

Investigating receptive bilingualism through a family language policy lens: The case of Arabic-English speaking families in Australia

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Abstract

Maintaining a heritage language in a monolingual society is not an easy task and presents ongoing challenges for immigrant families, particularly when children develop receptive bilingualism—understanding the heritage language but with limited production skills (De Houwer, 2007; Nakamura, 2019; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). This phenomenon often leaves parents concerned about the loss of their heritage language and a shift toward the majority language. While receptive bilingualism has received some scholarly attention in second-language acquisition and heritage-language studies, it remains underexplored in the field of family language policy.

To address this gap, through a family language policy lens, this thesis investigates how the three components of family language policy—beliefs, practices, and management strategies, as outlined in Spolsky’s (2004) model of language policy—as well as agency, the capacity to act and make choices (Ahearn, 2001; Kuczynski, 2002), influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among Arabic-English speaking families in Australia, from both parents’ and children’s perspectives. Over the course of six months, I conducted multiple ethnographically informed case studies of three families whose children were born in Australia and were aged 5–12 years. Data collection included parent interviews, audio-recorded parent-child interactions, observations, and informal conversations with children to understand why receptive bilingualism persists despite children’s exposure to their heritage language from birth.

Findings reveal that active parental agency, characterised by intentional engagement, mediated the translation of parental language beliefs into supportive language practices and management strategies, thereby developing both children’s receptive and productive bilingualism. Constrained

and deferred agency, by contrast, created misalignment between beliefs, practices, and strategies, reinforcing the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. From the children's perspectives, beliefs, practices, and engagement with parent-initiated strategies were shaped by their perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism, that is, their explicit statements about understanding Arabic but struggling to speak it. This awareness produced predominantly negative beliefs about speaking Arabic, leading the children to limit their engagement with the family language policy and ultimately maintaining receptive skills without developing productive ones. Together, these findings support the thesis argument that the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among bilingual children is influenced by a family language policy mediated by agency. Therefore, this study contributes to family language policy research by: (1) extending Spolsky's model of language policy to incorporate agency as a mediating process that could help translate parental beliefs into supportive language practices and strategies, and heritage language outcome as the result of these interacting components; (2) offering guidance for families to support their positive beliefs about their heritage language by implementing an explicit (planned) family language policy aimed at encouraging children to speak their heritage language; and (3) providing evidence-based insights that may inform educators and policymakers in developing programs and initiatives that support children's heritage language production skills.

To my family

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The journey of raising children bilingually, while rewarding, can be a challenging experience for parents, requiring careful planning, consistent effort, and commitment, particularly when maintaining a heritage language in a predominantly monolingual society. As a parent navigating this journey myself, I, along with many families from the Arabic-speaking community in Australia, have encountered firsthand the challenges of maintaining a heritage language in an English-dominant society. These challenges are well established in the international literature and include a lack of exposure to the heritage language, a lack of practice opportunities in mainstream schools (Guardado, 2017; Nesteruk, 2010) and parents' long working hours, which limit the time available to engage children in heritage language activities (Nesteruk, 2010). In the Australian context, similar challenges exist, with Pauwels (2005, 2007) reporting that immigrant parents struggle to pass their heritage language to their children due to the amount of effort invested in heritage language maintenance, community attitudes towards the heritage language, lack of support from the wider community and educational institutions and the degree of parental experience in bilingual environments.

Despite the substantial research on the challenges parents face when raising children bilingually, there remains a notable gap in understanding receptive bilingualism as both a phenomenon and a challenge, particularly through the lens of family language policy. Receptive bilingualism – where a child understands their heritage language but has limited production skills – is widely observed among bilingual families in immigrant communities (De Houwer, 2007; Döpke, 1992; Hoffman, 2014; Meisel, 2019; Montrul, 2016b; Nakamura, 2018, 2019; Sherkina-

Lieber, 2020). Family language policy is a fast-growing field that provides a framework for understanding intergenerational heritage language transmission, development, and maintenance (Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2022). Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy forms the foundation of this framework, establishing that a family language policy is composed of three interconnected yet independent components: language beliefs, language practices, and management strategies. However, these components do not appear to operate in isolation. Other factors must be considered when investigating receptive bilingualism through a family language policy lens, particularly the role of agency—the capacity to act and make choices about the heritage language, a concept originating in linguistic anthropology (Ahearn, 2001) and developmental psychology (Kuczynski, 2002) that is now widely applied in family language policy research (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Smith-Christmas, 2020). Although it is now well established that agency is among the most critical factors in determining the success of family language policy, where children can speak their heritage language (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Schalley & Eisenclas, 2020), the relationship between agency and receptive bilingualism as a heritage language outcome remains unclear. Therefore, understanding how a family language policy, agency, and the prevalence of receptive bilingualism interact is important for heritage language-speaking communities, including the Arabic-speaking community in Australia, where families and community members consistently express concern about children's inability to speak Arabic despite sustained parental efforts (SBS, 2022).

The Arabic-speaking community in Australia consistently calls for guidance and support to facilitate intergenerational language transmission, frequently voicing their concerns through online platforms and social media. These concerns are reflected in a report by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS, 2022), in which Arab Australian academics and parents advocate for increased

support for Arabic language education and maintenance. According to the report, learning a heritage language helps community members maintain strong cultural connections and enhances their psychological well-being. Moreover, the report highlights the community's call for the Australian government to improve access to Arabic language education for younger generations, with the goal of facilitating intergenerational language transmission. My personal interactions within the Arabic-speaking community have similarly revealed that many families are seeking methods and strategies to develop, support and encourage their children to speak Arabic, specifically aiming to address and reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Reflecting on my own experiences as a parent within the Arabic-speaking community, I, too, encountered the persistent challenge of receptive bilingualism despite my efforts to create an Arabic-rich home environment. My children's good comprehension of Arabic and struggles to speak the language led me to seek scholarly guidance, where I discovered that receptive bilingualism, particularly within the field of family language policy, is significantly underrepresented in existing research. Thus, the combined impact of my personal experiences and the community's expressed needs led to the birth of this research and triggered my interest in conducting this study.

While receptive bilingualism has been explored in various fields, such as second language acquisition and heritage language studies (De Houwer, 2007; Döpke, 1992; Meisel, 2019; Nakamura, 2018; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020), to my knowledge, no research within the field of family language policy has exclusively examined receptive bilingualism as a heritage language outcome. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to examine how a family language policy influences the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among Arabic-English-speaking families in Australia, drawing on both parent and child perspectives. Children's voices are often absent from family language studies, yet

their insights are important for understanding the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Throughout this thesis, I argue that the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among bilingual children is influenced by a family language policy that is mediated by agency. To pursue the study's aim, I was guided by the following overarching research question:

To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?

Followed by two specific sub-questions:

1. How do the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?
2. How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?

To address these research questions, I drew on a qualitative, longitudinal case study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives and grounded in a constructivist worldview. This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of family language policy, agency, and receptive bilingualism as they unfold in the everyday lives of Arabic-English-speaking families. Through this investigation, I hope to offer guidance for families, educators, and policymakers seeking to support heritage language maintenance and reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among immigrant families.

1.1 Background and context of the study

Australia is a culturally and linguistically diverse nation that has produced one of the most ethnically diverse societies in the world (Noble & Watkins, 2024). Since the 1940s, considerable immigration from non-English-speaking countries has contributed to Australia's linguistic diversity, including an influx from the Middle East and beyond (Noble & Watkins, 2024; Piller & Gerber, 2018). This diversity is reflected in the most recent Australian census (2021), which

reported approximately 300 languages other than English as heritage languages are spoken at home (Multicultural NSW, 2021). Of particular interest within this linguistic landscape, and highly relevant to this study, is the substantial presence of Arabic-speaking communities throughout Australia. The Arabic-speaking communities have a long-standing history in the country, with immigration occurring in waves since the late 19th century and increasing significantly from the 1940s onwards, largely driven by political instability in the Middle East (Allam et al., 2023). These communities originate from a range of countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, among others and are characterised by diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds (Allam et al., 2023).

Today, Arabic is one of the fastest-growing community languages and one of the most widely spoken languages in Australia (Cruickshank, 2008). The Arabic-speaking community is considered one of the most established and visible ethnolinguistic groups, concentrated primarily in metropolitan areas such as Sydney and Melbourne (Abdelhadi, 2016; Cruickshank, 2008). Data from the 2021 Australian Census shows that approximately 21% of Australians speak a language other than English, with Arabic being the second most commonly spoken language, used by 1.4% of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2022). In addition, a report by Multicultural NSW (2021) shows that 29% of Arabic speakers in the 2021 Census were children under the age of 19, and although no exact census data exists on the number of second or third-generation Arabic-speaking children, their language practices, or their knowledge of Arabic language and culture, these figures indicate that many children are being raised bilingually, with Arabic spoken at home and English used in educational settings and the broader community. Furthermore, Arabic remains a main language taught at Australian schools, “with over 21,000 primary school children studying Arabic in government, non-government and community schools” nationwide (Cruickshank, 2025, p. 2). Notably, Arabic’s diglossic nature, in which two language

varieties serve different functions and are used in different domains (Saiegh-Haddad & Schiff, 2024), means that children often learn Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) at school—a formal variety not spoken at home—while using colloquial Arabic (dialect-specific), such as Levantine, Egyptian, or Iraqi Arabic, in everyday family conversations (Albirini, 2016; Ferguson, 1959; Saiegh-Haddad & Schiff, 2024).

However, such demographic and educational visibility does not preclude Arabic from experiencing a language shift like many other minority languages in the country. According to Cavallaro (2005), Australia remains largely inclined towards monolingualism despite its linguistic diversity, and although Australia is characterised as a multilingual nation, “this is only true of the languages of recently arrived migrants” (Forrest et al., 2020, p. 1070). In fact, it is newly arrived immigrants who revitalise the use of heritage languages and have a positive influence on language maintenance (Pauwels, 2005). As for subsequent immigrant generations, research conducted by Zhang et al. (2023) reveals that language shift was highly prevalent among second-generation Australian-born immigrant children, with two-thirds of third-generation immigrant children speaking English only at home, and children from Arabic-speaking backgrounds were no exception (Forrest & Dandy, 2017). Fishman (1966) long ago warned that children from different ethnolinguistic backgrounds tend to lose their heritage language by the second or third generation. Some children even become entirely monolingual English speakers by the second generation, with little or no knowledge of their heritage language, unless the family firmly maintains the heritage language at home and takes deliberate actions to preserve it (Edwards, 2010; Fishman, 1966). Locating this study within its broader historical and sociolinguistic context, I now turn to understanding the relationship between heritage language maintenance and receptive bilingualism.

1.2 Heritage language maintenance and receptive bilingualism

Understanding receptive bilingualism requires us to take a step back and reflect on the broader context of heritage language maintenance within immigrant families. In this section, I bring together the two central concepts that frame this study—heritage language maintenance and receptive bilingualism—and explore the relationship between them. I begin by unpacking what is meant by a heritage language, particularly in the context of immigrant families in English-dominant societies, such as Australia. I then turn to the concept of heritage language maintenance, with special attention to the role of the family in supporting heritage language maintenance and sustaining intergenerational language transmission. From there, I shift focus to receptive bilingualism, an outcome common among children in immigrant households that has received limited attention within the field of family language policy. By bringing these concepts into the discussion, this section lays the groundwork for understanding how receptive bilingualism may emerge as an unintended, undesired outcome of families' heritage-language maintenance efforts. It is within this space, between the family's heritage-language efforts and outcomes, that receptive bilingualism takes shape as both a personal and a sociolinguistic reality, one that warrants closer attention and deeper understanding.

1.2.1 What is a heritage language?

At the heart of this thesis is the concept of a heritage language, a term that is more than a label—shaped by history, culture, and families' experiences—and one that continues to evolve across various contexts. I approach this section by first reflecting on the meaning of the term *heritage*, then tracing the evolution of the concept of *heritage language* in the Canadian, American, and Australian contexts, and finally, considering the challenges of arriving at a shared definition suitable for this study. In doing so, I acknowledge the diversity of views on what constitutes a heritage

language while grounding my research in a definition that reflects both scholarly thought and the experiences of heritage language families.

The term *heritage* as a starting point carries both emotional and cultural significance, often tied to ideas of ancestry, identity, and continuity, something inherited and passed down from one generation to the next. As Gounari (2014) explains, the term *heritage* holds emotional value, referring to one's background and origin. In this sense, heritage is not only about what is preserved from the past but also about how it is lived and carried forward in the present. Montrul (2016) adds that many speakers view their language as a vital part of their cultural heritage, further highlighting the deep connection between heritage and language. These layered meanings of heritage form the backdrop against which the term heritage language began to take shape in educational and linguistic discourse.

The term *heritage language* is relatively new in educational and linguistic discourse, first used in Canada in the early 1970s to describe indigenous and immigrant languages (King & Enns-Kananen, 2013). Later, the term was modified to suit different contexts and countries, such as the United States and Australia (King & Enns-Kananen, 2013). In the US, the term was embraced in the early 1990s to provide a richer and more precise definition for non-mainstream languages (Eisenchlas & Schalley, 2020). Importantly, scholars in the U.S. used the term to reframe the status of background or heritage speakers, who were often portrayed less favourably than native or second language speakers in educational and policy discourses (Eisenchlas & Schalley, 2020). In Australia, where this study is situated, the term 'heritage language' has also undergone adaptation. Several terms have been used interchangeably, including ethnic languages, languages other than English (LOTE), and community languages (Pauwels, 2016). Among these, community language is the

most widely used, as it avoids connotations of obsolescence and affirms the ongoing presence and use of these languages within communities (Clyne & Fernandez, 2007; Liddicoat, 2018). However, this term has also faced criticism. For instance, NALDIC, the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (2011), argues that the term ‘community language’ can imply a shared set of values or practices among all speakers, which overlooks the diversity and complexity of their linguistic experiences. In response to these limitations, Liddicoat (2008) advocates the use of the term *heritage language* in the Australian context. Liddicoat (2008) suggests that this term offers a more flexible and meaningful framework than alternatives such as community language or language other than English (LOTE), “allowing for connections across various categories of non-dominant languages and better reflecting the cultural and familial ties many speakers have to their language” (p. 237). Nevertheless, the term *heritage language* is not without controversy and is not universally accepted. Critics argue that the term can be overly prescriptive and may suggest a nostalgic rather than contemporary relationship with language (Echeverria & Sparling, 2024; Leeman, 2015). In this thesis, I adopt the term *heritage language* in line with Liddicoat’s (2008) arguments, as it captures the cultural and familial significance of such languages within the Australian context.

As the term *heritage language* has evolved across various contexts, what qualifies as a heritage language remains difficult to define. The literature has offered a range of perspectives, sometimes overlapping but often highlighting different dimensions of heritage language use and identity. For example, Gounari (2014) defines heritage language as the language used at home, not a majority language in society, often passed down from parents to their children, whose survival depends on the family. In contrast, King and Ennser-Kananen (2013) argue that a heritage language is not simply passed down from parents to children; rather, it carries broader cultural associations and

significance. Kelleher (2010) further expands this view, stating that “any language other than English could be considered a heritage language to its speakers” (as cited in Gounari, 2014). Similarly, Cummins (2005) asserts that heritage languages are those spoken by immigrants, refugees, and newcomers, distinguishing them from dominant societal languages. Some scholars have even suggested a narrow and a broad definition, where the broad definition could explore the cultural heritage aspects of the heritage language, and the narrow definition could focus on the linguistic competence of heritage language speakers (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007).

Taken together, these varied definitions and understandings reflect the complexity and evolving nature of what qualifies as a heritage language. For the purposes of this thesis, I draw on the definition proposed by Rothman (2009), who identifies four key criteria for identifying a heritage language: “the language is spoken in the home domain, is accessible to young children, is acquired through natural interaction, and is not the dominant language of the wider society” (p. 156). What makes Rothman’s definition particularly relevant to this study is its emphasis on the child’s experience with the language in naturalistic, home-based settings, which aligns with the aims explored in this study, where a child is not just a recipient of language but an agent in the ongoing process of language transmission and maintenance. With this understanding in place, I now turn to explore what it means to maintain a heritage language and the role of the family in heritage language maintenance.

1.2.2 Understanding heritage language maintenance

As Australia’s linguistic landscape continues to diversify, so too does interest in how immigrant families maintain and transmit their heritage languages across generations. Immigrant families maintain their heritage language for religious, cultural, and identity purposes, as well as to develop

a sense of belonging to the heritage-language community (Attaallah, 2020; Brown & Muslim, 2016; Nordstrom, 2020; Tawalbeh, 2014; Tseng, 2020). To better understand the role of heritage languages in the lives of immigrant families, it is useful to distinguish here between language transmission, language development and language maintenance. While these concepts are closely related, they refer to different stages of language continuity. Language transmission refers to the initial process of passing a heritage language to children in early childhood, typically within the home environment (Fishman, 1991). Language development refers to “the development of new linguistic knowledge in all its breadth, the processes and the conditions under which these processes take place” (Eisenclas & Schalley, 2020, p. 2). In contrast, heritage language maintenance is the subsequent process that involves the continued use, development, and preservation of the heritage language across generations, particularly in environments where the dominant societal language often prevails (Pauwels, 2016; Valdés, 2006). According to Baker and Wright (2017), language maintenance refers to the stability of the language, its distribution among speakers, the proficiency of children and adults in their heritage language, and its maintenance in specific domains. Language maintenance, then, is not simply about introducing the language to children but about maintaining its presence and use in daily life. Language maintenance promotes the vitality and functionality of the heritage language within the child’s developing linguistic repertoire. As such, heritage language maintenance is an evolving, long-term process that requires consistent effort and intentionality from both families and communities to resist the pressures of language shift and to manage, maintain, and transmit their languages to the next generation (Baker & Wright, 2017; Eisenclas & Schalley, 2020).

As stated earlier, for immigrant families, heritage language maintenance involves retaining their language, identity, religion and heritage culture, while also nurturing a sense of belonging to the

heritage language community (Attaallah, 2020; Brown & Muslim, 2016; Nordstrom, 2020; Tawalbeh, 2014; Tseng, 2020). It is through language that children may communicate with their extended family abroad, participate in religious and cultural traditions, and experience a sense of continuity with their roots. Heritage language maintenance is also associated with cognitive, emotional, and educational advantages. According to Yates and Terraschke (2013), language maintenance can create stronger family relationships and deepen community ties. Similarly, Baker (2000) observes that some parents view their heritage language as an inseparable part of who they are, a legacy worth passing down. Families also see bilingualism as a practical and intellectual asset, believing it can enhance children's academic achievement and mental flexibility (Baker, 2000; Caldas, 2012; Cavallaro, 2005). These perspectives remind us that the heritage language is not just a tool for communication but a deeply personal expression of culture and connection that preserves one's identity, cultural values, ancestral ties, and overall sense of belonging.

Beyond the home, heritage language maintenance has wider implications for public life and national identity. For linguistically and culturally diverse countries like Australia, the ongoing presence of heritage languages contributes to stronger social cohesion, bringing benefits not only to individuals but also to communities and the broader society (Forrest et al., 2020). This broader view has informed an increasing body of research examining how language practices are woven into the everyday lives of families, particularly those navigating bilingual and multilingual environments (Cavallaro, 2005). While this recognition is encouraging, it also draws attention to the ongoing challenges many immigrant families face, particularly in predominantly English-speaking societies, where pressures to prioritise the majority language can make maintaining a heritage language difficult.

As previously mentioned, maintaining a heritage language in predominantly English-speaking environments faces considerable challenges, particularly since English continues to dominate education, media, and public life. Cavallaro (2005) argues that the dominance of English can hasten language shift, even in homes where the heritage language is valued. Ferguson (2012) further suggests that English's role as a global lingua franca may inadvertently threaten linguistic diversity. In this context, some families may find it easier, or even necessary, to favour English, particularly when concerned about discrimination, assimilation, or educational success (Pauwels, 2007; Nesteruk, 2010). As Nesteruk (2010) notes, parents themselves may become agents of language shift, consciously or unconsciously suppressing the use of their heritage language. In such situations, bilingual children become reluctant or even reject their heritage language as they develop their linguistic skills in the mainstream language.

These family-level challenges reflect a broader structural reality: while Australia's multicultural framework supports the preservation of languages and cultures in theory, in practice, support for bilingualism remains limited (Cavallaro, 2005). The Australian government offers numerous English language development programs for immigrants, yet support for maintaining heritage languages and facilitating their intergenerational transmission remains minimal (Yates & Terraschke, 2013). Despite policy-level recognition of linguistic diversity, heritage language programs often receive insufficient funding to meet the needs of minority or heritage language communities, where many languages remain vulnerable (Burnaby, 2008; Rubino, 2010). This vulnerability is largely due to Australia's enduring "Anglocentric" orientation and the prevailing dominance of English (Rubino, 2010, p. 1). According to Rubino (2010), bilingualism and multilingualism "are not yet fully recognised as valuable assets in the Australian society, particularly in the work environment" (p. 3). Therefore, although the state offers limited language

maintenance support, immigrant communities have taken some responsibility for heritage language maintenance.

Many immigrant communities have developed grassroots initiatives, or community-level initiatives, to develop their languages through religious institutions, local cultural centres, and informal learning environments (Juvonen et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these initiatives often face limitations in resources, time, and institutional support (Berardi-Wiltshire, 2018). Consequently, the responsibility of language maintenance tends to fall most heavily on families themselves. Within the home, decisions made by parents and children play a critical role in shaping heritage language outcomes. Therefore, although language maintenance requires collaboration among the state, the community, and parents, it remains highly dependent on families' initiatives (Yates & Terraschke, 2013). Even in multicultural societies like Australia, where there is policy-level recognition of linguistic diversity, the survival of minority languages ultimately depends on what happens in the home. This growing awareness of the family's role in language maintenance leads to the next section, which examines the important role of the family in maintaining heritage languages.

1.2.3 The role of the family in heritage language maintenance

Classic language policies viewed the nation-state as the primary domain influencing intergenerational heritage language maintenance and transmission (Spolsky, 2012). According to Spolsky (2004), heritage language advocates argue that it is the state's responsibility to maintain minority and heritage languages and linguistic diversity. However, much of the research conducted on heritage language maintenance shows that it is the duty of the family and the heritage language speaker to maintain their language (Gounari, 2014; King & Fogle, 2013; Nesteruk, 2010).

Although the state is expected to recognise certain rights, such as religious rights or the right to speak a heritage language, the family remains mainly and primarily responsible for heritage language maintenance and intergenerational transmission (Spolsky, 2004). In this section, I focus on the important role of the family in heritage language maintenance, beginning by exploring what constitutes a family and then examining how family members, particularly parents, shape the linguistic environment in ways that influence intergenerational language transmission and heritage language outcome.

The family is an intimate social and organisational unit, seen as a community of practice where adults engage in child-rearing (Pauwels, 2016). The family provides the foundation for children's language socialisation, development, and production, where adults or caregivers, such as parents, make decisions to practice, nurture, encourage, or abandon their heritage language (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018). While traditional understandings of family have focused on married couples with children, this notion has evolved across cultures and in various contexts (Purkarthofer, 2020). In today's context, a family can include married couples, single parents, foster carers, adopted parents, and migrant or transnational parents, among many others (Juvonen et al., 2020). Despite this diversity, much of the early literature on family language policy focused on families who were from "Western, educated, industrialised, rich, and democratic backgrounds, where one of the parents speaks the societal language, and the other parent has emigrated" (p. 42). While recent years have seen a welcome shift toward more inclusive research on diverse family types, languages, and contexts (King & Fogle, 2017), Arabic-speaking families in Australia have only recently begun to receive scholarly attention in the home domain.

Given the central role families play in heritage language maintenance, the *home domain* emerges as an important space for exploring how language is maintained in everyday family life.

The home domain does not refer to a physical space but rather to a point of reference where family members negotiate language use through a family language policy (Eisenclas & Schalley, 2020). It is within this domain that language beliefs, practices, and management strategies that form the family language policy come together in ways that either support or challenge the continuity of a heritage language. Thus, the home domain is placed in a central position for the continuance, maintenance, and preservation of intergenerational heritage languages (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Fishman, 2000b; Gounari, 2014; Pauwels, 2016; Spolsky, 2012; Valdés, 2006). As Clyne (2003) notes, “If a language is not strongly transmitted in the home domain, it is not likely to survive another generation” (p. 22). Pauwels (2005) similarly observes that even when a policy and educational support are in place, it is ultimately families that determine the survival or loss of a heritage language, particularly the family language policy the family applies, which plays a critical role in the continuance, maintenance, survival, and preservation of intergenerational heritage languages (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Fishman, 2000b; Gounari, 2014; Schwartz & Verschik, 2013; Spolsky, 2012).

Building on the understanding that the home is a central site for language maintenance, continuity, and survival, it becomes necessary to consider how the family language policy is shaped and how it affects heritage language maintenance and outcomes. Spolsky (2017) noted that the term *language policy* itself is often vague and requires clarification, particularly when applied beyond institutional or state-level planning. Spolsky distinguishes between language policy as a broad field of study and language policy as a concrete management plan or process. In his earlier work, Spolsky (2004) proposed that the language policy of a family or any speech community should be examined from the bottom up, focusing on the micro-level of individuals and households. This micro-level perspective gave rise to his triadic model of family language policy,

which comprises three interrelated components: language ideology, language practices, and language management (p. 17). These three components have since become foundational in understanding how families navigate the use of heritage languages in daily life. As Schwartz and Verschik (2013) argue, language planning at the micro level, within families or among individuals, not only influences intergenerational transmission but may also shape broader patterns of language planning at the community or even national level (p. 4). This suggests that family-based decisions around language use are not isolated but may collectively influence larger sociolinguistic outcomes. In this way, the family language policy becomes a vital tool or plan for preserving and developing heritage languages, particularly within immigrant families. However, even with intentional family efforts, the outcomes of a family language policy are not always straightforward. In the following section, I proceed to explore receptive bilingualism as an outcome of the family's heritage language maintenance efforts and a key concept in this study.

1.2.4 Receptive bilingualism as an outcome of heritage language maintenance

Within the wider discussion of heritage language maintenance, one increasingly visible outcome among immigrant families is receptive bilingualism. The literature on family language policy often focuses on successful language transmission or language shift; far less is known about the in-between space that receptive bilingualism occupies. Smith-Christmas (2016) argues that at the heart of family language policy lies the question of why some children raised in bi/multilingual environments develop productive skills in the heritage language while others do not, even when they have been immersed in the language from birth (Baker, 2000; Meisel, 2019; Nakamura, 2018). Typically, second and third-generation children become receptive bilinguals, understanding their heritage language but struggling to speak it (Danesi, 2020).

While receptive bilingualism is a common linguistic phenomenon among children from immigrant backgrounds (De Houwer, 2007; Nakamura, 2019), it is often perceived by parents as an undesired outcome of their language maintenance efforts. Receptive bilingualism can be a baffling experience for parents who expect their children to speak their heritage language (De Houwer, 2007), given the time and effort parents have invested in speaking the heritage language and teaching it to the children. To date, the literature reveals that the emergence of receptive bilingualism is shaped by several factors, including the amount and quality of language exposure, the child's age, social networks, and the value placed on language both within and outside the home (Köpke, 2019; Meisel, 2019; Unsworth, 2016). However, one important but under-explored factor that previous studies have not treated in much detail is how a family language policy mediated by agency relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Agency is a concept that is gaining much attention in the field of family language policy and encompasses two key terms: parental agency and child agency. Parental agency is seen as the capacity to act and make choices that shape heritage language outcomes (Ahearn, 2001; Kuczynski, 2002). Child agency, on the other hand, is understood as children's capacity to act and make choices by complying with, negotiating, defying or rejecting the family language policy (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Karpava, 2022; Schwartz, 2020; Smith-Christmas, 2020). Although some studies have attempted to address the concepts of parental and child agency and their influence on heritage language outcomes (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Srhir, 2020; Wang & Obaidul Hamid, 2022) and found that agency is among the most critical factors in determining the success of family language policy, where the children can speak their heritage language, more research is required to explore how a family language policy mediated by agency relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. In this study, receptive bilingualism is viewed not as a deficit or a failure of

children's bilingual development, but rather as an outcome of family language policy dynamics. Therefore, I position receptive bilingualism as a valuable stage of bilingual development, a strength that reflects key receptive skills, which can serve as a foundation for the subsequent development of productive bilingualism.

Having explored the relationship between heritage language maintenance and receptive bilingualism—particularly within the context of immigrant families in English-dominant societies—it is clear that the family plays a central, if not the main role in shaping children's heritage language outcomes. As this section has shown, heritage language maintenance is an ongoing process shaped by the family language policy of both parents and children. Receptive bilingualism, in turn, emerges not as a failure but as an undesired heritage language outcome. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I describe the structure of the remainder of the thesis.

1.3 Thesis structure

Investigating receptive bilingualism through a family language policy lens in the family domain, where parents and children co-create their bilingual environment, provides a valuable stage for understanding how heritage language outcomes are shaped. It is within these everyday interactions that family language beliefs, practices, and management strategies unfold, are shaped and reshaped by both parental and child agency. Together, these factors play a critical role in influencing the heritage language outcome, particularly the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The chapters that follow build a layered and in-depth exploration of receptive bilingualism as it emerges in the experiences of Arabic-English-speaking families in Australia. Each of the eight chapters contributes to this exploration by bringing together theory, research, and families' voices

and experiences to shed light on how heritage languages are maintained within bilingual or multilingual immigrant homes.

I begin in **Chapter 2** by reviewing the academic literature related to the research questions. This chapter provides an overview of international and Australian research on family language policy, receptive bilingualism, and parental and child agency. I first present the literature on the field and the concept of family language policy. I then define receptive bilingualism and explore its relevance in the field, noting the lack of empirical studies focusing on receptive bilingualism as an outcome. Following this, I explore the role of parental and child agency in mediating heritage language outcomes, identify gaps in existing research, particularly the limited attention to Arabic-speaking families in Australia, and thereby establish the rationale for this study.

In **Chapter 3**, I turn to the theoretical framework that underpins the study. I draw on Spolsky's (2004) triadic model of language policy, examining how each component influences the others from both the parents' and the child's perspectives. I then explore how parental and child agency operate within the home domain, either supporting or hindering heritage language maintenance. I propose extending Spolsky's model by incorporating agency as a mediating process and positioning heritage language outcomes as the result of these interacting components. At the end of the chapter, I hypothesise that agency may be exercised differently by children, which may influence how they participate and engage with the family language policy.

In **Chapter 4**, I present the methodological approach and research design used to address the research questions. Grounded in a constructivist worldview (Peterson & Gencel, 2013), I adopt a qualitative, longitudinal case study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives (Okada, 2024). I provide an overview of the philosophical and epistemological assumptions guiding the research

and outline the processes of participant recruitment, data collection, and analysis. The chapter also reflects on my positionality as a parent-researcher within the Arabic-speaking community, acknowledging how my insider role influenced data access and the interpretation of the findings. I also discuss the ethical considerations of conducting research with families, and highlight how the longitudinal design enabled the capture of authentic data.

Chapters 5 and 6 present the study's findings, beginning with parental perspectives and the children's perspectives. In **Chapter 5**, I examine how parents implement a family language policy and how their language beliefs, practices, and management strategies relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Drawing on interview and observational data, I consider how different types of agency influence the family language policy and heritage language outcome.

In **Chapter 6**, I turn to the perspectives and experiences of children, whose voices are often absent from family language policy research. This chapter presents findings from audio-recorded parent-child interactions, the researcher's observations and informal conversations with the children, illustrating how children engage with the family language policy. Through this lens, receptive bilingualism emerged as a product and a driver of the children's family language policy.

Chapter 7 brings together parents' and children's perspectives to offer an integrated discussion of the findings. This chapter reflects on how a family language policy is co-constructed by parents and children, and on how agency functions as a mediating process between beliefs, practices, and management strategies from both parents' and children's perspectives. This chapter also situates receptive bilingualism within the wider discourse of heritage language maintenance, proposing it as a heritage language outcome.

Finally, in **Chapter 8**, I offer concluding reflections on the study's findings. This chapter synthesises key findings, answers the research question, and discusses the study's contributions to

the fields of family language policy, bilingualism, and heritage language education. I highlight the theoretical and practical implications of viewing receptive bilingualism as a heritage-language outcome, outline the study's limitations, and propose directions and possible avenues for future research. I now turn to Chapter 2, the literature review, examining how family language policy, receptive bilingualism, and agency have been theorised and researched across both international and Australian contexts, identifying key contributions, recurring themes, and notable gaps that this study seeks to address.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced the context and rationale for this study, showing how receptive bilingualism is an unintended outcome of the family's heritage-language maintenance efforts. I also positioned family language policy as a comparatively new field of research that has grown rapidly over the last two decades, investigating and thereby shedding light on how heritage languages are maintained, developed and transmitted intergenerationally within the home domain (Eisenchlas & Schalley, 2020; Fishman, 1991; King & Fogle, 2017). In this chapter, I proceed to critically survey the literature on family language policy, receptive bilingualism and agency. In Section 2.1, I trace the development of family language policy as both a field and a concept. Section 2.2 surveys the literature on receptive bilingualism and receptive bilinguals. Section 2.3 scopes the literature on the causes of receptive bilingualism. Finally, section 2.4 concludes the chapter by examining the literature on the role of agency in family language policy and its relationship to receptive bilingualism. Together, these sections establish the scholarly foundation upon which this study is built, acknowledging key contributions to the field and drawing attention to the research gaps this study seeks to fill. The central argument of this chapter is that receptive bilingualism as a heritage-language outcome warrants more research attention.

2.1 Family language policy as a field of inquiry and as a concept

The term *family language policy* has various meanings in the scholarly literature and is commonly presented as a field of inquiry and a concept for understanding “unofficial language planning” at the family level (Verschik & Doyle, 2017, p. 123). De Houwer (1999), King et al.

(2008) and Spolsky (2004), prominent scholars in the field of language policy and planning, conceptualised family language policy as a bottom-up approach to language planning at the micro-level of the family. Such an approach offers a lens for examining how heritage languages are negotiated, learned, managed and shaped by the everyday linguistic practices and decisions of family members. However, this broad application of the term has led to diversity in definitions and conceptualisations that reflect the multifaceted nature of family language policy, which falls under two categories or classifications: family language policy as a field and family language policy as a concept—necessitating careful distinction where the former develops substantive theories while the latter is prone to diverse interpretations. In the following section, I provide a brief review of the literature on family language policy, examining both the field and the concept, beginning with a description of what the term *family* entails.

Family is at the heart of our understanding of family language policy; however, defining the term *family* remains a debatable and challenging task due to the variety of definitions that have been proposed in the literature, each embodying a multitude of concepts (Lomeu-Gomes & Lanza, 2020). Traditionally, a family consisted of a married couple, with or without children; however, in contemporary contexts, a significant terminological shift has taken place as the definition of a family has broadened and evolved across various contexts and places (Purkarthofer, 2020). Nowadays, a family could include married couples, single parents, foster carers, adopted parents, or migrant/transnational parents, with or without children, among many others (Juvonen et al., 2020).

Drawing on and synthesising concepts from the existing literature, I define the term family in this thesis as an intimate social and affective organisational unit, functioning as a community of practice with its own socialising agents, adults, and children who make significant decisions about heritage language acquisition, development, maintenance and production (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; Fishman, 1991; King & Fogle, 2013; Lomeu-Gomes & Lanza, 2020; Luykx, 2003; Spolsky, 2009; Wilson, 2020). In this definition, I explicitly include the children as important members of the family unit, whose voices are often absent from family language policy studies. In doing so, I situate family language policy within the family unit as a collaborative social space, where adults and children navigate complex, situated, and socially negotiated choices and decisions to use, practice, nurture, encourage, or abandon their heritage language (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; Fishman, 1991; Lanza, 2007). These choices and decisions are not simply imposed by adults nor straightforwardly accepted or rejected by children, but somewhat continuously shaped through family interactions, individual experiences, social perceptions, and the broader sociocultural context, including attitudes of the dominant society, reflecting a blend of both internal and external influences (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020). Therefore, understanding what constitutes a family is central to understanding family language policy, both as a field of inquiry and as a concept.

Family language policy, as a field of inquiry, emerged from the intersection of two previously disconnected research disciplines, language policy and child language acquisition studies (King & Fogle, 2017). On the one hand, language policy has been primarily concerned with solving language problems in newly independent nations, with substantial research examining language policies in institutional and work contexts while paying little attention to the home domain and the

family (King & Fogle, 2017). On the other hand, child language acquisition was concerned with analysing caregiver-child interactions in home and laboratory settings while focusing on first language acquisition, ignoring parental language beliefs, practices, and goals (King & Fogle, 2017).

Family language policy then established itself as a field of inquiry through the seminal work of King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry in 2008, which drew wider scholarly attention to the home as a site of language planning, maintenance, and survival. King et al. (2008) stressed the need for a new field of inquiry that could bridge the gaps between language policy and child language acquisition and shed light on what families do with language at home. King et al. argued that the components of Spolsky's (2004) language policy model, language beliefs, language practices and language management strategies, could be applied to the home domain and that studies on parent-child interaction in child language acquisition studies could set the scene for examining how children develop heritage language receptive and productive skills from social encounters with caregivers/parents (King et al., 2008; Rowe et al., 2017). Thus, family language policy as a field of inquiry places the family under sharp focus as a dynamic, independent domain or social space (Spolsky, 2009), crucial for heritage language maintenance, development and survival (King et al., 2008; Lomeu-Gomes & Lanza, 2020; Spolsky, 2012).

As a concept, one of the earliest scholars to conceptualise language policy at the family level was Luykx (2003), who investigated language socialisation among bilingual Spanish-Aymara (Indigenous Bolivian language) families. Luykx (2003) argued that language choices within the family could constitute an implicit and unconscious language policy of the family, and that such a

policy affects heritage language maintenance, survival, and intergenerational transmission (p. 39). Although Luykx's conceptualisation predates the formal establishment of the field, it offered a conceptual foundation that was later built upon, leading to the earliest definitions of family language policy by King et al. (2008), who initially defined family language policy as "an explicit and overt planning of language use among family members" (p. 907). However, with the increased research conducted on family language policy, Caldas (2012) and Curdt-Christiansen (2018) have offered an expanded definition, suggesting that family language policy also encompasses implicit, unconscious, and covert language planning among family members.

Despite the development of these definitions, there remains a difficulty in distinguishing between what constitutes explicit and overt planning and what falls under implicit and covert practices. For this study, and to avoid ambiguity, I chose not to make a distinction between explicit and overt, or implicit and covert. Rather, I adopt a more inclusive understanding of family language policy that captures the full range of language planning within the family. Therefore, as a concept, family language policy in this thesis refers to the explicit (deliberate planning) or implicit (unplanned, naturally occurring) and unofficial language planning at the family level. Such a definition is particularly relevant, given that Wilson (2020) argues that research on family language policy has traditionally centred on middle-class, educated, European minority-language families that implement explicit language policies, thereby overlooking families whose language planning practices are more implicit. In this sense, family language policy can be seen to exist along a continuum, ranging from implicit, naturally occurring planning to explicit and deliberate planning.

Thus far, I have reviewed the literature on the development of family language policy as a field of inquiry and as a concept. As a field of inquiry, family language policy is a novel field of research that combines findings and concepts from the fields of language policy and child language acquisition. As a concept, family language policy refers to the implicit or explicit, unofficial language planning at the family level. This distinction was necessary to clarify both the theoretical scope and practical application of the term. In the next section, I turn to reviewing the literature on receptive bilingualism and receptive bilinguals.

2.2 Receptive bilingualism and receptive bilinguals

As briefly discussed in the introduction chapter, one of the most significant challenges and a commonly perceived undesirable heritage language outcome that families face when applying a family language policy is the prevalence of receptive bilingualism (Meisel, 2019; Montrul, 2016b). Receptive bilingualism is sometimes referred to as passive bilingualism; however, the latter has been criticised by scholars for “not doing justice to the active decoding processes involved in understanding language” (Hoffman, 2014, p. 24). Thus, receptive bilingualism can be seen as a form of functional bilingualism where the language acquisition process does not end even though the heritage language speaker may not speak the heritage language (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986; Meisel, 2019; Montrul, 2016b). Instead, receptive bilingualism continues to develop and could be turned into productive/active bilingualism, where the child can speak their heritage language (Döpke, 1992), provided that the right linguistic environment is present. Therefore, receptive bilingualism should not be seen by families, educators and scholars as “a reason for concern because it does not necessarily indicate language acquisition failure” (Meisel, 2019, p. 163), but

rather as a linguistic outcome which can support the future development of productive bilingualism.

In reviewing the current literature on family language policy, receptive bilingualism remains underexplored. To date, no study has thoroughly investigated receptive bilingualism from a family language policy lens. This gap may be attributed, in part, to the relatively recent emergence of family language policy as a field of inquiry. As a result, much of what we know about children's receptive bilingualism comes from research in second-language contexts or in heritage-language education. While receptive bilingualism is a term widely used across those two fields, according to Sherkina-Lieber (2020), there is barely any cross-fertilisation between them or other fields in general, which shows the need for interdisciplinary studies on the phenomenon to understand how it emerges, is experienced, and potentially addressed in family settings, a gap this study seeks to address by drawing on family language policy and language studies perspectives.

In examining the literature, it appears that within the second language context, receptive bilingualism refers to a communication mode used by individuals, both children and adults, who acquire a second language that is not their heritage language, and who show stronger comprehension than production skills in that language (Döpke, 1992; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). In contrast, in the heritage language context, receptive bilingualism refers to a mode of bilingual communication used by immigrant children living in a country where their heritage language is a minority language often restricted to the home domain (De Houwer, 2007; Meisel, 2019; Nakamura, 2018). Receptive bilingualism tends to be more difficult in the heritage-language context because the heritage language is in a foreign-language environment and is most likely

supported only in the home domain. In Australia, for instance, a study by Escudero et al. (2023) reveals that while 95% of the surveyed parents valued maintaining their heritage language, fewer than half participated in community initiatives, and fewer than one in five believed there was sufficient support beyond the home. In contrast, a second-language speaker may have the support of an educational system and a second-language-speaking community, or may be learning the second language in a country where it is the dominant language.

Although receptive bilingualism is recognised in heritage language research, it is not always clearly conceptualised or consistently named as such within the literature. For example, Armon-Lotem et al. (2014) describe a pattern in which “Immigrant parents who are dominant in a minority language generally speak to their children in their native language, while their children tend to respond in the language of the host society. This well-documented phenomenon usually leads to rapid language shift within a single generation” (p. 78); however, this pattern, while characteristic of receptive bilingualism, is not explicitly named or framed as such. A similar observation in Tseng (2020) research which notes that “heritage language speakers, a subpopulation of home language speakers...may understand the language but not have the productive ability” (p. 112). However, Tseng (2020) does not identify receptive bilingualism as a phenomenon or a concept. The variation in how receptive bilingualism is referred to and described across the research landscape points to a conceptual gap that warrants closer scholarly attention. Likewise, Ribot and Hoff (2014) describe receptive bilingualism as a form of ‘code-switching’, defining it as “a pattern of bilingual proficiency in which bilinguals understand two languages but are able to speak only one” (p. 334). While this definition aligns with the core features of receptive bilingualism, it is important to distinguish receptive bilingualism from code-switching. The former typically involves

comprehension with limited or absent production in the heritage/home or second language, whereas the latter describes fluent alternation between two languages, often within the same conversation (Yuliana et al., 2015).

Within the framework of family language policy, I define receptive bilingualism, in this thesis, as a form of functional bilingualism in which children can understand their heritage language but have limited production skills, typically restricted to single words, formulaic expressions, or short phrases. This definition adopts the arguments of several scholars. First, studies by Baetens Beardsmore (1986) and Montrul (2016b) present receptive bilingualism as a form of functional bilingualism characterised by comprehension with constrained productive ability, often resulting from limited heritage language exposure (Armon-Lotem, 2018; Köpke, 2019; Meisel, 2019; Paradis & Grüter, 2014; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). Second, research investigating receptive bilingualism through expressive-receptive language tasks has found that receptive bilingual children typically produce only single words appropriate to conversational context, usually related to the home domain (Dopke, 1992; Giguere & Hoff, 2022; Thordardottir, 2011). More recent studies by Montrul (2016b), Nakamura (2019) and Sherkina-Lieber (2020) have shown that receptive bilingual children can produce some words and even some phrases in the heritage language. Nakamura's (2019) study has contributed significantly to the present definition by showing how receptive bilingual children, aged 4 and 7, were capable of producing words and short phrases in their heritage languages (English and Italian), primarily through rote phrases (repetition of parents' utterances) and polar responses (yes/no answers). Likewise, Smith-Christmas's (2016) research informs the adopted definition by showing that although Gaelic-English bilingual children primarily replied in English despite adult Gaelic input, their limited

Gaelic production consisted mainly of short, functional two-word phrases used to attract attention or make requests.

Having reviewed the literature on receptive bilingualism, it is now important to survey the existing research on receptive bilinguals. Receptive bilinguals are often described as a sub-category of heritage language speakers, born or raised in host countries, who possess limited heritage language productive skills despite being immersed in the heritage language from birth; in other words, receptive bilinguals are restricted to aural skills (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986; Montrul, 2016b; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020; Tseng, 2020). Although the term *receptive bilingual* is not new and has been thoroughly discussed by Baetens Beardsmore (1986), it is still not widely used in the literature on family language policy, and very little attention has been paid to receptive bilingual children, which is a central aim of this study. Early studies, especially

Similarly, Döpke (1992) described receptive bilinguals as individuals who can understand the heritage/minority language but cannot speak it. In the current literature, Beaudrie (2009) defines receptive bilinguals as individuals, children, or adults who have developed stronger receptive skills than productive skills due to the limited use of their heritage language. More recently, Sherkina-Lieber (2020) wrote that receptive bilinguals possess sufficient comprehension skills to participate in a conversation but insufficient productive skills to speak in the heritage language; “receptive bilinguals often always reply in the dominant language” (p. 413). What can be drawn from these definitions is that receptive bilinguals are a generation of heritage language speakers who produce limited words or phrases in the heritage language. Such limited speech production, if not addressed, often results in heritage language shift or loss (Fishman, 1991; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020).

The definition of receptive bilinguals above aligns with scholarly views that position receptive bilinguals at the lower end of the heritage language proficiency continuum (Montrul, 2016b; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). However, this positioning may not fully capture the abilities of receptive bilinguals, as it measures production rather than comprehension, which can be quite advanced. The heritage language proficiency continuum ranges from full production abilities (native-like) to receptive abilities (Montrul, 2016b; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). Montrul (2016b) argues that the wide variation in the proficiency levels of heritage language speakers is often due to the way the heritage language was acquired. Consequently, some existing literature positions receptive bilinguals as low-proficiency language speakers, where both low-proficiency speakers and receptive bilinguals may avoid speaking the heritage language due to its difficulty or a lack of specific heritage-language skills (Meisel, 2019; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). As Sherkina-Lieber (2020) notes, existing heritage language studies rarely differentiate between receptive bilinguals and other low-proficiency heritage language speakers. In this sense, receptive bilinguals could be considered low-proficiency heritage language speakers, as receptive bilingualism does not imply zero production of the heritage language (Nakamura, 2019).

The positioning of receptive bilinguals on the continuum raises important questions about intervention and support. In the literature, it is generally accepted that receptive abilities precede productive abilities (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986). However, there are no clear guidelines for appropriate methods to cater to the needs of receptive bilinguals, whether at home or in the classroom (Beaudrie, 2009). In the school context, Carreira (2004) proposes that heritage language classrooms be designed explicitly to nurture and develop receptive and productive heritage

language skills. As for the home environment, it is necessary to investigate and understand the causes of receptive bilingualism, a task that is addressed in the next section.

2.3 Causes of receptive bilingualism

In the previous section, I reviewed the literature on receptive bilingualism and receptive bilinguals; in this section, I proceed to review the scholarly research on the causes of receptive bilingualism, showing that to date, the literature identifies two major causal factors of receptive bilingualism—language exposure and the child’s age— while acknowledging that other factors remain to be investigated (Janabi et al., 2020; Köpke, 2019; Meisel, 2019; Thordardottir, 2014; Unsworth, 2016).

Language exposure is an overarching construct encompassing a broad range of concepts and factors, primarily the quantity and quality of language exposure. The quantity of language exposure refers to the amount of language exposure a child receives at home (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020; Armon-Lotem, 2018; Köpke, 2019; Paradis & Grüter, 2014; Thordardottir, 2011; Unsworth, 2016). On the other hand, the quality of language exposure refers to various facets of language input and is often studied along three dimensions: parental interactive inputs, parental linguistic inputs, and conceptual inputs, while acknowledging that there are other dimensions (Anderson et al., 2021; Rowe & Snow, 2020). In addition to language exposure, the child’s age is another critical factor discussed extensively in the literature across three variables: the critical period for language acquisition, the children’s chronological age and the age of onset of bilingualism (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021; Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). The critical period is a timeframe for successful language acquisition and production, generally spanning from birth to approximately 10-12 years

(Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). Chronological age is a measure of an individual's life from birth until the present day (Sewell, 2020), while the age of onset of bilingualism refers to the age at which a child comes in contact and is immersed in the dominant language (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021; Montrul, 2016b). In the subsections that follow, I examine in greater detail the literature on the effects of language exposure and children's age on receptive bilingualism, arguing that other factors through a family language policy lens could yield a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

2.3.1 The quantity of language exposure

To date, many heritage language studies explicitly state that the quantity of language exposure children receive at home significantly shapes their productive language abilities, particularly vocabulary, which is considered crucial for language production (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020; Armon-Lotem, 2018; Köpke, 2019; Paradis & Grüter, 2014; Thordardottir, 2011; Unsworth, 2016). The term *quantity of language exposure* is often used synonymously with *amount of language exposure* in the literature and refers to the amount of language exposure a child receives. To begin with, in the myriads of studies exploring and analysing the amount of language exposure a child receives and its consequences for receptive and productive skills, results have generally indicated a significant relationship between language exposure and heritage-language productive skills. Studies by Altinkamis and Simon (2020), Thordardottir (2011), and Janabi et al. (2020) found that increased exposure to the heritage language positively influenced children's heritage language productive skills. Altinkamis and Simon (2020) found that the amount of language exposure Turkish-Dutch children receive at home influences their vocabulary production.

Specifically, parents who reported speaking mainly to their children in Turkish, or children who spent much time with their Turkish-speaking grandparents, performed better on Turkish productive skills tests than children with less exposure to Turkish. Similarly, Thordardottir (2011) concluded that bilingual French-English children in Canada with balanced language exposure (40-60%) outperformed their peers with lower heritage-language exposure in productive vocabulary tasks. Supporting these findings, Janabi et al. (2020) identified a bidirectional relationship between language exposure and productive skills among Dutch English bilingual children in Australia, emphasising that both languages mutually influence each other's development. While these studies point to a generally positive association between heritage language exposure and productive skills, other research has shown more variable or even contradictory outcomes, particularly once children enter mainstream schooling.

Studies examining heritage language development after children enter mainstream schooling reveal a consistent pattern of decline in heritage language use despite continued exposure. A longitudinal study by Giguere and Hoff (2022) revealed that the children's English abilities quickly outpaced their Spanish abilities upon entering mainstream US schools. Similarly, Janabi et al. (2020) and Verdon et al. (2014) showed that, among Australian children from Arabic, Vietnamese, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and indigenous-speaking backgrounds, as exposure to English increases, their heritage-language productive skills decrease. Janabi et al. (2020) identified a bidirectional relationship. In contrast, Verdon et al. (2014) demonstrated a clear inverse relationship: increased exposure to English was associated with a decrease in heritage language proficiency. By contrast, Farabolini et al. (2021) found no significant correlations between language exposure and receptive-

productive language skills among bilingual children of mixed ethnic backgrounds living in Italy, suggesting that language exposure influences bilingual skills differently across contexts. These mixed results highlight the complexity of drawing generalisable conclusions regarding language exposure and heritage language outcomes, emphasising the need for careful consideration in interpreting how the amount of language exposure affects receptive and productive bilingual skills.

While previous studies have shown the impact of language exposure on heritage language outcomes, it is equally important to evaluate the data collection methods that led to these findings. Altinkamis & Simon (2020), Giguere & Hoff (2022), and Thordardottir (2011) employed standardised proficiency tests and expressive-receptive vocabulary gap tests, often developed for monolingual children. Janabi et al. (2020) used the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals, Fourth Edition Test (CELF4-NL0), primarily developed to detect language disorders and delays; a test often criticised for lacking construct validity (Briggs, 2020), which raises questions about how accurately these tests assess language outcomes. Farabolini et al. (2021) relied on the Non-word Repetition (NWR) test and an Italian version of a picture vocabulary test- tests which are often criticised as a measure of short-term phonological memory as “they assess children’s morphophonological characteristics of non-words without considering that young bilingual children might have limited morphophonological knowledge” (Armon-Lotem, 2018, p. 630). As for determining the amount of language exposure the children receive in the heritage language, parental qualitative discussion and semi-structured interviews (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020; Farabolini et al., 2021; Verdon et al., 2014) or parental questionnaires (Janabi et al., 2020; Thordardottir, 2011; Verdon et al., 2014) were used—methods which could be susceptible to recall

bias. This brief methodological review reveals a critical gap in heritage language research where many studies rely on standardised monolingual assessments and/or parental recall regarding the amount of language exposure a child receives. Relying solely on parents' memories may be prone to bias, which this study aims to address by diversifying data collection methods.

Thus far, the complexity of quantifying heritage language exposure is evident in the disparate findings across studies reviewed above. Studies suggest that children who received 40–60% heritage-language exposure performed better on productive vocabulary tests than those with lower exposure (Meisel, 2019; Thordardottir, 2011). However, achieving such exposure can be challenging for migrant families, as children spend most of their time in mainstream schools. Given these complexities in quantifying heritage language exposure, I proceed in the following section to review the literature on the quality of language exposure and its influence on heritage language outcomes.

2.3.2 The quality of language exposure

Having shown that the quantity of language exposure is important for children's heritage language development, the quality of exposure is another factor that influences heritage language outcomes (De Houwer, 2020; Paradis, 2011; Rowe & Snow, 2020). According to Vygotsky (1978), quality language exposure involves social interaction in which children learn expressive and productive language skills through encounters with others, particularly their parents. In the current literature on quality of language exposure, quality of language exposure is explored along three dimensions: parental interactive inputs, parental linguistic inputs, and parental conceptual inputs, while acknowledging that there are other dimensions (Anderson et al., 2021; Rowe &

Snow, 2020). Rowe et al. (2017) stress that to encourage language production skills, the quality of language exposure must be “Interactionally supportive, linguistically adapted, and conceptually challenging for the child’s age/level” (p. 5). In this subsection, I show that, to date, much emphasis in the bilingual literature has been placed on the quantity of language exposure rather than on the quality of exposure, which could develop children’s heritage-language productive skills. I begin the section by surveying the literature on the quality of language exposure in terms of parental interactive inputs, followed by parental linguistic inputs, and conclude by presenting scholarly literature on parental conceptual inputs.

Parental interactive inputs refer to engaging children in quality interactions such as back-and-forth conversations (Anderson et al., 2021; Golinkoff et al., 2019; Ramirez et al., 2020; Rowe & Snow, 2020). The relationship between back-and-forth conversations and bilingual children’s language production is under-researched (Lanza, 2007); only a handful of studies have investigated this relationship. In the Australian context, Döpke (1992) interviewed bilingual German-English-speaking parents and audio-recorded parent-child heritage-language interactions to provide a close analysis of the quality of parental interactive input. Wang & Obaidul Hamid (2022) found that back-forth conversations between Chinese-Australian parents and children enhanced language development, where parents provided their children with quality language variety in daily interactions, from varying and optimising word choices to engaging children in complex interactive conversations and during the COVID19 lockdown; parents engaged their children in weekly interactive ‘chat time’ to enhance their productive skills and involve them in deeper conversations beyond daily communications. While Döpke found that for children to be productive bilinguals, parental input must be child-centred, utilising diverse discourse structures such as

minimal grasp strategy (where parents show no comprehension of the child's speech), adult repetition, and longer discourse exchanges.

On the other hand, Said and Zhu's (2019) audio-recorded study of mealtime conversations in an Arabic-speaking family in the UK found that parent-child interactions could lead to successful heritage language learning when parents adopted a flexible, encouraging approach—one that accommodated children's changing needs while encouraging them to speak Arabic. Meanwhile, Sahafi's (2015) study on language maintenance in New Zealand among Arabic-English-speaking families found that fathers play an essential role in providing quality interactions with their children; however, limited topics were discussed during parent-child interactions, emphasising the need for a communication-rich Arabic-language environment. Shen & Del Tufo (2022) and Quay (2008) also investigated bilingual conversations during dinner in one academic family with their Chinese-English-Japanese-speaking two-year-old daughter and found that the parents had adopted a one-parent-one-language (OPOL) approach as their explicit family language policy to structure their interactions. Quay compared parental interview reports with actual language use and found a mismatch between the parents' stated language input practices and their actual parent-child conversational interactions. The study revealed that parents frequently code-mixed between the heritage and dominant languages during interactions, which Quay argued limited the child's exposure to sustained heritage language input.

Although the reviewed studies have recognised the robust role of conversations in heritage language production skills, current research is beginning to look beyond back-and-forth conversations to examine parental linguistic input in this context. Parental linguistic inputs include,

but are not restricted to, increasing vocabulary diversity, repetition, longer discourses, and joint attention between parent and child (Rowe & Snow, 2020). Joint attention is defined as the focus of parent and child on the same object or event and includes responses to children's gestures, words, and questions and clarifying children's utterances (Anderson et al., 2021; Golinkoff et al., 2019; Ramirez et al., 2020; Rowe & Snow, 2020).

Several studies have been conducted in Australia focusing on Arabic-English language pairs. Yousef (2022) examined parental vocabulary diversity as a form of linguistic input and found that mothers interact with children in Arabic through the minority-language-at-home approach, reading Arabic stories to increase vocabulary diversity and exposing children to Arabic television. It was unclear, however, whether the stories were read in Modern Standard Arabic or colloquial Arabic (dialect-specific), an important distinction given that Arabic stories are typically written in Modern Standard Arabic, which contains different vocabulary and grammatical structures from the colloquial varieties children hear in daily conversation. Notably, all these studies have relied on self-reported parental feedback rather than observed behaviour. As for television exposure, there is currently insufficient empirical evidence to support claims that television exposure positively influences bilingual children's linguistic development to the same extent as parent-child interactions (Zauche et al., 2016). Therefore, the impact of television exposure on bilingual development, including its potential role in nurturing productive bilingualism and reducing the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, remains inconclusive and requires further research.

In a similar vein, Bahhari (2020) also investigated Arabic language maintenance amongst ten sojourning Saudi families in Australia with nineteen primary-school-aged children and found that

parents exposed their children to various linguistic inputs, such as constant communication with grandparents who exposed children to diverse vocabulary and contexts and used the social media application 'WhatsApp' which enhanced the children's heritage language literacy, communication and productive skills. Likewise, in a doctoral study, Abdelhadi (2016) explored the communities' efforts, particularly parental efforts, to maintain Arabic in Toowoomba, Australia. Abdelhadi (2016) found that among the twenty parents interviewed and observed, the parents employed several strategies to increase children's linguistic input, with face-to-face conversations as the primary interactive method, supplemented by translation, reading stories, repetition, and reading the Qur'an, all of which enhance the children's vocabulary and productive skills.

In the international context of parental linguistic input, Nakamura (2018) focused on repetition as a key interactive input strategy employed by two non-Japanese fathers with two bilingual children aged 4 and 7, who were born in Japan to Japanese mothers. Although the study is limited to a small sample size, findings suggested that repetition helps the children receive quality language exposure where parents repeat their children's utterances in the correct language form to keep the conversation going and involve the children in longer discourses contributing to greater production of the heritage language, typically the weaker language, which has also been supported by Rowe and Snow (2020). Through audio-recorded conversations between parents and children during play, homework, baking, and crafts, Nakamura (2018) found that adult repetition was not used effectively. Instead, the fathers employed a 'move on' strategy, continuing the conversation. The children were unresponsive to the repetition strategy, and Nakamura argues that, for it to be successful, it must be used in the children's early years to establish active bilingualism. Again, the study's small sample size makes generalisation difficult.

As for the conceptual dimension of the quality of language exposure, this aspect refers to topics of conversation that offer children age-appropriate challenges suitable for their developmental level. These include discussing past, present, and future objects/events, examining word meanings, and engaging in more challenging, age-appropriate conversations (Rowe & Snow, 2020). Book reading, particularly picture books, provides one context for such conceptual input, as “good picture books present essential features of an object or event, facilitating the acquisition of the concepts depicted” (Dowdall et al., 2020, p. 383). While most book reading research comes from monolingual studies, the few bilingual studies available (Li, 2014; Nakamura, 2019; Shen & Del Tufo, 2022) suggest that parent-child shared reading can aid in delivering conceptual input through discussions of word meanings, temporal events, and expanded conversations beyond the book content.

Among the few studies on parent-child shared book reading, Nakamura (2019) explored parental strategies in children’s English heritage language development in Japan. Using an ethnographic approach, Nakamura interviewed eight exogamous English-Japanese bilingual families and found that parents used book reading to encourage heritage language development and production by discussing a range of topics, word meanings, and present and future events. Parents reported that “reading long chapter books provided the children with richer English input than in everyday conversation and enhanced their English literacy skills” (Nakamura, 2019, p. 154). Similarly, in an American nationally representative study, Shen & Del Tufo (2022) examined the frequency and benefits of parent-child shared book reading of children aged 2-6 from diverse language backgrounds and various socio-economic classes and found that many bilingual parents, regardless of socioeconomic status, engage in shared book reading to enhance children’s

productive/expressive skills and expose the children to different topics and vocabulary, promoting and building conceptual knowledge (Shen & Del Tufo, 2022). Likewise, Li (2014) conducted a visual methodology study in which all data were collected via video recordings of Chinese-Australian immigrant families to explore parents' support for children's heritage language development. In this study, the researcher asked families to photograph all family activities that support heritage language learning and acquisition, particularly book reading. Results reveal bidirectional conceptual engagement, or collective agency, between parent and child through shared book reading. Through these interactions, parents and children discussed various conversation topics and temporal events, corrected linguistic errors, and engaged in expansive social conversations beyond the book content. Although these studies offer valuable insights into how shared reading supports heritage language development, they are nonetheless limited by small sample sizes and varied methodological approaches, which make direct comparisons challenging.

In this subsection, I have shown that quality language exposure encompasses three dimensions, interactive, linguistic, and conceptual inputs (Rowe & Snow, 2020), that together develop children's heritage language productive skills. While all three dimensions contribute to heritage language development, the research reviewed above suggests that interactive input may be particularly important, as it provides the context for delivering linguistic variety and conceptual complexity through everyday activities such as play and book reading. Book reading, as documented in the literature, is an effective strategy for developing language production skills, yet it is rarely discussed or investigated in research on Arabic as a heritage language. In addition, what we know about the quality of language exposure Arabic children receive at home is primarily based on observational studies or parental reports rather than recorded parent-child interactions;

thus, assessing causal factors of receptive bilingualism is challenging without analysing parent-child interactions, which this study aims to address through longitudinal recordings and direct observations.

2.3.3 Children's chronological age and age of onset of bilingualism

While the quantity and quality of language exposure are undeniably crucial for developing children's heritage language production skills, many researchers argue that children's age is another factor that needs to be considered in heritage language production and outcomes (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021; Meisel, 2019). The children's age is explored in the literature across three variables: the critical period for language acquisition, the children's chronological age and the age of onset of bilingualism (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021; Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). As defined above, the critical period is a timeframe for native-like language acquisition and production (Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). Chronological age is a measure of an individual's life from birth until the present day (Sewell, 2020), while the age of onset of bilingualism refers to the age at which a child comes in contact with and is immersed in the dominant language (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021; Montrul, 2016b). I begin this final subsection on the causes of receptive bilingualism by reviewing the literature on the critical period, followed by an examination of the children's chronological age and the age of onset of bilingualism.

The critical period of language acquisition is a time frame during which native-like language skills can be acquired in a naturalistic, rich language environment (Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). Lenneberg (1967) theorised that the critical period for language acquisition is biologically linked to age and that the onset and end of the critical period for second-language acquisition fall between

the ages of two and early puberty. Since then, the critical period of language acquisition has been the subject of a long-standing debate across various fields, including language acquisition, linguistics, biolinguistics, and neurolinguistics.

However, recent research has revealed important distinctions between critical periods for different types of language acquisition. First, most research has focused on the critical period in second-language acquisition rather than in first- or heritage-language acquisition (Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). Second, current research suggests that the critical period for first/heritage language acquisition spans a much longer timeframe than originally proposed for second language acquisition. While Lenneberg theorised that the critical period for second language acquisition occurs between age two and early puberty, research on first/heritage language acquisition suggests that the critical period begins much earlier, potentially at the fetal stage and continues until early puberty (Friedmann & Rusou, 2015; Meisel, 2013). Third, insufficient language input during this critical period may result in children failing to develop adequate understanding or production skills in their heritage language (Friedmann & Rusou, 2015). Finally, while heritage language acquisition remains possible after this critical period, successful production is not guaranteed and requires considerably more effort (Snow & Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978).

While the critical period hypothesis provides a biological framework for language acquisition, research on heritage language development reveals that children's chronological age shows inconsistent and often contradictory relationships with heritage language outcomes. Studies by Gagarina & Klassert (2018) on Russian as a heritage language in Germany and Thomas et al. (2014) on Welsh as a heritage language in Wales found positive age effects and showed that

children's skills in the heritage language increased and improved with chronological age, and that the older the children, the better their heritage language production skills.

In contrast, other studies have found negative or no age effects. For example, Armon-Lotem et al. (2021) examined 240 Hebrew-English-speaking children aged 60-77 months using the Core language score (CELF-preschool-2) to quantify English language performance. They found that English heritage language skills among these children declined with chronological age, with younger children outperforming their older peers across various age-appropriate linguistic tasks. The researchers attributed this pattern to younger children spending more time at home, thereby increasing their exposure to the heritage language. In comparison, older children receive increased exposure to the dominant language through schooling. Similarly, Makrodimitris and Schulz (2021), in their study of 27 Greek-German bilingual children aged 6 years, using Greek sentence repetition tasks and parental questionnaires, found that the children's chronological age did not affect heritage language development in the assessed tasks. Likewise, Meir & Janssen's (2021) study examined 39 Russian-Dutch and 36 Russian-Hebrew bilingual children aged 4-5 through noun-elicitation tasks and concluded that the age of onset of bilingualism was more important than current chronological age in shaping heritage-language development and outcomes.

In contrast to the mixed findings on chronological age, the age of onset of bilingualism emerges as a more consistent predictor of heritage language outcomes. The children's age of onset of bilingualism has received considerable research attention and refers to the age at which a child comes into contact with and is immersed in the dominant language (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021; Montrul, 2016b). Typically, research on the age of onset of bilingualism suggests that exposure to

the dominant language begins between the ages of 3 and 4, as children enter preschool or daycare. However, some children may start even earlier. The age of onset of bilingualism is also an indicator of the length of exposure to the heritage language and often marks changes in the quantity and quality of language exposure, as well as in the child's learning environment (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021). This is because quantity decreases as children spend more time in dominant language environments, while quality may diminish as heritage language use becomes restricted to the home domain. According to Montrul (2016), as heritage language speakers acquire and become proficient in the dominant language, their heritage language skills gradually decline, and they begin to experience heritage language attrition, where whole or parts of their heritage language become forgotten. Therefore, if exposure to the dominant language is delayed in the early years, children are more likely to retain their heritage language skills (Armon-Lotem et al., 2021; Meir & Janssen, 2021; Montrul, 2016b).

Despite the theoretical importance of age of onset, only a handful of studies have investigated the relationship between the children's age of onset of bilingualism and heritage language production skills, suggesting it plays a more important role in heritage language production than either chronological age or critical period factors. For example, Soto-Corominas et al. (2022) investigated the effect of the age of onset of bilingualism on heritage language skills among newly arrived Arabic-English refugee children aged 4-10 residing in Canada. In a different context, Albirini (2018) investigated the role of the age of onset of English among Arabic-speaking children in the US, while Armon-Lotem et al. (2021) examined the relationship between the development of English as a heritage language and the age of onset of bilingualism among English-Hebrew bilingual children.

The findings from these studies show consistent patterns. Soto-Corominas et al.'s results showed that children performed well on heritage-language tasks due to high-quality heritage-language exposure and delayed exposure to English, and that children who acquired the dominant language close to puberty had more cognitive maturity and were more likely to retain and develop their heritage-language skills. Albirini's study provided additional evidence through a comparative design: the children were divided into three groups: those who were exposed to English before the age of three (Early Exposure), those exposed to English between the ages of 3 and 5 (Late Exposure), and a final group of 12 children who were not exposed to English (No Exposure). The children's results were compared to those of monolingual children living in Jordan (L2 group), where Arabic is the dominant language, to establish what Arabic-speaking children of a specific age group would have acquired in a monolingual setting. Results revealed no differences between the monolingual group in Jordan and the group with no exposure in the US. However, both the Early Exposure and Late Exposure groups showed significantly lower Arabic proficiency than the monolingual and No Exposure groups, with the Early Exposure group showing the greatest decline in heritage language proficiency. Corroborating these findings, Armon-Lotem et al. (2021) found that children exposed to the dominant language later performed better on heritage-language tasks than those exposed to it earlier. While these findings suggest that the age of onset of bilingualism may be a critical factor affecting heritage language production skills, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution, given the limited number of studies investigating this relationship.

Thus far, I have examined the literature on some of the causes of receptive bilingualism and argued that the quantity and quality of language exposure, as well as the child's age, may be

contributory factors at the family level. However, viewing heritage language outcomes solely through linguistic input would place the full responsibility for their children's receptive bilingualism on parents. In reality, the family language policy and the heritage language outcomes do not exist in a vacuum and are also shaped by and coexist within a broader sociocultural context in which the family is embedded (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Romanowski, 2021). The status of the heritage language, the language of education, the dominant language, the social perceptions and attitudes of the dominant society, and economic pressures can all influence parental language choices and children's willingness to speak the heritage language (Bilgory-Farakas & Armon-Lotem, 2025; Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020). Acknowledging these factors, I now shift focus to the critically underexplored factor of agency—a gap this study seeks to address that may be related to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

2.4 Agency in family language policy and receptive bilingualism

Having reviewed the literature on some of the causes of receptive bilingualism, it becomes apparent that other factors within the family may also play an important role in shaping heritage language outcomes. To date, no studies have explicitly examined how agency, whether parental or child agency, relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism—a fertile area for exploration within the field of family language policy that this study seeks to address. In this final section of the literature review chapter, I critically review the literature on agency, arguing that parental and child agency play important roles in heritage language outcomes, particularly in the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

2.4.1 Parental agency and family language policy

Agency may be among the most critical factors determining the success of family language policy and promoting children's heritage language production skills. According to Gyoki (2015), the notion of agency is multifaceted, with various interpretations, applications, and theoretical perspectives. In the field of language studies, Ahearn (2001) was the first to use the term agency, defining it as a "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" through the agency of power and agency of intention (pp. 112-113). Agency of power is an objective force applied to either dominate or resist internal or external influences (VandenBroek, 2010). Meanwhile, the agency of intention is subjective and "centred more on the subjective individual's projects and desire" (Ortner, 2001, as cited in VandenBroek, 2010, p. 9). Thus, agency is associated with specific domains (Schwartz, 2018) and involves power or control over actions (King & Lanza, 2017) to produce specific outcomes based on intentions. These intentions are often linked to the individual's identity and sense of autonomy (Gyogi, 2015).

According to Spolsky (2009), every domain, including the family, has its agents. Agents are social actors (Srhir, 2020) or individuals with the ability "to make sense of the environment, initiate change, and make choices" (Kuczynski, 2002, p. 29). In the family domain, parents are seen as important agents or managers of heritage language acquisition who make conscious choices (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018) about the language children will speak at home (p. 244) and whether to enact a family language policy. Therefore, parents play a significant role in family language policy, particularly as agents who could facilitate or hinder children's heritage language development (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018).

Exactly what parental agency refers to has sparked debates among scholars (Smith-Christmas, 2020). In the context of family language policy, the term ‘parental agency’ remains unstable, with various conceptualisations. For example, Curdt-Christiansen and Wang (2018) define parental agency as “the capacity of parents to make decisions about measures to promote or discourage particular languages based on their understanding and perceived values of the languages” (p. 236), emphasising decision-making capacity but not actual implementation. Wang and Obaidul Hamid (2022) define parental agency as “parents’ capacity to pursue their visions” (p. 207), which introduces the less concrete notion of “visions” without specifying what constitutes language-related choices or actions. Similarly, Srhir (2020) described parental agency as the “mechanism parents employ to shape family language policy in daily conversations” (p. 114), focusing on practical implementation but overlooking the decision-making process. In contrast, Hatoss (2019) expanded the concept to include both “motives and actions,” which, while comprehensive, introduces psychological dimensions that may be difficult to observe or measure. As these varying definitions suggest, there is disagreement about what parental agency encompasses, from decision-making to implementation to motivation; however, none captures all of these dimensions, highlighting the need for a clearer, more comprehensive definition of parental agency, which will be discussed in the theoretical framework chapter.

Given this conceptual variability, I now present the handful of studies that have investigated parental agency in a family language context. Srhir (2020) investigated the role of active parental agency in achieving bilingualism and multilingualism among Spanish-Arabic-speaking families. Using a longitudinal study to increase validity and allow for comparison over time, Srhir argued that parents, particularly mothers, see themselves as having linguistic authority to act as heritage

language teachers. By exercising active agency through negotiation, parents planned their family language policy by making explicit decisions, using various strategies and actions, such as speaking the heritage language at home and enrolling the children in Arabic and other educational activities to encourage and support the heritage language. Such efforts were made to resist pressure to use the dominant language and to encourage children to speak their heritage language.

Likewise, Curdt-Christiansen and Wang (2018) also investigated parental agency; however, unlike previous studies that examine parental agency in Western contexts, they examined parental agency from a non-Western perspective, specifically among Chinese-speaking families living in China. The study provided valuable insights into the role of parents as agents of family language policy. Given that Putonghua is China's lingua franca and English holds a high global status, parents acted as language managers who promoted all three languages, Putonghua, English, and their regional dialect, in and outside the home by applying an overt and planned family language policy. Such an approach to parental agency, which is rarely observed in the literature, is often linked to cultural beliefs, linguistic hierarchy, and strong ambitions for their children's future. These initial studies suggest that parental agency through supportive choices may encourage heritage language development.

More recently, through observations and semi-structured interviews, Nie and Wang (2025) demonstrated how parental agency was evident in parents' deliberate efforts to construct linguistic landscapes that support the maintenance of their heritage language. Despite differing access to resources, parents from four Yi-speaking families in China created linguistic environments through their language use, materials, and routines, which facilitated intergenerational language

transmission. Likewise, Wang and Liddicoat (2025) examined how Chinese families (40 parents) exercised parental agency to support their children's English learning and found that, although parents valued English and employed various strategies, their agency was shaped by macro-level factors (e.g., educational reforms and sociocultural context) and micro-level factors (e.g., socioeconomic status and access to capital). Thus, in these examples, parental agency was about choices that appear to take multiple forms, with varying impacts on heritage language outcomes.

On the other hand, a handful of studies have investigated parental agency in terms of actions and choices that could hinder heritage language production skills and lead to rapid language shift (Armstrong, 2014; Hatoss, 2019; Romanowski, 2021). Agency, in this case, involves power or control over actions and the enforcement of a family language policy. Armstrong (2014), for example, demonstrated that English/Gaelic (Celtic Scottish) parents who exercised agency by enforcing an explicit, conscious, and overt family language policy did not achieve positive heritage language outcomes. In instances where mothers forced their children to watch Gaelic television programs, read and sing in Gaelic, and enrol the children in Gaelic language activity programs outside the home, the children resisted their parents' agency and spoke the dominant language.

In the Australian context, studies have begun to explore parental agency across diverse linguistic communities. Hatoss (2019) investigated parental agency in terms of motives and actions among South Sudanese families from various ethnic groups, while Romanowski (2021) examined the role of parental agency among Polish-English-speaking families, and Wang & Obaidul Hamid (2022) examined parental agency among English-Chinese-speaking families. Wang and Obaidul Hamid found that parental agency was perceived as a power or a defence strategy. While some

parents had a positive attitude towards heritage language maintenance, they often struggled to maintain their heritage language in the face of internal (child agency) and external (the dominant language) factors. On the other hand, Hatoss (2019) and Romanowski (2021) found contradictions between parental beliefs and practices, as well as between parental actions taken to maintain the heritage language. While parents claimed that they planned and implemented an overt family language policy through the agency of power, the results reveal that parents lacked agency and did not encourage or sustain the heritage language once formal schooling began. Parents shifted their agency to the community and the state, indicating that it was the community's and the state's role to help with language maintenance through funding and additional literacy activities. Thus, Hatoss concluded that parental "agency as motive could not be equated with agency as action" (p. 56). Agency, in this case, was inconsistent and unstable, hindering the children's heritage language production skills.

The limited literature reviewed above reveals that parental agency could take different forms, either encouraging children's heritage language production skills, through decisions, negotiation and flexibility in applying a family language policy or hindering heritage language production skills through shifting parental language responsibilities to the community or the nation-state or enforcing a family language policy, often leading to undesired heritage language outcomes where the children cannot speak their heritage language. In the next section, I present the scholarly literature on child agency and its impact on heritage language outcomes.

2.4.2 Child agency and family language policy

As described in the previous section, parents are important social agents who could either support or hinder family language policy; however, they are not the only agents (Wang & Obaidul-Hamid, 2022). Child agency also plays a decisive role in heritage language development, maintenance, and production (Schalley & Eisenclas, 2020). Child agency is a broad concept theorised differently depending on the theorist and the discipline (Morrow, 2002). From a social perspective and in the context of family language policy, child agency is defined as children choosing whether to comply with and participate in the family language policy (Kuczynski, 2002; Smith-Christmas, 2020), as children are also social agents who construct their own heritage language beliefs, feelings and views that influence parents' behaviour and beliefs and the family language policy as a whole (Karpava, 2022). In this subsection, I show how, to date, the literature on child agency has tended to present child agency as a clash-type model of unequal agency, a model of parental control versus children's compliance or resistance, which causes conflict in the home domain and leads to undesired heritage language outcomes.

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the role of child agency in the family language policy context, reflecting a shift in research focus from parents as sole decision-makers to children as active participants, typically framing child agency in terms of compliance or resistance. Compliance involves children negotiating and participating in the family language policy, thereby producing positive heritage language outcomes in which children speak the heritage language. On the other hand, resistance involves children defying, challenging, or resisting parental ideas, requests, commands, and beliefs (Gyogi, 2015; Kuczynski, 2002), thus sometimes causing conflict in the home domain and leading to undesirable heritage language

outcomes where the children refuse or do not speak the heritage language (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Wang & Obaidul-Hamid, 2022).

Among the limited studies that reported positive heritage language outcomes, Gyogi (2015) explored child agency among two Japanese-speaking families with children aged 12 living in the UK, who were mature enough to express their feelings and experiences. Gyogi showed that, at times, the children resisted speaking the heritage language due to a lack of competency in Japanese rather than as an act of defiance against the mother's commands. However, the children chose to speak their heritage language as much as possible to reflect a positive self-image to others and their mothers. Likewise, Said & Zhu (2019) examined how two Arabic-English-speaking children living in the UK exercise agency during conversations with their parents. A turn-by-turn analysis of parental and child agency revealed that the children were aware of the family's language policy and their parents' language choices. As a result, the children were active socialisers, asserting their agency of power and agency of intention by code-mixing between English and Arabic and using certain Arabic adjectives to demonstrate their commitment to family values. Said and Zhu (2019) state that, since the parents were second-generation immigrants and the children were third-generation, both had equivalent proficiency in the heritage language, allowing the children to exercise agency by negotiating their position of power.

In contrast to the limited studies above, the large body of research on child agency suggests that child agency involves children defying, challenging, or resisting parental ideas, requests, commands, and beliefs. Studies across various linguistic and cultural contexts (Degu, 2021; Fogle & King, 2013; Gafaranga, 2010; Revis, 2019; Smith-Christmas, 2016) have shown that children

exercise agency by shaping family language practices, often prioritising the dominant language over the heritage language. A recurring theme in these studies is that children's lack of proficiency in the heritage language leads them to establish monolingual norms by choosing to speak the heritage language selectively in specific interactional situations, such as prayer and with guests, as in the case of Degu's (2021) study, which investigated child agency among Ethiopian and Eritrean-speaking families living in Sweden. Additionally, discrepancies between parental linguistic ideologies/beliefs and actions, as well as parents' limited proficiency in the societal language, overpowered child agency, with children assuming agentive roles as linguistic brokers and even dominant language teachers for their parents. The children interpreted and translated for parents from the dominant to the heritage language and vice versa, thus giving the children linguistic authority over parents to favour the dominant language and shape the family language policy (Gafaranga, 2010; Revis, 2019). In Gafaranga's (2010) study on medium request (interactional practices to speak the dominant language) among the Rwandan community in Belgium, the children exercised and enforced their agency of power through (a) medium requests, conversational strategy, where they demanded that the parents repeat or ask questions in French, the dominant language, (b) children's preference for speaking the dominant language and resisting parental beliefs and preferences of the heritage language (c) children influencing parental choices and the family language policy by persisting on using French as the home language.

In the same vein, Smith-Christmas (2016) investigated the language use of the Gaelic (Celtic Scottish) language among two Gaelic-English bilingual children and their families. Although the study mainly examined family language policy and language shift, child agency was briefly investigated and discussed. Consistent with the literature, results also show that the children

exercised their agency by replying to their parents in English rather than Gaelic and by preferring the dominant language. On the rare occasions when the children spoke Gaelic, their limited heritage-language speech consisted of two-word phrases used to gain attention or make a request.

Likewise, Fogle and King (2013) drew data from three studies (conducted between 2008 and 2013) that investigated child agency and parental language behaviour among different types of families. Consistent with findings from previous studies, children exercised agency in daily conversations through negotiation of language practices, participation (asking wh-questions), and resistance (no response to parental commands or answering with the word ‘nothing’). These findings suggest that child agency in bilingual or multilingual families is not simply about resisting or defying parental requests, but also involves negotiation, participation, and power dynamics within family interactions. However, a common theme in studies of child agency is that children frequently resist and challenge the family’s language policy due to a lack of linguistic competence in the heritage language, which may be attributed to factors beyond the home. As Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) note, child agency is a “blurred factor between internal and external categories, often related to school culture, peer culture, and mainstream culture. These cultures shape children’s agentive role in FLP” (p. 179). Children’s decisions to speak or resist the heritage language are thus influenced not only by parental expectations or a lack of competency in the home language, but also by curricular demands that privilege the dominant language, peer pressure to conform, and the perceived status of the heritage language in broader society. These external factors do not diminish child agency but reveal its complexity, where children navigate multiple, sometimes competing, influences when making language choices.

In the literature reviewed above, child agency in the family language policy context was presented as either compliance or resistance to parental linguistic beliefs and practices. On the one hand, compliance involves negotiation and participation in the family language policy. On the other hand, resistance involves defying, challenging, negotiating, or resisting parental ideas, requests, commands, and beliefs (Gyogi, 2015; Kuczynski, 2002), which can sometimes lead to conflict within the home domain (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Wang & Obaidul-Hamid, 2022). The literature reviewed above indicates that acts of resistance or defiance are often due to a lack of competence in the heritage language. Children's lack of linguistic competence and proficiency in the heritage language can lead them to defy parental compliance regimes, become reluctant to speak the heritage language (Meisel, 2019), and develop monolingual norms, ultimately forcing parents to speak the dominant language (Degu, 2021; Revis, 2019). Therefore, greater focus on and understanding of parental agency, child agency, and receptive bilingualism could yield findings that could support intergenerational transmission of heritage languages, allowing children to speak their heritage language. In the final section of this chapter, I summarise the existing literature's findings, highlighting the main gap this study aims to address.

2.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I critically reviewed the literature on family language policy, receptive bilingualism, and its causes, arguing that although extensive research has been conducted in the field of family language policy, less attention has been paid to exploring the causes of receptive bilingualism through a family language policy lens. The literature to date has acknowledged that the quantity and quality of language exposure, as well as children's age, are critical factors that

may be correlated with the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. However, the family language policy that families apply, shaped by parental and child agency, may be closely associated with the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, a relationship that remains largely unexplored. To address this gap, this thesis examines how a family language policy influences the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among Arabic-English-speaking families in Australia, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of the factors that shape heritage language outcomes. In the next chapter, I present the theoretical framework guiding this study and explain how it addresses the gaps identified in the literature.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the literature on family language policy and argued that, although extensive research has been conducted in the field, there remain gaps in understanding how a family language policy, mediated by agency, affects the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. To fill these gaps, in this chapter, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework guiding this study. Specifically, I explain and draw upon Spolsky's model of language policy as the study's foundational theoretical lens. As Grant & Osanloo (2014) argue, the theoretical framework of any research serves as the foundation on which all knowledge in research is constructed. I begin this chapter by explaining why Spolsky's model of language policy is the most appropriate theoretical framework for this study. In section 3.1, I provide an overview of the three components of Spolsky's model of language policy. In section 3.2, I propose an extension of Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy by: a) positioning agency in the model as a mediating process that shapes, and mediates the translation of language beliefs into practices and management strategies; b) conceptualising agency along a continuum that reflects the degree and nature of engagement in translating beliefs into practices and management strategies and c) adding "heritage language outcome" to the proposed extension to represent the result of beliefs, agency, practices, and language management strategies.

3.1 Spolsky's model of language policy

One of the most commonly used theoretical frameworks for studying the continuance, maintenance, and preservation of intergenerational heritage languages in the family domain is Spolsky's model of language policy (Gounari, 2014; Hollebeke et al., 2022; King et al., 2008; Liao & Huang, 2020; Schwartz & Verschik, 2013; Spolsky, 2004). Developed by Bernard Spolsky (2004), a giant in the field of language policy and planning, Spolsky's model of language policy is categorised into three interrelated yet independent components: the beliefs, practices, and management strategies of a speech community (the family). According to Spolsky, these three components are considered part of language planning and management, or the language policy of any speech community. The benefit of this theoretical framework is that it not only provides a window into the family language policy from the parents' perspective (King et al., 2008) but also sheds light on parent-child interactions and, ultimately, child language development (De Houwer, 1999), making it particularly valuable and useful for understanding receptive bilingualism in heritage language contexts. In the upcoming pages, I unpack the three components of Spolsky's model of language policy and how each component will be used in my study, beginning with family language beliefs.

3.1.1 Family language beliefs

The term language beliefs is often used interchangeably and synonymously in the literature with language ideologies. Language beliefs or language ideologies refer to the family's "beliefs and attitudes about language and language use" (Spolsky, 2004, p. 17) or what individuals/families think or perceive a particular language (Bui et al., 2022; Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; King

& Fogle, 2017). For the purpose of this study, I define language belief more broadly to encompass both cognitive and affective dimensions, referring to what individuals or families think and feel about a particular language, thereby supporting clarity in data collection and analysis.

Within the family domain, both adults' and children's language beliefs not only affect parent-child interactions but ultimately determine the success of the family language policy (De Houwer, 1999). On the one hand, parental language beliefs are seen as the driving forces and motivations for applying a language policy. Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) explicitly state that beliefs and goals are "driving forces for caregivers to provide language and cultural environments as well as facilities, accessible to family members, for language socialisation and maintenance" (p. 176). Similarly, Hollebeke et al. (2020) and Spolsky (2017) position beliefs as central to language policy decisions. On the other hand, children's language beliefs are seen as equally important, as they influence the children's willingness to engage with and participate in the family language policy (Bui et al., 2022). In what follows, I provide an overview of the significance of parental and children's language beliefs, showing how these beliefs are influential factors in applying a family language policy that could reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Parental beliefs about language and language use are part of parents' "general belief and value systems regarding children's overall development" (De Houwer, 1999, p. 81). Parental language beliefs tend to be global in nature and are often shaped by overarching societal norms and cultural expectations, which reflect families' general perspectives "on society or philosophy of life" (Baker, 1992, as cited in Nakamura, 2016, p. 309). As Spolsky (2004) argues, language beliefs are "the explicit beliefs about language and language use" (p. 5), referring to social conventions that

influence a speech community's linguistic choices and practices (Spolsky, 2004). However, Spolsky has been criticised for this definition, where Wilson (2020) argues for the need "to expand the definition and include the implicit, unplanned language beliefs that may shape parental decisions" about the heritage language and its use (pp. 4-5).

Although Spolsky's model of language policy does not explicitly describe types of parental beliefs, a considerable number of studies have employed Spolsky's theoretical framework to investigate types of parental beliefs. Three common types of parental ideologies/beliefs emerged from the literature that could impact not only the linguistic practices in the home domain but also the success of the family language policy (De Houwer, 1999).

The first type involves beliefs about the language (s) the family should use, how to use them, and the purpose of using them (De Houwer, 1999; King et al., 2008). A recent study by Lising (2022) of Filipino-English-speaking families in Australia revealed that although families valued their heritage language, they believed they should mainly speak English at home with their children. This was due to institutional pressures and the high status of English; parents considered the latter to be more important for their children's future and success. As a result, the children did not speak the heritage language. These parental beliefs about which language to use at home and for what purpose demonstrate the concept of "impact belief" introduced by De Houwer (1999).

De Houwer (1999) defined "impact belief" as deliberate decisions not to speak the heritage language so children could reach specific educational goals (p. 83). This concept, in a sense, resembles the types of parental agency discussed in the previous chapter, where parents exercise power or control over their children's linguistic development. Impact belief could either be strong,

where the parents enforce the children to use a particular linguistic form, or weak, where parents have no control over their children's language development and shift their linguistic responsibility to others and the environment (De Houwer, 1999). The impact of parental beliefs on language use and transmission is further supported by Wilson's (2020) findings, which show that although immigrant parents valued their heritage language, speaking the host language was seen as a requirement for both economic and social success for the children and their parents. Thus, parental beliefs about which language to use and for what purpose align with Spolsky's (2008) perception that "major changes in language practices and beliefs are the results of management activities concerning education" (As cited in McCarty & May 2017, p. x).

The second type of parental beliefs concerns parents' perceptions and beliefs about which linguistic varieties to use, such as dialects, slang, or a formal heritage language (King et al., 2008). Rubino (2022), for instance, studied the challenges Italian dialect speakers face in Australia through a family language policy lens. Using a diachronic approach to demonstrate how ideologies evolve, Rubino compared language beliefs identified in studies conducted with Italian immigrants between 1978 and 2016. Those studies included memoirs, online surveys, and excerpts from interviews with first-, second-, and third-generation Italians, collected at different times by various researchers. Results reveal that first-generation parents believed their children should speak standard Italian rather than dialect, despite many parents speaking dialects rather than standard Italian themselves, revealing tensions between linguistic varieties and beliefs about which variety to transmit. In contrast, second-generation parents believed that some form of Italian (whether standard or dialectal) was necessary for intergenerational communication, as their children's grandparents could not speak English. These findings demonstrate that parental beliefs about

which linguistic varieties to use are not static and can change over time, which might influence heritage language outcomes.

The third type of parental beliefs involves parental beliefs regarding heritage language learning and bilingualism in general. In Lising's (2022) study, although parents had positive beliefs and were highly motivated to maintain their heritage language, they believed that learning more than one language has detrimental effects on children, such as linguistic confusion. As a result, through parental agency (the capacity to act and make choices), the parents abandoned their heritage language. On the other hand, Tran et al.'s (2021) Australian study on the maintenance of Vietnamese as a heritage language showed that parents believed heritage language maintenance and children's ability to speak it provide better employment opportunities and strengthen relationships with extended families; as a result, the parents supported the children's heritage language development. De Houwer (1999) states that a minimal condition for supporting children's productive or active bilingualism is that parents have positive beliefs towards the heritage language, exercise active agency through negotiation and understand their roles as heritage language supporters and agents.

What can be inferred from the studies presented above is that although parental language beliefs appear to form the foundation for implementing a family language policy, children's heritage language beliefs are equally important. To date, only a handful of studies have investigated children's beliefs about their heritage language. Crump (2014) investigated the perspectives of Japanese Canadian children aged 4-6 on multilingualism and found that the children held positive beliefs about their heritage language by expressing pride in their

bilingualism, particularly when comparing themselves to monolingual relatives and associating speaking the heritage language with their identities. Similarly, Almér (2017) investigated children's beliefs about language and bilingualism among Swedish children in Finland, who believed that knowing more than one language enables better communication with others.

In contrast to these positive beliefs, some children develop negative beliefs about their heritage language. Wilson (2020) investigated six case studies among French-speaking children in England aged 6-16 and found that while some children showed positive beliefs towards speaking their heritage language for communicating with extended family, many developed language anxiety due to rigorous parental language rules, frustration from attending weekend community language schools, fears of making errors and not being understood, which led the children to prefer speaking English due to their awareness of their limited heritage language skills. In line with Wilson's study, Bui et al.'s (2022) research with two Vietnamese Australian families found that the children also held negative beliefs towards their heritage language and displayed strong pro-monolingual preferences for English, which created tension in the family due to the mismatch between the mother's and the children's language beliefs.

Overall, as shown above, parental and children's language beliefs, both cognitive and affective, appear to form the foundation of a family language policy and constitute one component of Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy, which guides this study. Parental beliefs include and are not restricted to family members' beliefs about the language/s the family should use, how to use them and the purpose of using them, beliefs about language varieties (using dialect or formal language) and parental beliefs about language learning and bilingualism in general. These beliefs

can differ from one family member to another and from one family to another, depending on each family member's perspective of the heritage language (Hirsch & Lee, 2018). While less extensively studied, children's heritage language beliefs tend to be positive and negative. Children tend to develop positive beliefs about their heritage language in families where parents consistently implement supportive language practices and management strategies, maintain a pro-bilingual ideology, and create emotionally positive associations with the heritage language (Curdt-Christiansen et al., 2023; Hollebeke et al., 2020). In such families, children often view bilingualism as a source of pride and identity. In contrast, negative beliefs and heritage language anxiety tend to emerge in families where there is a mismatch between parental expectations and children's perceived proficiency, where overly rigid or coercive management strategies are employed, or where children experience criticism that induces shame (Sevinç & Backus, 2017). Sevinç's (2020) research with Turkish-Dutch children in the Netherlands demonstrates that negative emotions/beliefs characterised by anxiety, insecurity, fear of making errors, shame, and avoidance can develop when children perceive their proficiency as inadequate, face negative evaluations from heritage language speakers, or when monolingual ideologies in the broader society devalue the heritage language. These beliefs often led children to prefer the majority language, creating tensions within families. Therefore, from both parental and children's perspectives, language beliefs play a crucial role in shaping the family language policy and perhaps the heritage language outcome. I now proceed to the next subsection to explore Spolsky's second component of the language policy model, family language practices.

3.1.2 Family language practices

Family language practices are often motivated by and diverge from the language beliefs of family members (Hollebeke, 2020; Piller & Gerber, 2018; Tseng, 2020). Spolsky (2004) initially defined language practices of a speech community as “the sum of the sound, word and grammatical choices that an individual speaker makes”, “the conventional differences between levels of formality of speech, appropriate in different situations” (p. 9) and the rules the speech community agrees on for speech in a specific context (Spolsky, 2004). Today, the term ‘language practices’ embodies a multitude of concepts that are variably defined, often making no clear distinctions between language practices and language management strategies (Okita, 2002). For example, Schwartz (2020) states that language practices are “actual routines of languages used at home in the interaction between family members” (p. 206), referring to the language choices and preferences made by family members, particularly adults. Lomeu-Gomes and Lanza (2020), on the other hand, assert that language practices range from explicit and overt to implicit and covert practices, while Spolsky (2021, p. 9) argues that language practices are “the choices of language variety made by speakers in a speech community”. The breadth of these definitions, spanning from unconscious routines to deliberately planned activities, demonstrates how the same language activities could be classified as either practices or management strategies, reflecting definitional ambiguity in the field.

Throughout this thesis, language practices refer to the habitual, routine language behaviours that occur naturally during daily interactions (Spolsky, 2004). This definition aligns with Schwartz’s (2020) categorisation of language practices, where four major types of language practices in the family have been identified in the literature: “goal-directed code-mixing (adhering

to one language at home while code-mixing in certain contexts), flexible language use (dominant and heritage language are used at home), ritual language use (establishing family cultural traditions and rituals associated with the heritage language through religious activities), and reciprocal bidirectional learning (parents teach the children the heritage language and children teach the parents the dominant language)” (pp. 206-211). These four categories illustrate the range of family language practices that may occur during daily family interactions. Accordingly, family language practices can either support or hinder children’s heritage language development (Smith-Christmas, 2016).

Numerous studies in the literature have provided valuable insights into family language practices and often suggest that while some parents believe that maintaining their heritage language and transmitting it to their children is important for the children’s cognitive advantage, maintaining heritage identity and close cultural and ancestral connections (Caldas, 2012), parental practices do not often align with their language beliefs. As seen in some studies in the literature review chapter, substantial evidence shows a mismatch between family language beliefs and practices; that is, what families think about their language does not often align with their language practices (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; Nakamura, 2016). For example, to understand how language beliefs affect language practices at home, Curdt-Christiansen (2016) interviewed and observed language practices in three families from different ethnic backgrounds in Singapore. While many parents believed in and valued their heritage languages, their language practices did not align with their beliefs. In some of the families, for instance, family members perceived their heritage language as a language that marks their culture and roots; however, they spoke English to the children as they believed English is more valuable as it offers their children more employment

stability and since English is used as the medium of instruction at school, the families felt that they are obliged to support it, thus, revealing a contradiction between beliefs, practices and expectations. In a parallel study, Nakamura (2016) examined parental heritage-language practices among Thai mothers living in Japan. Although the mothers in this study valued their heritage language, economic and sociocultural factors influenced their language practices, leading them to speak Japanese and some English with their children. Mothers also believed that exposure to the heritage language delayed Japanese language development, which they considered critical for academic success. These studies demonstrate that positive parental heritage language beliefs alone may not always translate into supportive language practices, reinforcing the role of agency in bridging this gap.

Among family language practices, conversational code-mixing was the most frequently observed among bilingual children, as noted in Chapter Two (Gafaranga, 2007; Gyoki, 2015; Ribot & Hoff, 2014; Said & Zhu, 2019). Conversational code-mixing is a natural and normal phase of bilingual language development and is universal among bilingual children (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2007; Grosjean, 1982; King, 2006). According to Auer (1984), during code-mixing, an individual's choice of one language over another is often associated with their competence in that particular language (as cited in Smith-Christmas, 2020, p. 225). While the term *translanguaging* is increasingly used in the literature to describe broader processes of knowledge construction, where speakers create and use discursive practices beyond conventional language boundaries (Wei & Lin, 2014, 2019, as cited in Lightfoot, 2019), in this study, I use the term *code-mixing* which is sometimes used interchangeably with code-switching (Jaraisy & Stamp, 2024), to refer to instances of language alternation between two or more languages in a conversation, whether intra-

sentential (within a sentence) or inter-sentential (between sentences) (Gumperz, 1977; Nishimura, 2014; Rahmat et al., 2019).

To sum up, in this brief subsection, I provided an overview of Spolsky's second component of the language policy model, family language practices, and argued that these are habitual, natural, daily heritage-language routines used by families in interactions. The literature above revealed that while parents may hold positive beliefs about maintaining their heritage language, their actual language practices often diverge from these beliefs due to various sociocultural and economic factors. This divergence is particularly noticeable in contexts where the dominant language is seen as providing educational and economic advantages. In contrast, code-mixing was the most reported language practice among bilingual children, as thoroughly discussed in the literature review chapter. In the following section, I discuss Spolsky's third component of the language policy model, language management strategies.

3.1.3 Language management strategies

According to Hollebeke et al. (2020), distinguishing between language practices and management strategies can be challenging. Spolsky (2004) defined language management strategies as deliberate, explicit efforts applied by members of a speech community, involving the "formulation and proclamation of an explicit plan or policy, not necessarily written in a formal document" (p. 23). Spolsky adds that members of the speech community believe that they can support their language practices by encouraging or forcing various strategies, interventions, management or planning to achieve desired outcomes. Therefore, I define language management strategies as deliberate, planned efforts that parents apply to maintain and develop children's

heritage language, such as exposing children to heritage-language media at home or arranging trips to heritage-language-speaking countries. Unlike the daily language practices, which are habitual, management strategies are deliberate. This distinction is important as scholars often note that “language policy has many terminological problems” (Spolsky, 2021, p. 202) and acknowledge “the blurred distinction between the concepts of language practices and language management” (Curdt-Christiansen & Lanza, 2018, p. 126).

Out of Spolsky’s three components of the language policy model, parental language management strategies have received the most critical attention (Wilson, 2019). To date, various language management strategies families use in the home domain have been identified in the literature, while acknowledging that there are others. These strategies include the one-person-one-language (OPOL) strategy, minority-language-at-home, diverse discourse strategies (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; Lanza, 2007), the design of a home language environment, and maximal engagement with the minority language (Schwartz, 2020; Yamamoto, 2001).

The one-parent-one-language (OPOL) strategy is the most commonly employed approach by parents to encourage heritage language production (Caldas, 2012). This strategy involves each parent speaking their heritage language to the child exclusively and consistently (Wilson, 2021). For instance, if parents speak different heritage languages, one parent will consistently speak Language A to the child. In contrast, the other parent consistently speaks Language B, ensuring the child receives consistent input in both languages. An advantage of OPOL is that it allows the child to differentiate between languages and recognise which language to use and with whom (Schwartz, 2020). Despite the popularity of OPOL as a heritage language management strategy, it

has been argued in the literature that OPOL is unrealistic and insufficient to attain successful heritage language transmission, as it is a long-term strategy that parents find difficult to adhere to consistently, and parents often code-switch between the heritage and dominant language (De Houwer, 2007; Yamamoto, 2001). In addition, OPOL has only proved successful among young children who had little to no exposure to the dominant language (Wilson, 2021). In a study by Okita (2002) on the maintenance of Japanese as a heritage language, OPOL proved to be emotionally stressful and demanding. Mothers felt that OPOL excluded non-Japanese speaking partners from child-rearing, thus placing pressure on mothers to cater for their children's heritage language needs alone (Okita, 2002). Schwartz (2020) argues that families need to shift away from traditional strategies such as OPOL, incorporating "a more flexible and pragmatic use of language at home" whilst taking into account the role of child agency and behaviour in language management strategies (p. 214).

Another common language management strategy families use is using a minority language at home. The minority-language-at-home strategy is when parents speak only the heritage language at home, according to Meisel (2019). By doing so, parents create a monolingual environment in which their children receive maximised exposure to the heritage language. Yousef (2022) investigated the family language strategies used by families from Arabic-speaking backgrounds in Australia and found that while the minority language at home maximised children's opportunity to practise their heritage language. According to King et al. (2008), the minority-language-at-home strategy requires consistency, a key factor in achieving the desired heritage-language outcome.

Diverse discourse strategies have been cited in the literature as language management strategies that parents use to encourage heritage language production skills. These include the minimal grasp strategy, considered one of the most effective heritage language management strategies. In this approach, parents indicate a “lack of comprehension of the children’s language choice” (Schwartz, 2020, p. 198) and ask the child to repeat the utterance in the heritage language. Lanza (1992) argued that minimal grasp is an effective strategy for developing a child’s productive skills in the heritage language. It encourages children to use their cognitive skills to formulate sentences and phrases in the heritage language with parental support through repetition and joint attention. First, repetition allows children to receive quality language exposure, as parents restate their children’s utterances in the correct language form to maintain the conversation and engage them in longer discourses, ultimately increasing their use of the heritage language, typically the weaker language (Rowe & Snow, 2020; Nakamura, 2018). Second, joint attention, which involves focusing on a single object and responding to children’s gestures, words, and questions while clarifying their utterances. This can be facilitated through book reading, which has been described as a powerful vehicle for language learning (Murray, 2014). Finally, the move-on strategy is another discourse strategy that parents use to create a harmonious environment, motivating children to continue practising their heritage language and building their productive skills (Doyle, 2013). In this strategy, parents demonstrate understanding and acceptance of their children’s language choices, allowing the conversation to flow naturally while avoiding implicit or explicit disruptions that might discourage children from using the heritage language (Schwartz, 2020).

The previous strategies suggest a need to move from traditionally advocated language management strategies to modern, more flexible ones (Wilson, 2021). *Design of home language environment* is a new and modern language management strategy that aims to create a home language environment that provides quality language input through practices such as joyful reading, the use of modern electronic devices, and educational television programs (Schwartz, 2020). Incorporating such a strategy in the family language environment raises children's interest in the heritage language, develops meta-linguistic awareness, provides quality parent-child interactions and time spent together, which has an inevitable impact on the child's emotional development as well as on cognitive and linguistic development (De la Piedra, 2011, as cited in Schwartz, 2020, p. 205). Another modern strategy, proposed by Yamamoto (2001), is the maximal engagement with the minority language, in which parents provide increased input in the heritage language and actively engage children in its use (De Houwer, 2007; Yamamoto, 2001). Thus, "the more engagement the child has with the minority language, the greater her or his likelihood of using it" (Yamamoto, 2001, as cited in Schwartz, 2020, p. 205).

While extensive research has been conducted on parental language management strategies in the family language policy context, there is a notable absence of studies on the strategies children use to maintain and develop their heritage language. This is because, according to Nelson et al. (1985), children typically imitate or follow the strategies set by their parents. However, as children mature and progress through developmental stages, their language strategies can evolve (Nelson et al., 1985).

In conclusion, Spolsky's model of language policy serves as a robust framework for understanding how bilingual families apply and implement a family language policy. Language beliefs form the foundation of a family language policy, influencing how parents and children view which language should be used at home, how, and for what purposes. Language practices refer to the habitual, routine language behaviours that occur naturally during daily interactions. Language management strategies, on the other hand, represent planned and deliberate efforts parents apply to maintain and develop their children's heritage language. Although Spolsky's model captures *what* families do to maintain their heritage languages through language practices and management strategies, it does not account for *how* and *why* families—both adults and children—act, or fail to act, on their positive beliefs to achieve the desired heritage-language outcome. In the following section, I propose that, although agency is not formally conceptualised in Spolsky's model, it could be added to the model as a mediating process that shapes, and mediates the translation of language beliefs into supportive language practices and management strategies.

3.2 Conceptualising agency in family language policy

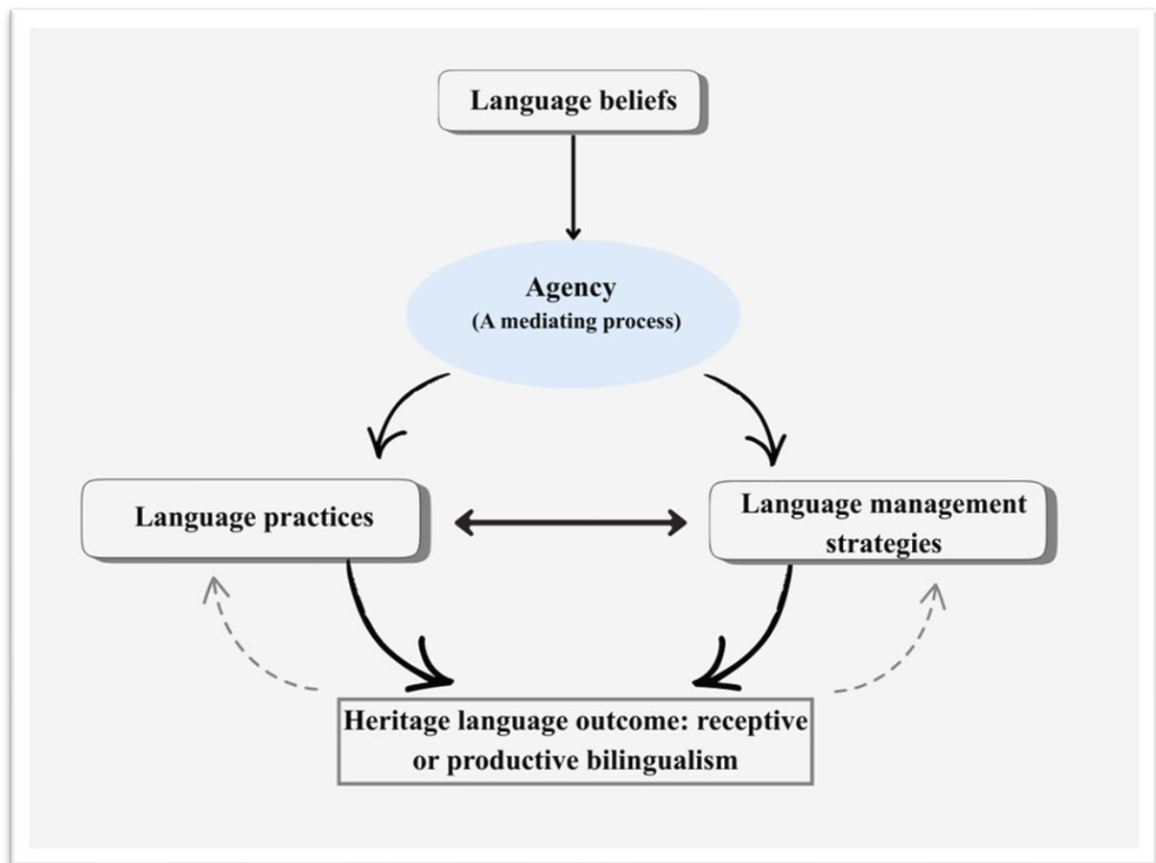
The definition of agency in family language policy is “layered, complex and at times contradictory” (Fogle, 2012, p. 41) and has concentrated substantially on Ahearn's (2001) definition that agency involves the socioculturally mediated capacity to act. Agency also involves making choices (Curd-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Kuczynski, 2002). These choices are often contextually situated: they are not simply imposed by adults nor straightforwardly accepted or rejected by children, but are continuously shaped through family interactions, individual experiences, social perceptions, and the broader sociocultural context, including attitudes of the

dominant society, reflecting a blend of both internal and external influences (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020). While Ahearn's definition captures agency as socioculturally mediated, Giddens' (1984) structuration theory theorises how sociocultural factors operate to constrain or enable the capacity to act. Giddens defines agency "not as the intentions people have but as their capability of doing those things in the first place" (p. 40), and introduces the concept of structure, which refers to the rules, resources, and social systems that both enable and constrain the capacity to act. Therefore, in conceptualising agency in family language policy, I do not intend to ignore foundational definitions, but to synthesise and build upon insights from linguistic anthropology (Ahearn, 2001), developmental psychology (Kuczynski, 2002), and sociology (Giddens, 1984) to offer a more comprehensive account of how agency operates within family language policy. In this thesis, I use the term agency to refer to family members' capacity to act and make choices that shape heritage language outcomes, while recognising that such choices are both enabled and constrained by structural forces (school, institutional policy, media, societal attitudes). Within this conceptualisation, parental and child agency operate differently. Parents exercise agency by making choices about the enactment or non-enactment of their family language policy, whereas children exercise agency by choosing whether to comply with, negotiate, or reject it (Kuczynski, 2002; Smith-Christmas, 2020) because "children are still acquiring the sociocultural knowledge (including language) necessary for their capacity to act" (Smith-Christmas, 2020, p. 218) (see Table 1 for conceptualisation of terms). Here, I propose to use the term enactment of a family language policy rather than implementation, with reference to Ball, Maguire, and Braun's (2012) theory of policy enactment, which argues that policies are not simply implemented, where agents take instructions from another person or entity, but enacted by agents based on their beliefs,

contexts, resources, and circumstances, thereby creating a linguistic environment that fits their reality. While I use *enactment* to foreground agency, I treat the terms *enactment* and *implementation* as interchangeable throughout this thesis, in line with their usage across FLP scholarship.

3.2.1 Agency as a mediating process between beliefs, practices and strategies

Spolsky's model of language policy makes valuable contributions to understanding the components of a family language policy and although his recent work *Rethinking Language Policy* recognises the individual level and the role of self-management, defined as "the conscious effort to modify or add to one's linguistic repertoire" (Spolsky, 2021, p. 11), as important factors in language policy implementation, his model falls short in explaining how its components translate into actual heritage language outcomes and his latest work does not operationalise agency within the family language policy context, nor does it differentiate between types of agency, or examine how parental and child agency interact to shape heritage language outcomes. To address these gap, I propose a) extending Spolsky's model by positioning agency a mediating process that shapes the relationship between language beliefs and their translation into practices and management strategies (see Figure 1), b) conceptualising agency as active, constrained or deferred, and c) heritage language outcome to be added to the proposed conceptual framework to represent the result of beliefs, agency, practices, and management strategies. I hypothesise that active agency mediates alignment among family language policy components, whereas constrained or deferred agency contributes to misalignment, thereby influencing the heritage language outcome.

Figure 1. *Extending Spolsky's model of language policy: Agency as a mediating process*

Note. Language beliefs form the foundation of family language policy. Agency functions as a mediating process that translates beliefs into language practices and management strategies. The bidirectional arrows between beliefs and agency, and between practices and strategies, reflect their interrelated nature. Both practices and strategies contribute to the heritage language outcome, either receptive or productive bilingualism. Dashed arrows indicate feedback loops through which outcomes may reshape future practices and strategies.

3.2.2 Active, constrained and deferred agency continuum

Building on the incorporation of agency into Spolsky's model of language policy, in this section, I further propose that agency, whether parental or child agency, be conceptualised as active, constrained or deferred, to better capture agency's role in the family language policy families apply and the heritage language outcome. The need for this conceptualisation arises from the review of the scholarly literature, in which agency is often discussed broadly. For example, while Ahearn's (2001) definition and Giddens's (1984) framework provide foundational understandings of agency, neither categorises the forms agency may take. I propose expanding upon these foundational definitions and conceptualising agency along a continuum that reflects the degree and nature of engagement in the family language policy. At one end of this continuum lies active agency, characterised by family members' active engagement in the family language policy. At the other end lies deferred agency, where engagement is either absent or limited. Between these poles lies constrained agency (see Figure 2), in which family members' capacity to act is shaped or limited by structural forces or contextual circumstances. This conceptualisation is necessary to distinguish agency from Spolsky's third component of the language policy model *management strategies*; whereas management refers to explicit, planned interventions, agency encompasses the broader capacity to act, which may be exercised consciously or unconsciously, and is conditioned by structural forces. Thus, agency, in this thesis, functions as a mediating process that bridges beliefs, practices, and strategies, rather than as a fourth component of Spolsky's model of language policy.

To begin with, I conceptualise *active parental agency* as parents' intentional engagement in the family language policy, where parents make choices and decisions to encourage and support the children to speak their heritage language. These choices and decisions mediate the translation of parental language beliefs into supportive practices and strategies, in line with the literature discussed in Chapter Two. For example, Said's (2021) study found that English-Arabic-speaking parents who were aware of their heritage language beliefs took necessary measures and exercised active agency to encourage their children's heritage language development. Similarly, Srhir's (2020) study of Spanish-Arabic-speaking families found that mothers acted on their beliefs and exercised their agency by planning their family language policy, making explicit decisions and choices to consistently speak the heritage language at home, enrolling their children in structured language programs, and engaging in cultural and educational activities that reinforced the language.

Active child agency is another term that requires careful conceptualisation and definition. Based on the literature presented in Chapter Two, child agency can manifest, on the one hand, as compliance with and participation in the family language policy (Fogle, 2012; Smith-Christmas, 2020), or, on the other hand, as defiance, resistance, and rejection of the family language policy (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Gyogi, 2015; Kuczynski, 2002; Wang & Obaidul-Hamid, 2022). However, not all family language policies are implemented to preserve the heritage language; some parents prioritise the majority language for pragmatic or ideological reasons (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; Lising, 2022). In such cases, active child agency would manifest as alignment with the parents' majority-language-oriented policy. In this study, where all parents

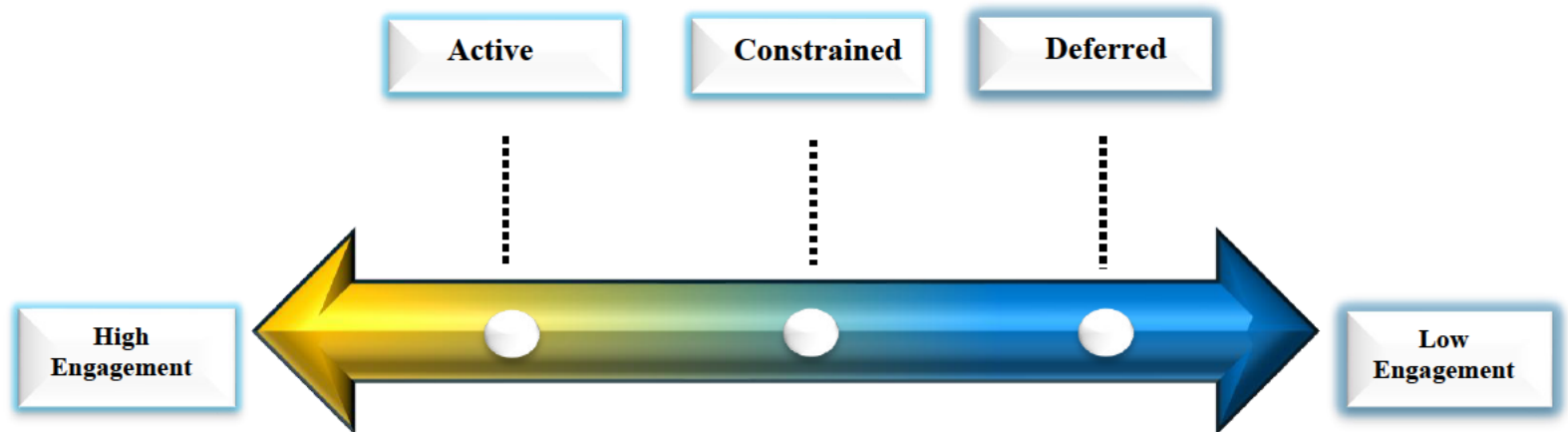
desired to preserve their heritage language, I conceptualise *active child agency* as children choosing to comply, negotiate, or participate in the family language policy, which can take many forms such as showing commitment to family values (Said & Zhu, 2019), speaking the heritage language to reflect a positive self-image (Gyogi, 2015), and using heritage language selectively in specific contexts (Degu, 2021).

While active agency may create alignment among language beliefs, practices, and management strategies, family members do not, and cannot, always exercise active agency. As seen in the previous chapter, some parents exercised their agency through inconsistent language practices and strategies, or by enforcing a family language policy, or shifting language maintenance responsibility to the community or the nation-state (Armstrong, 2014; Hatoss, 2019; Romanowski, 2021). I define these forms of choice as constrained parental agency, in which structural constraints or contextual circumstances limit parental choices and decisions to encourage and support children in speaking their heritage language. I hypothesise that constrained parental agency creates misalignment between beliefs, practices and language management strategies, leading to undesired heritage language outcomes. Similarly, I define constrained child agency as children choosing to reject, defy or resist the family language policy. However, I hypothesise that the children exercise constrained agency due to their limited productive skills in the heritage language, along with other factors.

Deferred agency refers to intentional non-intervention, where family members consciously choose not to engage with family language policy. It is important to clarify that constrained and deferred agency do not imply moral judgment nor denote parental failure in maintaining their heritage language, but rather reflect the structural realities within which families operate (Giddens,

1984). By distinguishing between active, constrained, and deferred agency (see Table 1), this study provides an analytical tool for examining how family language policy unfolds and why some families succeed in maintaining their heritage language while others struggle despite holding positive beliefs about their heritage language. It is important to note that while these categories are presented as distinct points on the proposed agency continuum, agency is inherently unstable; family members may move between these positions depending on context, situation, or interlocutor. The detailed methodological procedures for identifying and coding agency are outlined in Chapter Four, where I show how drawing on multiple data sources, semi-structured interviews, observations of family interactions, and audio recordings of parent-child interactions, helped identify instances of agency through participants' accounts of decision-making, moments of negotiation or resistance, and explanations for why practices and strategies diverge from stated beliefs.

Figure 2. *Proposed agency continuum*



3.2.3 Receptive bilingualism as a heritage language outcome

Building on the proposed incorporation of agency in Spolsky's model of language policy and the classification of agency as active, constrained or deferred, in this section, I explore how receptive bilingualism may emerge from the misalignment between language beliefs, practices, and management strategies, particularly when parents or children exercise constrained or deferred agency.

While Spolsky's (2004) original model emphasises the relationship between beliefs, practices, and management strategies, it does not explicitly account for the outcomes these components produce, whether productive bilingualism, receptive bilingualism or even monolingualism. As King (2016) notes, a central question in family language policy research is "what beliefs, practices, and conditions lead to what child language outcomes" (p. 728). Similarly, Hollebeke et al. (2020) argue that connecting family language policy components to measurable outcomes—such as proficiency, language maintenance, or bilingualism type—is essential for understanding the impact of family language policy at the individual and family level. Adding *heritage language outcome* to the proposed extension thus represents the result of beliefs, agency, practices, and management strategies, a formal contribution of this thesis to family language policy. This conceptualisation moves beyond the existing literature, which primarily attributes receptive bilingualism to insufficient language exposure, the child's age, or other external factors, offering a deeper understanding of how language outcomes are shaped within the family domain. Rather than viewing receptive bilingualism as a negative heritage language outcome, this study positions it as the product of multiple internal and external factors.

3.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I outlined and discussed the theoretical framework guiding this study, drawing on Spolsky's model of language policy. By adopting Spolsky's model of language policy, several key terms and key findings were established. First, I acknowledged that distinguishing between language practices, management strategies, and agency can be challenging. To address this, language practices are defined as habitual, language management strategies are deliberate and planned, and agency is the mediating process that mediates the translation of beliefs into practices and strategies (see Table 1). Second, I proposed extending the model by incorporating agency as a mediating process that shapes and help translate beliefs into practices and strategies. Third, I proposed classifying agency as active, constrained, and deferred. Finally, I examined how receptive bilingualism may emerge as an outcome of constrained or deferred agency, positioning it not as a negative outcome but as the product of multiple interacting factors: beliefs, practices, management strategies, and agency. In the following chapter, I discuss the rationale for selecting the study's methodological approaches and how these align with the theoretical framework presented here.

Table 1. *Conceptualisation of key terms*

Term	Definition
Language beliefs	What individuals or families think and feel about a particular language (cognitive and affective dimensions) (Spolsky, 2004; Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020).
Language practices	The habitual, routine language behaviours that occur naturally during daily interactions (Spolsky, 2004; Schwartz, 2020). For example, a parent habitually speaking Arabic during mealtimes reflects a language practice.
Language management strategies	Deliberate, planned efforts that parents apply to maintain and develop children's heritage language (Spolsky, 2004), such as exposing children to heritage-language media at home or arranging trips to heritage-language-speaking countries.

Parental agency	Family members' capacity to act and make choices that shape heritage language outcomes, while recognising that such choices are both enabled and constrained by structural forces (Ahearn, 2001; Giddens, 1984; Kuczynski, 2002).
Active parental agency	Intentional engagement, where parents make choices and decisions to encourage and support the children to speak their heritage language.
Constrained parental agency	Constrained engagement, in which structural constraints limit parental choices and decisions to encourage and support the children to speak their heritage language.
Deferred parental agency	Intentional non-intervention, in which parents consciously choose not to make decisions to encourage and support children in speaking their heritage language.
Child agency	Children's capacity to act and make choices to comply with, negotiate, participate in, reject, defy or resist the family language policy.
Active child agency	Children choose to comply with, negotiate, or participate in the family language policy.
Constrained child agency	Children choose to reject, defy or resist the family language policy.
Deferred child agency	Children choose not to engage with the family language policy.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.0 Introduction

Having explored and outlined the theoretical framework guiding this study, I now turn to the methodology and research design adopted to answer the study's central research question and sub-question. The chosen methodology was designed to achieve the study's aim of investigating how family language policy, mediated by agency, relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, drawing on both parent and child perspectives and guided by the overarching research question, which is: *To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism? Followed by two specific sub-questions:*

1. How do the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?
2. How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?

These research questions provide the foundation for the study's methodology and align with the research's dual objectives: to examine the influence of a family language policy on the prevalence of receptive bilingualism from both parent and child perspectives and to investigate how agency, exercised by parents and children, relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

The present chapter is organised into four sections. Section one describes the research design. Section two presents the participants and sampling techniques. Section three details the data collection methods, and finally, section four explains the study's data analysis procedure and ethical considerations.

4.1 Research design

The contributions of various interdisciplinary approaches and methodological traditions to research in family language policy have opened the door to the implementation of multiple research approaches, designs, and methods. According to King & Lanza (2017), language policy studies heavily and critically employ qualitative research approaches and choices to obtain a deep understanding of the matter or the phenomenon under investigation. With this foundation in mind, in this section, I present the study's methodological framework, beginning with a discussion of the selected philosophical worldview and my positionality, followed by the rationale for adopting a case study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives.

4.1.1 Philosophical worldview and the researcher's positionality

Philosophical worldviews serve as foundational belief systems that guide researchers in constructing knowledge and meaning (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Saunders et al., 2019). These worldviews are human constructs that reflect the overall philosophical orientation that researchers bring to their studies and influence the study's methodology, methods of data collection, and, ultimately, the interpretations of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, embracing a specific worldview clarifies the researcher's stance and directs the choice of methodology and design, ensuring a coherent and rigorous inquiry. In this section, I describe the study's philosophical position and my positionality as a researcher, contending that constructivism was deemed the most appropriate worldview for addressing the study's research question. This worldview aligns with the study's aim of understanding the relationship between family language

policy, agency, and receptive bilingualism by understanding how parents and children develop their language policy and agency based on their perceptions and experiences.

The adaptation of a constructivist philosophical worldview was guided by four elements or assumptions: ontology (what we know, what exists and what we encounter in research), epistemology (the nature, assumptions, justification and limitations of human knowledge), methodology (means of gaining knowledge about the world), and axiology (researcher's ethics and values) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Hathcoat et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2019). Ontologically, I adopted the constructivist paradigm's relativist stance, acknowledging multiple realities of the phenomenon under study through parents' and children's different interpretations of their family language policy and application of agency. For example, within the same family, parents described their language practices as predominantly Arabic, while their children reported speaking mostly English, illustrating how multiple realities coexist within a single household.

Epistemologically, I embraced the subjectivist epistemology, in which meaning is co-constructed between the researcher and participants. In this view, the truth in research emerges from participants' experiences through naturalistic data collection methods, primarily interviews and observations, which were employed to capture authentic language interactions (Peterson & Gencel, 2013; Dudovskiy, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). Through this approach, I aimed to understand how families develop their beliefs, practices, language management strategies, and agency through their interpretations of their linguistic and social environments. For example, when initially asked about language use at home, the mother from Family B stated, "We speak Arabic." Through follow-up questions exploring how, when, and with whom, the mother elaborated that both parents had

collaboratively decided to establish an Arabic-only policy, which emerged through participant-researcher dialogue.

Methodologically, I applied constructivism as a means of gaining knowledge about social reality. This guided my examination of receptive bilingualism at the micro-levels within the family context. Through a constructivist lens, I examined how each family member's beliefs, practices, and language management strategies shaped their agency and receptive bilingualism. This approach ensured that the research captured the experiences of both parents and children through naturalistic observations and in-depth interviews in their home environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Axiologically, I recognised and acknowledged that research cannot be value-free, as my own values, beliefs, and biases can influence the research process and findings. To minimise my subjectivity, I adopted a reflexive approach throughout the research process. For example, as a bilingual Arabic-English speaker, I remained vigilant not to project my own language-maintenance experiences onto participants' narratives during coding. By regularly reflecting on my own positionality, assumptions, and interpretations and how they might shape the study's design, data collection, analysis, and conclusions, I was able to focus on the specific contexts in which participants live and work, particularly the family domain. This approach allowed me to understand how family language policies are constructed in everyday life while remaining mindful of potential biases and ethical considerations throughout the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Hathcoat et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2019).

Having explored constructivism's ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological dimensions, I now turn to explaining how these assumptions informed my position

within the research. I have positioned myself through the lens of a constructivist philosophical worldview, adopting an insider-outsider stance where knowledge is co-created through my dual role as both an observer of the cases under study (the families) and as a researcher seeking to understand and find answers in the world I live in (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This dual perspective allowed me to draw from the knowledge gained through observation of the families while maintaining a distance necessary for scholarly inquiry. As an insider, I brought an understanding of how families apply a family language policy and of its influence on heritage language outcomes. As a researcher, I examined these contexts by extending Spolsky's model of language policy, while remaining mindful of potential biases through continuous reflexivity during discussions of my positioning and interpretations with my supervisors. However, this positioning might have introduced some biases. For example, my background and personal experiences with bilingualism and family language policy might have influenced my interpretation, leading me to emphasise data that aligns with my experiences or expectations. Additionally, as an insider in the community, my familiarity with the subject can lead to overfamiliarity with the subject under study, affecting the depth of analysis and conclusions. My role as an interviewer might also have influenced how participants responded during interviews and how they acted during observations, shaping the data in ways that may not reflect their true perspectives. By acknowledging these biases and maintaining regular discussions with supervisors, I aimed to increase transparency in the research process, thereby strengthening its credibility and trustworthiness. Building on these considerations, I proceed below to describe the qualitative methodological choice.

4.1.2 Case study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives

Aligning with the philosophical worldview presented above, I adopted a longitudinal, qualitative, case study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives, combining elements of ethnographic perspectives and case studies to collect informative, naturally occurring data that would help me explore and understand how individuals' (parents and children) or groups' perspectives and experiences contributed to receptive bilingualism (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Moyer, 2008; Schwartz, 2020). This information was necessary to answer my study's overarching exploratory research question and contribute knowledge to the existing body of literature (Saunders et al., 2019). In this section, I outline the rationale for choosing a case study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives.

Firstly, while this study does not constitute a full ethnography, it adopts ethnographic perspectives, defined as a "topic-oriented approach that is less comprehensive in scope and length than an ethnography and provides an emic viewpoint guiding to other research approaches" (Okada, 2024, p. 174), allowing for "an in-depth and holistic understanding of human activities, behaviours, beliefs, and values within a broad sociocultural context" (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013, p. 49). This approach was particularly suitable for investigating family language policies as they naturally occur within the home domain, providing rich insights into how language beliefs, practices and management strategies shape receptive bilingualism without conducting a full ethnography, which tends to be more time-intensive, broader in scope, and requires extended immersion in the field.

Secondly, several scholars have promoted the application of an ethnographic perspective in language studies. Heath et al. (2008) encouraged this approach as it provides insight into language learning in “multi-party interactions” (p. 121) and unveils how individuals achieve desired outcomes through natural interactions. Similarly, Green & Bloom (1997) stressed that an ethnographic perspective incorporates both the researcher’s and participants’ perspectives, thereby encouraging me to take the role of a social researcher to investigate, explore and relate to the families in a more focused approach, learning from the participants rather than using data to prove a point.

Thirdly, the case study component, defined by Yin (2014) as “a form of empirical social enquiry that interrogates social phenomena both in detail and in a real-world context” (as cited in Forrest-Lawrence, 2019, p. 319). The case study approach, supplemented by ethnographic perspectives, offered several key advantages: a) focusing on a smaller number of participants or multiple cases, yielding variation among participants with similar characteristics (Duff, 2020), b) “explicitly focusing on context and dynamic interactions” of individuals or the family (micro-level) (Duff, 2020; Schwandt & Gates, 2018; Ramirez, 2016, p. 69), and c) providing analytical possibilities for studying receptive bilingualism through methodological eclecticism, where a variety of data collection methods were used to achieve the research’s aim, answer the study’s research question, and provide evidence to support, challenge or refute existing theories (Duff, 2020; Ramirez, 2016). This combination of case study and ethnographic approaches allowed me to examine each family’s language policy and agency in depth while also identifying patterns across cases.

Finally, I considered the methodological challenges of applying a purely quantitative rather than a primarily qualitative approach. According to Schwartz (2020), researchers may encounter difficulties applying quantitative research methods to family language studies due to the “diversity and heterogeneity of the families” (p. 213). Additionally, the literature review in the previous chapter showed that, in quantitative studies, relying solely on parental feedback from one-off questionnaires and surveys may be prone to memory recall bias and to discrepancies between reported and actual parent-child language use at home. These limitations of purely quantitative methods further justified my choice of a primarily qualitative, case-study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives, as it allowed for prolonged engagement with families and direct observation of their language experience, providing authentic data on actual language use. However, to provide empirical support for the qualitative themes, basic frequency counts were used to quantify observable language practices and strategies. For example, parental language practices and management strategies were quantified through frequency counting, including code-mixing, using Arabic in daily activities, ritual language use, watching television in Arabic, communication with extended family, consistently speaking Arabic without code-mixing, and children’s polar responses, formulaic expressions, repetitions, attending Saturday schools and reading books in Arabic. Each instance was manually identified and tallied across all data collection methods for each family. The frequency counting methodology and detailed findings are presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.2 Participants and sampling techniques

Qualitative research seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study; consequently, it relies heavily on individuals and families who can provide a rich insight into their daily language use and outcomes (Liamputtong, 2019). Thus, as a researcher, I needed to select and define an appropriate population prior to initiating data collection and ensure that participants could meet the study's objectives and answer the research question (LeCompte & Schensul, 2012). In this section, I describe the participant selection process and the sampling criteria applied, emphasising that careful, purposeful participant recruitment and sampling were crucial for obtaining rich, naturalistic data.

- Parents needed to be adults over the age of 18 who could commit to a three-month audio recording process.
- Parents had to be from an Arabic-speaking background (one or both parents),
- One or two parents could participate in the interviews and the parent-child interactions,
- Parents (one or both parents) must speak Arabic at home with their children most of the time,
- Parents whose children are born and raised in Australia (second-generation children) or those who were born overseas and arrived as infants,
- Children needed to be between the ages of 4 and 12 (pre-kindergarten- primary school ages),

- Children had to have some ability to understand and/or speak some Arabic to meet the criteria of a receptive bilingual, where the children understand but have limited production skills, usually at the word and phrase level.

The next step was to follow a suitable sampling technique to ensure that participants met the pre-set criteria. Purposive criterion sampling was selected and applied to identify participants who have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon of receptive bilingualism and can provide rich, unique, and informative cases relevant to the research project (Lanza, 2008; Liamputtong, 2019). This non-probability sampling technique entails selecting and identifying participants who meet pre-set criteria to answer the research question best and meet the study's objectives. Following that, the next step was to determine the appropriate sample size for the study. Liamputtong (2019) recommended several factors for determining sample size. First, qualitative research should prioritise the quality of the research rather than the quantity of participants. Second, the study should focus on flexibility and depth. Third, the sample size should be sufficient to provide enough data to answer the research question and thoroughly address the objectives. Fourth, qualitative studies are labour-intensive, requiring significant time and effort for translation, transcription, and analysis.

After determining the sampling technique, the next step was to advertise the study to recruit potential participants. However, the dispersed distribution of Arabic-speaking communities across Australia (Special Broadcasting Service [SBS], 2022) made it challenging to locate participants who satisfied the predetermined criteria. To reach a maximum number of participants, I decided to search for participants on Facebook, where I am a member of several Arabic-speaking

communities. After obtaining ethics approval from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee in August 2023, I posted an anonymous recruitment advertisement on the ‘Arab Australian Ladies Community Group’, an Australia-based group with 13,000 members from various Arab nationalities, dispersed across Australia. This community group was selected as the primary recruitment platform due to the researcher’s 7-year membership and its status as one of the largest online groups. The study’s advertisement on the ‘Arab Australian Ladies Community Group’ ran for four weeks, during which interested individuals were encouraged to contact me via my student email for more information about the study and to determine their eligibility based on the pre-set criteria.

Initially, 30 families who met the eligibility criteria expressed interest in participating in the study, with the majority residing in Melbourne. Despite efforts to minimise participant fatigue by selecting a three-month timeframe for audio recording of parent-child interactions, only four families indicated they could commit to the study’s longitudinal timeframe, a limitation that will be further addressed in the limitations section of Chapter 8. Contact was then made with participants who met the eligibility requirements using my student email, which identified me as the sender and contained my contact details. Parent participants were emailed the study’s letter of introduction, parents’ information sheet, and consent forms for both parents and children. The parent participants were encouraged to discuss the study with their children and return the signed consent forms before engaging in further discussions about the study.

After receiving the consent forms, the researcher contacted the participating families to express her gratitude for participating in the study. Upon further discussion with the families and

considering the study's focus on receptive bilingualism, it was determined that the fourth family did not meet the purposive criterion sampling requirements due to their children's non-proficiency in Arabic. Therefore, three families with similar characteristics participated in the study, allowing for cross-case comparisons and a manageable scope within the research.

In summary, in this subsection, I outlined the participants' recruitment and sampling techniques, emphasising the importance of careful, purposeful selection to meet the study's aims and objectives. Purposive criterion sampling was employed to select three families that met specific criteria. Additionally, the recruitment process encountered challenges due to the dispersed nature of the Arabic-speaking community in Australia and the commitment required for the three-month audio recording process. Despite these obstacles, the study successfully engaged families motivated to learn more about receptive bilingualism and contribute to research on heritage language maintenance. I proceed to the following section and present the parents' and children's demographics.

4.2.1 Parents demographics

Three families with distinct linguistic and cultural characteristics consented to participate in this study. Family A's multilingual environment contrasts with Family B's limited English proficiency, while Family C brings forth balanced bilingual parents in English and Arabic, presenting yet another variation. During parental interviews, participants selected pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality and safeguard their privacy, as suggested by Allen and Wiles (2016). Comprehensive demographic data were collected to develop an in-depth, informed understanding

of each family's background, including key variables such as parental age, occupation, self-reported language proficiency, and years in Australia.

Family A consisted of a multilingual 43-year-old mother fluent in Lebanese Arabic, English and French. On the other hand, the father is 55 years old and a native English speaker, with Arabic as his second language. Both parents share a Lebanese heritage, yet differ in their places of birth; the mother was born in Lebanon and has resided in Australia for 10 years, while the father was born in Australia (see Table 2). At the time of the study in 2023, the family resided in Sydney and had three sons.

Table 2. *Demographics of Family A*

Variables	Mother	Father
Age	43	55
Occupation	Community Services Officer	Tradesman
Languages spoken	English*, Arabic, French	English*
Number of children	3	3
Ethnic background	Lebanese	Lebanese
Religious background	Muslim	Muslim
Present in the interview	Yes	Yes
Place of birth	Lebanon	Australia
No. of years in Australia	10 years	Born in Australia
Place of residence in Australia	Sydney	Sydney

*Primary language used at home based on audio-recordings and observations

In contrast to Family A, Family B included the mother, 41 years old, with Iraqi Arabic as her first language and English as her second, with limited proficiency, as indicated by the mother: “*I don't speak English too well.*” On the other hand, the father, 52 years old, is also a native speaker

of Iraqi Arabic, with limited proficiency in English. Both parents are of Iraqi ethnicity and were born in Iraq, having resided in Australia for the past 15 years. The family lives in Sydney and has five children, two of whom have participated in this study (see Table 3). Contrary to Family A, in which the father abstained from participation, both parents in Family B chose to participate in the study, thus offering an opportunity to understand receptive bilingualism from both parents' perspectives.

Table 3. *Demographics of Family B*

Variables	Mother	Father
Age	41	52
Occupation	Community Services Officer	Delivery Driver
Languages spoken	Arabic*-limited English	Arabic*-limited English
Number of children	5	5
Ethnic background	Iraqi	Iraqi
Religious background	Sabeian Mandaean	Sabeian Mandaean
Present in the interview	Yes	Yes
Place of birth	Iraq	Iraq
No. of years in Australia	15 years	15 years
Place of residence in Australia	Sydney	Sydney

*Primary language used at home based on audio-recordings and observations

In contrast to Families A and B, Family C was based in Melbourne and included a 37-year-old mother and a 39-year-old father who shared Lebanese heritage. The mother was born in Lebanon and has been in Australia for 20 years, whereas the father was born in Australia. The family had a diverse household with five children aged 5 to 15. Four children, comprising three females and one male, participated in the study (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Demographics of Family C*

Variables	Mother	Father
Age	37	39
Occupation	Teacher	Businessman
Languages spoken	English*, Arabic	English*, Arabic
Number of children	5	5
Ethnic background	Lebanese	Lebanese
Religious background	Muslim	Muslim
Present in the interview	Yes	Yes
Place of birth	Lebanon	Australia
No. of years in Australia	20	Born in Australia- Raised in Lebanon and Australia
Place of residence in Australia	Melbourne	Melbourne

*Primary language used at home based on audio-recordings and observations

4.2.2 Children's demographics

Building on the parents' demographic data, I provide detailed information about the children in each participating family in this section. It is important to note that the children's Arabic language abilities discussed here were based solely on parental reports and were not formally assessed, as this study prioritised capturing naturalistic, everyday heritage language use related to the family language policy, agency and receptive bilingualism.

To begin with, three siblings from Family A participated in the study: Muhammad, aged 9; David, aged 8; and Ayman, aged 5; all names are pseudonyms. At the time of data collection in 2023, Muhammad was in year 4, David was in year 2, and Ayman was attending pre-kindergarten. All three children were born and raised in Sydney, attended mainstream school with English as the

language of instruction, and attended an Arabic school on Saturdays. The comprehensive demographics of Family A's children are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Family A's children's demographics*

Name	Age	Sex	Place of birth	Place of residence	School year	Number in family
Muhammad	9	Male	Sydney	Sydney	4	1st child
David	8	Male	Sydney	Sydney	2	2nd child
Ayman	5	Male	Sydney	Sydney	Pre-kindergarten	3 rd child

Two children, Rose and Sami, participated in the study in Family B. Rose, the fourth child in her family, was 12 years old and in year 7 at the time of data collection. According to the parents, Rose could comprehend day-to-day Arabic conversations within the family but struggles to speak. On the other hand, Sami was an 8-year-old in Year Two who mainly spoke English at home and was the family's youngest child. Table 6 provides detailed demographic information about the children in Family B.

Table 6. *Family B's children's demographics*

Name	Age	Sex	Place of birth	Place of residence	School year	Number in family
Rose	12	Female	Sydney	Sydney	7	4 th child
Sami	8	Male	Sydney	Sydney	3	5 th child

Turning to Family C, four children participated in the study: Manal (F), aged 12; Fayrouz (F), aged 11; Kawthar (F), aged 9; and Ahmad (M), aged 5. Manal, the second child of the family and

a predominantly English speaker, was 12 years old and in Year 7 at the time of data collection. Fayrouz, the third child, also primarily an English speaker, was 11 years old and in Year 6. Kawthar, the fourth child, also a predominantly English speaker, was a shy 9-year-old in Year 4. Finally, Ahmad, the youngest child, speaks only English and was five years old in Pre-Kindergarten. Detailed demographic data for the children are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Family C's children's demographics*

Name	Age	Sex	Place of birth	Place of residence	School year	Number in family
Manal	12	Female	Melbourne	Melbourne	7	2 nd child
Fayrouz	11	Female	Melbourne	Melbourne	6	3 rd child
Kawthar	9	Female	Melbourne	Melbourne	4	4 th child
Ahmad	5	Male	Melbourne	Melbourne	Pre-Kindergarten	5 th child

In summary, the study included nine Australian-born children aged between 5 and 12 years, with 12 years defined as within the child age range for the purposes of this study, from three families, all of whom attended mainstream schools with English as the language of instruction. The participating children comprised three male siblings from Family A (Muhammad, David, and Ayman, aged 9, 8, and 5, respectively); two siblings from Family B (Rose and Sami, aged 12 and 8); and four Melbourne-raised siblings from Family C (Manal, Fayrouz, Kawthar, and Ahmad, aged between 5 and 12 years), representing diverse age groups from kindergarten to Year 7. The following section will detail the study's data collection method.

4.3 Data collection methods

With permission from parents, I commenced the study's data collection phase by designating private homes as the research setting. This initial step was important for establishing relationships with participants and immersing oneself in the family's daily lives through observations and discussions (Saunders et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). Following this setup, the case study approach, informed by ethnographic perspectives, guided data collection over a six-month period from August 2023 to February 2024. Multiple data collection methods were employed, including semi-structured face-to-face interviews with parents, audio recordings of parent-child interactions, observations, and informal discussions with the children. Each family's collected data was placed in a secure, encrypted computer file with an assigned pseudonym as soon as it was collected, to ensure participant confidentiality. In this section, I detail the study's data collection methods, explaining how each was selected to address the research question and achieve the study's objectives.

4.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Before conducting the parental interviews, I pre-determined a set of interview questions (see Appendix K) and piloted them several times with non-participants, one male (aged 47) and a female (aged 31). Although they were not participants in the study, this piloting allowed me to ensure the clarity and conciseness of the questions. Piloting also helped me identify ambiguities, enhance data quality and relevance, assess interview duration, and make necessary adjustments to keep interviews within a 30–45-minute timeframe while gathering comprehensive information. In

the pages that follow, I present the methods used to conduct the parental interviews, aiming to gather relevant and trustworthy data.

Prior to the actual interviews, I contacted the families via telephone to express my appreciation for their willingness to participate in the study and to begin establishing rapport. Each phone call lasted approximately 20 minutes and was conducted in Arabic as per parents' requests, during which I scheduled dates for the parental interviews. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in Arabic (as per parents' request) in August 2023 at the families' homes and were audio-recorded using a 'Sony ICDPX470 Digital Voice Recorder' to allow me to concentrate on the interaction by questioning and listening (Saunders et al., 2019). The parental interviews proceeded as follows.

First, I collected demographic data, which took approximately 15 minutes with each family. The demographics included parental age, occupation, languages spoken, number of children, children's sex and ages, ethnic and religious backgrounds, parental place of birth, and years in Australia. Next, I asked the parents several open-ended questions (see Appendix K) to facilitate natural dialogue and purposeful conversations between the researcher and participants, in which the participants spoke more than the researcher. The researcher listened more to understand "the participants' inner reflections and thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and responses to the external world" (Salmons, 2015, p. 29). The open-ended questions enabled a deeper investigation of the parental family language policy (beliefs, practices, and management strategies), parental agency, child agency, and receptive bilingualism, thereby addressing the research questions and the study's objectives. Finally, I concluded each interview by thanking the parents for their time and contributions, providing them with the opportunity to ask any questions, share additional thoughts, and address any concerns they may have had. I also informed the parents about the next step in the

research process: the three-month-long audio recordings of parent-child interactions. Each family participated in one semi-structured interview at the onset of data collection, lasting approximately 33 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Arabic at the parents' request (see Table 8 for a summary of interview details). Although the semi-structured interviews provided valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge the limitations or challenges encountered. At times, parents would occasionally deviate from the original interview questions. To overcome this challenge, I had to gently steer conversations back to the relevant topics without disrupting the natural flow of the conversation.

Table 8. *Parental interview details*

Family	Parent present during the interview	Interview time	Duration (h:m: sec)
A	The mother	6.00 pm -7.00 pm	00:33:18
B	The mother and the father	6.00 pm -7.00 pm	00:32:46
C	The mother and the father	11 am- 12:00 Noon	00:33:30

4.3.2 Audio recordings of parent-child interactions

To capture naturalistic parent-child language interactions, audio recording of parent-child interactions was indispensable and essential for addressing key aspects of the research questions. Audio-recorded parent-child interactions were collected over a three-month period, from September 1, 2023, to December 1, 2023, on a weekly basis and served as a valuable complement

to the semi-structured interviews, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the families' language experiences.

In preparation for the audio-recording phase, I initially planned to provide each family with a digital voice recorder and instructions on its use. However, during preliminary discussions with the families, the parents expressed a preference for using their own recording devices, which they were more familiar with and comfortable with. I agreed to this arrangement, as it was likely to increase the families' engagement and consistency in recording their interactions.

To ensure the data collected was representative of the families' everyday language use, I provided guidelines on the types of interactions to record, such as mealtimes, play sessions, and daily routines. Additionally, I advised the parents to record interactions in various settings, both inside and outside the home, to capture diverse language experiences. Throughout the process, I emphasised the importance of capturing natural, authentic interactions and encouraged parents to record as many interactions as possible within three months. Given the longitudinal nature of this study, families were given the flexibility to choose when and how often to record, ensuring that the collected data captured natural, authentic language interactions. While necessary for providing authentic data, the flexibility of this method presented challenges in ensuring consistent data across families. To mitigate this issue, I maintained regular contact with the families through fortnightly phone calls and emails, providing support, addressing any concerns, and ensuring the families were on track with their recordings. Nevertheless, the lengths of the parent-child audio recordings varied among families: Family A provided seven recordings, Family B provided 10 recordings, and Family C provided five recordings over the three months, totalling 390 minutes. The variation in the number of recordings reflected differences in family availability, daily routines, and engagement

with the recording task. Family B, where both parents had limited English proficiency and predominantly spoke Arabic at home, provided the most recordings, while Family C, balancing work and five children, provided fewer. The recordings captured everyday parent-child interactions, including mealtimes, homework sessions, play activities, and daily routines. These contexts corresponded with the observation sessions, enabling triangulation between self-recorded and researcher-observed language practices. For example, mealtime interactions recorded by Family A aligned with the mealtime observation conducted with the same family. Table 9 provides an overview of the audio recordings collected from each family, including the number of recordings, total duration, and average length of each recording.

Table 9. *Audio recording of parent-child interactions*

Family	No. of parent-child recordings	Total duration (minutes)	Average recording duration (minutes)	Recording emailed to the researcher
A	7	140	20	Fortnightly
B	10	150	15	Fortnightly
C	5	100*	20	Fortnightly

*The number of recordings differed across families due to variations in availability, family routines, and adherence to the task.

4.3.3 Observations

Another data collection method I used in this study was face-to-face observations of the families. According to De Fina (2020), and as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2, scholars heavily criticise data collection methods and analyses that come from parental reports rather than direct observations in naturalistic, everyday family settings, as there can be discrepancies between reported and actual language use (Wilson, 2020). Thus, through participant

observations, a holistic, theoretically driven ethnographic perspective is applied, and researchers immerse themselves in the daily practices of the community they are part of (Figueroa, 2017). Participant observations also help validate and complement data collected from parental interviews and audio recordings, thereby strengthening the validity of the findings through data triangulation across multiple sources (Kawulich, 2005).

I observed each family in their home thrice between October and December 2023, with each observation lasting approximately one hour, as shown in Table 10. During the observations, I took the role of observer-as-participant with moderate participation. According to Kawulich (2005), the observer-as-participant stance is the most ethical approach, as it enables the researcher to participate in the participants' activities while the participants are aware of the researcher's presence, while also maintaining the role of a researcher to collect data. Observations were semi-structured, guided by the study's focus on language practices, management strategies, and agency, while remaining open to emergent interactions. This approach allowed me to be present with families while observing their everyday language interactions in natural settings. To manage researcher presence and minimise intrusion, I arrived thirty minutes early to build rapport through casual conversation, allowing family members to become accustomed to my presence before observations commenced. During observations, I positioned myself unobtrusively within the family setting and refrained from initiating language-related discussions, enabling interactions to unfold naturally. Drawing on my insider-outsider positioning discussed in Section 4.1.1, I remained reflexively aware of how my presence might influence family behaviour, documenting any perceived effects in field notes for consideration during analysis.

Table 10. *Participants' observations*

Family	Observation	Time	Duration (minutes)	Collected during	Topic discussed
A	1	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	60 minutes	Mealtime	Football matches
	2	6:30 pm - 8:00 pm		Homework	Playing Jenga
	3	10:00 am - 12:00 pm		Homework	Homework
B	1	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	60 minutes	Lunchtime	Cooking Poultry
	2	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm		Playing Connect Four	Playing Connect Four
	3	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm		Playing Twister	Playing Twister
C	1	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	60 minutes	Playing Connect Four	Playing Connect Four
	2	6:30 pm - 8:40 pm		Playing Smash Bros	Playing Smash Bros Video game
	3	10:00 am - 12:00 pm		Having desserts and tea	Desserts and tea

4.3.4 Informal conversations with children

Informal conversations with children were a central part of this study, as the literature review in Chapter 2 revealed that over-reliance on parental reports of children is prone to bias and may not accurately reflect children's language use and experiences. The term 'informal' here refers to the conversational, child-friendly approach adopted, rather than the absence of structure. While the discussions were guided by open-ended questions related to the children's language beliefs, practices, strategies, and agency (see Appendix L), they were conducted in a relaxed, naturalistic setting during board games to encourage spontaneous responses and reduce power imbalances between the researcher and child participants (Swain & Spire, 2020). Given that siblings from the same family were present together, these discussions resembled family-based focus groups in structure; however, I directed questions to each child individually to capture their perspectives.

While some children responded openly, others were more reserved or shy and provided limited responses. By engaging directly with the children, I gained firsthand insight into their language views and experiences.

Between December 2023 and February 2024, I conducted informal discussions with the children at their homes, recording them as they played the board games '*Jenga*' and '*Connect Four*'. This enjoyable and relaxed setting encouraged the children to express their thoughts openly, and discussions were conducted in English at the children's request. Before audio-recording the discussions, I built rapport by having casual conversations about the children's interests and daily routines. The informal discussions focused on understanding the children's family language policy and agency, enabling them to share their authentic experiences and opinions. I asked open-ended questions and encouraged the children to elaborate on their responses, yielding rich, detailed insights into their language experiences (see Appendix L). This approach yielded valuable data that complemented the information gathered from parental interviews and parent-child audio recordings. Table 11 outlines the approach to conducting informal conversations with the children. Despite the overall success of the data collection process, several methodological challenges emerged. The quality of audio recordings was occasionally compromised by technical issues, while varying levels of environmental noise in different home settings affected data clarity. These challenges were managed through consistent communication with participating families and ongoing technical adjustments.

Table 11. *Informal conversations with the children*

Family	Children present during the discussion	Discussion mode	Time of conversation	Topics discussed	Discussion duration (h:m:sec)
A	Muhammad, David, Ayman	Face-to-face	11 am	Language beliefs, practices, strategies, agency	00:27:21
B	Rose, Sami	Face-to-face	11 am	Language beliefs, practices, strategies, agency	00:14:27
C	Manal, Fayrouz, Kawthar, Ahmad	Face-to-face	11 am	Language beliefs, practices, strategies, agency	00:17:51

In summary, in this section, I discussed the study's data collection methods and revealed that several data collection methods were required to answer the research question and meet the objectives of this study. Today, much of the literature on family language relies primarily on parental interviews and reports to understand heritage language at home, which are often collected at a single point in time. As a result, this 6-month longitudinal study employed parental semi-structured interviews, audio-recording of parent-child interactions and informal discussions with the children, which "created a triangulated database, adding depth, breadth, credibility and validity to research findings" (McCarty, 2015, p. 89). However, those methods do not fall short of criticism and limitations, which can be resolved through research rigors, as discussed in section 4.6. Before detailing the data analysis procedures and ethical considerations, Table 12 provides an overview of the data collected from each family, illustrating the types of data generated by each method and their alignment with the research objectives.

Table 12. Summary of data collection methods across participating families

Data collection method	Family A	Family B	Family C	Total	Data type	Research objective addressed
Semi-structured interviews	1 (33 mins)	1 (33 mins)	1 (34 mins)	3 interviews (~100 mins)	Parental reports	Beliefs, practices, strategies and agency
Audio recordings of parent-child interactions	7 (140 mins)	10 (150 mins)	5 (100 mins)	22 recordings (390 mins)	Naturalistic interaction	Practices, strategies, agency, and receptive bilingualism
Observations	3 (180 mins)	3 (180 mins)	3 (180 mins)	9 observations (540 mins)	Researcher field notes	Practices, strategies and agency
Informal conversations with children	1 (27 mins)	1 (14 mins)	1 (18 mins)	3 conversations (~59 mins)	Children's reports	Children's beliefs, practices, strategies and agency
Total per family	12 data points	15 data points	10 data points	37 data points (~1,089 mins)		

4.4 Data analysis and ethical considerations

The data analysis process in qualitative research is an ongoing process of “reasoning, thinking and theorising” (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 168, as cited in Liamputtong, 2019). Among the qualitative data analysis techniques, thematic analysis stands out as one of the most commonly used data analysis approaches, suitable for analysing the data collected in this study. Thematic analysis is a method that captures themes and patterns across datasets (Braun et al., 2019, p. 843). According to Braun et al. (2019), three types of thematic analysis have been identified in the literature and

include the coding reliability approach (partial qualitative approach of themes), codebook (applied if more than one coder is analysing data) and reflexive thematic analysis, which considers the role of the researcher in the analysis process (Braun et al., 2019). In this section, I outline the study's data analysis method, explaining that reflexive thematic analysis was chosen for its methodological flexibility, which allows for an inductive (data-driven), deductive (theory-driven), or hybrid approach that combines both inductive and deductive reasoning (Braun, 2019; Thompson, 2022).

Reflexive thematic analysis involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting themes within the data while explicitly acknowledging how the researcher's perspectives, skills, and experiences influence those themes. By conducting a reflexive thematic analysis, the researcher becomes 'the storyteller,' where data is interpreted 'through the lens of their own cultural membership and social positionings, their theoretical assumptions' (Braun et al., 2019, p. 850). This interpretive process extends to the analytical process of coding, where the researcher determines whether to employ a deductive, inductive, or a combination of both approach, based on their "ideas based on their existing knowledge and viewpoints" to inform theme generation (Braun et al., 2019, p. 850). Accordingly, I employed a hybrid coding approach that combined deductive and inductive reasoning. The deductive component was guided by Spolsky's model of language policy, which employed predetermined categories, including language beliefs, practices, and management strategies, while the inductive component allowed new themes to emerge from the data. This hybrid approach to coding in thematic analysis provided a comprehensive framework for answering the study's research questions while remaining open to unexpected findings. Themes were subsequently interpreted through the lens of Spolsky's model of language policy, focusing on the

interplay among beliefs, practices, and management strategies, and on how agency mediated alignment or misalignment among these components. The following section will outline the six-phase approach to data analysis.

4.4.1 The six-phase approach to data analysis

The analysis process followed Braun et al.'s (2019) six-phase framework for reflexive thematic analysis, which includes familiarisation with the data, generating codes, constructing themes, revising themes, defining and naming themes, and writing and producing the report, which was consistently applied for the semi-structured interviews, parent-child audio recordings, observations, and informal conversations with children. Prior to commencing the data analysis process, all collected data was translated from Arabic to English by the researcher, who is a NAATI (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters) accredited translator. Translation preceded coding to ensure consistency in the analytical process, as coding in the original Arabic and then translating codes would risk creating inconsistencies across datasets. Additionally, translating first enabled a unified English codebook, facilitating supervision discussions and ensuring transparency in the analytical process. All translations were transcribed manually using intelligent verbatim transcription, which maintains the accuracy of spoken content while removing fillers, hesitations, false starts, and repetitions to improve readability and coherent communication (Hadley, 2014). This approach was appropriate, given that the analysis focuses exclusively on content rather than interactional features.

The translation and transcription process occurred concurrently with data collection, with the aim of producing written records of the audio recordings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). During

translation, I paid particular attention to preserving key cultural and linguistic concepts, adding explanatory notes where direct translation was insufficient to convey the full meaning. Although the transcription and translation process was particularly complex and time-intensive due to the volume of data and the diverse Arabic dialects used by participating families, maintaining the authenticity of the original conversations during translation was essential for ensuring research transparency and analytical accuracy. The six phases were then implemented across all data sources as follows:

Phase 1: Familiarisation with data

According to Braun et al. (2019), familiarisation is the entry point into the data and requires the researcher to shift focus from data generation, such as translation and transcription, to appreciating the data (pp. 852-853). I familiarised myself with the data by listening to all audio-recorded data, one at a time. These audio recordings served as permanent records, allowing me to overcome the transient nature of conventional observation by enabling multiple reviews for accuracy and reducing the likelihood of observer error and bias (Saunders et al., 2019). The next step was to read, re-read and make casual notes on each transcript, one at a time, to identify important information that was relevant to answering the research question, making connections and noticing differences between the families, developing an understanding of the content and making connections to the existing literature (Byrne, 2022). Given the vast and evolving terminology used in the field of family language policy, during the familiarisation stage, I found it essential to develop clear operationalisations of key terms to support the coding process, guide the identification of initial patterns, and ensure consistency across all data sources. Building on the

conceptualisations established in Chapter 3 (Table 1), Table 13 presents the operationalisation criteria used to identify these constructs in the data.

Table 13. *Operationalisation of terms*

Term	Operationalisation
Family language policy (FLP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explicit FLP planning: Through statements by parents or children indicating a plan, e.g., “<i>We decided to speak Arabic to the children.</i>” - Implicit FLP planning without explicit statements of planning.
Parental language beliefs	<p>Stated importance of preserving and maintaining Arabic, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural identity (e.g. “<i>Arabic is important for maintaining our cultural heritage.</i>”) - Religious purposes (e.g. “<i>Learning Arabic is crucial for understanding the Qur’an.</i>”)
Parental language practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instances of code-mixing (counted per conversation or as indicated by parents). - Using Arabic in daily conversations. (e.g. “<i>We speak Arabic every day.</i>”) - Reciting religious text in Arabic.
Parental language management strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent use of Arabic in the home; identified in interviews, recordings and observations. (e.g., “<i>We only speak Arabic at home</i>”). - Sending children to Arabic schools (e.g., “<i>We enrolled our children in Saturday Arabic classes.</i>”) - Watching television in Arabic or travelling to the homeland (e.g., “<i>We only watch TV in Arabic, or we travel to Iraq.</i>”)
Agency (general)	<p>Distinguished from management and practices through: (a) moments of decision-making about language strategies or the family language policy (<i>We laid down the foundations for only speaking Arabic at home</i>), (b) accounts of negotiation, resistance, or compliance between family members (<i>I speak English 23/7</i>), and (c) explanations for divergence between stated beliefs and observed practices (<i>There is no encouragement at all</i>).</p>
Active parental agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent implementation of a language policy (e.g., “<i>We stick to our Arabic-only rule at home.</i>”) - Creation of Arabic-speaking opportunities (e.g., “<i>We teach the children to speak in Arabic</i>”)

“Table continued”

Constrained parental agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inconsistent implementation of stated policies (e.g., <i>“We try to speak Arabic, but we use English a lot.”</i>) - Enforcement of restrictive language rules (e.g., <i>“I made the decision that I speak Arabic with the children and my husband speaks English.”</i>)
Deferred agency (parental and child)	Allowing the children to set the home language (e.g., <i>“It’s up to the children to speak what they like.”</i> Or <i>Children not complying with or rejecting parental requests.</i>
Child language beliefs	What the children think and feel about the heritage language (likes and dislikes), for example: <i>“I like speaking Arabic because it helps me communicate with my grandparents,”</i> or <i>“I don’t like speaking Arabic because I’m not good at it and it’s hard.”</i>
Child language practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Arabic in daily conversations with instances of code-mixing. - Reciting the Qur’an in Arabic
Parent-initiated language strategies	For example, for example: <i>“I watch television in Arabic</i> or <i>“I go to Saturday school.”</i>
Active child agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attempts to speak Arabic when requested (e.g., <i>trying to respond in Arabic when prompted by parents</i>). - Participation in Arabic conversations, even when struggling to speak.
Constrained child agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusal to speak Arabic (e.g., <i>“I don’t want to speak Arabic, I prefer English.”</i>) - Resistance to parental language requests (e.g., <i>responding in English when asked to speak Arabic</i>). - Challenging language rules (e.g., <i>“Why do I have to speak Arabic at home?”</i>)
Receptive bilingualism	<p>Comprehension of parental speech in Arabic without the need for translation, where the child explicitly states, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>“I understand what you are saying, but I cannot reply in Arabic.”</i> - <i>“I know what that means, but I do not know how to say it in Arabic.”</i> - Limited verbal responses in Arabic (e.g., <i>rote phrases and polar responses</i>). - Predominant use of English in responses. - Parents reporting the child understands Arabic but does not speak it.

Phase 2: Generating codes

Following the preparatory steps above, the real analysis phase began after importing the translated transcripts into NVivo (2014) for coding. Coding is “the process by which raw data are gradually converted into usable data through the identification of themes, concepts, or ideas that have some connection with each other” (Austin & Sutton, 2014, p. 439). To begin the coding process, I first had to set the coding strategy. “In Vivo” codes, also known as verbatim coding, “a form of qualitative data analysis that emphasises the actual spoken words of participants” (Manning, 2017, p. 1), were selected to capture authentic expressions from parents and children. This coding approach aimed to illuminate what is happening, how it is happening, why it is happening, and how these elements relate to the study’s aims and research questions. By using “In Vivo” codes, I aimed to stay close to the participants’ language and perspectives, ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the empirical data.

In addition to using “In Vivo” codes, the coding process integrated both deductive and inductive reasoning, with initial coding categories derived from Spolsky’s model of language policy (language beliefs, practices, and management strategies) while remaining open to emergent codes. As Braun et al. (2019) emphasise, codes represent the researcher’s interpretations of patterns and theoretical assumptions across the dataset. Consequently, this interpretive nature of coding means that different researchers may generate different codes from the same dataset (Byrne, 2022). By combining “In Vivo” codes with a deductive-inductive approach based on Spolsky’s framework and codes emergent from the data, the analysis aimed to balance staying true to the participants’ perspectives with identifying theoretically relevant patterns and themes.

Next, I developed a structured codebook and maintained it to ensure coding consistency across all datasets throughout the analysis process. The conceptualisation of terms guided the codebook in aligning the codes with the emerging themes, the study's aims and objectives, and the research question. The codebook also served multiple important purposes:

1. **Monitoring data saturation:** The codebook tracked the emergence of new codes and themes. Saturation was assessed based on whether new codes or themes continued to emerge from the data.
2. **Promoting researcher reflexivity:** The codebook encouraged ongoing examination of assumptions and interpretations. I continually assessed the fit between the codes, the data, and the research questions to ensure the analysis remained properly aligned with the study's aims.
3. **Ensuring coding consistency:** By providing clear definitions and examples, the codebook enabled consistent application of codes across the entire dataset.
4. **Supporting analytic rigour through collaborative review:** Although reflexive thematic analysis prioritises co-constructed meaning over reliability checking, a peer researcher and my supervisor reviewed the codes, ensuring coding consistency and coherence.

Table 14 illustrates the coding process, presenting sample excerpts from the data along with their corresponding initial codes. These excerpts and codes offer a glimpse into the initial themes that emerged from the analysis.

Table 14. *Sample initial codes*

Initial codes	Data
Preserving cultural heritage and identity	<i>“I am preserving the Arabic language because it is the language of our culture... I would like the children to know they are Arab... If my son doesn’t have this background, we would lose generations.”</i>
Communication with extended family	<i>“We are members of a vast Arabic-speaking community and engage heavily with the community here, and when we travel to Iraq, the children need to speak Arabic.”</i>
Comprehension and recitation of religious texts	<i>“We must learn Arabic to understand and recite the Qur’an.”</i>

Phase 3: Constructing initial themes

After all the data had been coded, I categorised the codes into themes guided by both inductive and deductive approaches. Themes are patterns that evolve from the codification process and are organised around commonality (Byrne, 2022). According to Byrne (2022), as the analysis process progresses, the focus now shifts from interpreting granular data (codes) to examining the combined meaning and significance of the data as a whole (themes). This transition enabled me to communicate meaningful insights directly addressing the research question. I found this third stage of analysis challenging, as I had to critically evaluate and discard codes and themes that did not align with the overall analysis. This step was important to avoid muddying the results and to allow me to draw clear and well-supported conclusions. However, before discarding any codes or themes, I carefully reviewed the raw data associated with them to make informed decisions about

their significance and relevance to the overall analysis. This review process ensured that no important codes or themes were hastily eliminated, thereby enhancing the integrity and credibility of the research outcomes.

After coding all relevant data, I reviewed the codes and grouped them by shared meanings, conceptual relationships, and theoretical relevance to lay the foundation for potential themes that could answer the research question. Themes were then constructed by combining and comparing codes to capture information related to the phenomenon under study, and are necessary to address and answer the research question. For example, codes related to parents' language beliefs, such as the importance of Arabic for cultural identity and religious significance, were grouped under the initial theme of positive parental beliefs.

These initial themes were then further analysed to identify broader, overarching themes that captured patterns across all datasets. Throughout the thematic analysis process, initial themes were continually compared across the full range of data sources, including interviews, audio-recorded interactions, observations, and informal discussions, to ensure they accurately captured the essence of the data. The themes were continuously evaluated, revised, and refined to ensure they remained firmly grounded in empirical evidence while effectively addressing the research questions. Table 15 illustrates the process of generating initial themes, presenting sample excerpts from the data along with their corresponding initial codes.

Table 15. *Sample initial themes*

Initial codes	Initial themes	Data
Preserving cultural heritage and identity	Parental beliefs	<i>“I am preserving the Arabic language because it is the language of our culture... I would like the children to know they are Arab... If my son doesn’t have this background, we would lose generations.”</i>
Communication with extended family	Parental beliefs	<i>“We are members of a vast Arabic-speaking community and engage heavily with the community here, and when we travel to Iraq, the children need to speak Arabic.”</i>
Comprehension and recitation of religious texts	Parental beliefs	<i>“We must learn Arabic to understand and recite the Qur’an.”</i>

Phase 4: Reviewing initial themes

The phase of reviewing initial themes was particularly important in ensuring the quality and coherence of the analysis. During this stage, having a clear and finalised conceptualisation of each theme was crucial to understand how the initial “themes fit together and tell the story of the data, ensuring the themes do not overlap” (Braun et al., 2019, p. 856). This phase involved a thorough evaluation and refinement of the initial themes to reflect the coded data better and prepare for the final analysis. To review the initial themes, I first conducted a theme review and modification, examining each theme in relation to the coded data to assess its clarity and relevance to the research question. This allowed me to identify themes that were well-supported by the data and those that required further development or refinement. Next, I combined themes that shared similar concepts or patterns. In cases where initial themes were too broad or heterogeneous, I divided them into more

specific sub-themes to allow for a more detailed and precise representation of the participants' experiences and perspectives. Finally, I evaluated each theme to determine if it was essential to the overall story and research questions. Themes that were found to be peripheral, redundant, or unsupported by sufficient evidence were removed from the analysis. This elimination process ensured that the final thematic structure was focused, parsimonious, and grounded in the empirical data. Throughout this phase, I maintained a reflexive stance, constantly questioning and refining my interpretations to ensure they accurately reflected the participants' voices and the research objectives.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Once the initial themes have been thoroughly reviewed and refined, the next critical step in the thematic analysis process is to define and name the final themes. This phase focuses on ensuring that the themes and their corresponding names accurately and meaningfully represent the key insights from the data, effectively capturing the essence of the information in relation to the research question (Braun et al., 2019). During this phase, I succinctly named the themes to direct "the reader into what they can expect to read about in the theme and draw them into wanting to read the analysis" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 857). For example, the initial codes of "Preserving cultural heritage and identity," "Communication with extended family," and "Comprehension and recitation of religious texts" were grouped under the initial theme of "Positive parental beliefs," which captured parents' positive language beliefs and attitudes about preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children. Table 16 presents quotes from the interviews, selected to support each theme and provide rich, detailed examples of participants' experiences and perspectives. The final set of themes, along

with their definitions and representative quotes, formed the basis for writing up the findings and presenting a coherent narrative of the language beliefs, practices, and management strategies employed by Arabic-speaking immigrant families in Australia.

Table 16. *Defining and naming themes*

Initial codes	Initial themes	Theme	Data
Preserving cultural heritage and identity	Positive parental beliefs	Parental language beliefs	<i>“I am preserving the Arabic language because it is the language of our culture...”</i>
Communication with extended family	Positive parental beliefs	Parental language beliefs	<i>“When we travel to Iraq, the children need to speak Arabic.”</i>
Comprehension and recitation of religious texts	Positive parental beliefs	Parental language beliefs	<i>“We must learn Arabic to understand and recite the Qur’an.”</i>

While the six-phase thematic analysis was applied consistently across all data sources, the nature of each dataset required specific analytical attention. Parental interviews and informal conversations with children were analysed for thematic content related to language beliefs, practices, management strategies, and agency. Audio recordings of parent-child interactions and observation field notes required additional attention to interactional features, such as language choice (Arabic, English, or code-mixing), parental prompts and child responses, and instances of compliance with or resistance to parental language requests. These interactional patterns were coded and integrated into the broader thematic framework. Final themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 17. Triangulation was achieved by thoroughly comparing findings across data

sources for each family. For example, parental reports of speaking Arabic at home were compared against audio-recorded interactions to verify consistency between stated practices and actual language use. Similarly, field observation notes were cross-referenced with both interview data and audio recordings to identify similarities and differences, thereby strengthening the credibility of the data analysis.

Table 17. *Summary of theme, sub-themes and data sources*

Theme	Sub-themes	Data source
Parental language beliefs	Preserving cultural heritage and identity, communication with extended family, comprehension and recitation of religious texts.	Interviews.
Parental language practices	Code-mixing, using Arabic in daily activities, and ritual language use	Interviews, audio recordings, observations.
Parental language management strategies	Enrolling children in Saturday schools, watching television in Arabic, communicating with extended family, travelling to the homeland, and reading books in Arabic.	Interviews, audio recordings, observations.
Parental agency	Active agency (collaborative decision-making); constrained agency (unilateral decisions, coercive approach); deferred agency (allowing children to set home language, absence of language practices and strategies)	Interviews, audio recordings, observations.
Children's language beliefs	Positive beliefs (cultural identity, religious significance); Negative beliefs (perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism, challenges at Saturday school, peer influence)	Informal conversations.

Children's language practices	Polar responses, formulaic expressions, repetitions, code-mixing	Audio recordings, observations, and informal conversations.
Children's language management strategies	Attending Saturday school, watching television in Arabic, and reading books in Arabic.	Audio recordings, observations, and informal conversations.
Child agency	Active agency (compliance, negotiation); constrained agency (resistance, defiance); deferred agency (disengagement).	Audio recordings, observations, and informal conversations.
Receptive bilingualism indicators	Comprehension without production, limited verbal responses, word/phrase level production.	Audio recordings, observations, and informal conversations.

Phase 6: Producing the report

The final step in the six-phase approach to data analysis involves producing the final report, which “is not purely a writing exercise” but instead serves as the final step to “check how well the themes work together” (p. 857). As Kiger and Varpio (2020) argue, producing the final report involves writing that begins during early analytical stages through note-taking and theme development. During this stage, direct quotations from participants are carefully selected to support each theme, while in the discussion chapter, the selected themes connect with the broader literature (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

In addition to reviewing and selecting themes that aid in answering the research question, during this final phase, I established the order in which to report themes in a clear, concise, and logical manner (Byrne, 2020). To ensure a coherent narrative, first, I organised the themes to reflect the interconnected nature of family language policy and agency. Second, themes related to agency and its sub-categories were to be presented to understand how agency affects not only the family

language policy but also the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Finally, I presented the quotes necessary to support the themes. The selection of representative quotes followed a systematic approach based on my codebook and the conceptualisation of terms developed during the familiarisation phase. I carefully chose quotes drawn from multiple data sources to ensure a comprehensive representation of the phenomenon under study.

In summary, in this section, I outlined the study's data analysis method and demonstrated how a reflexive thematic analysis addressed the research question by capturing themes across datasets, linking them to the existing theory guiding the study, and remaining open to emerging themes. I applied Braun et al.'s (2019) six-phase approach to the analysis of all data sources and explicitly documented key methodological decisions, including the combination of deductive and inductive approaches, the use of 'In Vivo' coding, and the development of a structured codebook. Through careful triangulation of interview data, audio recordings, observations, and informal discussions with the children, I captured both reported and observed themes relevant to the study. While NVivo software supported data organisation, the core analytical work was grounded in my interpretation and triangulation of multiple data sources, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the relationship among family language policy, agency, and receptive bilingualism. In the next section, I turn to the ethical considerations that underpinned the design and implementation of this study.

4.4.2 Ethical considerations

I received ethical clearance to conduct the study from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (Project No. 2023/462) in August 2023. I commenced the research only after obtaining this approval, ensuring that all aspects of the study adhered to the required

ethical guidelines. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, I remained mindful of critical ethical issues and concerns, particularly regarding informed consent procedures (Nathan et al., 2019; Polonsky & Waller, 2019), protecting participants' privacy and confidentiality (Liamputtong, 2019; Starfield, 2015), and minimising any potential risks to participants. Prior to data collection, I distributed bilingual information sheets in English and Arabic to participants and explained their contents. These sheets included comprehensive details about the study, my contact information and that of my supervisors, participation requirements, participants' rights, and potential risks and benefits (see Appendix E). I also addressed issues related to privacy, confidentiality, and the ethical handling of digital information, drawing on Seidman's (2006) framework, which outlines what, to what end, how, how long, and for whom. I ensured that all participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, their right to control the publication of their data, and the five-year data retention period, as outlined in the University of Sydney's ethical guidelines.

4.4.3 Research rigors (Trustworthiness)

In the process of establishing research rigors, which refers to the quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research where the researcher has "drawn the correct conclusions about the meaning of an event or phenomenon" (Houser, 2018, p. 215), I drew on Lincoln and Guba's (1994) "Model of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research", the most commonly used model for research rigors. The model was employed to strengthen the quality of the research inquiry by providing an "accurate representation of the population studied" and enabling potential replication of the study with different populations (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 151).

Lincoln and Guba's model outlines four components to ensure trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 152), which I applied throughout this study. Credibility refers to "how believable are the findings?" (Bryman, 2016, as cited in Liamputtong, 2019, p. 19), which I achieved through member checking (participant feedback) with post-interview follow-ups and discussions to confirm my interpretations of themes accurately represented participants' experiences. My time spent with participants, interview techniques and triangulations, careful transcription, and use of participants' direct words further contributed to the study's credibility (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). For transferability, which refers to "the ability to transfer research findings or methods from one group to another" (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 153), I provided a solid description of the participants and research context to allow the study's methodology to apply to different groups or geographical locations, enabling potential replication while acknowledging the characteristics of my study population. I established dependability by ensuring consistency of the findings where another researcher (my supervisor) could follow the study's aim, participants' selection process, data collection length and method, data analysis method, interpretation and presentation of results, and how credibility was achieved, allowing for potential replication or audit of the research process by other researchers (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Finally, to ensure confirmability, I first established credibility, transferability, and dependability (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Then, I demonstrated that my study's results emerged from the data rather than personal disposition through reflexivity, maintaining a reflective and self-critical stance throughout to ensure my interpretations and conclusions were grounded in the data rather than personal biases or preconceptions.

In summary, I outlined the model and criteria I used to ensure research rigour and trustworthiness. Establishing research rigor was essential for strengthening the quality of the research inquiry. I drew on the widely accepted model of trustworthiness in qualitative research proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1994), which consists of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I applied these criteria throughout the study to enhance trustworthiness. By adhering to these standards, I aimed to represent the population accurately studied and establish a foundation for potential replication of the study in different contexts, thereby ensuring the overall rigour and validity of the findings. In the upcoming section, I conclude this chapter by drawing together its main arguments and setting the stage for presenting the findings from both parent and child perspectives.

4.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented the study's longitudinal methodological approach and research design, which, unlike most family language policy studies that rely on single-point data collection, provided a foundation for capturing authentic, naturally occurring language interactions over time. The constructivist worldview, combined with a case study approach informed by ethnographic perspectives, enabled the examination of family language policy from both parent and child perspectives. Multiple data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews, audio recordings of parent-child interactions, observations, and informal conversations with children, created a triangulated database, enabling comparisons between reported beliefs and observed practices and strategies. Data analysis followed Braun et al.'s (2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis, combining deductive categories from Spolsky's model with inductive codes emerging from the data. In the upcoming chapter, I present findings derived from parental data,

demonstrating how alignment or misalignment between beliefs, practices, and strategies relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

CHAPTER FIVE: FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY, AGENCY, AND RECEPTIVE
BILINGUALISM - PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

5.0 Introduction

Following the methodological approach and the proposed theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapters, the following three chapters present and analyse the empirical findings of this study. In this chapter, I present the study's findings on parental family language policy and agency, as well as their impact on receptive bilingualism. In Chapter Six, I present findings on the children's family language policy, agency, and receptive bilingualism. In Chapter Seven, I synthesise and discuss the findings from both Chapters Five and Six, linking them to the existing literature to contextualise and interpret their significance. Together, these interconnected chapters seek to address the thesis's overarching research question: *To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?* And two specific sub-questions:

1. How do the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?
2. How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?

Overall, by answering the study's research questions, I show how the alignment between family language policy components, mediated by agency, relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The findings I present here are based on the data collected through parental interviews, audio recordings of parent-child interactions, and my observations of the families. Accordingly, this chapter is structured as follows: Section 5.1 presents findings on the parents'

family language policy and its influence on receptive bilingualism, while Section 5.2 examines the impact of parental agency on receptive bilingualism.

5.1 Family language policy and receptive bilingualism

Family language policy refers to the explicit (deliberate planning) or implicit (unplanned, naturally occurring) and unofficial language planning at the family level. Although the current literature extensively examines the pivotal role of family language policy in shaping children's heritage language outcomes (Luykx, 2003), the relationship between parental family language policy and the prevalence of receptive bilingualism remains largely unexplored. To fill this gap, in this section, I examine how the components of Spolsky's model of language policy—beliefs, practices, and management strategies—relate individually and collectively to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The central hypothesis here is that alignment among the three components, mediated by agency, can form a language policy that develops children's productive language skills through supportive language use and exposure, whereas misalignment may develop and reinforce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

5.1.1 Parental language beliefs

Parental language beliefs play an important role in heritage language maintenance and can influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism; however, beliefs alone do not determine heritage language outcomes. As discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, language beliefs refer to what individuals or families think and feel about a particular language and are a fundamental component of Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy. Based on the initial parental interview question, "*Why are you preserving Arabic and teaching it to your children?*" the findings reveal

that the parents from all three families believed it was important to preserve Arabic and transmit it to their children to preserve their cultural heritage and identity and for communication with the extended family.

Preserving cultural heritage and cultural identity emerged as the primary belief for preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children among the parents of all three families. This finding is evidenced by the statements below:

During the parental interview, the mother from Family A said:

“I am preserving and teaching Arabic to the children because it is the language of our culture... I would like the children to know they are Arab... If my son doesn't have this background, we would lose generations.”

In the above extract, according to the mother of Family A, preserving Arabic is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and is a key marker of cultural heritage, suggesting that language loss results in the erosion of cultural heritage and identity. The mother's strong emphasis on preserving Arabic suggests that her children would be able to speak Arabic, rather than develop receptive bilingualism.

In a similar vein, the father, from Family B, also believed that preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children is necessary for maintaining the children's cultural heritage and identity, where he stated:

“We must preserve Arabic and teach it to the children, so our children don't forget their background. They need to know where they come from, their ancestral countries, cities or areas. Arabic is our mother language.”

While the father's response similarly emphasises the importance of preserving Arabic for the children's cultural heritage and identity, his use of 'must' indicates a strong belief that preserving the heritage language is an obligation, framing it as a duty rather than a choice for maintaining cultural connections. This belief also suggests and implies that the children should be able to speak Arabic and not be receptive bilinguals.

Likewise, the father, from Family C, also believed that preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children is important for preserving cultural heritage, where he expressed:

“My aim is first to give the children a sense of belonging towards my country. I do not want the children to lose their language.”

The father's focus on 'belonging' suggests that the heritage language is believed to be a vital connection to the country of origin, while his concern about language loss shows that he does not wish for his children to lose their language. The father's response suggests that he envisions his children speaking Arabic and not being receptive bilinguals. Therefore, it appears that parents from all three families strongly believe in preserving Arabic for cultural heritage and identity.

Another shared belief among families is that preserving Arabic is important for communicating with extended families both in Australia and abroad. This finding is supported by statements from parents of all three families. For example, in an audio-recorded conversation between the mother

of Family A and Muhammad (aged 9) about the importance of learning Arabic, the mother tells Muhammad:

“How will you go to Lebanon when no one can understand you? Grandma won’t be able to understand you.”

In the extract above, the mother’s statement shows that she believes that preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children is important for communicating with the extended family, particularly with relatives in Lebanon. The mother’s question to her son suggests a concern that language loss could create communication barriers with the extended family, indicating that receptive bilingualism would be insufficient for meaningful family conversations and implying the need for Muhammad to speak Arabic.

The mother from Family B also believed that it is important for the children to speak Arabic for communicating with the extended family, where she stated:

“We are members of a vast Arabic-speaking community and engage heavily with the community here, and when we travel to Iraq, the children need to speak Arabic to their relatives.”

The mother’s response highlights a dual perspective on preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children. First, heritage language preservation is seen as essential for enabling communication and maintaining cultural ties with the local community. Second, it is important for the children to speak Arabic to communicate with the extended family in Iraq. This suggests that receptive bilingualism

may limit children's ability to communicate with the community and their extended family, both locally and abroad.

The mother from Family C also believes that it is important for the children to speak Arabic for communicating with the extended family, by saying:

“My goal is for them to learn Arabic so that they will know how to speak and interact with people if they go to Lebanon.”

The mother's explicit reference to “speak and interact” reveals an expectation that the children must learn Arabic to maintain communication and cultural ties with the extended family in Lebanon. The mother's statement implies that the children have some command of Arabic and are not receptive. Thus, all three families also believe that preserving and teaching Arabic to the children is important for communicating with the extended family.

Comprehension and recitation of religious texts, particularly the Qur'an and Hadith [teachings of Prophet Muhammad], emerged as another shared belief of Families A and C. Interestingly, unlike communication with extended family, which requires productive language skills, this belief may be supporting the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, as it emphasises memorisation, understanding and recitation of the Qur'an rather than spontaneous language production.

The mother from Family A expressed this belief by stating:

“We preserve the Arabic language so the children can understand and recite the Qur'an”.

Although the mother's statement reflects her belief in the importance of preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children so they can recite the Qur'an, and her use of 'must' signals a sense of obligation, her emphasis on learning Arabic to understand and recite religious texts aligns more with the development and prevalence of receptive bilingualism, as recitation is more likely to promote memorisation and comprehension than natural language production (Baharin et al., 2025).

Likewise, the father from Family C similarly views the preservation and transmission of Arabic to the children as essential for reciting and understanding religious texts, where he said:

“From another perspective, especially religiously, [Arabic is important for] reciting and understanding the Qur'an and Hadith.”

Similar to the mother of Family A, the father of Family C also believes that preserving Arabic and teaching it to children is important for the comprehension of religious texts. By stating “from another perspective,” The father acknowledges multiple reasons for maintaining Arabic, with religious recitation and comprehension being significant. Thus, the parents from Families A and C believe that preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children is important for comprehension and recitation of religious texts.

In summary, parental beliefs centred around three main themes: preserving cultural heritage and identity, enabling communication with extended family, and, for Families A and C, supporting the comprehension and recitation of religious texts (see Table 18). Notably, Family B uses Aramaic as the language of prayer and therefore does not share this particular belief. These findings align with Spolsky's model of language policy, which positions beliefs as the foundational component

influencing family language decisions. Whether these beliefs translate into supportive language practices is examined in the following subsection.

Table 18. *Summary of the identified parental beliefs*

Parental family language policy component	Family language policy component subcategory	Family	Frequency	Total
Heritage language beliefs	Preserving cultural heritage and cultural identity	A	1	3
		B	1	
		C	1	
	Communication with the extended family	A	1	3
		B	1	
		C	1	
	Comprehension and recitation of religious texts	A	1	2
		B	0	
		C	1	

5.1.2 Parental language practices

Having identified the importance of parents preserving Arabic and teaching it to their children, in this section, I explore the language practices parents apply and their impact on receptive bilingualism, based on data from parental interviews, parent-child audio recordings, and my observations of the families. As outlined in the theoretical framework chapter, parental language practices refer to families' habitual, natural language routines used in daily interactions, such as using Arabic in daily activities (Schwartz, 2020; Spolsky, 2021). In what follows, the most common and frequently used language practices across the families will be presented, followed by less common and less frequent practices.

Code-mixing emerged as the predominant and most frequently applied language practice across all three families. Code-mixing refers to the process of alternating between two or more languages in a conversation, which can be inter-sentential or intra-sentential (Gumperz, 1977; Rahmat et al., 2019). This finding is supported by the number of code-mixing occurrences per family, as observed in parental interviews, parent-child audio recordings, and observations (see Table 19). However, marked differences in frequency and impact on receptive bilingualism were noted.

In examining code-mixing practices across families, Family B demonstrated alignment between their positive beliefs and their applied language practices by reducing code-mixing.

During the parental interview, the mother from Family B said:

“We mainly speak Arabic at home, but occasionally we mix English words and phrases to deliver the message.”

The mother's statement indicates that Family B predominantly speaks Arabic at home, with occasional code-mixing of English words and phrases. This practice appears to reflect a planned family language policy aimed at maximising Arabic input and aligns with the mother's beliefs about preserving Arabic, with Arabic used as the primary medium of family communication and English used only when necessary for clarification. Data from parent-child interactions and observations also support the mother's claim, revealing only 19 instances of code-mixing out of 305 turns across all datasets, as presented in Table 19. This lower frequency of code-mixing in

Family B reflects an alignment between the parents' stated beliefs and practices and adherence to the family language policy.

In contrast, families A and C showed higher frequencies of code-mixing, though with different patterns, which may have a greater impact on the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. According to the mother from Family A:

"If my children don't understand me, I would mix English with Arabic until they do."

In this extract, the mother's statement reveals that she code-mixes when the children struggle to understand Arabic. While this practice partially aligns with the mother's beliefs about preserving Arabic, as it maintains some Arabic exposure for the children, data from parent-child interactions and observations reveal a striking 164 instances of code-mixing out of 489 turns across all data sets, as shown in Table 19. This high frequency suggests that code-mixing is more prevalent than the mother intends, creating a misalignment between her beliefs and practices and may be contributing to receptive bilingualism, where the children become accustomed to mixed language input, thus reducing their opportunities to speak Arabic.

Similarly, code-mixing was also prevalent and occurred frequently in Family C. The mother from Family C reported:

"I speak with the children in English and sometimes use Arabic words here and there. I speak English 99% of the time."

According to the mother of Family C, she primarily communicates in English, with occasional code-mixing of Arabic words into English sentences. The mother's statement aligns with data captured in audio recordings and observations, where 198 instances of code-mixing of Arabic words/phrases out of 412 turns were detected, as shown in Table 19. Despite the mother's belief in the importance of preserving Arabic, the frequent code-mixing suggests a misalignment between her stated beliefs and her actual language practices. Frequent code-mixing reduces the children's exposure to Arabic, which may hinder the development of their productive skills in the heritage language. Nonetheless, this limited exposure may still support receptive comprehension, even where production remains limited.

Another common practice observed among all three families was the use of Arabic in daily activities, where conversations were conducted entirely in Arabic. The *use of Arabic in daily activities* category refers to everyday conversational exchanges between parents and children, including routine interactions such as meal-time talk, house chores, discussing school, giving instructions, and general household communication. This finding first emerged in parental interviews and was later quantified through parent-child audio recordings and the researcher's observations. Unlike the code-mixing instances discussed above, these represent turns where families-maintained Arabic throughout their interactions without mixing with English.

Family B demonstrated the strongest use of Arabic in daily activities, as evidenced by the mother's statement:

"We speak Arabic at home every day... Everything we talk about is in Arabic."

The mother's statement reflects a strong commitment to using Arabic in daily activities, aligning closely with her belief in preserving and teaching Arabic to the children. The mother's statement was supported by data from parent-child audio recordings and the researcher's observations, which show that she used Arabic in 92.4% of her total turns (282 out of 305) (see Table 19). This high percentage indicates an alignment between the family's stated beliefs and practices, which may also point to the presence of an explicit (planned) family language policy, unlike the more implicit (natural and unstructured) language policy observed in the other families. This consistency can be understood in light of the parents' linguistic profile, where both arrived in Australia as adults with limited English proficiency, and Arabic remains their habitual language of spousal communication.

Similarly, the mother from Family A reported using Arabic in daily activities:

"We speak Arabic daily. I ask the [children] things in Arabic, for example, What do you want to study? What do you want to eat? Brush your teeth. Go to bed. But they often respond in English..."

The mother's statement indicates that she uses Arabic for a range of everyday interactions, including questions and directives related to daily routines. While this reflects a degree of alignment with her stated belief about preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children, data from audio recordings and the researcher's observations show that the mother from Family A used Arabic in only 67.0% of her turns (325 out of 480). This suggests that nearly one-third of her interactions occurred in English. Furthermore, the mother's observation that the children frequently respond in

English, despite her use of Arabic, suggests the development and prevalence of receptive bilingualism, in which the children understand Arabic but tend to express themselves in English.

In contrast to Families A and B, the use of Arabic in daily activities was limited in Family C. The mother from Family C stated:

“I speak English 99% of the time.”

The mother's statement indicates that Family C predominantly uses English in daily activities, with only occasional use of Arabic words or phrases. This is supported by data from audio-recordings and observations, which show that Arabic was used in 33.0% of the mother's total turns (139 out of 412). Although this low percentage reveals a misalignment between the family's stated belief in preserving Arabic and the observed language practices, interestingly, this percentage is considerably higher than the mother's estimate, which suggests that the mother from family C speaks Arabic more than she perceives. Although 33% may not represent minimal use of Arabic in daily activities, it is still comparatively lower than the Arabic usage observed in the other families. This reduced use of Arabic may be creating conditions conducive to receptive bilingualism, where the children develop comprehension of Arabic but lack sufficient exposure to develop productive skills.

Ritual language use, defined as using the heritage language for religious purposes, emerged as an infrequent shared language practice among Families A and C, with 2 and 1 occurrences, respectively, while absent in Family B. Unlike code-mixing and the use of Arabic in daily activities, which were quantified by individual turns, each Qur'anic verse or Hadith reference was counted as

a single occurrence as these represent intentional selections of sacred texts rather than extended conversational. Evidence of this practice was drawn from both parental reports and observed parent-child interactions, where the mother from Family A said:

“I encourage the children to recite the Qur’an in Arabic, and I explain [its content] to them.”

The mother’s statement shows that she uses ritual language by encouraging the children to recite the Qur’an, aligning this practice with her belief in preserving Arabic to better understand religious texts. However, with only two instances recorded, the limited and formulaic nature of this practice may not provide sufficient exposure to support the development of productive Arabic skills, despite research suggesting that rote expression can form the basis for productive language development (Dyson, 2021).

An audio recording between Muhammad (9) and his mother revealed another example of ritual language use in Family B, as shown below:

Turn	Utterance
1	Muhammad [Speaking in Arabic]: اللهم باسمك ونموت <i>‘O Allah, in Your name we [live] and die’</i>
2	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: نموت ونحيا <i>‘We die, and we live. [A morning and evening supplication].’</i>
3	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: كمان بتعرف عن العش. <i>‘You also know [the hadith] about cheating...’</i>
4	Muhammad [Speaking in Arabic]: من غشنا فليس منا <i>‘Whoever cheats us is not one of us.’</i>

This conversation shows Muhammad reciting the morning supplications and hadiths with his mother's help. In doing so, the mother reinforces her belief in preserving Arabic by supporting her child's ability to comprehend and recite religious texts. However, as shown in the interaction, the use of ritual language in this structured religious context primarily encourages the recitation of established texts rather than spontaneous conversational exchange, which may reinforce Muhammad's receptive bilingualism.

Likewise, ritual language use was also reported in Family C. The father said:

"I tell the children to recite the Qur'an so they can speak [Arabic]."

The father's statement suggests that he encourages the use of ritual language through Qur'an recitation, aligning with his belief in preserving Arabic for the comprehension of religious texts, with the expectation that the children might be able to speak Arabic. However, ritual language use was not captured in the audio recordings and observations conducted for this study, which may reflect the timing and scope of data collection rather than the actual frequency of such practices. This pattern mirrors that of Family A, where ritual language use was similarly not observed during the recorded interactions, rather than natural Arabic production. It is also important to note that the absence of ritual language use in Family B can be attributed to their Sabean-Mandean faith, which employs Aramaic rather than Arabic in religious contexts.

Table 19. *Summary of identified parental language practices*

Parental family language policy component	Family language component subcategory	Family	Frequency	Total
Heritage language practices	Code-mixing	A	164/489	381
		B	19/305	
		C	198/412	
	Using Arabic in daily activities	A	325/489	-
		B	282/305	
		C	139/412	
	Ritual language use	A	2	3
		B	0	
		C	1	

In summary, despite parents' positive beliefs about preserving Arabic, some observed language practices in the recorded data were limited and may contribute to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. While three primary practices emerged—code-mixing, using Arabic in daily routines, and ritual language use—these findings reflect the specific interactions captured during data collection and may not represent the full scope of family language practices. Family B demonstrated the strongest alignment between beliefs and practices, with limited code-mixing (19 instances) and high Arabic use (92.4%). Family A showed partial alignment with moderate code-mixing (164 instances) and Arabic use (67%), while Family C exhibited misalignment through extensive code-mixing (198 instances) and reduced Arabic use (33%). Ritual language use, while aligning with

Families A and C's religious beliefs, was infrequent and produced formulaic expressions rather than natural language production; it was absent in Family B due to their use of Aramaic for prayer. These patterns of alignment and misalignment appear to create conditions in which children develop more receptive than productive skills. I now turn to presenting findings on language management strategies.

5.1.3 Parental language management strategies

Building on the identified parental language beliefs and daily language practices, this subsection presents findings on the final component of Spolsky's model of language policy: language management strategies. Before presenting these findings, it is necessary to clarify the distinction between language practices and language management strategies as operationalised in this study. As outlined in the theoretical framework (Chapter Three), language practices refer to habitual, often unconscious language efforts that occur naturally in daily interactions, such as code-mixing or using Arabic during routine conversations. Language management strategies, by contrast, are deliberate and planned efforts applied by members of a speech community to maintain and develop the heritage language (Caldas, 2012; Spolsky, 2004). The key criterion for categorising an effort as a management strategy rather than a practice is intentionality: strategies require conscious effort and planning, whereas practices are habitual and natural. For instance, a parent naturally speaking Arabic at dinner constitutes a practice, whereas deliberately restricting English television to increase Arabic exposure constitutes a strategy. In what follows, the most common and frequent language strategies observed will be presented, followed by those that are less common and less frequent.

Watching television in Arabic emerged as a common strategy adopted by all three families; however, its implementation varied significantly. Family B demonstrated the strongest alignment between beliefs and practices through exclusive Arabic media exposure and evidence of regular implementation. During the parental interview, the father from Family B reported:

“We don't have English TV channels...we only have Arabic TV channels for the children to watch daily.”

The father's statement indicates a deliberate language management strategy that involves exclusive exposure to Arabic media, aligns with his belief in preserving and teaching Arabic to the children, and indicates an explicit (planned and deliberate) family language policy. The data in Table 20 supports this claim, showing three instances of this strategy being implemented in Family B, compared to the less frequent implementation in Family A.

On the other hand, Family A showed only partial alignment between their beliefs and language management strategies, as the implementation of the 'watching television in Arabic' strategy was inconsistent. The mother from Family A stated:

“We have set up Arabic channels on TV. I tell the children to watch the Arabic kids' programs on it.”

The mother's statement suggests a planned language management strategy aimed at creating an Arabic language environment through media exposure, which may appear to align with the mother's positive beliefs. However, no direct evidence of the children watching Arabic television

was captured in the parent-child recordings or noted during observations. At the same time, observational data revealed that the children frequently used their electronic gadgets to watch English-language shows and programs. While the absence of Arabic media use in the data might suggest limited implementation, it is also possible that the children watched Arabic television at times not recorded. Therefore, it cannot be conclusively determined whether the strategy was inconsistently implemented or simply not observed during the recording period.

In contrast to Families A and B, Family C displayed minimal alignment between beliefs and language management strategies, particularly in their limited implementation of the watching television in Arabic strategy. The mother of Family C stated:

“I encourage them to watch something in Arabic on TV.”

The mother's statement indicates a less structured approach to implementing the 'watching television in Arabic' strategy. While this partially aligns with her belief in preserving and teaching Arabic to children, the data in Table 20 show only one recorded instance of this strategy based on parental reports. Although the mother expressed a preference for the children to watch Arabic media, they were observed watching YouTube content in English on their electronic devices, suggesting that although this strategy is encouraged, it is not consistently implemented. This pattern of children watching English content despite parental preferences for Arabic media was observed across all three families. Therefore, similar to what was observed in Family A, this strategy only partially aligns between the mother's stated beliefs and her actual language management strategies. Thus, although watching television in Arabic was a strategy shared across families, its

implementation varied, suggesting that its effectiveness in supporting productive bilingualism depends on consistency.

Communication in Arabic with extended family members, both locally and internationally, emerged as another deliberate strategy adopted by all three families, which appears to align with their beliefs about preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children. This finding is evidenced by statements from each family:

The mother, from Family A, stated:

“I tell the children to speak in Arabic to their maternal grandmother and aunty whenever I am on the phone with them.”

The mother's statement reflects a deliberate language management strategy aimed at creating opportunities for the children to use Arabic with extended family members. This strategy aligns with the mother's parental belief in preserving Arabic for communication with the extended family and suggests the adoption of an implicit, natural family language policy. However, no instances of communication with the extended family were captured in the audio recordings or observed by the researcher, and thus, there is no empirical evidence to support the mother's reported strategy. While the absence of data does not conclusively indicate infrequent implementation of this strategy, the available data suggests that this strategy may be implemented infrequently, potentially limiting its effectiveness in supporting the development of children's heritage language production skills.

Similarly, the father from Family B said:

“When we are on the phone with family, we call our children and tell them to say hello to their relatives.”

The father's statement reflects a deliberate language management strategy that encourages the children to interact with extended family members in Arabic, supporting both language use and familial connection. This strategy aligns with the family's belief in preserving Arabic to enable communication with the extended family. However, as with Family A, no conversations with extended family members were recorded in the data collected for this study. The absence of such recordings means that the implementation of this strategy could not be assessed through the available data, which may limit insights into the children's opportunities to develop productive language skills through communication with the extended family.

Evidence of the communication in Arabic with the extended family strategy was also articulated by the mother from Family C, who stated:

“I tell the children to speak with their grandmother overseas over the phone, but they struggle to speak in Arabic and ask me to translate.”

The mother's statement reflects an effort to implement and encourage the children to communicate with the extended family, demonstrating alignment between her beliefs and the language management strategies she applies. However, the mother also acknowledged challenges with this strategy, including the children's struggle to speak Arabic and their reliance on her for translation. No additional instances of this strategy were observed beyond parental reports.

Consistently speaking the heritage language, defined in this thesis, as the parents speaking Arabic without code-mixing, which requires effort, commitment and consistency, emerged as another strategy used by families. However, its implementation varied considerably across families, as shown in Table 20. While the previous section examined overall heritage language practices, including code-mixing, in the analysis here, I focus on parents' attempts to maintain monolingual Arabic interactions. Consistently speaking Arabic was observed in audio recordings of parent-child interactions and during the researcher's observations, where some parents were observed attempting to maintain Arabic throughout their conversations with children.

Turn	Utterance
1	David [Speaking in English]: Mama, this medicine is
2	The mother: ليش ماما حبيبي؟ معليش هذا بفيديك الدواء. أنت بتعرف. <i>'Why, my darling? It's okay darling, the medicine makes you better. You know that.'</i>
3	David [Speaking in English]: <i>'I'm having a very bad day.'</i>
4	The mother: يلا حبيبي. الله يرضى عليك. <i>'Come on darling, may god bless you.'</i>

The conversation between the mother and David demonstrates the mother's language management strategy of consistently speaking Arabic, suggesting alignment with the positive belief in preserving cultural heritage and identity. In the conversation above, while the mother maintains Arabic throughout her turns, David consistently responds in English. This pattern suggests that, despite the mother's efforts, this strategy may be ineffective in encouraging the children to speak Arabic,

providing clear evidence of receptive bilingualism, where the children understand Arabic but respond exclusively in English.

Similarly, the mother from Family B consistently speaks to Sami in Arabic, as presented in the example below.

Turn	Utterance
1	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: شنو رح تسوي بالعراق؟ شنو البلان مالتك؟ <i>'What are you going to do in Iraq? What's your plan?'</i>
2	Sami [Speaking in Arabic]: أكل هواي... <i>'I'll eat a lot'</i> [Speaking in English]: With Qusay and all of my brothers.
3	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: تاكل هواي. وبعد <i>'Eat a lot, and then what?'</i>
4	Sami: أكل هواي ونروحن... <i>'I'll eat a lot, and then we'll go'...</i>
5	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: أولاد خالك؟ <i>'Cousins?'</i>
6	Sami [Speaking in English]: <i>No, hotel.</i>

The conversation above between the mother and Sami showed more consistent use of Arabic by both the child and the mother. The mother's use of Arabic aligns with her beliefs of preserving and teaching Arabic to the children. Data presented in Table 20 further support this by showing that Family B used Arabic in 83.6% (255 out of 305) of their turns without code-mixing. Throughout the conversation, the mother consistently speaks Arabic and uses follow-up questions (turns 3 and 5) to encourage Sami to continue responding in Arabic. While Sami mostly responds in Arabic,

occasional code-mixing suggests that his receptive skills may still be stronger than his productive skills.

Likewise, in a conversation between Fayrouz from Family C and her father, despite the father reporting that he speaks 99% English, he attempts to consistently speak Arabic after his initial English sentence.

Turn	Utterance
1	The father [speaking in English:] Fayrouz, if someone asked you in Arabic كيفك؟, 'How are you? What would you say?'
2	Fayrouz [Speaking in Arabic]: الحمد لله ' <i>Thank God</i> '
3	The father [Speaking in Arabic]: طيب شو بتقولى, الحمد لله بخير؟ ' <i>So, what do you say, [you say] thank god, I am well.</i> '
4	Fayrouz [Speaking in Arabic]: أنا منيح ' <i>I am good (masculine marker).</i> '

The conversation above between the father and Fayrouz reveals a different approach to the strategy of consistently speaking Arabic. In this interaction, the father initiates the conversation in English but then switches to and maintains Arabic for the remainder of the conversation. The father of Family C also appears to carefully scaffold the conversation in a way that prompts an Arabic response, for example, by asking, "If someone asked you in Arabic." Although this conversation appears to be more of an explicit language-teaching moment to encourage the child to speak Arabic, no other instances of similar interactions were observed across all datasets.

Turning to more specific language management strategies, corrective feedback emerged as another language management strategy, applied by Families A, B, and C. In this study, corrective feedback refers to parental correction of children's linguistic errors, ranging from subtle interventions, such as clarification and repetition, to more overt methods, including input reformulation and direct correction (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). For instance, in the above extract between Fayrouz and her father, turn 3 demonstrates implicit corrective feedback, where the father says, "So, what do you say, [you say] thank god, I am well," expanding the child's utterance without explicitly stating it is incorrect. However, this was the only example of corrective feedback observed in Family C. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the children of Family C noticed the sudden use of this strategy and began questioning their father's change in approach, suggesting that the parents in Family C do not consistently implement corrective feedback.

As for Family A, only a single recording showed the mother of Family A using implicit corrective feedback as a language management strategy, as illustrated below:

Turn	Utterance
1	Muhammad [speaking in Arabic]: أنا تفاح <i>'I am an apple'</i>
2	The mother: إنت تفاح؟ أو إنت أكلت التفاح <i>'Are you an apple? or, did you eat an apple?'</i>
3	Muhammad [Speaking in Arabic]: لا لا أنا... <i>'No, No, I...'</i>
4	The mother: إنت شو؟ <i>'You are what?'</i>
5	Muhammad [Speaking in English]: [inaudible- unclear speech]

In the example provided above, Muhammad initiates the conversation in Arabic, demonstrating productive skills, likely drawing on formulaic expressions learnt in Arabic Saturday school. The mother responds with implicit corrective feedback, gently prompting self-correction by questioning his statement. This aligns with her belief in preserving Arabic as a means of maintaining cultural heritage and identity. While Muhammad attempts to respond in Arabic, he appears to struggle, ultimately producing unclear speech, which may indicate stronger receptive than productive skills. Although this use of corrective feedback aligns with the mother's beliefs, its infrequent occurrence (only one instance) suggests it is not consistently applied as part of the family's language management strategy.

Within Family B, corrective feedback emerged as an explicit and frequently used strategy, with parents regularly correcting their children's linguistic errors and encouraging them to repeat the correct form, as in the following example:

Turn	Utterance
1	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: الله، سامي رح يروح للعراق؟ شنو تريد تاكل هناك؟ <i>'How nice, Sami is going to Iraq? What do you want to eat there?'</i>
2	Sami [Speaking in Arabic]: كباب، گوص؟ <i>'Kebab, Shawarma?' [mispronouncing the Arabic word for shawarma]</i>
3	The mother [Speaking in Arabic and correcting pronunciation]: گص <i>'Shawarma'</i>
4	Sami: گص گص <i>'Shawarma, Shawarma' [correct pronunciation]</i>

In the example above, the mother uses corrective feedback consistently and explicitly, aligning with her belief in preserving Arabic to maintain cultural heritage and identity. When Sami mispronounces the Arabic word 'شاورما' (shawarma) in turn 2, the mother immediately provides the correct pronunciation in turn 3. Sami's immediate repetition of the correct form suggests that this strategy may be more effective in Family B than in Family A, demonstrating its capacity to improve children's language production skills and reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Additional instances of corrective feedback (8 in total) were also observed in Family B, as reported in Table 20.

Finally, travelling to the homeland was an immersive language management strategy reported only by Family B. According to the father:

"We travel regularly, every two years or so, to Iraq so the children can learn the language and see family."

The father's statement reveals that Family B uses travelling to the homeland as a deliberate, long-term, and planned strategy. This strategy serves the dual purpose of facilitating children's language learning and encouraging them to speak Arabic, while also maintaining connections with the extended family, aligning with the family's belief in preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children for communication with the extended family.

Table 20. *Summary of identified parental language strategies*

Parental family language policy component	Family language component subcategory	Family	Frequency*	Total
Language Management Strategies	Watching TV in Arabic	A	1	5
		B	3	
		C	1	
	Communication with the extended family	A	1	3
		B	1	
		C	1	
	Consistently speaking the heritage language without code-mixing	A	161/480	-
		B	255/305	
		C	30/412	
	Corrective feedback	A	1	10
		B	8	
		C	1	
	Travelling to the homeland	A	0	1
		B	1	
		C	0	

**Frequency variations reflect differences in family language strategies, recording contexts, and individual family circumstances during data collection.*

In sum, in this subsection, I have examined the language strategies families employ and how these strategies influence receptive bilingualism, arguing that parents exhibit varying levels of alignment between their positive beliefs and the language management strategies they implement. The findings revealed a spectrum of strategies, varying in type and frequency of implementation across the three families. Common strategies included watching Arabic television, communicating with extended family, parents consistently speaking Arabic, corrective feedback and travelling to the homeland. Family B demonstrated strong alignment between stated beliefs and applied language management strategies, as evidenced by the consistent application of these strategies. In contrast, Family A showed partial alignment between beliefs and strategies, whereas Family C

showed minimal alignment and limited implementation of the identified strategies. These varying degrees of implementation appear to shape children's language development, with consistent application supporting productive bilingualism and inconsistent implementation potentially contributing to the development and prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

In conclusion, in this section on parental family language policy, I examined how the components of Spolsky's model of family language policy—beliefs, practices, and management strategies—affected the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. I argued that alignment between these components could form a language policy that encourages, supports, and develops children's productive language skills through supportive language use and exposure, whereas misalignment develops and reinforces receptive bilingualism. While Spolsky's model of language policy implies that the presence of all three components indicates a language policy, the findings revealed a different pattern: varying degrees of alignment among parental beliefs, language practices, and management strategies across families. Family B demonstrated strong alignment between their beliefs, practices, and strategies. In contrast, Family A demonstrated partial alignment between beliefs and practices. Family C displayed misalignment between their beliefs and practices. These partial alignments and misalignments in Families A and C highlight a limitation of Spolsky's model, suggesting that the mere presence of beliefs, practices, and strategies does not necessarily result in a family language policy that could support and develop production language skills. Table 21 consolidates the thematic structure of parental beliefs, practices, and management strategies, illustrating how major themes and sub-themes were derived from the coded data.

Table 21. *Thematic structure of parental family language policy*

Theme	Sub-theme	Example codes	Illustrative data excerpt
Parental language beliefs	Preserving cultural heritage and identity	-language of our culture -know they are Arab - don't forget their background -sense of belonging	"I am preserving and teaching Arabic to the children because it is the language of our culture... I would like the children to know they are Arab" (Mother, Family A)
	Communication with extended family	-Speak Arabic to their relatives -Speak Arabic with family overseas.	"My goal is for them to learn Arabic so that they will know how to speak and interact with people if they go to Lebanon." (Mother, Family C)
	Comprehension and recitation of religious texts	-understand and recite the Qur'an -reciting and understanding religious texts	"We preserve the Arabic language so the children can understand and recite the Qur'an." (Mother, Family A) "I tell the children to recite the Qur'an so they can speak [Arabic]." (Father, Family C)
Parental language practices	Code-mixing	-mix English with Arabic, -occasionally mix English words -use Arabic words here and there"	"If my children don't understand me, I would mix English with Arabic until they do" (Mother, Family A), "I speak with the children in English and sometimes use Arabic words here and there. I speak English 99% of the time." (Mother, Family C)
	Using Arabic in daily activities	-speak Arabic at home every day -everything in Arabic, -ask things in Arabic"	"We speak Arabic at home every day... Everything we talk about is in Arabic" (Mother, Family B)
	Ritual language use	-recite the Qur'an -morning supplications -Understanding hadith	"I encourage the children to recite the Qur'an in Arabic, and I explain [its content] to them" (Mother, Family A)
Parental language management strategies	Communication with extended family	-speak Arabic to grandmother, -say hello to relatives -phone with family	"I tell the children to speak in Arabic to their maternal grandmother and aunty whenever I am on the phone with them" (Mother, Family A)
	Consistently speaking Arabic without code-mixing	-No code-mixing	Frequency rates
	Watching television in Arabic	-only Arabic TV channels, -set up Arabic channels -watch something in Arabic	"We don't have English TV channels...we only have Arabic TV channels for the children to watch daily" (Father, Family B)
	Corrective feedback	-correcting pronunciation -repeating the correct form after correction	Mother corrects Sami's mispronunciation of "shawarma"; Sami immediately repeats the correct form (Observation, Family B); 8 instances observed.
	Travelling to the homeland	-travel	"We travel regularly, every two years or so, to Iraq so the children can learn the language and see family" (Father, Family B)

5.2 Parental agency and receptive bilingualism

The previous section on family language policy demonstrated that alignment between the components of Spolsky's model of language policy—beliefs, practices, and management strategies—could develop and support children's productive language skills, while misalignment may develop and reinforce receptive bilingualism. Although Spolsky's model predicts that the presence of all three components indicates the presence of a family language policy, as seen in Family B, the model does not account for why some families, such as Families A and C, could not translate their positive beliefs into supportive language practices and strategies. These findings suggest that additional factors are needed to bridge the gap between beliefs, practices, and strategies to produce a family language policy capable of reducing the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Therefore, in this section, I investigate how parental agency operates as a mediating process that shapes the alignment between the components of Spolsky's model, while also examining its impact on receptive bilingualism. The argument of this section is that agency was observed to operate through three observable forms: active, constrained, and deferred; each producing different degrees of alignment between beliefs, practices, and management strategies.

5.2.1 Active agency

Active parental agency, a term that builds on the literature's description of agentic actions discussed in the literature review chapter, represents a form of mediating agency characterised by intentional engagement, in which parents make choices and decisions to encourage and support the children to speak their heritage language. These choices may include and are not restricted to setting an explicit (planned) family language policy or making choices to implement this policy (Curdt-

Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Kuczynski, 2002; Srhir, 2020). In this subsection, I examine the role of active parental agency in family language policy, arguing that it mediates the translation of language beliefs into supportive and consistent heritage language practices and management strategies, which, in turn, appear to be associated with reducing the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Based on parental reports and in response to the interview question: *“Tell me about the language use at home”*, setting an explicit family language policy through collaboration between the parents emerged as an example of active parental agency in Family B. This is evidenced in the statement of the father from Family B, who declared:

“We laid down the foundations for only speaking Arabic at home.”

The father's statement from Family B reveals that he exercises active parental agency in two ways: first, through collaboration between the parents, where the father uses the collective pronoun “we,” which shows that both parents collaborate as agents to make choices and decisions about the family language policy. Second, both parents have laid the foundations for the children to speak Arabic, implying that an explicit, planned family language policy was developed to support the children's productive skills and reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The application of such an agency could explain the family's alignment among beliefs, practices, and strategies, as evidenced by the family's high rate of Arabic-speaking.

The mother from Family B also supports her husband's statement and demonstrates that she, too, exercises active parental agency through collaboration between the parents. The mother added:

“My husband and I made the decision to speak Arabic only at home. Everything we talk about is in Arabic. We rarely speak English.”

In the excerpt above, the mother from Family B also exercises active agency by making a collaborative decision to speak only Arabic at home. The phrases *“made the decision”* and *“everything we talk about is in Arabic”* also suggest an explicit family language policy made by both parents to support the children in speaking Arabic.

During the parental interview, the father from Family B also demonstrated that he exercises active parental agency by recognising the children's language learning difficulties and addressing these difficulties. The father said:

“The children have difficulties with Arabic words and pronunciation. My wife and I explain what those words mean in English. We teach the children how to use the words correctly [in context] and help them with pronunciation.”

This excerpt illustrates the parents' awareness of their children's heritage language learning difficulties and their joint exercise of active agency through collaborative decision-making to address them. By translating Arabic words into English, modelling correct contextual use, and supporting pronunciation, the father and mother of Family B demonstrate both an explicit language policy and shared responsibility in overcoming these learning difficulties. Although the parents' approach aligns with their beliefs, practices, and strategies aimed at creating an environment that encourages Arabic language production and minimises the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, this approach may be attributed to the parents' limited proficiency in English. As the mother of

Family B noted during the interview, her limited proficiency in English encourages her to converse more frequently with her children in Arabic, thereby providing consistent exposure to the heritage language and support for language learning.

In summary, in this subsection, I investigated active parental agency and argued that active parental agency could help translate language beliefs into supportive heritage language practices and strategies through joint decision-making. The examples above from Family B demonstrate that active parental agency was exercised through joint decision making, where the parents together set an explicit family language policy, and recognised the children's language learning difficulties and addressed these difficulties. These choices or decisions may help explain the high use of Arabic with the children and the strong alignment between the components of Spolsky's model, illustrating how active agency through intentional engagement mediates the alignment between beliefs, practices, and strategies. No additional instances of active parental agency were identified across the dataset. In contrast, Families A and C exercised other forms of agency, which will be explored in subsequent sections.

5.2.2 Constrained agency

Constrained parental agency is conceptualised in this thesis as constrained engagement, in which structural constraints limit parental choices and decisions to encourage and support the children to speak their heritage language. In Family A, for example, the father's limited Arabic proficiency represented a significant structural constraint that shaped the family's language policy. As a non-Arabic speaker, his capacity to directly contribute to the children's heritage language development and maintenance was linguistically limited, placing the responsibility of heritage language

maintenance solely on the mother. This uneven distribution of linguistic gender roles made it more difficult to sustain consistent implementation of language practices and management strategies, despite the mother's positive beliefs in maintaining Arabic for cultural identity and communication with the extended family. Within this constrained context, the mother of Family A exercised constrained agency through unilateral decisions regarding the family's language policy. During the interview, the mother from Family A stated:

“I, the mother, decided that I should speak Arabic with the children.”

While the mother in Family A's statement demonstrates a commitment to maintaining Arabic, the phrase “I, the mother, decided” suggests unilateral decision-making—implementing a family language policy independently rather than collaboratively—despite her positive beliefs, as outlined in section 5.1.1. This individual approach contrasts with Family B's collaborative approach and may help explain the misalignment between Family A's beliefs, practices, and strategies. The mother further explains the constraints that led to her unilateral decision-making:

“At first, the father wanted to speak Arabic to the children. I realised that the father speaks broken Arabic, so I chose to teach my children [Arabic], and the father teaches them English.”

The mother's adoption of the one-person-one-language strategy (OPOL) illustrates how constrained agency operates. Faced with the father's limited Arabic proficiency, the mother chose to assign language roles: she would speak Arabic, and the father would speak English, as he is a native speaker of English. While this decision reflects agency, the capacity to act and make choices, it was

constrained by structural realities that limited available options. The consequence, however, was that the father was excluded from the family language policy despite his initial willingness to participate, placing the responsibility for heritage language maintenance on one parent. This pattern demonstrates that constrained agency not only creates conditions that reinforce receptive bilingualism by limiting heritage-language exposure but parents' proficiency in the heritage language influence parental language choices. Parents less proficient in English may rely on Arabic out of necessity (Family B), whereas parents proficient in both languages may default to English in parent-child interactions (Family A).

Constrained agency was also evident in how the mother from Family A encouraged Arabic learning. As the sole agent of heritage language maintenance, her approach to language learning, while well-intentioned, appeared coercive rather than nurturing. This was evident in an audio recording between Muhammad and his mother, as shown below:

Turn	Utterance
1	Mum [Speaking in Arabic]: محمد، فيك تقلي ليش عم نتعلم عربي؟ <i>'Muhammad, can you tell me why we are learning Arabic?'</i>
2	Muhammad [Speaking in English]: Umm... I don't know. Maybe it's because of our religion, to learn the names of Allāh ...Islam. I don't know.
3	Mum [Speaking in English]: We learn Arabic because we are from an Arabic-speaking country. We must learn to read the Qur'an; we learn Arabic... [Mum raises her voice] How will you go to Lebanon when no one can understand you?

In the conversation above, the mother begins the conversation in Arabic and asks Muhammad about the importance of learning Arabic. Muhammad's uncertain response in English, "*I don't know,*" suggests that this enforced approach may be creating anxiety rather than fostering natural language development. The mother then explains in English why Muhammad should learn Arabic, her raised voice adding pressure to the rhetorical question, "*How will you go to Lebanon when no one can understand you?*" While this reflects the mother's genuine concern for her son's heritage language development, such framing, a product of being the sole agent of heritage language maintenance, may create language anxiety rather than motivate heritage language learning. This illustrates how constrained agency, even when exercised with positive intent, can produce approaches that hinder rather than support heritage language productive skills.

Thus far, in this subsection, I have shown how constrained agency in Family A led to unilateral decision-making and a coercive approach to encouraging Arabic. In both examples, structural constraints (the father's limited Arabic proficiency and the mother's sole responsibility for heritage language maintenance) shaped how agency was exercised, creating misalignment between language beliefs, practices, and strategies and thereby reinforcing receptive bilingualism. In the next section, I present findings on deferred parental agency.

5.2.3 Deferred agency

In the subsections above, I have demonstrated that active parental agency mediates alignment through collaborative decisions and choices that encourage and support heritage language use, whereas constrained parental agency may disrupt alignment and hinder children's heritage language development. In this subsection, I present findings on deferred parental agency. Deferred agency is

conceptualised in this thesis as intentional non-intervention, where parents consciously choose not to make decisions to encourage and support children in speaking their heritage language. This deferral is still a form of choice; however, even when grounded in positive beliefs, it appears to create conditions that support and reinforce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Allowing children to set the home language emerged as a critical indicator of deferred parental agency in Family C. This was evident in the parents' responses to the two interview questions: "*Tell me about the language use at home*", and "*Who decides what language to use at home, the children or the adults?*"

The father replied:

"The children decide the home language. They speak in English, and we go along with that. Honestly, I rarely speak to the children in Arabic."

The father's statement reveals that he exercises deferred agency by ceding control of the family's language policy to the children and choosing not to intervene to encourage or support the heritage language. Despite believing in the importance of preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children, the father in Family C adopts a neutral stance, allowing the children to control the family's language policy. Such a stance appears to contribute to misalignment among beliefs, practices, and language management strategies, leading to inconsistent Arabic exposure that may result in receptive bilingualism or even monolingualism in English.

Likewise, the mother from Family C also exercised deferred agency by allowing the children to set the home language. The mother reported:

“Our children decide the home language because the language they understand is English.”

Like the father, the mother exercised deferred agency by also ceding control of the family language policy to the children. Despite the mother's positive beliefs in preserving and teaching Arabic to the children, exercising deferred agency creates misalignment between beliefs, practices and management strategies. As a result, the children receive limited and inconsistent Arabic input, which may lead to the reinforcement of receptive bilingualism or a gradual shift toward English monolingualism. Thus, exercising deferred agency appears to function as a risk factor for the children's Arabic language development.

The absence of supporting and encouraging Arabic learning and use at home emerged as a further indicator of deferred parental agency exercised by the parents of family C. The father reported:

“There is no encouragement at all... We do not say, come on, my son, come, my daughter, let's teach you Arabic.”

The father's statement illustrates deferred agency through explicit non-intervention. Despite holding positive beliefs about preserving Arabic, the father's explicit acknowledgment that *“There is no encouragement at all”* reveals a lack of action in supporting or encouraging Arabic language learning. The father's framing of language maintenance as “teaching” —an extra task rather than natural family interactions—may explain the exercise of deferred agency. This resulted in misalignment between beliefs, practices, and management strategies, reinforcing receptive

bilingualism. Interestingly, however, this partially contradicts the observed data presented above, which shows that the parents of Family C do implement some language management strategies, such as encouraging watching television in Arabic and communication with the extended family.

Similarly, the mother from Family C also exercised deferred agency by not encouraging Arabic learning and use at home. The mother stated:

“I do not encourage anyone to do anything. It is up to the [children] to do what they want.”

The mother's statement above exemplified deferred agency through intentional non-intervention, where she does not encourage or support Arabic learning and use at home. Instead, the mother allows the children to determine their own language use, ceding control of the family language policy. While there are instances where the parents do attempt to support and encourage Arabic learning and use, for example, through the practices and strategies discussed above, such practices and strategies appear to be limited, inconsistent and shaped by deferred agency. Thus, deferred parental agency, despite positive beliefs, can work against heritage language maintenance efforts and may create conditions that support the development and prevalence of receptive bilingualism or even monolingualism.

To sum up, in this section, I investigated the role of parental agency in aligning the components of Spolsky's model of language policy and its impact on receptive bilingualism. Three forms of agency emerged from the data: active, constrained, and deferred (see Table 22). Family B's active agency, characterised by collaborative decision-making, created alignment between beliefs, practices, and

strategies, supporting productive bilingualism. Family A's constrained agency, shaped by structural forces, was exercised through unilateral decisions, creating partial misalignment. Family C's deferred agency, characterised by allowing children to control the family language policy and the absence of support and encouragement for Arabic learning and use at home, also created misalignment and conditions that could lead not only to the development of receptive bilingualism but also to a potential language shift toward English monolingualism.

Table 22. *Summary of identified parental agency*

Agency Type	Family A	Family B	Family C
Active	×	✓	×
Constrained	✓	×	×
Deferred	×	×	✓

✓ Present × Absent

5.3 Chapter summary

Drawing on parental interviews, parent-child audio recordings, and observations, in this chapter, I presented several key findings addressing the study's research sub-questions. First, alignment of family language policy components — language beliefs, practices, and management strategies — formed a language policy that supports children's productive language skills, whereas misalignment led to inconsistent practices and strategies that reinforce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Second, findings on parental agency revealed three different forms: active agency (Family B), where collaborative decision-making translated beliefs into supportive practices and

strategies; constrained agency (Family A), where structural forces limited the translation of beliefs into consistent practices and strategies; and deferred agency (Family C), where intentional non-intervention such as ceded control of the family language policy to the children, limited heritage language development despite positive parental beliefs. These findings suggest that while Spolsky's model of language policy shapes heritage language outcomes through the alignment or misalignment of the family language policy components, parental agency operates as a mediating process through which beliefs, practices, and strategies become aligned or misaligned, influencing the heritage language outcome. However, the relationship between agency and outcome remains correlational rather than determinative; agency appears to mediate or not rather than function as an independent predictor. Future research with similar or larger samples could strengthen this analysis by comparing families with similar practices or management strategies but differing forms of agency. Looking ahead, the upcoming chapter will present findings on family language policy and agency from children's perspectives, offering a more holistic view of heritage language development among immigrant families in Australia.

CHAPTER SIX: FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY, AGENCY AND RECEPTIVE
BILINGUALISM- CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

6.0 Introduction

Building on the analysis of parental perspectives in Chapter 5, which revealed how different types of parental agency affect both the alignment between family language policy components and the heritage language outcome, in this chapter, I explore how children engage in a family language policy, exercise agency and how that influences the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. One central argument of this chapter is that receptive bilingualism is both a product and a driver of children's family language policy. As a product, receptive bilingualism emerges from children's language beliefs, their constrained language practices, and limited engagement with parent-initiated management strategies. As a driver, the children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism shapes how they engage with the family language policy and the type of agency they exercise. It is important to clarify that I use the term *perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism* as an analytic construct and interpretive lens to understand children's experiences. In this study, the children do not use the term *receptive bilingualism* or demonstrate explicit metalinguistic awareness of receptive bilingualism as a linguistic phenomenon. Rather, their awareness is inferred from observable language choices and explicit statements such as "*I understand [Arabic], but I can't speak it,*" which align with the defining characteristics of receptive bilingualism as conceptualised in this thesis. Accordingly, this chapter is structured as follows: First, I will present data on children's family language policy, followed by findings on child agency.

6.1 Children's family language policy and receptive bilingualism

According to Palviainen & Boyd (2013), the family language policy, whether implicit or explicit, is often co-constructed between family members. Within the home domain, children play an active role alongside parents in constructing the family language policy, which influences the heritage language outcomes (Karpava, 2022). Drawing on Spolsky's model of language policy, in this section, I investigate how the children engage in a family language policy—that is, their heritage language beliefs, whether cognitive or affective; the habitual daily language practices they employ; and how they respond to parent-led management strategies—arguing that the children's negative language beliefs about speaking Arabic were primarily due to their perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism.

6.1.1 Children's language beliefs

While parental language beliefs have been extensively documented, research on children's heritage language beliefs has grown considerably in recent years (Nenonen, 2024; Zhan, 2023). Children's language beliefs refer to what the children think and feel about a particular language. This broader conceptualisation encompasses both cognitive evaluations and affective orientations, which may be shaped by experience, identity, or perceived competence (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; King & Fogle, 2017; Schalley & Eisenclas, 2020). In this section, I show that, as with parental beliefs, children's heritage language beliefs can be conceptualised as positive or negative, with the latter being more prevalent. However, I acknowledge that the children's language beliefs presented in this thesis were not directly observable but were inferred from their verbal responses, grounded in their own words and experiences.

Prompted by the initial children's discussion question with the researcher, "*Do you like speaking Arabic? Why or why not?*" analysis of children's responses across all families revealed that positive beliefs about speaking Arabic were less common than negative ones. Among the nine children, only three, two girls from Family C and one boy, Sami, from Family B, expressed positive beliefs about speaking Arabic (see Table 23). These beliefs were influenced by various factors, including cultural identity and religious significance, as shown below.

Liking to speak Arabic due to having a sense of cultural identity was one positive belief expressed by only two children, Manal from Family C and Sami from Family B. Manal (12), the eldest child from Family C, said:

"I like speaking Arabic because it's like the language of, you know, where I come from.

Manal's response reflects a definite belief in speaking Arabic, which she sees as important for having a sense of cultural identity. For Manal, speaking Arabic is a marker of her cultural identity and origin, and she views it as a positive connection to her heritage and background. Similarly, Sami (8) from Family B also linked his positive belief of liking to speak Arabic to his having a sense of cultural identity, saying:

"I like speaking Arabic because I am from Iraq, and I like speaking our language."

Sami's response reveals that his positive belief in his liking to speak Arabic also stems from his cultural identity. He directly links speaking Arabic to his Iraqi background, highlighting the influence of cultural identity on children's language beliefs.

While cultural identity was a key reason for Manal and Sami to like speaking Arabic, for another child, liking to speak Arabic carried religious significance. Only Kawthar (9), from Family C, liked speaking Arabic due to the language's religious significance, particularly its connection to the Qur'an. Kawthar said:

“Yeah, I guess it makes me feel good because I'm speaking Arabic, which is the language of the Qur'an.”

Kawthar's response also reveals that she likes speaking Arabic; however, her reply, *“Yeah, I guess”*, expresses a degree of uncertainty in her positive belief. Unlike her sister, who valued Arabic for cultural identity, Kawthar's somewhat tentative positive belief toward speaking Arabic is influenced by the language's religious significance. Kawthar directly associates speaking Arabic with the Qur'an, explaining that it makes her feel good because it is the language of her religion.

Therefore, among the nine children, only Manal, Kawthar, and Sami expressed the positive belief of liking to speak Arabic due to cultural identity and religious significance. This positive belief about speaking Arabic, which aligns with their parents' positive beliefs, was absent for the remaining children.

In contrast to the positive belief expressed by Manal, Kawthar, and Sami, three children explicitly stated that they do not like speaking Arabic. This negative belief was primarily attributed to the children's recognition of a mismatch between their comprehension and production skills in Arabic—a pattern that aligns with the definition of receptive bilingualism, where I refer to this self-recognition as the children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism. Thus, awareness

of receptive bilingualism' is applied here as an analytic lens to interpret the children's experiences, rather than as a construct they explicitly recognise or articulate.

Disliking speaking Arabic due to perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism emerged as a negative belief for Muhammad (9), who stated:

" I don't like speaking Arabic. I understand, but I struggle to speak it...because of how small my brain is; it's only peanut-size. The only thing I could say is, "I am an apple."

Muhammad's response shows that he does not like speaking Arabic, directly attributing this negative belief to his perceived inability to speak in Arabic despite understanding it. By comparing his cognitive capacity to a "peanut-size" brain and acknowledging that he has a limited vocabulary and can only produce formulaic expressions such as "I am an apple," Muhammad articulates frustration with his productive limitations.

Similarly, Rose (12) from Family B also stated that she dislikes speaking Arabic due to her perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism, which often leads to a communication breakdown with her extended family, asserting:

"I don't like speaking Arabic. The thing is, I understand them [extended family members], but no one understands me when I speak in Arabic; I struggle to speak with my extended family."

Rose's response shows that her negative belief about disliking speaking Arabic also stems from her perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism, in which she recognises that she can understand Arabic but struggles to speak it. Her explicit statement, "No one understands me," highlights her

difficulty making herself understood by extended family members, reinforcing her negative belief toward speaking Arabic. Like Rose, Fayrouz (11) also held the negative belief that she disliked speaking Arabic, due to her perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism. However, while Rose's struggle centred on being misunderstood by others, Fayrouz's difficulty lay in maintaining back-and-forth conversations.

Fayrouz explained:

"I don't like speaking Arabic...it's not I don't like speaking it. I'm not good at it...I understand it, but I just can't reply back and forth."

In the statement above, Fayrouz shows partial negative beliefs about disliking speaking Arabic, where her initial statement, *"I don't like speaking Arabic,"* is quickly clarified with *"It's not I don't like speaking it,"* suggesting that her negative beliefs stem from experience of conversational limitations—understanding Arabic but being unable to sustain back-and-forth exchanges—rather than a dislike for the language *per se*.

Collectively, the children's responses demonstrate that their negative belief about disliking speaking Arabic was shaped by their perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, which appeared in different forms, ranging from limited vocabulary (Muhammad) to communication breakdowns with the extended family (Rose) to conversational limitations in Arabic (Fayrouz). In addition, these negative beliefs are compounded by affective dimensions, including feelings of embarrassment, frustration, linguistic anxiety, and a sense of incompetence in the heritage language (Relaño-Pastor, 2024; Sevinç, 2022; Sevinç & Dewaele, 2018).

Although the children disliked speaking Arabic due to their perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, two children, Muhammad (from Family A) and Rose (from Family B), also linked their dislike of speaking Arabic to difficulties faced at Saturday Arabic School, including social isolation and the mixing of Modern Standard Arabic with Aramaic in religious studies.

Muhammad attributed his negative belief of disliking speaking Arabic to challenges faced at Arabic Saturday School, particularly feeling socially isolated, stating:

“I don't like speaking Arabic because I don't have any friends at Arabic school on Saturdays. I have zero friends, which makes me hate Arabic and Saturday School.”

Muhammad's response reveals that he holds the negative belief of disliking speaking Arabic due to his social isolation at Arabic Saturday school. His statement about having “zero friends” indicates that the absence of friendships at the school and lack of social integration at the Arabic school, rather than language proficiency challenges, are shaping his overall beliefs toward speaking the language.

In addition to Muhammad's negative belief of disliking speaking Arabic, which stemmed from social isolation at Saturday school, Rose attributed her dislike of speaking Arabic to dissatisfaction with Saturday schools, particularly the mixing of Modern Standard Arabic with Aramaic in religious studies. Rose explained:

“I don't like speaking Arabic because Saturday schools were terrible. They don't teach you proper Arabic; it's like the whole different Mandaean bible language [Aramaic]. I didn't like learning or speaking Arabic there.”

Rose's response shows her negative belief about speaking Arabic, which stems from challenges faced at Saturday Arabic school, especially mixing Arabic and Aramaic in religious studies. Rose's statement, *"I didn't like learning or speaking Arabic there"*, reveals how the challenges faced in Saturday schools seem to influence the children's beliefs toward speaking their heritage language. Thus, both children's negative beliefs about disliking speaking Arabic stemmed from the challenges they face at Saturday schools, showing how these challenges can impact children's beliefs about speaking the heritage language.

Although collecting firsthand data from children was a priority, the perspective of one parent provided valuable insights into the children's dislike of speaking Arabic and the factors influencing this negative belief. During the parental interview, the mother from Family B (Rose and Sami's mother) explained that she perceives peer influence to play a considerable role in their children's dislike of speaking Arabic. Since Arabic is not the language of their peers, the children from Family B often seem to stigmatise their Arabic-speaking peers. According to the mother:

"The children do not like speaking Arabic. If they have a friend who only speaks Arabic, they consider him an 'import.' They want someone who speaks the same language as them and is at the same level as them."

The mother's response reveals how her children do not like speaking Arabic due to peer influence, where Rose and Sami stigmatise their Arabic-speaking peers, labelling them as *"imports."* This highlights how the desire to fit in with English-speaking peers can contribute to negative beliefs about the heritage language. Thus, the children's negative belief in disliking speaking Arabic

stemmed from their perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism, challenges faced at Saturday schools, and peer influence.

In summary, this subsection presents the children's beliefs about learning and speaking Arabic, as well as the reasons behind these beliefs. Data drawn from the children's discussions with the researcher revealed that the children in this study expressed more negative than positive beliefs about speaking their heritage language. While three children expressed a positive belief in liking to speak Arabic due to having a sense of cultural identity and religious significance, this belief was limited and not collectively shared. In contrast, several children reported disliking speaking Arabic, which was influenced by various factors, including perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, challenges faced at Arabic Saturday School, and peer influence, as shown in Table 23.

Table 23. *Summary of identified children's beliefs*

Children's family language policy component	Language component subcategory	Children of Family	Frequency	Total
Positive beliefs	Liking speaking Arabic due to having a sense of cultural identity.	A	-	2
		B	1	
C		1		
	Liking speaking Arabic due to its religious significance	A	-	1
		B	-	
		C	1	
Negative beliefs	Disliking speaking Arabic due to perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism	A	1	3
		B	1	
C		1		
	Disliking speaking Arabic due to challenges faced at Arabic Saturday School	A	1	2
		B	1	
		C	-	

	Disliking speaking Arabic due to peer influence	A	-	1
		B	1	
		C	-	

- Absent

6.1.2 Children's language practices

In the previous subsection, I presented children's language beliefs and the reasons behind them; in this subsection, I present findings on the children's language practices. Children's heritage language practices refer to the habitual, natural daily language routines and linguistic choices children use in interactions (Schwartz, 2020; Spolsky, 2021). Research on receptive bilingual children's language practices remains limited, with only a handful of studies (Nakamura, 2018; Smith-Christmas, 2016) exploring this area, highlighting the need for further investigation. I begin this subsection by presenting data on language practices observed infrequently, including polar responses (yes/no answers), formulaic expressions, and repetitions, before examining more frequently observed language practices, such as code-mixing.

Polar responses (yes/no answers) emerged as a language practice used only by Fayrouz from Family C, as shown in the following conversation between Fayrouz and her mother.

Turn	Utterance
1	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: فيروز أكلتي فلافل؟ <i>'Fayrouz, did you eat falafel?'</i>
2	Fayrouz [Speaking in Arabic]: نعم <i>'Yes.'</i>
3	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: حبيتي الفلافل؟ <i>'Did you like the falafel?'</i>

4	Fayrouz [Speaking in Arabic]: نعم 'Yes.'
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In the conversation above, Fayrouz responds to her mother's yes/no questions with brief polar responses. While such responses are appropriate to the question type, research indicates that reliance on polar responses (and formulaic expressions), rather than extended speech, is characteristic of receptive bilingualism (Nakamura, 2019). Across the recorded data, Fayrouz's Arabic production consisted primarily of polar responses and formulaic expressions; she did not produce extended or spontaneous Arabic speech, though she indicated that she would like to speak Arabic if she had the ability. This pattern aligns with her previously expressed statements about struggling to speak Arabic despite understanding it.

In contrast to Fayrouz's reliance on polar responses, Manal and Kawthar, also from family C, used and drew on formulaic expressions as a heritage language practice. Manal stated:

"I don't speak Arabic. I say really basic things, like, شكرًا 'Thank you', and السلام عليكم 'Peace be upon you'."

Manal's statement demonstrates that she uses and relies on basic, memorised formulaic expressions as part of her language practice. Her Arabic production appears to be limited to culturally fixed expressions, such as greetings and expressions of gratitude, a common pattern of receptive bilingualism. However, the use of formulaic expressions warrants closer analytic inspection. On one hand, Manal's choice to use Arabic greetings and expressions of gratitude—rather than defaulting entirely to English—may reflect agentive engagement with Arabic when she

feels competent, signalling cultural affiliation and participation in the heritage-language community. On the other hand, her confinement to these expressions reflects constrained productive capacity, where she may lack the linguistic skills for spontaneous speech beyond these fixed phrases. This duality—agency within constraint (discussed in detail in section 6.2.2)—characterises much of the children's language practice in this study. Manal is not simply *failing* to speak Arabic; she is deploying her available resources while navigating the limits of her productive ability.

Like Manal, Kawthar also uses and relies on formulaic expressions as a language practice. However, her use of Arabic formulaic expressions was restricted to single Arabic words rather than complete expressions. Kawthar explained:

'For me, it's like Manal as well. [I'll speak] with someone, and then I'll insert a word in Arabic, for example, شكراً, [Thank you], Dad.'

Although Kawthar's Arabic production mirrors Manal's reliance on formulaic expressions, her description suggests a more limited application of this practice, in which she inserts Arabic words sporadically rather than using full expressions. This selective use of Arabic within predominantly English speech also reflects receptive bilingualism, in which she understands Arabic but does not produce it beyond a few memorised, isolated words.

Unlike Manal and Kawthar, repetition emerged as a language practice exclusively used by Fayrouz from Family C. Fayrouz explained:

"I speak Arabic when mum asks me something in Arabic, you know, when you repeat a word to confirm something."

Fayrouz's statement reveals that she primarily relies on repetition by echoing words or phrases from her mother's speech, rather than generating her own Arabic utterances. Such repetition differs from the formulaic expressions used by Manal and Kawthar, demonstrating variation in language practices even within the same family. This pattern also aligns with receptive bilingualism, in which comprehension skills are present but production is limited, reinforcing Fayrouz's earlier reflections on struggling to produce Arabic beyond repetition.

Thus, the children of Family C, Fayrouz, Manal, and Kawthar, predominantly relied on polar responses, formulaic expressions, and repetition as language practices. The prevalence of these language practices appears to be associated with receptive bilingualism, in which children understand the heritage language but have limited productive skills. These language practices were not observed among other families; however, code-mixing was detected as a shared language practice among the children of families A and B.

Code-mixing refers to the alternation between two or more languages in a conversation, either within a single sentence (intra-sentential) or across different sentences (inter-sentential) (Gumperz, 1977). While inter-sentential mixing is common among fluent bilinguals, intra-sentential mixing is frequently used by receptive bilinguals who rely on one dominant language with occasional insertions of another (Rahmat et al., 2019). Analysis of audio-recorded parent-child interactions and discussions with the researcher revealed that intra-sentential code-mixing was a shared language practice among the children of Families A and B, ranging from word-level insertions to clause and phrase-level mixing.

Code-mixing at the word level emerged as a shared language practice among the children of Families A and B, particularly in interactions with their parents. For example, in a conversation between Muhammad, from Family A, and his mother, Muhammad inserted an Arabic word into an otherwise English sentence, as shown below:

Turn	Utterance
1	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: كفتته شو عم ترسم؟ ' <i>Kafta [Meatballs]? What are you drawing?</i> '
2	Muhammad [Speaking in English]: That brown thing that looks like a lemon, كبه [Lebanese finger food].

In the conversation above, Muhammad code-mixes at the word level, inserting the culturally specific term 'كبه' [*Lebanese finger food*]. While Muhammad understands his mother's Arabic question, he primarily responds in English. As such, an important question arises: Does code-mixing constitute agentive choice or constrained response? On one hand, Muhammad's insertion of an Arabic lexical item into an otherwise English utterance may reflect competence, using available Arabic resources to maintain cultural relevance while operating within the limits of his productive proficiency (Grosjean, 2010). On the other hand, his reliance on English for sentence construction suggests that code-mixing is also shaped by linguistic constraints where he may lack the productive resources to formulate a complete response in Arabic. The example here could also be also understood as agency operating within constraints: Muhammad exercises choice in how he responds (selecting a culturally specific Arabic term), but this choice is bounded by his limited productive abilities.

Similarly, Rose from Family B also demonstrated code-mixing at the word level, particularly when discussing travel plans with her mother.

Turn	Utterance
1	Rose [Speaking in English]: They want to go to / عراق / <i>'Iraq'</i> .
2	The Mother [Speaking in English]: Who?
3	Rose [Speaking in English]: Laith and Sami.
4	The Mother [Speaking in Arabic]: مباشرة رح يروحون للعراق؟ <i>'Will they go directly to Iraq?'</i>
5	Rose [Speaking in English]: First, they want to go to Thailand, but then Waleed wants to go to / عراق / <i>'Iraq'</i> . So, who's going to talk with them?

In this conversation, Rose inserts the Arabic word 'عراق' ('Iraq') into her otherwise English sentences, demonstrating word-level code-mixing. This pattern indicates that English remains her primary language of communication, while she code-mixes culturally specific Arabic terms. Such language practice reinforces her preference for English as her dominant language and reflects receptive bilingualism, where she comprehends Arabic but has limited productive skills.

Code-mixing at the phrase level was also observed among the children of Family B. During the discussion with the researcher, Rose explained:

"I can say short sentences in Arabic, but sometimes, I mix half English and half Arabic. At other times, I just speak English."

Rose's reflection reveals that she also code-mixes at the phrase level; however, her statement indicates that, while she can construct and produce phrases in Arabic, she frequently alternates between Arabic and English, suggesting a dependence on English for full-sentence construction. This pattern of code-mixing also demonstrates receptive bilingualism, as Rose comprehends both languages but struggles to consistently speak Arabic.

Interestingly, Sami, also from Family B, exhibited different patterns of code-mixing at the phrase and clause level in the following conversation with his mother:

Turn	Utterance
1	Sami [Speaking in Arabic]: ماما, منو رح ياخذنا [Speaking in English] to the airport? <i>'Mum, who will take us to the airport?'</i>
2	The Mother [Speaking in Arabic]: أخوك، أبوك، أختك <i>'Your brother, your father, your sister.'</i>
3	Sami: [Speaking in Arabic] وياش وروز... [In English] That's five people, right? <i>'Me, you and Rose... That's five people, right?'</i>
4	The Mother [Speaking in Arabic]: /إيه / 'Yes'

In the conversation above, Sami demonstrated various patterns of code-mixing, incorporating Arabic clauses and noun phrases in the same conversation where he produced the Arabic interrogative clause “ماما, منو رح ياخذنا” (“*Mum, who will take us?*”) in turn 1, before turning to English to complete his sentence. Then, in turn 3, he used an Arabic coordinated noun phrase “أني وياش وروز” (*Me, you and Rose*). This varied pattern of code-mixing reveals slightly stronger productive Arabic skills than those of Muhammad and Rose. However, despite Sami's ability to

produce Arabic phrases and clauses, his frequent code-mixing with English is consistent with patterns of receptive bilingualism and also align with his earlier statement that he likes speaking Arabic but struggles with forming complete sentences in Arabic. Thus, Muhammad from Family A, and Rose and Sami from Family B used code-mixing as a language practice, ranging from the word to the phrase level.

In summary, in this subsection, I documented the types of language practices children applied and revealed that the children from all three families used different language practices. Children from Family A applied code-mixing at the word level across all datasets. Similarly, children from Family B also employed code-mixing as a language practice, ranging from individual words to the clause and phrase level. In contrast, children from Family C relied exclusively on polar responses, formulaic expressions, and repetition (See Table 24). These language practices demonstrate how receptive bilingual children's productive abilities exist on a continuum, ranging from simple repetition and polar responses to phrase construction, as will be introduced in Chapter 7.

Table 24. *Summary of identified children's language practices*

Children's family language policy component	Language component subcategory	Children of Family	Frequency	Total
Language practice	Code-mixing	A	45/307	95
		B	50/322	
		C	35/233	
	Polar-responses	A	-	19
		B	-	
		C	19	

	Formulaic expressions	A	-	6
		B	-	
		C	6	
	Repetition	A	-	10
		B	-	
		C	10	

- Absent

6.1.3 Children's language management strategies

In the previous sections, I have presented findings on the children's language practices, in this section, I turn to the children's engagement with parent-initiated language management strategies. Language management strategies are the deliberate, explicit efforts made by members of a speech community to maintain and develop their heritage language (Caldas, 2012; Spolsky, 2004). In FLP literature, management typically refers to adult-led, planned interventions, such as enrolling children in heritage language schools or establishing language rules, rather than children's autonomous planning. Accordingly, this section does not claim that children independently initiate management strategies; rather, it examines how children engage or disengage from parent-initiated management strategies. The argument here is that the children in this study demonstrated limited or inconsistent engagement with language management strategies set by their parents, which may be contributing to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Communication in Arabic with extended family members, both locally and internationally, whether face-to-face or via digital platforms, emerged as a parent-initiated language management strategy that children across all three families engaged with to varying degrees.

Muhammad from Family A explained that he regularly communicates in Arabic with his immediate and extended family members, although he acknowledged experiencing occasional difficulties engaging with this parent-facilitated language management strategy. Muhammad explained:

“I usually say ‘السلام عليكم’ /Peace be upon you/ to people. I say a bit to my dad, but mostly to my cousins face-to-face, and sometimes to my grandmother overseas, using WhatsApp.”

In Muhammad's response above, Muhammad demonstrated the use of communication in Arabic with extended family members, both face-to-face and through the social media platform WhatsApp. However, his engagement with this strategy appears to be limited to basic, formulaic expressions, such as religious greetings, aligning with his earlier statements in Section 6.1.1 about understanding Arabic but struggling to speak it.

Similarly, Rose from Family B stated that she attempts to communicate in Arabic with extended family members, as encouraged by her parents; however, she finds engaging with this strategy challenging.

“Talking to my immediate family is easy for me, but with extended family, it is hard. I feel like they wouldn't understand me that good.”

Although Rose attempts to use Arabic with her extended family, she finds it easier to use this strategy with her immediate family (mother and father) than with her extended family, expressing concern that they may not understand her. Rose's hesitation to use this strategy with her extended

family aligns with her previously expressed belief that she likes speaking Arabic; however, her fear of being misunderstood by others seems to restrict her from speaking Arabic.

Likewise, Fayrouz from Family C also attempts to communicate in Arabic with her family overseas, where she stated:

“I try to speak with my family overseas in Arabic, I understand them, but I struggle to speak.”

Fayrouz's statement reveals that she also tries to engage with the communication with the extended family language management strategy; however, her acknowledgement of struggling to speak Arabic, despite understanding the conversation, indicates limited engagement with this strategy.

Collectively, the children's responses demonstrate that engaging with the communication with extended family members emerged as a shared language management strategy; all three experienced difficulties applying it. Muhammad's use of this strategy was limited to formulaic expressions. Rose hesitated to use this strategy due to fears of being misunderstood by her extended family, even though she felt comfortable speaking Arabic with her immediate family. Fayrouz explicitly acknowledged her struggle to speak Arabic with her extended family, despite understanding.

Attending Saturday Arabic school or mainstream bilingual schools emerged as another parent-initiated language management strategy that the children engaged with. Although not initiated by the children themselves, this strategy reflects a deliberate interventional measure set by parents to

support heritage language maintenance and development. The following responses illustrate how the children engaged with this strategy and the challenges encountered.

Muhammad from Family A reflected on his experience of attending Saturday Arabic school as a parent-initiated language management strategy, indicating completion and relief at its conclusion. Muhammad stated:

“I go to Saturday school, but I have already finished.... It's school holidays now; I'm glad it's over... Formal Arabic was so confusing.”

Muhammad's response indicates that he attends Saturday Arabic school; however, his expressions of relief that the school is over and his description of formal (Modern Standard Arabic) as “*confusing*” suggest that he experienced difficulty applying this strategy. This may be due to the difference between Modern Standard Arabic and the Lebanese dialect spoken at home. Such a difference may limit Muhammad's motivation or ability to speak Arabic, ultimately reinforcing receptive bilingualism.

Rose shared a similar experience, reporting that she previously attended Saturday Arabic school but indicated that she no longer does:

“Well, I used to go on Saturdays, but I don't anymore. It was too hard for me because of Fus'ha (Modern Standard Arabic).”

Rose's response reveals that she, too, has previously attended Saturday school, a language management strategy set by the parents and applied by the children. However, her statement, “*it*

was too hard for me,” led her to withdraw from following and applying this strategy. This highlights how the difference between Modern Standard Arabic taught at school and the dialect spoken at home can discourage children from following this parent-initiated language management strategy.

Sami from Family B also followed the language management strategy of attending Saturday Arabic school and explained:

“I went to Arabic school once. It was good. I learnt my ABCs, but I forgot them now...they taught me how to write my name in Arabic, and they would put videos of the numbers...”

Sami's statement indicates that he also attended Saturday Arabic school, where he learned foundational skills, including the Arabic alphabet and basic writing. However, his acknowledgement that *“I forgot them now”* suggests that the strategy was short-lived. This highlights that occasional or inconsistent participation in Saturday Arabic school, as a parent-initiated language management strategy, may not be sufficient to develop children's language production skills.

In contrast to children who followed and attended Saturday school as a parent-initiated language management strategy, Manal from Family C reported attending a mainstream school where Arabic is taught daily. Manal explained:

“We learn Arabic every day in our English school, but not really at home. We don't speak at home what we learn at school; it's like we are learning a different language.”

Manal's response reveals that she learns Arabic through mainstream schooling, which is used as a parent-initiated language management strategy rather than attending Saturday School. However, her statements "*It's like we are learning a different language,*" and "*We don't speak at home what we learn at school,*" indicate that she is aware of the difference between Modern Standard Arabic and the Lebanese dialect spoken at home, as well as the lack of alignment between school and home language use, which may limit her opportunities to develop Arabic productive skills.

Thus, the children's responses demonstrate that Arabic schooling, whether through Saturday Arabic schools or mainstream schools, has emerged as another parent-initiated language management strategy that the children engage with to varying degrees. However, the children's engagement with this strategy varied significantly, and challenges related to Modern Standard Arabic, limited participation, and a lack of alignment between school and home environments appear to hinder its effectiveness in developing children's production skills. An interesting observation here is how children negotiate, resist, or adopt these parental strategies. Muhammad expressed relief that Saturday school had ended, describing formal Arabic as "confusing"—a response that suggests resistance through emotional disengagement rather than defiance. Rose explicitly withdrew from Saturday school because "it was too hard," representing a form of resistance to a parent-initiated strategy. Sami attended briefly but "forgot" what he learned, indicating minimal sustained engagement. Manal, attending a mainstream bilingual school, articulated a clear disconnect: "We don't speak at home what we learn at school." This statement reflects not non-compliance but an interpretive act—Manal has identified an important structural barrier (the MSA-dialect divide) that constrains her ability to transfer school-based learning to home

practice. These responses reveal a continuum of child engagement with parent-initiated management strategies, ranging from reluctant compliance (attending despite discomfort) to negotiated participation (attending but not internalising) to resistance (withdrawing) to interpretive critique (identifying why the strategy fails to meet its aims). Therefore, children are not passive recipients of parental management but active interpreters who assess, adapt to, and sometimes reject these strategies based on their own experiences and perceived constraints. This positions children's engagement with management strategies as a site of agency—although agency operates within the structural limitations of proficiency, the MSA-dialect divide, and the resources available within the family.

In addition to attending Arabic language schools, the researcher inquired whether the children engage with reading in the heritage language, as a language management strategy. Reading in the heritage language is an effective language management strategy used for developing children's language production skills and supporting overall language learning (Li, 2014; Murray, 2014; Nakamura, 2019; Shen & Del Tufo, 2022). In this study, however, neither parents nor children reported reading in Arabic, indicating a complete absence of this strategy. For example, Muhammad said:

“I don't read in Arabic; I don't even have any Arabic books; what do you expect?”

Muhammad's response shows that book reading is not part of the family's language management strategies. His statements, *“I don't read in Arabic”* and *“I don't even have any Arabic books,”* reveal the absence of this strategy and a lack of access to reading resources in Arabic.

Similarly, Rose also indicated that she does not read in Arabic, explaining:

“I don't know where to find Arabic books. I've never seen them, and I don't think I have the time because of school and extracurriculars.”

Rose's response further highlights the absence of Arabic reading as a language management strategy. Rose's statement, *“I don't know where to find them”*, indicates uncertainty about accessing Arabic reading resources and her additional comment that *“I don't think I have time because of school and extracurriculars”* shows that time constraints and difficulty balancing schoolwork and extracurricular activities do not allow for reading books in Arabic, reflecting limited engagement with this language management strategy.

Additionally, Manal also confirmed that she does not read books in Arabic, stating:

“I recite the Qur'an. The Qur'an is an exception, but other than that, no, I don't read any Arabic books.”

Manal's response reveals that what appeared as “reading Arabic books” as a language management strategy is actually limited to the children reciting the Qur'an. Reciting the Qur'an is exclusively in Modern Standard Arabic and often involves memorisation rather than spontaneous language use or reading in Arabic, which may reinforce receptive rather than productive skills.

Thus, the children's responses demonstrate that reading in Arabic as a language management strategy was absent across all three families. Despite its recognised value for supporting heritage language development, a lack of access to resources and time restraints have contributed to the

absence of this strategy. Without regular exposure to reading in the heritage language, children miss out on opportunities to learn diverse vocabulary, grammatical structures, and meaningful contexts, all of which are essential for strengthening both receptive and productive language skills (Janabi et al., 2020).

To summarise, in this subsection, I aimed to uncover how children engage with parent-initiated language management strategies and how such engagement affect the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The findings reveal that communicating in Arabic with the extended family was the most frequently used strategy among the children. However, the children's application of this strategy was minimal, often limited to basic, formulaic expressions, such as greetings and expressions of gratitude. Similarly, attending Saturday Arabic schools or mainstream bilingual schools was another language management strategy which the children followed and applied to varying degrees. As for book reading, the children's responses indicate that none of them read books in Arabic. Table 25 summarises children's engagement with parent-initiated language management strategies.

Table 25. *Summary of children's engagement with language management strategies*

Family language policy component	Language component subcategory	Children of Family	Frequency	Total
Parent-initiated language management strategies	Communication with the extended family	A	1	3
		B	1	
		C	1	
	Attending Saturday or mainstream bilingual school	A	1	3
		B	1	
		C	1	

	Reading books in Arabic	A	-	
		B	-	-
		C	-	

- Absent

In conclusion, in this section, I presented findings on children's language beliefs, language practices and engagement with parent-initiated language management strategies. Findings reveal that only three children expressed positive beliefs about speaking Arabic due to its cultural and religious significance; the remaining children disliked speaking Arabic because of perceived limited productive skills, challenges in Saturday schools, and peer influence. The children also demonstrated limited application of language practices and engagement with parent-initiated strategies. Thus, a bidirectional relationship exists between receptive bilingualism and children's family language policy: limited engagement is associated with receptive bilingualism, while awareness of limited productive skills discourages engagement with practices and strategies that could enhance these skills. In the upcoming section, I present findings on child agency and receptive bilingualism,

6.2 Child agency and receptive bilingualism

In the previous section, I concluded that receptive bilingualism is shaped by and shapes the children's engagement with the family language policy. On the one hand, the application of limited language practices and limited engagement with parent-initiated management strategies were associated with receptive bilingualism; on the other hand, the children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism discouraged them from applying or following language practices and strategies that could enhance their productive skills. What stands out from these findings is that

children are not just recipients of the family language policy but are agents who make conscious choices about their heritage language use and participation in the family language policy (Schalley & Eisenclas, 2020).

Before presenting the findings on child agency, it is necessary to situate them within broader debates on child agency in family language policy. Scholarship has evolved from early conceptualisations of children as recipients of parental language choices to recognition of children as active co-constructors of family language policy (Curd-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Schwartz, 2010; Smith-Christmas, 2020). Smith-Christmas (2020) argues that children exercise agency by accepting, negotiating, or rejecting parental language choices, while acknowledging developmental constraints on their capacity to act. Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) demonstrate that children's resistance can reshape parental strategies and, ultimately, family language policy itself. Schwartz (2010) highlights that children's language attitudes and peer orientations influence FLP outcomes, often diverging from parental intentions. Building on this foundational literature, I position agency not as a fourth component of FLP alongside beliefs, practices, and management, but as a mediating process that operates across all three components. Importantly, parental and child agency interact dynamically in what Palviainen and Boyd (2013) term the "co-construction" of FLP. Parents may apply a family language policy, but child agency exercised through agentive responses—whether active, constrained, or deferred—shape how that policy is enacted. This bidirectional relationship means that a family language policy is continually negotiated through the interplay of parental and child agency (Fogle & King, 2013). If agency mediates FLP components, then receptive bilingualism emerges not just from misaligned beliefs,

practices, or strategies, but from the agentic choices of both parents and children as they navigate structural constraints.

Having established this theoretical positioning, it is necessary to clarify how child agency was understood in this study, where I drew on interpretive approaches that examine how children make sense of their linguistic environment and act—or refrain from acting—in response (Kuczynski, 2002; Smith-Christmas, 2020). Agency, in this view, is not simply observable behaviour but involves interpretive processes through which children assess their linguistic resources, evaluate parental expectations, and make choices accordingly. For example, a child who chooses to speak English despite parental expectations for Arabic is exercising agency through an interpretive act: recognising the expectation, evaluating their capacity to meet it, and deciding on a course of action. Similarly, a child who remains silent or responds minimally is not exercising constrained agency but could be exercising deferred agency, a choice, whether conscious or developmentally influenced, to neither comply nor resist. This interpretive framing distinguishes between agentic choice (where children assess and respond to their environment) and constrained response (where structural factors, such as linguistic competence, shape available options). Both, however, constitute forms of agency, as even constrained responses involve children navigating and responding to their circumstances within their developmental capacities (Kuczynski, 2002; Smith-Christmas, 2020). Building on this definition, I proceed to present findings on active child agency, then turn to constrained and deferred agency.

6.2.1 Active child agency

Active child agency can take multiple forms and is often described in the literature on family language policy as children's choosing to comply with parental language choices and participate in family language policy (Fogle, 2012; Smith-Christmas, 2020; Zhan, 2023). According to Said and Zhu (2019), children who comply with their parents' language choices are often aware of the family's language policy and tend to exercise their agency to demonstrate commitment to family values. Thus, active agency reflects intentional engagement, in which children make choices within their developmental capacities to participate in the family language policy. In this subsection, I present findings on active child agency based on data drawn from parent-child interactions and the children's discussion with the researcher, arguing that children's active agency was observable in two forms: (1) expressed willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy, and (2) actual compliance and participation in the family language policy—both of which were frequently accompanied by explicit statements about limited productive skills, despite understanding.

Expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy emerged as one observable type of active child agency among the children. For example, when the children were asked, *"If you knew how to speak Arabic, would you like to speak it at home?"*, Muhammad replied:

"Yes, I would love to speak Arabic, but I don't speak it right."

Muhammad's response reveals that he exercises active agency by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family's language policy, as evidenced by his desire to speak

Arabic at home. His statement, *"I don't speak Arabic right,"* acknowledges his productive limitations, yet this awareness does not diminish his expressed willingness to participate in the family language policy.

Rose and Sami from Family B also exercised active agency by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy. Rose said:

"Yes, if I had the skills, I would speak Arabic with others; I understand everything; I just can't speak properly."

Rose's response demonstrates that she, too, exercises active agency by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy to speak Arabic. Rose's statements, *"If I had the skills, I would speak Arabic with others,"* and *"I understand everything; I just can't speak properly,"* demonstrate that although she explicitly acknowledges her productive limitations, she nonetheless expresses willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy. However, an important question arises: why do the children perceive themselves as lacking the skills to speak Arabic? As evidenced earlier in this chapter (Section 6.1.3), the children consistently identified the disjuncture between Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) taught at Saturday schools and the spoken dialect used at home as a significant barrier. Rose herself stated that Saturday school *"was too hard for me because of Fus'ha"* (p. 212), while Manal noted, *"We don't speak at home what we learn at school; it's like we are learning a different language"* (p. 213).

Similarly, Sami exercised active agency by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy. According to Sami:

"I want to speak it too. I speak Arabic with my parents. I mean, I understand, but as Rose said, I can't speak Arabic well."

Sami's response also indicates that he exercises active agency by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy. His explicit statement, *"I understand, but as Rose said, I can't speak Arabic well,"* demonstrates that the children's acknowledgement of limited productive skills frequently accompanies their agentic choices rather than determining them.

Likewise, Kawthar from Family C exercised active agency by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in her family's implicit and unplanned language policy, where she said:

"I would obviously like to speak Arabic at home. I just can't speak it, but if I knew it, yeah, I would speak it."

Kawthar's response reveals that she also exercises active agency, as she expresses a willingness to speak Arabic at home if she had the ability. Her statement, *"I just can't speak it, but if I knew it, yeah, I would speak it,"* follows the same pattern observed across the children of other families: explicit acknowledgment of limited productive skills paired with expressed willingness to participate, reflecting a commitment to the family's values of speaking the heritage language.

Collectively, the responses from all four children demonstrate that they exercised active child agency by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy. In each case, the children's agentic choice (willingness to participate) was accompanied by

explicit statements about their limited productive skills—observable in their own words rather than inferred by the researcher.

In addition to expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy, the children also exercised active child agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy by speaking Arabic with their parents, as shown in the following examples of parent-child interactions.

Muhammad from Family A exercised active child agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy through speaking Arabic with his mother, as demonstrated in the following interaction:

Turn	Utterance
1	The Mother [speaking in Arabic]: حبيبي، ما بتحب تحكي عربي؟ <i>'Darling, don't you like speaking in Arabic?'</i>
2	Muhammad [Speaking in English]: 'I don't know how to speak in Arabic.'
3	The Mother [speaking in Arabic]: بتعرف تحكي حبيبي، شو دائماً بتعيطلي؟ <i>'You do know how to speak, darling. What do you always call me?'</i>
4	Muhammad [Speaking in Arabic]: ماما، أنا بحبك؛ أنت حبيبي <i>'Mummy, I love you; you are my love.'</i>

In the above conversation, Muhammad demonstrated active child agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy, as evidenced by his attempt to speak Arabic. Although

Muhammad states in Turn 2 that he does not know how to speak Arabic, he, nonetheless, with the support of his mother, exercises active agency in Turn 4 by complying with his mother's request and switching from English to Arabic, reflecting his compliance and participation in the family language policy.

Similarly, Sami from Family B exercised active agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy. This is illustrated in the following interaction with his mother, where he attempts to speak Arabic at his mother's request:

Turn	Utterance
1	The Mother [speaking in Arabic]: سامي بتعرف تعد بالعربي؟ <i>'Sami, do you know how to count in Arabic?'</i>
2	Sami [Speaking in English]: No!
3	The Mother [speaking in Arabic]: يلا، حاول. <i>'Go on, try'</i>
4	Sami [Speaking in Arabic]: واحد، اثنين، ثلاثة، أربعة، خمسة، ستة، سبعة، ثمانية، تسعة، عشرة. <i>'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten'.</i>

The conversation above shows that Sami exercises active child agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy by attempting to speak Arabic to his mother. Although Sami initially responds "No!" in Turn 2 when asked if he knows how to count in Arabic, in Turn 4, he complies with his mother's request and participates in the conversation by counting from one to ten in Arabic, thereby complying with and participating in the family language policy.

Similarly, Fayrouz exercised active child agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy by speaking in Arabic, as demonstrated in the following conversation.

Turn	Utterance
1	The Father [Speaking in Arabic]: السلام عليكم <i>'Peace be upon you.'</i>
2	Fayrouz [Speaking in Arabic]: و عليكم السلام <i>'Peace be upon you too.'</i>
3	The Father [Speaking in Arabic]: شو عندكم اليوم؟ لوين رايحين؟ <i>'What are you doing today? Where are you going?'</i>
4	Fayrouz [Speaking in English]: I don't know what it is called in Arabic... / رايحين مدينة / 'We are going [to] Madina.'

In the example above, Fayrouz exercises active child agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy by attempting to speak Arabic with her father. Although she implicitly indicates in Turn 4 that she struggles to fully express herself in Arabic, she nonetheless responds in Arabic in Turn 5, demonstrating her compliance with and participation in the family language policy.

Thus, children from all three families exercised active agency by complying with and participating in the family language policy, despite acknowledging their productive limitations.

To summarise, in this subsection, I examined active child agency and argued that children from all three families exercised it in two ways: first, by expressing a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy; and second, by complying with and participating in it. These two forms of active agency demonstrate that children are not just recipients of the family

language policy but are also agents capable of making choices about their heritage language use and participation in the family language policy, despite their self-reported limited heritage language productive skills. In the upcoming section, I present findings on constrained child agency.

6.2.2 Constrained child agency

While in the previous subsection, I provided evidence of active child agency, where the children expressed a willingness to comply with and participate in the family language policy and complied with and participated in the family language policy, constrained child agency, characterised by children choosing to challenge, resist or reject the family language policy, was also prevalent. This form of agency, detailed in studies by Curdt-Christiansen & Huang (2020) and Gyogi (2015), often leads to an undesirable heritage-language outcome in which children choose not to speak the heritage language. The term *constrained* is used here to reflect how the children's choices are often shaped by structural forces, such as limited productive skills in the heritage language, the Modern Standard Arabic-dialect divide, and peer influence. In this subsection, findings will show that constrained child agency was observable in two forms: (1) children deliberately choosing to speak English despite parental expectations to speak Arabic, and (2) challenging parental language choices. However, explicit statements about limited heritage language productive skills frequently accompanied these observable forms of constrained agency.

To begin with, when the researcher asked the children whether they were expected to speak Arabic at home, three children demonstrated constrained child agency by deliberately choosing to speak English despite parental expectations that they speak Arabic.

For example, Muhammad from Family A responded:

“No, I talk in English 232/7 [23 hours, 7 days a week], but sometimes our dad will kind of shout at us and say: Why are you not speaking Arabic?”

Muhammad's response illustrates constrained child agency through his agentive choice to speak English almost exclusively, despite his father's expectation that he speak Arabic. This choice, however, reflects an interpretive process: Muhammad recognises the parental expectation, evaluates his productive ability in Arabic (which he describes as limited to formulaic expressions), and decides to speak English. His agency is thus constrained by his awareness of his receptive bilingualism. Interestingly, his comment about his father's reaction, *'He kind of shouts at us,'* also shows defiance or resistance against a more coercive family language policy enforced by his father, revealing tension between parental language expectations and children's language choices. Muhammad's behaviour thus constitutes agentive choice rather than inability: he interprets the expectation, assesses his options, and acts accordingly, even if his competency level constrains his options.

Similarly, Rose from Family B also exercised constrained child agency by deliberately choosing to speak English despite parental expectations to speak Arabic, Rose explained:

“Yes, we have to [speak Arabic at home]. But we speak whatever we want. I speak English.”

Rose's response reveals that she, too, exercises constrained agency by deliberately choosing to speak English despite parental expectations to speak Arabic. She explicitly acknowledges that she is expected to speak Arabic at home but makes a conscious, agentive choice to speak English instead. Although this example demonstrates how children deliberately defy the family language

policy by rejecting parental language expectations and speaking the dominant language, Rose's choice is shaped by her perceived awareness of her limited productive skills, reflecting agency operating within structural constraints.

Fayrouz, from Family C, also exercised constrained agency by acknowledging that she deliberately chose to speak English despite her parents' expectations that she speak Arabic. Fayrouz said:

"Sometimes. My dad says to try to speak Arabic, but speaking Arabic is really hard, so we choose to speak English."

Fayrouz's response also demonstrates constrained child agency, as she deliberately chooses to speak English despite her father's requests that she speak Arabic. Fayrouz links her choice of speaking English to her self-reported limited heritage language productive skills. Thus, the children's responses demonstrate that they exercised constrained child agency by deliberately choosing to speak English despite parental expectations to speak Arabic, often constrained by structural forces.

Beyond deliberately choosing to speak English despite parental expectations to speak Arabic, the children also exercised constrained child agency by challenging parental language choices. For example, in an audio-recorded conversation between Muhammad and his mother, Muhammad challenged his mother's language choices and her justifications for these choices, as shown below:

Turn	Utterance
1	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: فيك تقلي ليش عم نتعلم عربي؟ <i>'Can you tell me why we are learning Arabic?'</i>

2	Muhammad [Speaking in English]: I don't know, because of our religion, maybe, to learn the names of Allah.
3	The mother [Speaking in Arabic]: ما قلتلي هديك المرة لانيو نحنا من [speaking in English] from an Arabic country and Arabic background? <i>'Didn't you tell me the other day, because we are from an Arabic country and Arabic background?'</i>
4	Muhammad [Speaking in English]: I never said that; you always say that!

In the conversation above, Muhammad exercised constrained agency in two ways. First, he persisted in speaking English despite his mother's attempts to engage him in speaking Arabic. Second, by challenging his mother's language choices and her justification for these choices, where he said, *"I never said that; you always say that"*, thus challenging his mother's language choices and her attempt to establish cultural connection as a reason or justification for learning Arabic. Thus, this conversation demonstrates resistance not through inferred cognition but through observable acts of non-compliance.

Kawthar from Family C also exercised constrained child agency by challenging her father's language choices, as shown in the following conversation:

Turn	Utterance
1	Kawthar [Speaking in Arabic]: أبي؟ <i>'Dad?'</i>
2	The father: ايه حبييتي؟ <i>'Yes, darling?'</i>

3	Kawthar [Speaking in English]: Are you trying to speak in Arabic for the researcher?
4	The father [Speaking in English]: Yes! The father [Speaking in Arabic]: لازم أنتو كمان تحكوا معي بالعربي <i>'You also need to speak with me in Arabic.'</i>
5	Kawthar: [Speaking in English]: Right!

In the conversation above, Kawthar exercises constrained agency by challenging her father's language choices and questioning whether the sudden insistence on speaking Arabic is genuine or merely for the researcher's benefit. Kawthar's response, *'Right!'* in turn 5, signifies her somewhat ironic acknowledgment of her father's effort while subtly indicating her challenge and perhaps resistance to his language choices. Therefore, the children from all three families also exercised constrained child agency by challenging parental language choices and avoiding speaking Arabic.

The children's avoidance of Arabic, choosing to speak English despite parental expectations, warrants careful analytic framing. Is this avoidance an agentic choice or a constrained response? The data suggests both dimensions are present. Fayrouz explicitly stated, "speaking Arabic is really hard, so we choose to speak English," indicating a conscious decision based on perceived difficulty. The verb "choose" signals agency, while "really hard" signals constraint. This pattern, agentic choice shaped by structural constraint, recurs across the children's narratives. The children are not simply unable to speak Arabic; they are making choices not to speak it, based on their assessment of their own capacities and the communicative demands of the situation. This distinction matters theoretically as it positions children as interpreters of their linguistic environment who make decisions, rather than just having limited productive skills. At the same time, it acknowledges that

these choices are not made freely but within the structural constraints of limited productive skills, the MSA-dialect divide and the dominance of English in their daily lives.

To sum up, in this subsection, I explored constrained child agency and argued that some children in this study exercised constrained agency by deliberately choosing to speak English despite parental expectations to speak Arabic and by challenging parental language choices. These forms of constrained child agency were evident across all three families, and the children's explicit statements about productive limitations consistently emerged as justification for exercising constrained agency. Thus, constrained child agency and receptive bilingualism appear to be interlinked. The children's explicit statements about their limited heritage language productive skills accompanied their observable acts of resistance and non-compliance, suggesting that children's agentic choices are contextualised by their self-reported language abilities. In the upcoming and final subsection of this chapter, I present findings on deferred child agency.

6.2.3 Deferred child agency

Unlike active and constrained agency, in which children choose to participate in or challenge parental language choices and the family language policy, deferred child agency involves neither compliance nor resistance to the family language policy. The term *deferred* captures the intentional non-intervention observed among younger children, in which agency is exercised through non-engagement rather than overt action. Deferred agency thus occupies one end of a continuum of engagement, representing children's choice, whether conscious or developmentally constrained, not to intervene in the family language policy at a given moment. In this subsection, I present findings on how the younger children, Ayman and Ahmad, both aged 5, exercised deferred agency.

Unlike their older siblings, whose agentive choices were accompanied by explicit statements about productive limitations, the younger children's agency was observable only through their behaviour: they neither complied with nor resisted parental language choices, but continued to speak English naturally. This non-participation in the family language policy, as evidenced by not speaking Arabic, may be characteristic of early receptive bilingualism.

In a conversation, captured between Ayman (5) from Family A and his mother, Ayman exercised deferred agency by neither complying with nor resisting his mother's language choices (speaking Arabic). Instead, he continued his conversation in English, as shown in the following conversation:

Turn	Utterance
1	Ayman (5) [Speaking in English]: Mum, where do I put this?
2	The mother: إيه حطا عندي بالأوضة على ال / <i>'Put it inside in my room on the...'</i>
3	Ayman [Speaking in English]: Sure. Muhammad wanted a Ninja Turtle plushie. Are you going to get him one?

In the conversation above, Ayman exercised deferred agency by neither complying with nor resisting his mother's use of Arabic. He demonstrated understanding of her language choices but produced no Arabic, continuing to speak entirely in English. This type of agency may be attributed to his young age and appears to reflect an early stage in the development of receptive bilingualism, where comprehension is evident, but no Arabic production was observed, not even at the rote or formulaic level seen in other children. Unlike Muhammad's constrained agency, where he

persisted in speaking English despite his mother's request, Ayman's deferred agency may reflect developmental factors rather than defiance of his mother's choices.

Similarly, in a conversation between Ahmad (5), from Family C and his mother, Ahmad exercised deferred agency by neither complying with nor resisting his mother's language choices (speaking Arabic), as shown in the following interaction.

Turn	Utterance
1	The mother: أحمد، كم بديك بان كيك؟ <i>'Ahmad, how many pancakes do you want?'</i>
	Ahmad (5) [Speaking in English]: What, I want that slimy one?
2	The mother: أي وحدة؟ <i>'Which one'</i>
3	Ahmad: [Speaking in English]: The Nutella one.

In the conversation above, Ahmad exercised deferred agency by neither complying with nor resisting his mother's language choices; instead, he continued the conversation naturally, showing an understanding of his mother's Arabic questions about pancakes while continuing the conversation in English. Like Ayman, Ahmad demonstrated comprehension in Arabic without production, suggesting the development of early receptive bilingualism. No other examples of deferred agency were detected among the children in this study.

Before summing up, the findings presented in this section on child agency reveal that child agency does not operate in isolation but interacts dynamically with parental agency as documented in Chapter 5. In Family A, where parental agency was characterised as constrained due to time pressures and inconsistent application of language practices and strategies, children exercised a

mix of active and constrained agency—willing to speak Arabic but often choosing English due to perceived limitations. This suggests that constrained parental agency may create conditions in which children's own constraints become more salient. In Family B, where parents exercised active, collaborative agency with an explicit family language policy, children demonstrated more consistent active agency, expressing willingness to participate despite their awareness of limited proficiency. This pattern suggests that active parental agency may support, although not guarantee, active child agency. In Family C, where parental agency was characterised as deferred, with minimal explicit policy enforcement, children exercised a range of agency types, including deferred agency among younger children. The absence of clear parental expectations may have contributed to children's non-engagement with the family language policy.

These findings suggest that parental and child agency are mutually constitutive: parental agency shapes the policy environment within which children exercise their own agency, while children's agentive responses, in turn, influence parental strategies and expectations over time (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020). This interaction positions agency as central to understanding FLP outcomes, including the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Rather than viewing receptive bilingualism as a failure of parental policy or child compliance, the findings suggest it emerges from the interplay of parental and child agency operating within structural constraints, such as the MSA-dialect divide, limited heritage-language input, and societal dominance of English.

In summary, in this subsection, I presented findings on deferred child agency, which emerged as a distinct form of child agency, primarily observed among younger children in this study. Unlike their older siblings, who demonstrated active agency through compliance and participation in the

family language policy or constrained agency through resistance, defiance or challenging parental language choices, younger children like Ayman and Ahmad exercised deferred agency by neither complying with nor resisting parental language choices. The key distinction between active, constrained or deferred agency lies in the absence of accompanying explicit statements; older children's agentic choices were contextualised by their self-reported limitations, while younger children's deferred agency was observable only through behaviour—comprehending Arabic while producing English, which may represent an early stage of receptive bilingualism, where the children's comprehension skills in the heritage language develop ahead of their production skills. Finally, it is important to note that active, constrained, and deferred agency represent orientations along a continuum of engagement with the family language policy. The same child may exercise active agency in one interaction (e.g., attempting to speak Arabic with a parent), constrained agency in another (e.g., choosing to respond in English despite parental expectations), and deferred agency in yet another context (e.g., neither complying nor resisting).

Table 26. *Summary of identified child agency*

Agency type	Children of Family A	Children of Family B	Children of Family C
Active	✓	✓	✓
Constrained	✓	✓	✓
Deferred	✓	×	✓

✓ Present × Absent

6.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I presented findings on children's family language policy and agency, arguing that receptive bilingualism emerged as a product and driver of the children's family language policy and agency. Findings on children's family language policy revealed that negative beliefs about speaking Arabic were more prevalent than positive beliefs, shaped by the children's awareness of their limited productive skills, challenges at Saturday schools, and peer influence. The children also demonstrated limited application of language practices and limited engagement with parent-initiated management strategies. Moreover, the children exercised agency in three observable forms—active, constrained, and deferred—with agentic choices frequently accompanied by explicit statements about productive limitations. These findings suggest that a bidirectional relationship exists between receptive bilingualism and children's family language policy and agency: limited engagement with language practices and parent-initiated strategies contributed to receptive bilingualism, while awareness of limited productive skills shaped how children exercised agency within the family language policy. In the upcoming discussion chapter, I synthesise findings from parental and child perspectives presented in Chapters 5 and 6, exploring how family language policy and agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

7.0 Introduction

The purpose of this ethnographic case study research was to explore how family language policy and agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among English-Arabic-speaking families in Australia. By employing a primarily qualitative research design, the study aimed to 1) address the gaps in the literature of family language policy on receptive bilingualism, and 2) answer the overarching question:

To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?

And two sub-questions:

- 1. How do the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?*
- 2. How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?*

To address the extent to which family language policy and agency influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, the data analysis presented in Chapters 5 and 6 revealed significant key findings that unravel a complex relationship between family language policy, agency and receptive bilingualism. Chapter 5 revealed that active parental agency mediated the translation of language beliefs into supportive language practices and strategies, which appear to be associated with reduced prevalence of receptive bilingualism among the children. Chapter 6, on the other hand, elucidated that the relationship between family language policy, child agency, and receptive bilingualism operated in reverse. Unlike parents, whose active agency mediated the implementation

of a family language policy, the children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism appears to influence their language beliefs, language practices, engagement with parent-initiated management strategies, and the type of agency they exercise.

In light of the above critical findings, in this discussion chapter, I synthesise, discuss and critically evaluate the key findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the proposed extension of Spolsky's model of language policy, as presented in Chapter 3. The aim here is to contribute to the growing body of literature on heritage language development and maintenance, and to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of receptive bilingualism. My argument in this chapter is that both family language policy and agency must be considered when examining receptive bilingualism from a family language policy perspective. This discussion chapter is organised into two main sections: The first section examines key findings related to the family language policy (addressing the first research sub-question: *How do the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?*), while the second section analyses key findings related to agency (addressing the second research sub-question 2: *How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?*). Together, these sections provide a comprehensive understanding of how a family language policy and agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, addressing the central research question: *To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?*

7.1 Family language policy and receptive bilingualism

The first sub-question of this study sought to determine how the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. As presented in the Literature review Chapter, family language policy is a field and a framework developed to understand how heritage languages are maintained and transmitted intergenerationally within immigrant families (Fishman, 1991; King & Fogle, 2017). As a framework, family language policy was categorised in this research based on Spolsky's model of language policy, which examines three independent yet intercorrelated components: the beliefs, practices and management strategies of a speech community (the family). These components examine how family members plan, negotiate, learn and manage their heritage language (De Houwer, 1999; King et al., 2008; Spolsky, 2004).

Building on this theoretical foundation, the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 showed that one of the main criteria of a successful family language policy is the children's ability to speak their heritage language (Fishman, 1991; Schwartz, 2010). However, as seen from the reviewed literature, despite parental efforts to transmit their heritage language intergenerationally, many immigrant children in English-speaking countries become receptive bilinguals who can understand their heritage language but with limited productive skills (Hoffman, 2014; Meisel, 2019; Montrul, 2016b; Nakamura, 2019; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020).

In the first section of this chapter, I present key findings from Chapters 5 and 6 on family language policy from the perspectives of both parents and children, arguing that parents who applied an explicit family language policy, as exemplified by Family B, had children who could produce Arabic phrases and clauses. I then unpack these findings in light of the literature and the

theoretical framework used in this thesis, beginning with family language beliefs, then moving through language practices, and concluding with management strategies.

7.1.1 Language beliefs

Language beliefs are a fundamental component of family language policy (Spolsky, 2017), and, as shown in the findings chapters, while parental beliefs may act as the primary motivation for applying a language policy, the children's beliefs were shaped by their perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, which also influenced their agency in terms of compliance and participation in the family language policy. In this subsection, I discuss the main findings on language beliefs, revealing differences between parental and children's beliefs about maintaining and speaking the heritage language, which were shaped by various factors, but are not limited to, cultural heritage and identity, communication with the extended family, religious significance and individual experiences, especially from the children's perspectives. The discussion begins by examining positive beliefs about maintaining and speaking the heritage language held by parents and children, followed by a discussion of the negative beliefs that emerged from the data.

A central finding is that all parents shared the belief that speaking and preserving Arabic is important for maintaining cultural heritage and identity, although this belief was not shared by all the children. Across all three families, parents believed that speaking Arabic is important for cultural heritage and identity, emphasising the language's role in connecting their children to ancestral traditions, and expressed concern that language loss equates to cultural heritage and identity loss. This shared parental belief aligns with findings from Caldas' (2012) and Leyendecker et al.'s (2018) studies, which highlight the foundational role of parents' beliefs in maintaining

heritage identity and cultural and ancestral connections. This finding also aligns with Spolsky's model of language policy, which identifies parental beliefs as the foundation of family language policy.

In contrast, the children's beliefs diverged substantially, with only two of the nine children sharing the belief that speaking and preserving Arabic is important for maintaining cultural heritage and identity: Sami (8) from Family B and Manal (12), the eldest child from Family C. The remaining children did not link speaking Arabic to preserving their cultural heritage and identity. A possible explanation for this observed difference between parental and children's beliefs could be the difference in how parents and children conceptualise the relationship between speaking the heritage language and cultural identity, with most children in this study not connecting speaking Arabic to maintaining cultural heritage and identity. This intergenerational divergence aligns with Jaffe's (2007) observation that "authentic identity" is often "anchored in a pre-language shift society, that existed before the economic, ideological and educational pressures that led to language shift" (p. 53), suggesting that children may not possess the same sense of nostalgia or cultural connection to the heritage language as their parents. This may be particularly relevant given that the parents migrated as adults with established cultural identities, while the children were born in Australia.

Comprehension and recitation of the Qur'an emerged as another partially shared positive belief among parents and children regarding the importance of speaking and preserving Arabic. This belief was shared by the parents of Families A and C, who emphasised that speaking Arabic is important for reciting and comprehending religious texts, and by only one child, Kawthar (9) from

Family C. The current findings on parental beliefs align with previous research by Spolsky (2003) and Forrest (2022), who argue that religion plays a crucial role in language maintenance or loss, which provides a context for families to encourage heritage language preservation. Furthermore, studies by Attaallah (2020), Brown and Muslim (2016), and Tawalbeh (2014) have demonstrated that religion can motivate heritage language maintenance within families. However, a key difference between those studies and the current one is that previous studies focused solely on parental beliefs, whereas the current study considers children's beliefs. The analysis in the current study revealed a generational gap between parents' and children's beliefs, with only one child believing that speaking Arabic is necessary to comprehend and recite the Qur'an. One possible explanation for this gap is that the children were aware of the differences between the language of the Qur'an, in which Classical Arabic recitation and Modern Standard Arabic is used for interpretation, and the dialects used in everyday home interactions. As shown in the findings presented in Chapter 6, children across all three families expressed difficulty learning Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and their family's dialect. Therefore, additional research is needed to explore how learning Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and dialects affects children's heritage language beliefs and perhaps outcomes.

Effective communication with the extended family emerged as another positive belief for preserving Arabic, a belief shared by parents of the three families but not expressed by any of the children. Parents from all three families believed that the children need to speak Arabic to maintain family connections both locally and transnationally. This finding supports evidence from previous studies by Leyendecker et al. (2018) and Tseng and Fuligni (2000), who demonstrated that speaking

the heritage language is essential for communication with the extended family and for maintaining family relations across generations and geographic boundaries. Although all parents believed in the importance of maintaining and speaking Arabic with their children to enable effective communication with the extended family, none of the children shared this belief. This mismatch could be attributed to the children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, which appears to create communication barriers rather than motivation to speak Arabic, where several children, such as Rose (12) from Family B and Fayrouz (11) from Family C, revealed that their inability to make themselves understood by extended family members shaped their beliefs about speaking Arabic. Although parents and some children expressed positive beliefs about maintaining and speaking Arabic to preserve cultural heritage and identity for religious purposes, such as reciting the Qur'an, and for effective communication with extended family, negative heritage language beliefs were predominant among the children. This predominance of negative beliefs among children may help explain the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, as children's self-perceptions may discourage them from speaking Arabic.

An important finding emerging from the data is that the children who expressed dislike of speaking Arabic frequently accompanied these statements with explicit reference to their ability to understand Arabic but their inability to speak it, or what I referred to as *perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism*. The results in Chapter Six showed that six of the nine children showed perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, where the children constantly stated, "*I don't like speaking Arabic; I struggle to speak it*". Thus, the children's perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism appears to be a factor contributing to their negative beliefs about disliking learning

and speaking Arabic. Although substantial evidence in the literature supports the finding that children's lack of competence in the heritage language leads to reluctance to speak the heritage language (Gyogi, 2015; Meisel, 2019; Smith-Christmas, 2020), the current study extends this understanding by showing how perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism creates negative beliefs about the heritage language, thereby disrupting the children's participation with family language policy and reducing opportunities for productive language development.

Another finding from Chapter 6 is that challenges children face at Arabic Saturday school emerged as yet another factor contributing to negative language beliefs, particularly among the children of Families A and B. These challenges centred primarily around social isolation and mixing Modern Standard Arabic and/or Aramaic in one class. Muhammad from Family A described Saturdays as his '*worst day*', while Rose from Family B found the mixing of the two languages (Aramaic and Arabic) '*really confusing*.' These challenges create additional barriers to heritage language learning beyond the home domain, further discouraging the children from engaging with and learning their heritage language. This finding extends Wilson's (2020) previous research by demonstrating how negative institutional experiences may shape children's beliefs about learning their heritage language. However, this contrasts with broader research showing that many bilingual children/students generally recognise the importance of community language schools for cultural and heritage identity development (Arthur, 2003; Francis et al., 2010). Furthermore, Chow's (2001) study of 510 adolescents in Chinese language schools in Canada revealed that ethnic pride was associated with positive community language school experiences, with age of migration a crucial factor; older students expressed greater satisfaction with heritage language learning. In contrast, the

children in this study were receptive bilinguals born in Australia, where English is the majority language, which may help explain their negative beliefs about Saturday language schools.

Peer influence emerged as another notable factor shaping children's negative beliefs about speaking Arabic, despite not being the primary focus of this investigation. The mother from Family B reported that both of her children stigmatise their Arabic-only peers and prefer English-speaking peers. This peer pressure may reinforce children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, as children tend to avoid situations where their limited Arabic production skills would be exposed to peers. This finding supports research by Bui et al. (2022) on how social factors influence children's language attitudes and choices, and Leyendecker et al.'s (2018) observation that although speaking the heritage language is important for relationships within the family, "speaking the majority language is important for fostering relationships with everyone beyond the family" (p. 58). The observed correlation between negative beliefs and peer influence suggests that peer influence creates an environment in which children's desire for social integration may conflict with their family's language policy, potentially contributing to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism as children avoid speaking Arabic while maintaining their comprehension skills. Although this finding is limited to a single family in the current study, it has implications for understanding how social factors outside the family domain influence heritage language maintenance. Additional studies are needed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between children's negative beliefs about their heritage language and peer influence.

Overall, this section has discussed key findings on parental and children's language beliefs, positing that substantial differences exist between parental and children's beliefs. Parents from all

three families emphasised the importance of preserving Arabic for cultural heritage and identity, religious significance, and communication with extended family, aligning with Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy, which posits that language beliefs influence the other family language policy component. However, the presence of positive parental beliefs did not guarantee their enactment; as the following sections will demonstrate, agency mediated the translation of beliefs into practices and strategies. The children did not broadly share these beliefs, with only three out of nine — Manal and Kawthar from Family C and Sami from Family B — expressing positive beliefs. For the remaining children, awareness of perceived receptive bilingualism, challenges encountered in Saturday schools and peer influences created negative beliefs about the heritage language. These negative beliefs discouraged the children from speaking Arabic, while their parents continued to use the language, leading to the development and prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The next section examines how these beliefs influence the language practices of parents and children.

7.1.2 Language practices

In the previous subsection, I discussed key findings on families' language beliefs; this subsection now turns to findings on families' language practices. Although Spolsky's model of language policy proposes that language beliefs influence the application of language practices, the findings revealed that not all parental and children's language beliefs led to supportive language practices and strategies. While parental language practices were often limited and inconsistent in Families A and C, creating a misalignment between beliefs and practices, Family B demonstrated more consistent practices that aligned with their beliefs. However, the children's language practices

were limited and varied, even within the same family, reflecting patterns of receptive bilingualism and different types of agency. This discussion begins with code-mixing as the primary shared language practice between some parents and children, followed by an examination of parent-specific practices and their impact on the prevalence of children's receptive bilingualism.

Analysis of the findings chapters revealed that code-mixing emerged as a predominant shared language practice between parents and children. To begin with, although parents from all three families code-mixed (inserting English words, phrases or sentences into Arabic utterances), marked differences in frequency and application were noted, correlating with the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Parents from Family A demonstrated 164 instances of code-mixing, while Parents from Family B had 19 instances, and parents from Family C exhibited 198 instances across all datasets. These findings demonstrated that Family B had the most substantial alignment between their language beliefs and practices, achieving this by limiting code-mixing and creating opportunities for the children to produce Arabic utterances. In contrast, Families A and C exhibited a misalignment between their language beliefs and actual practices, where high frequencies of code-mixing contributed to inconsistent heritage language input, likely reinforcing receptive bilingualism. This misalignment, where parents code-mixed by frequently inserting English into Arabic, rather than using Arabic consistently, provides an environment conducive to receptive bilingualism by exposing children to mixed language input. These findings support Byers-Heinlein's (2023) study, which found that parents who regularly code-mixed had children with smaller receptive vocabularies at 1.5 years and marginally smaller expressive vocabularies in a

smaller sample of bilingual children aged 2; however, this effect appears to diminish as children grow older.

In contrast, children's code-mixing (inserting Arabic words, phrases or sentences into English utterances) varied substantially, reflecting different positions along the proposed receptive bilingualism continuum (see Figure 3). Children in Family A code-mixed at the word and phrase level, children of Family B code-mixed at the word, clause and phrase level, while children in Family C did not code-mix but instead relied on repetition, formulaic expressions, and polar responses. This variation demonstrates that receptive bilingualism exists on a continuum, with children across families exhibiting different types and levels of heritage-language production. Children in Families A and B also demonstrated higher frequencies of intra-sentential code-mixing, with 45 and 50 instances, incorporating Arabic words, clauses and phrases into their English conversations. While these patterns broadly align with existing research on receptive bilingual children's code-mixing abilities (Montrul, 2016b; Nakamura, 2019; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020; Smith-Christmas, 2016), Family B's children, whose parents exercised active agency through collaborative decision-making, demonstrated higher productive skills compared to the children of Families A and C, supporting the argument that active parental agency appears to be associated with reduced prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

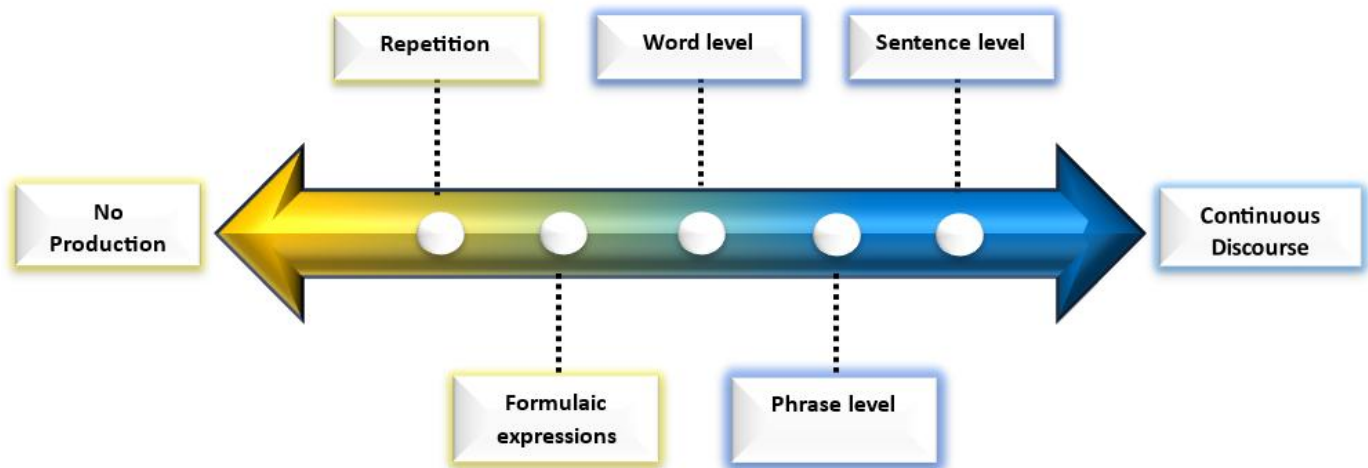
Although code-mixing was the only shared language practice between parents and children, another important finding is the parents' use of Arabic in daily activities and its impact on the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The contrast between the parents of Family B's higher Arabic use in daily activities (92.4% of their total turns) and the parents of Families A and C's substantially

lower rates (67% and 33%, respectively) supports the finding in the literature (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020; Armon-Lotem, 2018; Köpke, 2019; Paradis & Grüter, 2014; Thordardottir, 2011; Unsworth, 2016) that consistent heritage language input and exposure are crucial for developing children's productive skills, particularly vocabulary. This contrast also reveals a partial to significant misalignment between the parental beliefs stated in the previous subsection and their actual language practices. Variability in Arabic use during daily interactions among parents may create conditions in which children receive inconsistent Arabic input, potentially reinforcing their comprehension skills over production. This pattern aligns with research by Gibson et al. (2012), who found that inconsistent language exposure contributes to receptive-expressive semantic gaps in bilingual children, where comprehension abilities exceed production capabilities. Similarly, Mieszkowska et al. (2017) demonstrated that without consistent home language input, children's vocabulary knowledge in the heritage language remains predominantly receptive rather than productive. As a result, parents' inconsistent use of Arabic during daily activities appears to reinforce receptive bilingualism among children.

Another significant finding drawn from the data is that the parents of Families A and C reported using ritual language as a language practice. Although this practice aligns with parental beliefs about maintaining Arabic for religious purposes, its implementation was infrequent (two instances in Family A, one instance in Family C) and primarily encouraged formulaic expressions rather than natural language production. This finding extends Spolsky's (2003) observation about the underexplored relationship between religion and language maintenance by demonstrating how ritual language use, when limited to memorised recitations, may not effectively support productive

language development. Contrary to Forrest's (2022) research, which suggests that religious contexts can provide valuable opportunities for heritage language maintenance, the current study reveals that such opportunities were limited for children, as ritual language use or Qur'anic recitations were neither captured in audio recordings between parents and children nor observed by the researcher. Additional research is needed to understand how to integrate ritual language practices into everyday interactions, so children can develop more robust and productive skills in the heritage language rather than repeating memorised text. These findings have practical implications for heritage language maintenance programs, emphasising that the potential of ritual language use for supporting heritage language development depends on its integration into broader communicative contexts. This integration can expand beyond formulaic expressions and more effectively support children's heritage language production skills, rather than relying solely on memorised recitations. Family language policy research may benefit from incorporating L2 acquisition principles, as heritage language learners are acquiring Arabic as a second language, despite their heritage connection.

Drawing on the discussions above, the following continuum of receptive children's heritage-language production is proposed (see Figure 3), based on findings from Chapters 5 and 6. This continuum captures the range of language output observed among the children of this study, from repetition to heritage language production at the phrase level and serves as a visual representation of how differing children's language practices position them on the proposed continuum.

Figure 3. *Proposed receptive children's heritage language production continuum*

The proposed continuum illustrates the progressive development of receptive bilingual children's linguistic abilities, ranging from repetition to sentence-level production. The proposed continuum outlines five key stages of children's language production:

1. Initial mimicry through direct repetition of parental utterances,
2. Progression to using formulaic expressions,
3. Production of individual words,
4. Combining words into phrases,
5. Producing clauses.

In this study, most children produced utterances that fell between the word-level and phrase-level. However, Rose and Sami from Family B produced utterances at the clause level. This finding

is particularly significant, as it may suggest that receptive bilingual children can develop more advanced productive language skills than previously documented in the academic literature.

In summary, significant variation existed between parental and children's heritage language practices. Family B demonstrated low levels of code-mixing and higher daily Arabic use, while Families A and C showed more code-mixing or limited daily Arabic use, signalling a gap between parental beliefs and actual practices. In contrast, the children's reliance on code-mixing as a language practice indicates limited heritage-language production skills. The children of Family B, whose parents demonstrated alignment between their beliefs and practices, could form Arabic phrases and clauses, supporting the proposed heritage language production continuum. Ritual language use, while aligned with parental beliefs about religious significance, proved formulaic and infrequent, indicating that sporadic memorised recitations may not sufficiently support productive skills without broader integration into everyday interactions. What is important, however, is that parental practices were not solely determined by parental choices but were shaped by children's agentic responses. For example, when children exercised compliance, as in Family B, opportunities for productive language use were created. Conversely, when children resisted, as when Muhammad persisted in English despite his mother's Arabic input, parental practices yielded receptive rather than productive outcomes. Thus, family language practices emerged from the interaction between parental choices and child agency. In the next subsection, I examine the effect of language management strategies on the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

7.1.3 Language management strategies

Language management strategies are the deliberate and explicit efforts applied by members of a speech community to maintain and develop their heritage language (Caldas, 2012; Spolsky, 2004). In the context of family language policy, these strategies are often set by members of the speech community (the parents) to achieve the desired heritage language outcomes (Spolsky, 2004). Building on the previous discussions of family language beliefs and practices, in this subsection, I present key findings on the language management strategies families applied, discussing the effects of these strategies on the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. I argue that although some parents attempted to apply various language management strategies, the children's engagement with these strategies was impacted by their awareness of their perceived receptive bilingualism. This section proceeds by discussing findings on shared language management strategies between parents and children, followed by a discussion of parent-specific strategies.

The study's findings reveal that communication with the extended family, whether face-to-face or via digital platforms, emerged as a shared language-management strategy among parents and children across all three families. Parents from all three families encouraged their children to speak with extended family members locally and overseas, aligning with the parents' positive beliefs about preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children to encourage effective communication with the extended family. However, the children's engagement with this strategy was often minimal, restricted to basic greetings and formulaic expressions. The children were also hesitant to speak with the extended family due to their perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism and fears of making errors. Therefore, while parents viewed communication with the extended family as an

opportunity for developing children's natural language production, children considered this strategy a challenge. These findings resonate with Wilson's (2020) study, in which children developed heritage language anxiety due to fears of making errors and of not being understood by others, leading to a preference for the dominant language. These findings contribute to theoretical understanding by demonstrating that children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism influences how they engage with parent-initiated language management strategies. Future research supporting these findings are therefore recommended.

Formal Arabic education, through Saturday bilingual schools or mainstream bilingual programs, emerged as a language management strategy initiated by parents from all three families and implemented by the children. However, the children's application of this strategy varied, ranging from disliking bilingual schools to citing difficulties and challenges with Modern Standard Arabic compared to colloquial forms. For example, Muhammad from Family A struggled with formal Arabic grammar despite attending weekend classes. In Family B, both children withdrew from Saturday school due to confusion between dialect, Modern Standard Arabic, and Aramaic. These findings support existing research (e.g., Wilson, 2020) on how children may develop frustration from attending weekend bilingual programs. A possible explanation for this frustration is the linguistic gap between the Arabic dialect learned at home and the Modern Standard Arabic taught at school, which appears to create additional barriers to heritage-language production, as children struggle to transfer school-based Modern Standard Arabic knowledge into home communication contexts. These findings have significant implications for heritage language education programs, suggesting the need for pedagogical approaches that better bridge the gap

between formal and colloquial Arabic while acknowledging the challenges faced by receptive bilingual learners.

Although no other shared language management strategies were identified between parents and children, watching television in Arabic emerged as a shared language management strategy initiated by parents across all three families, though with notably different implementation patterns. Family B demonstrated an explicit family language policy through exclusive Arabic media exposure (three instances observed), creating an immersive environment aligned with their language maintenance beliefs. In contrast, Families A and C showed sporadic engagement (one instance each), reflecting a more implicit approach to watching television in Arabic. This variation in implementation and consistency aligns with De Houwer's (2007) study, which shows how consistency in parental application of heritage language practices and strategies affects children's heritage language development. De la Piedra (2011) also adds that the use of modern electronic devices and educational television programs "raises children's interest in the heritage language, develops meta-linguistic awareness, provides quality parent-child interactions and time spent together, which has an inevitable impact on the child's emotional development as well as on cognitive and linguistic development" (as cited in Schwartz, 2020, p. 205). While watching television in the heritage language emerged as a shared language management strategy among the parents, Zauche et al (2016) caution that watching television alone cannot replace the benefits of direct parent-child interaction for language development. These findings have important implications for heritage language programs, indicating that watching television in the heritage language needs to be integrated with parents' and children's conversations rather than relied upon in isolation.

Corrective feedback emerged as another shared parental language management strategy among the parents of Families A and B. Family B demonstrated the regular application of corrective feedback (eight instances), in which the parents corrected the children's linguistic errors and encouraged the repetition of correct pronunciation during conversations. In contrast, the mother from Family A demonstrated limited use of corrective feedback (one instance) through implicit correction, whereas the parents of Family C exhibited no evidence of this strategy. This variation in parental use of corrective feedback corresponded with differences in the children's productive heritage language skills. In Family B, where corrective feedback was applied consistently, Sami and Rose were able to produce Arabic at the clause level, suggesting that corrective feedback may support productive language development. However, research on corrective feedback specifically within family language policy contexts remains limited compared to classroom-based studies, such as those by Sheen & Ellis (2011). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of corrective feedback in home settings may depend on its regular implementation, the consistency with which parents address errors, and their sensitivity to the child's receptive bilingual status. These results provide important implications for heritage language maintenance, indicating that corrective feedback could be an effective language management strategy to encourage the children's heritage language production skills. However, more research is required to confirm this hypothesis.

Parents' attempts to consistently speak Arabic with their children without code-mixing emerged as another key finding from the analysis. This language management strategy is challenging to maintain over time, particularly as parents may inevitably code-mix between their heritage and dominant languages. Family B demonstrated the highest implementation rate, speaking Arabic

exclusively (255 out of 305) of their turns, while Families A and C showed lower rates of (161 out of 480) and (30 out of 412), respectively. This strategy resembles the OPOL (one-parent, one-language) approach, in which each parent speaks their heritage language exclusively and consistently to the child (Wilson, 2021). However, De Houwer (2007) and Yamamoto (2001) observe that maintaining the heritage language consistently is often unrealistic and insufficient for successful transmission, as parents frequently code-mix between the heritage and dominant languages. In addition, the current study's findings extend Paradis and Grüter's (2014) research by revealing how different levels of consistency in heritage language use correlate with children's language production patterns. The data suggests that while all families recognised the importance of speaking Arabic consistently, actual implementation varied substantially. Family B's approach created more opportunities for children to produce Arabic utterances, whereas Families A and C's less consistent use appeared to reinforce receptive rather than productive outcomes. These results contribute to the theoretical understanding of heritage language maintenance by demonstrating that, although difficult, consistency in language use may be crucial for supporting productive bilingualism. The findings also hold significant implications for family language planning, suggesting that successful heritage language maintenance requires an explicit family language policy and sustained commitment to language use.

Family B's use of travelling to the homeland as an immersive and planned language management strategy emerged as an interesting finding from the parental data. This finding supports evidence from previous studies on the importance of authentic heritage language exposure in encouraging children to speak their heritage language (Armon-Lotem, 2018; Köpke, 2019;

Meisel, 2019; Paradis & Grüter, 2014; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). However, not all families have the financial or logistical capacity to travel to the homeland, highlighting a key limitation of this resource-intensive strategy and stressing the need for more accessible local alternatives. Therefore, while families A and C relied solely on local language management strategies, Family B's approach incorporated both local and transnational elements, creating opportunities for authentic language immersion and development. This observation extends Paradis and Grüter's (2014) findings by demonstrating that intensive heritage language exposure periods, such as visits to the homeland, may accelerate receptive bilingual children's transition toward productive language use. The findings contribute to understanding how immersive experiences can complement other language management strategies, particularly for receptive bilinguals who may benefit from intensive exposure periods. Although these findings have important implications for understanding the role of immersive experiences in developing children's heritage language productive skills, the data in this study do not provide direct evidence of how the children engaged with this strategy, as no recordings or observations of homeland visits were captured, a fertile area for future research.

Further examination of the data revealed that reading in Arabic was the most notably absent language management strategy across all families, among both parents and children, highlighting significant implications for heritage language development. The analysis showed that none of the parents or children engaged in Arabic reading practices beyond reciting religious texts. Murray's (2014) research emphasises the crucial role of reading in heritage language development, highlighting a significant gap in parents' efforts to maintain their heritage language. While reading

was not mentioned or observed in parental language management strategies, the children's data revealed multiple barriers for the children to read in Arabic, including limited access to Arabic books, time constraints due to competing academic priorities, and children's perceptions of their Arabic reading abilities, as in the case of the children in Families A and B. Children of Family C, on the other hand, recited the Qur'an in Arabic, which primarily supported memorisation rather than natural language production. These findings have important implications for heritage language programs, suggesting the need for targeted interventions that make Arabic reading materials more accessible and appealing to receptive bilingual children while accounting for their linguistic challenges.

In summary, although parents initiated multiple language management strategies, the strategies' effectiveness depended on both parental implementation and children's agentic choices. Communication with extended family emerged as the only shared strategy between parents and children, yet children's engagement with this strategy was often limited to formulaic expressions. Watching television in Arabic showed consistent implementation only in Family B, while Saturday school attendance revealed how children's agency shaped outcomes. Muhammad's social isolation led to disengagement; he described Saturdays as his "worst day." Rose withdrew because formal Arabic was "*too hard*," and Sami's participation proved short-lived, acknowledging, "*I forgot them now*." Thus, management strategies did not operate independently of agency; parental agency, whether active, constrained, or deferred, determined implementation consistency, while child agency, whether active, constrained, or deferred, shaped actual uptake through compliance, resistance, or avoidance.

Based on the discussion of findings presented above on the three components of a family language policy, and to answer the study's first research question: *To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?* – The following conclusion can be drawn:

First, parental language policy appears to correlate with the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, depending on the degree of alignment among its three components: beliefs, practices, and management strategies. When these components align and are implemented consistently, children may exceed typical receptive bilingual patterns and begin to produce Arabic at the clause level. Conversely, misalignment between these components appears to reinforce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. The key point here is not merely having a language policy but implementing it consistently across families' daily routines and interactions.

Second, the children's awareness of their perceived receptive bilingualism appears to play a central role in shaping their beliefs and application of both language practices and management strategies. Children who were aware of their perceived receptive bilingualism often disliked speaking Arabic, restricted their Arabic interactions with extended family members, and exhibited reluctance to participate in or apply language management strategies, thereby reinforcing the prevalence of receptive bilingualism despite parental efforts. Having examined the effects of family language policy components on the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, I will now discuss findings on parental and child agency and their influence on receptive bilingualism.

7.2 Agency and receptive bilingualism

In light of the discussion above, I now turn to the thesis's second sub-question: *How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?* To explore this question further, it is important to remind the reader of the definition of agency. In a family language policy context, parental agency was defined in this study as family members' capacity to act and make choices that shape heritage language outcomes, while recognising that such choices are both enabled and constrained by structural forces (Ahearn, 2001; Giddens, 1984; Kuczynski, 2002). On the other hand, child agency was defined as the children's capacity to act and make choices to comply with, negotiate, participate in, reject, defy or resist the family language policy as "children are still acquiring the sociocultural knowledge (including language) necessary for their capacity to act" (Smith-Christmas, 2020, p. 218). Both parent and child agencies were further conceptualised in this thesis as active, constrained or deferred. In addition, as proposed in the theoretical framework (Chapter 3), agency functions not as a fourth component of Spolsky's model but as a mediating process that shapes the translation of language beliefs into practices and management strategies. The findings from Chapters 5 and 6 revealed that the type of agency exercised, whether active, constrained, or deferred, appears to influence the degree of alignment among family language policy components and, consequently, the heritage language outcome. As such, I begin the discussion with active agency, from both parents' and children's perspectives, followed by an analysis of findings on constrained agency, and finally, an evaluation of deferred agency. Each form of agency is examined in relation to its influence on family language policy and receptive bilingualism.

7.2.1 Active agency

Active agency emerged from the data as intentional engagement, in which parents make choices that could mediate the translation of their language beliefs into supportive practices and strategies, and children choose to comply with, negotiate, or participate in the family language policy. Drawing on the data from Chapters 5 and 6, the following paragraphs present findings illustrating how parents and children exercised active agency and how such agency affected the family language policy and the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. In the following, it will be shown that active parental agency, observed primarily in the parents of Family B, combined with the children's compliance with that policy, appeared to create opportunities for the children to develop their productive skills and was associated with a reduced prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Setting an explicit family language policy and the children's compliance with that policy emerged as the main finding of active agency in Family B. By applying an explicit family language policy where the parents collaborated, prioritised and planned to speak only Arabic at home and limited code-mixing, the parents of Family B exercised their agency to mediate the translation of their beliefs in preserving Arabic and teaching it to the children into supportive language practices and management strategies and created an immersive language learning environment that enabled the children to speak Arabic at the clause level. This planning aligns with Srhir's (2020) research, which showed that parents exercised active agency by planning their family language policy through explicit decisions that encourage and support children's heritage language development.

In contrast, Rose and Sami, the children of Family B, also exercised active child agency in two ways: first, by expressing a willingness to speak Arabic despite their perceived awareness of their

receptive bilingualism, and second, by complying with and participating in the family language policy. These forms of active agency were evident in both interview responses and observed interactions. Thus, the parents and children of Family B exercised active agency, resonating with Said & Zhu's (2019) findings, which show that children who comply with parental language choices are often aware of the family's language policy and tend to apply their agency to show commitment to family values. These findings highlight the importance of active parental and child agency in supporting heritage language maintenance, demonstrating that parental efforts, combined with children's compliance with and participation in the family language policy, are fundamental to reducing the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

Another important finding emerging from the data on active agency is parental joint commitment to implementing a family language policy that provides the children with opportunities for language learning and development. As documented in Chapter 5, the parents of Family B exercised active agency by committing to applying consistent language practices and strategies, offering Rose and Sami continuous opportunities to learn and speak Arabic, whether by consistently speaking Arabic, applying corrective feedback or visiting the homeland, thereby supporting the children's heritage language development.

In response, Rose and Sami demonstrated their own active agency by complying and engaging with these practices and strategies, attempting to speak Arabic during interactions, even when they were initially reluctant. For example, Sami tried to count in Arabic despite initial reluctance, illustrating that active child agency is not static, where Sami's initial reluctance shifted to compliance through parental scaffolding, demonstrating how agency can be negotiated within

interactions. Nonetheless, the study's findings are consistent with those of Curdt-Christiansen & Wang (2018), Kuczynski (2002), and Srhir (2020), who observed that active parental agency exercised through deliberate language policy implementation encourages children to comply with and engage in the heritage language. Therefore, Family B's commitment to implementing a family language policy through collaborative decision-making provided opportunities for language learning, which reduced the prevalence of receptive bilingualism and increased productive skills, as evidenced by Rose and Sami's ability to produce clauses in Arabic, a level of production not observed among other children. These findings have significant implications for heritage language maintenance, suggesting that consistent parental commitment to the family language policy can encourage children to comply with and participate in the family language policy, which may reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism.

In contrast to these findings, one significant and unexpected finding emerging from the data is that the parents of Families A and C exercised constrained agency rather than active agency, despite the children's willingness to comply with and participate in the family's language policy. Children, such as Muhammad from Family A and Fayrouz and Kawthar from Family C, expressed a willingness to comply with the family language policy and to speak Arabic if they were able to do so. However, structural constraints, including time pressures, competing demands, and, in Family A, the father's limited Arabic proficiency, limited parents' capacity to translate their beliefs into consistent practices and strategies. As a result, the parents did not plan an explicit family language policy or create an environment where beliefs, practices, and strategies align to support children's heritage language productive skills.

The presence of constrained rather than active parental agency appears to correlate with children's positioning at the lower end of the proposed heritage language production continuum (see Figure 3), where, for example, the children of Family C were limited to polar responses and formulaic expressions rather than constructing phrases and clauses in Arabic. Constrained parental agency, therefore, emerges as a contributing factor to the persistence of receptive bilingualism. This finding contributes to the literature by revealing how receptive bilingualism can persist despite children's willingness to participate in the family language policy, when parental agency is constrained by structural forces.

Overall, the discussion of findings presented in this subsection examined how parental and child agency affect the prevalence of receptive bilingualism and argued that active parental agency exercised through collaborative decision making where parents, together, set and applied an explicit family language policy that aligns beliefs, practices and management strategies created opportunities for children to develop their productive skills and reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, as exemplified by the parents of Family B. The children of Family B also exercised active agency and demonstrated commitment to family values by complying with their parents' choices and attempting to speak Arabic despite their awareness of their perceived receptive bilingualism. In contrast, an interesting and unexpected finding emerging from the data is that children of Families A and C expressed a willingness to comply with the family language policy; however, their parents exercised constrained rather than active agency due to structural limitations. This mismatch shows that although children's active agency is important, active parental agency is

indispensable for mediating the translation of beliefs into consistent practices and strategies. In the next subsection, I discuss findings related to constrained agency.

7.2.2 Constrained agency

Building upon previous findings on active agency, this section shifts focus to constrained agency and its impact on receptive bilingualism. In this study, constrained parental agency refers to constrained engagement, in which structural forces, such as limited heritage-language proficiency, time pressures, or limited access to resources, limit parents' capacity to translate their language beliefs into supportive practices and strategies. When operating under such constraints, parents may resort to inconsistent practices, coercive approaches, or rely on external factors, such as community schools, for heritage language support (Hatoss, 2019; Romanowski, 2021). In contrast, constrained child agency involves children choosing to defy, challenge, or resist the family language policy by rejecting parental language choices (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Gyogi, 2015; Kuczynski, 2002; Wang & Obaidul-Hamid, 2022), often shaped by children's limited productive skills in the heritage language, which constrains their capacity to comply even when willing to do so. This section illustrates how, from a parental perspective, constrained agency contributes to misalignment between the components of the family language policy, affecting the heritage language outcome. From a child's perspective, constrained child agency, characterised by rejection, defiance, or resistance to the family language policy, also affects the heritage language outcome.

Unilateral decision-making about the heritage language emerged as an example of constrained parental agency in Family A. The mother's decision to speak Arabic with the children while

assigning the father to speak only English was shaped by a structural constraint: the father's limited Arabic proficiency. While well-intended, this unilateral approach marginalised the father's participation in the family language policy, despite his initial willingness to contribute, thereby reducing potential Arabic exposure from two parents to one. These findings align with Luykx's (2003) observations that language choices within the family determine the maintenance, survival, and intergenerational transmission of heritage languages. Unlike Family B, where both parents collaborated in implementing a supportive language policy, Family A's unilateral approach was constrained by the father's limited Arabic proficiency, which has created barriers to children's heritage language development by limiting Arabic input to one parent. This finding extends the current understanding of how constrained parental agency, exercised through unilateral decision-making in response to structural limitations, impacts children's heritage language outcomes.

Another significant finding is that parents of Family A, operating under constrained agency, resorted to coercive rather than supportive approaches to encourage the children to speak Arabic. As stated by Muhammad (see Chapter 6), the father of Family A enforces a coercive language policy by shouting at the children for not speaking Arabic. Similarly, the mother's rhetorical questioning of why Muhammad should learn Arabic reflected a coercive approach that emerged from, rather than constituted, constrained parental agency. Consequently, Muhammad also exercised constrained agency by defying such approaches and deliberately speaking English despite parental expectations. However, Muhammad's defiance appears to be shaped by his limited productive skills, which constrained his capacity to comply even when he was willing to do so. A possible explanation for Muhammad's defiance is that enforced approaches and language policies

may create anxiety rather than support natural language development, affecting the children's willingness to speak Arabic and instilling a negative association with the language, which can lead to resistance and limited progress beyond receptive bilingualism. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in this area, which link coercive approaches arising from constrained parental agency to hindering heritage language production skills and not producing the desired heritage language outcomes (Armstrong, 2014; Hatoss, 2019; Romanowski, 2021). Moreover, this finding highlights the significance of empathetic approaches that encourage children to speak their heritage languages. Even if parents hold positive heritage language beliefs, a coercive approach can erode children's confidence and build defiance or resistance in children toward speaking their heritage language.

Another important finding emerging from the data is that some children exercised constrained agency by deliberately speaking English despite parental expectations to speak Arabic, which may be contributing to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. In Family A, the children consistently spoke English; Muhammad, for example, stated that he speaks English 23 hours a day, 7 days a week, overriding and challenging his mother's language choices and demonstrating a clear preference for the dominant language, often linking this to limited heritage-language production skills. Similarly, children in Family C chose to speak English rather than Arabic, citing language difficulties. Even in Family B, where children predominantly exercised active agency, Rose acknowledged preferring English in certain contexts, illustrating that active and constrained agency are not mutually exclusive but can coexist within the same child depending on the interactional context. This deliberate preference for English over Arabic may suggest that the children are

exercising constrained agency stemming from their perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism rather than defying the family language policy. The children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism influenced the type of agency they exercised, aligning with Degu's (2021) findings that children's limited linguistic competence in their heritage language leads them to establish monolingual norms and prefer speaking the dominant language.

In conclusion, in this subsection, I discussed how constrained agency from parents' and children's perspectives relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, arguing that parental and children's constrained agencies are influenced by different factors. Firstly, findings identify unilateral decision-making by parents, particularly in Family A, as an example of constrained parental agency. The mother's decision to exclude the father from the family's language policy was shaped by a structural constraint: his limited Arabic proficiency, thereby reducing the children's exposure to Arabic and limiting their opportunities to develop heritage-language skills. Secondly, when operating under a constrained agency, parents may resort to coercive approaches, which create tension between parents and children and lead children to resist or avoid participating in the family language policy. Thirdly, the section highlighted how children in Families A and C exercised constrained agency by deliberately choosing to speak English, reflecting their perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism. Even children in Family B, who predominantly exercised active agency, demonstrated constrained agency in certain contexts, illustrating the fluid nature of agency across interactions. Thus, in line with the proposed extension of Spolsky's model of language policy, constrained agency disrupts the alignment of parental beliefs, practices, and management

strategies, contributing to a cycle in which children's receptive bilingualism is reinforced and productive language development remains limited.

7.2.3 Deferred agency

Building on the findings of active and constrained agency, in this final subsection, I present key findings on deferred agency. Deferred agency, whether parental or child, refers to intentional non-intervention, in which family members choose not to engage with the family's language policy, even when the capacity to do so may exist. However, deferred child agency, in which children understand Arabic but continue to speak English, may be a characteristic of early receptive bilingual development. The findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 reveal that younger children tend to exercise deferred agency and default to the dominant language if parental guidance or a family language policy is absent. Three key findings emerged regarding deferred agency: parents allowing children to set the home language, the absence of support and encouragement for Arabic learning and speaking, and children not complying with or resisting the family language policy.

Allowing the children to set the home language was an example of deferred parental agency in Family C, where both parents stated that maintaining and teaching Arabic was important, but did not make choices to support the children's heritage-language production skills, instead allowing the children to set the home language. This hands-off approach led the children to speak only English, as Arabic was neither supported nor integrated into daily language activities, resulting in insufficient exposure to Arabic. These findings extend prior research by demonstrating that deferred agency, specifically allowing children to set home language, contributes to insufficient heritage language exposure; limited heritage language production skills are closely associated with

insufficient heritage language exposure (Armon-Lotem, 2018; Köpke, 2019; Meisel, 2019; Paradis & Grüter, 2014; Sherkina-Lieber, 2020). The findings also suggest that deferred parental agency, characterised by allowing children to set the home language, is directly linked to minimal heritage language exposure, which fails to create a conducive environment for heritage language maintenance and restricts the children's opportunities to develop productive Arabic language skills.

Another key finding related to deferred parental agency that emerged in Family C is the absence of support and encouragement for Arabic learning or speaking. The parents exercised deferred agency by taking a neutral stance that neither supported nor encouraged the children in activities that could stimulate and develop their Arabic language skills. For instance, Family C's lack of language practices and management strategies, such as constant code-mixing and inconsistent conversation in Arabic, created an environment where children were exposed to Arabic only sporadically. This finding illustrates how deferred agency, distinct from constrained agency, manifests as intentional non-intervention, thereby creating conditions conducive to receptive bilingualism.

In contrast to the deferred agency exercised by parents, deferred child agency was primarily observed among younger children rather than older ones. Ayman (5) from Family A and Ahmad (5) from Family C showed patterns of deferred child agency by neither complying with nor resisting their parents' language policy. Children who showed patterns of deferred agency typically understood parental Arabic instructions yet responded solely in English. The children neither complied with nor defied their parents' language policy, nor did they attempt to speak Arabic. These findings suggest that this form of child agency aligns with deferred parental agency: when parents

do not prompt or reinforce Arabic, children also exercise deferred agency and adopt a neutral stance, refraining from participating or defying the family's language policy. However, whether younger children's non-engagement reflects deferred agency or constrained agency warrants consideration. The data suggests elements of both: these children understood Arabic but did not attempt production, indicating comprehension capacity alongside production constraints.

In conclusion, in this section, I discussed findings on parental and child agency and attempted to answer the research question: *How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?* I argued that each form of active, constrained, and deferred agency from both parents' and children's perspectives mediates the translation of beliefs into practices and strategies, thereby affecting the family language policy and the heritage language outcome. When active parental agency, characterised by parental collaboration, was exercised, the children progressed to producing Arabic phrases and clauses. Constrained agency, characterised by structural limitations such as limited heritage language proficiency and time pressures, reduced the children's opportunities to develop their heritage language production skills. Under such constraints, parents resorted to coercive approaches, and children's resistance was shaped by their perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism, which led them to choose to speak English. Deferred agency involved parents choosing not to support and encourage the children to speak the heritage language, and the children neither complied with nor resisted the family language policy, showing indifference towards using and speaking Arabic, resulting in the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among the children. In the final section of this chapter, I synthesise the overall findings

on how family language policy and agency collectively affect the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among English-Arabic-speaking families in Australia.

7.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I synthesised and discussed key findings on how family language policy and agency affect the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among English-Arabic-speaking families in Australia, addressing the overarching research question: *To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?*

In addressing the first sub-question, *how do the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?* The findings revealed that parental family language policy influences the prevalence of receptive bilingualism by aligning or misaligning beliefs, practices, and management strategies. Families that implemented an explicit and collaborative family language policy, as seen in Family B, reduced the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. Conversely, misalignment between the family language components, as observed in Families A and C, perpetuated the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. These findings confirm the hypothesis that the alignment between the family language policy components is crucial for developing children's heritage language productive skills.

With respect to the second sub-question: *How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?* The findings revealed that agency operates as a mediating process shaping the translation of beliefs into practices and strategies. In Family B, active parental agency mediated this translation, enabling children to progress along the proposed continuum of heritage language

production. This was complemented by children's active agency through compliance and participation in the family language policy. Constrained agency, characterised by structural limitations, disrupted alignment between beliefs and practices in Family A. Under such constraints, parents resorted to coercive approaches, and children, whose resistance was shaped by their limited productive skills, chose to speak English. Deferred agency, observed in Family C, involved parents choosing not to engage with the family language policy, and younger children neither complied nor resisted, with comprehension exceeding production, suggesting early receptive bilingualism. These findings support the study's hypothesis that agency mediates the relationship among the family language policy components, shaping whether children develop productive or receptive bilingualism. Finally, the longitudinal design enabled observation of evolving dynamics. In Family C, for example, parents adjusted their practices over time, illustrating changes that a cross-sectional study may have missed. The next chapter will conclude the thesis by summarising its key findings, contributions, and implications and identifying avenues for future research.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

8.0 Introduction

Since its emergence, family language policy has become a significant research field investigating critical factors that affect heritage language maintenance among bilingual families. Although considerable attention has been given to heritage language maintenance, little attention has been paid to receptive bilingualism in family language policy studies. To address this gap in the literature and drawing upon inspiration from both the scholarly literature and my personal experiences with heritage language maintenance and the challenges of raising bilingual children, the primary aim of this thesis was to investigate how a family language policy mediated by agency relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, among Arabic-English-speaking families in Australia, drawing on both parent and child perspectives.

For my investigation, I employed an ethnographically informed case study approach, guided and framed within Spolsky's model of language policy, which categorises a language policy as comprising three independent yet interrelated components: language beliefs, practices, and management strategies. What emerged from the preliminary chapters was the need to extend Spolsky's model of language policy by positioning agency not as a fourth component, but as a mediating process that shapes and helps translate parental beliefs into supportive language practices and strategies. Guided by the overarching research question: *To what extent does a family language policy influence the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?* I conceptualised that family language policy as a co-constructed process shaped by both parental and child agency. This was further explored through two specific sub-questions:

1. How do the components of a family language policy relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?
2. How does agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism?

By addressing these questions through the collected data, I sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of how the components of family language policy, shaped by both parental and child agency, correlate with the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. In this final chapter, I summarise the thesis's findings and situate them within broader theoretical and practical contexts. I begin by outlining the key findings and contributions of the study. I then reflect on the study's theoretical, methodological, and practical implications, before considering its limitations and proposing directions for future research. Finally, I conclude the chapter with final reflections and closing remarks.

8.1 Summary of findings

Guided by the proposed extension of Spolsky's model of language policy, in this section, I present the key findings of the thesis, emphasising their relevance to the study's aim, research questions by showing how receptive bilingualism was found to be correlated with multiple interconnected factors, particularly, the family language policy parents apply, mediated by agency, and the children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism.

First, I demonstrated in Chapter 5 that the alignment between the three components of family language policy—beliefs, practices, and management strategies—is critical for translating parental beliefs into supportive heritage language practices and strategies. Alignment among these

components produced a family language policy that supports heritage language production, whereas misalignment—even when positive beliefs were present—limited the translation of those beliefs into supportive practices and strategies, thereby reinforcing receptive bilingualism. Thus, Family B, whose parents collaboratively established an explicit family language policy with aligned beliefs, practices, and strategies, demonstrated greater success in encouraging children to speak Arabic, with Rose and Sami producing utterances at the clause level. In contrast, in Families A and C, where misalignment between components was evident, the children showed patterns consistent with receptive bilingualism, with children's production limited to word-level code-mixing or formulaic expressions.

In Chapter 5, I also discussed the role of parental agency in shaping both the family language policy and heritage language outcomes. Three forms of agency emerged from the data. In Family B, active parental agency, characterised by intentional engagement through collaborative decision-making, created alignment among the family language policy components, enabling children to progress to producing Arabic at the clause level. In Family A, constrained parental agency, characterised by constrained engagement through unilateral decisions and coercive enforcement, created conditions where children resisted the family language policy, contributing to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. In Family C, deferred parental agency, characterised by intentional non-intervention, created conditions in which children set the home language with no encouragement of Arabic, resulting in production limited to formulaic expressions and polar responses. Thus, while active agency created alignment between beliefs, practices, and strategies, constrained and deferred agency disrupted this alignment, reinforcing receptive bilingualism. These

findings address the second research sub-question and introduce a triadic conceptualisation of agency to family language policy scholarship.

Then, I proceeded to Chapter 6 to answer research sub-questions 1 and 2 from the children's perspectives, and I found that the children's family language policy was shaped by their perceived awareness of receptive bilingualism, as expressed in their explicit statements about understanding Arabic but struggling to speak it. First, not all children held positive beliefs about their heritage language; some associated speaking Arabic with difficulties experienced at Saturday Arabic community schools, including confusion between Modern Standard Arabic and dialect and social isolation within these settings. Second, the children's awareness of their receptive bilingualism influenced their language practices; children primarily employed code-mixing due to reluctance, fear of making mistakes, or frustration stemming from limited productive skills. Third, although parents established language management strategies, children struggled to engage with them. Therefore, receptive bilingualism emerged as both a product and a driver of the children's language beliefs, practices, and engagement with parent-initiated management strategies.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I also highlighted the role of child agency in family language policy, which operated differently from parental agency. Active child agency was characterised by children's compliance and participation in the family language policy, even when they initially expressed difficulty or reluctance. Constrained child agency, marked by resistance and defiance, was driven by children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism. Deferred child agency, predominantly observed among younger children, reflected non-engagement with the family language policy, where the children understood Arabic but continued responding in English,

suggesting early stages of receptive bilingualism rather than resistance. Importantly, unlike parental agency, child agency did not mediate the translation of beliefs into supportive practices and strategies. Rather, the children's perceived awareness of their receptive bilingualism shaped their beliefs, practices, and engagement with parent-initiated management strategies. This represents a refinement of the proposed theoretical framework that, while agency mediates the translation of beliefs into practices for parents, for children, the children's awareness of their receptive bilingualism itself drives the relationship between family language policy components.

Together, the findings from Chapters 5, 6, and 7 answer the overarching research question and demonstrate that while family language policy relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, it is not just the presence of beliefs, practices, and strategies that matter, but their alignment, mediated by agency. When an active agency creates alignment among these components, productive bilingualism is more likely to develop. Conversely, when agency is constrained or deferred, receptive bilingualism tends to prevail, provided there is some heritage-language exposure from parents.

8.2 The study's implications and contributions

Drawing on the findings above, I now turn to the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the study. First, I discuss how positioning agency as a mediating process within Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy extends existing theoretical frameworks and offers new insights into how beliefs, practices, and management strategies interact to influence heritage language outcomes. Second, I outline how the ethnographically informed case study approach enabled in-depth exploration of family language policy, demonstrating the value of qualitative

methods in capturing naturalistic data that enhance our understanding of receptive bilingualism. Finally, I offer practical guidance for families, educators, and policymakers, providing recommendations for supporting productive bilingualism and addressing the challenges of receptive bilingualism.

8.2.1 Theoretical implications and contributions

In this thesis, I make important theoretical contributions to the field of family language policy, bilingualism, and heritage language maintenance by advancing our understanding of how a family language policy and agency impact receptive bilingualism. By investigating the intersection of these three elements, this research makes the following contributions:

1. Contribution to existing theories

The study builds on and extends Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy by positioning agency not as a fourth component, but as a mediating process that shapes the translation of beliefs into practices and management strategies. While Spolsky's model provides the foundation for understanding language policy and is widely used to examine language policies at family, institutional, and community levels, this study demonstrates that the mere presence of positive beliefs, practices, and strategies does not guarantee heritage language maintenance or the desired heritage language outcome. Rather, agency, particularly active agency, exercised through collaborative parental decision-making, mediates whether and how beliefs are translated into supportive practices and strategies. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that family language policy is not a top-down process driven solely by parents, but a co-constructed process shaped by

both parents and children, with child agency either supporting or undermining parental efforts. These findings suggest that theoretical models of language policy should account for agency as a mediating process, particularly at the micro-level of family interactions, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of heritage language outcomes.

8.2.2 Methodological implications and contributions

This study makes methodological contributions to family language policy research through its ethnographically informed case study approach. By employing multiple data collection methods and analysing family language policy from both parents' and children's perspectives, this research demonstrates the value of in-depth qualitative investigation in understanding receptive bilingualism.

1. Methodological implications and contributions

The ethnographically informed case study design, not typical in family language policy research, provided rich, contextualised data on how family language policy operates in practice. Through interviews, observations, informal discussions with children, and audio recordings of parent-child interactions over a three-month period, the study captured the language practices and strategies of both parents and children, offering triangulation that strengthened the validity of the findings. A key methodological contribution was the inclusion of children's voices as active participants, whose voices are often underrepresented in family language policy research. This approach highlighted the importance of recognising children as agents and co-constructors of family language policy.

2. Applications for future research

While many family language policy studies rely primarily on parental interviews or surveys, the methodological approach used in this study, integrating ethnographic perspectives with longitudinal, naturalistic audio-recordings, can serve as a model for future research on family language policy and receptive bilingualism. Researchers could replicate this design in different cultural and linguistic settings to explore cross-cultural variations in family language policy. Future studies might also benefit from combining qualitative and quantitative methods, such as incorporating language proficiency assessments alongside ethnographic data, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how family language policy and agency shape heritage language outcomes. Additionally, more structured recording protocols, such as scheduled daily recordings or researcher-controlled recording devices, could address the limitation of participant-selected recordings and capture a fuller range of family language practices.

8.2.3 Practical implications and contributions

In this final and important section on the study's implications and contributions, I discuss the practical implications drawn from this study's findings on family language policy and receptive bilingualism. The findings revealed significant implications for families, educators, and policymakers regarding how to support children's heritage language development beyond receptive bilingualism. I begin by examining implications for families, followed by recommendations for educators and heritage language programs, and finally, suggestions for policymakers.

1. Recommendations for families

If families wish to support their children's productive bilingualism and reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, recognising the alignment between their language beliefs, practices, and management strategies may be beneficial. The following recommendations emerged from the study's findings:

- Parents should address any conflicting beliefs and avoid unilateral decision-making, particularly when one parent has limited heritage language proficiency. This study found that collaborative parental decision-making was associated with more desirable heritage language outcomes.
- Parents should involve children in the development of the family language policy, considering their preferences, interests, and challenges, to allow them to develop a sense of ownership and active agency. This recommendation addresses the study's findings about the importance of active child agency in heritage language development and maintenance.
- Parents need to aim to maintain consistent use of and exposure to the heritage language in daily interactions wherever possible, while recognising that complete consistency may be challenging to achieve. The study found that higher rates of heritage language use in daily routines were associated with children's ability to produce heritage language utterances beyond the word level.

- Parents need to recognise that while Saturday schools and television can support language learning, these strategies should complement rather than replace back-and-forth daily heritage language conversations.
- Families need to consider strategies to integrate religious and cultural activities into daily communication, moving beyond formulaic expressions to encourage natural language production.
- Parents could create a supportive linguistic environment by engaging children in heritage language practices and strategies such as storytelling, playing games, or attending cultural events. This is particularly important given the study's finding that Family B's consistent use of Arabic led to better children's heritage language outcomes.

2. Recommendations for educators and heritage language programs

Heritage language educators play a crucial role in supporting family language policy outside the home. Based on the study's findings, particularly children's experiences with Saturday school, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Heritage language programs need to design curricula that emphasise productive language skills, incorporating conversational practice alongside reading and writing activities. The study found that children require more opportunities to develop their heritage language production skills beyond memorisation and recitation.
- Language schools should address challenges related to language variety and social integration, particularly the mixing of Modern Standard Arabic with dialect, and the

social isolation some children experience. Ensuring children feel supported and included may improve engagement with heritage language programs.

- Educators should collaborate with families to align educational efforts with family language policy, creating a cohesive approach to language maintenance. The study identified disconnects between home dialect use and the formal Arabic taught in schools, which contributed to children's negative beliefs about speaking Arabic.

3. Policy recommendations and community support

Policymakers and community leaders also play a crucial role in supporting the maintenance of heritage languages. Based on this study's findings regarding the challenges families face in maintaining Arabic, the following recommendations are proposed.

- Governments should invest in quality-controlled, accessible, and affordable heritage language programs, such as Saturday schools or mainstream bilingual schools, ensuring appropriate curriculum design and addressing issues of language varieties identified in this study.
- Policymakers should develop initiatives to raise awareness about the benefits of bilingualism and the phenomenon of receptive bilingualism, encouraging families to implement language practices and strategies that support productive skills.
- Community organisations should provide resources and support networks for immigrant families, including addressing the social isolation identified in this study and encouraging connections that reinforce heritage language use.

- Cultural organisations should create opportunities for heritage language speakers to interact in meaningful ways, moving beyond formulaic expressions to encourage natural language production in social settings.

Overall, the implications of this research enhance our understanding of family language policy, providing insights for families, educators, and policymakers. For families, supportive language practices and strategies, as well as the children's involvement in the family language policy, are essential to reduce the prevalence of receptive bilingualism. For educators, curriculum development should focus on methods to develop the children's productive skills and social integration. For policymakers, quality-controlled programs and community support are essential. Implementation of these recommendations may support immigrant families who wish to maintain their heritage languages. In the next section, I outline the study's limitations.

8.3 Limitations of the study and directions for future research

Although this study contributes to the literature by investigating how family language policy and agency relate to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations concern the scope of the study, data collection, and methodology. In this section, I critically reflect on these limitations and their potential impact on the findings, while providing constructive suggestions for future research. These limitations, although unavoidable, provide opportunities for future research to build upon and refine the current study's contributions.

8.3.1 Theoretical limitations

1. Scope of the study

This study exclusively examined receptive bilingualism among Arabic-English-speaking families in Australia, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other immigrant communities, particularly those from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds. The cultural and linguistic specificity of the study means that its conclusions may not be universally applicable. For example, the role of religion in shaping family language beliefs or the challenges of institutional support may differ across other heritage language contexts. Future research could expand the scope to include diverse linguistic and cultural groups. Comparative studies across immigrant communities could identify universal patterns and context-specific challenges, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of family language policy and receptive bilingualism.

2. Limited prior research on the topic

A limitation I encountered in this study was the scarcity of prior research specifically addressing the relationship between family language policy, agency, and receptive bilingualism among bilingual families. While extensive literature exists on family language policy and heritage language maintenance, research examining how agency relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism remains limited. This gap made it challenging for me to contextualise findings about child agency and its relationship to receptive bilingualism. Furthermore, the lack of comparative studies made it difficult to verify whether the patterns identified in this study reflect broader trends in heritage language development. Future research across different linguistic communities would enable

comparative analysis and contribute to more comprehensive theoretical frameworks for understanding how agency shapes heritage language outcomes.

8.3.2 Methodological and ethical limitations

1. Qualitative approach limitations

I employed a qualitative methodology, prioritising depth and context over breadth and statistical generalizability. While this approach enabled me to conduct a detailed exploration of family language policy and receptive bilingualism, it limited my ability to quantify patterns and their significance. My analysis of beliefs, practices, and management strategies relied on interpretative methods rather than statistical measurements of their frequency or impact. For example, while the study I conducted revealed that Family B's consistent use of Arabic led to better outcomes, I was unable to quantitatively measure the relationship between language exposure and productive skills. Although my study's ethnographic approach provided rich insights into family interactions, the reliance on primarily qualitative data affects the precision and generalisability of my findings.

2. Sample size and sampling limitations

The study's reliance on a small sample size, a common feature of qualitative research, presents a limitation in my research. While the three participating families or cases provided detailed data on family language policy and receptive bilingualism, the small sample may mean that specific experiences or perspectives are underrepresented. This limitation was partially addressed through in-depth data collection methods, including interviews, observations, and audio recordings, which

provided rich insights into each family's language practices and strategies. Future research could incorporate mixed-methods approaches to balance depth and breadth, and expand the sample to include families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and family structures.

Additionally, as outlined in Chapter 4 (Methodology), children who did not speak or demonstrate understanding of Arabic were excluded from this study. This decision was necessary to focus the analysis on receptive bilingualism; however, this sampling criterion has implications for the generalisability of the findings. First, by excluding children with no receptive competence, this study cannot speak to the full range of heritage language trajectories. Complete language loss, in which children neither understand nor produce Arabic, may result from severely misaligned or absent family language policy, yet such cases fall outside the scope of this analysis. The findings presented here thus reflect a particular segment of heritage language outcomes (receptive bilingualism) rather than the full continuum from balanced bilingualism to complete language shift.

Second, the absence of data on children with no Arabic proficiency may obscure patterns of family language policy misalignment that result in language attrition or loss. In families where parental agency is more constrained or entirely deferred, or where there is complete misalignment between beliefs, practices, and management, children may not develop even receptive bilingualism. Such cases would challenge the model proposed in this thesis, suggesting that the relationship between agency and receptive bilingualism operates only within a certain range of heritage language exposure.

Reflecting on how such cases might extend the proposed model, it is plausible that complete language loss may represent an extreme outcome of deferred parental agency combined with constrained or deferred child agency, where neither parent nor child engages with the heritage language. In such scenarios, the co-constructive dynamic between parental and child agency that this thesis identifies may be absent altogether, resulting not in receptive bilingualism but in monolingualism in the dominant language. Future research would benefit from including families across the full spectrum of heritage language outcomes, including those in which children have no heritage language proficiency, to test and extend the proposed theoretical framework.

These limitations do not invalidate the findings but contextualise them within a specific segment of heritage language experience. The patterns identified regarding active, constrained, and deferred agency and their association with receptive bilingualism apply to families where some degree of heritage language transmission has occurred. Whether these patterns hold, or how they might differ, in cases of complete language loss remains an open question for future investigation.

3. Researcher's presence

My presence during family observations may have influenced participants' natural language practices and parent-child interactions. While I made efforts to minimise this effect by building rapport and spending extended time with each family, some parents or children may have adjusted their usual language practices and strategies, especially when demonstrating their Arabic language use. To address this, I collected audio recordings when I was not present, though participants remained aware they were being recorded, which may have continued to influence their language

choices. Future studies could mitigate this limitation by employing more naturalistic data collection methods, such as parent-recorded interactions or extended observation periods, to more accurately capture authentic language use.

4. Researcher Positionality

As a researcher with personal experience in heritage language maintenance and being a member of the Arabic-speaking community, my positionality may have influenced data collection and interpretation. Although this insider status facilitated trust and rapport with participating families, it may have affected how questions were framed and how participants' responses were interpreted. While I maintained a reflexive approach through detailed field notes and regular self-reflection, my familiarity with language maintenance challenges among Arabic-English speaking families might have influenced which aspects of family language policy received more attention during data collection and analysis. To address this limitation, I engaged in regular discussions with my supervisors and documented my decision-making processes throughout the research. Future studies could enhance rigour by adopting a mixed-research team approach, involving researchers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to provide multiple perspectives on data interpretation.

8.3.3 Analytical limitations

1. Subjective interpretation

The analysis relied heavily on qualitative interpretation of beliefs, practices, and management strategies, which, while providing rich insights into family language policy, introduces potential subjectivity in pattern identification. For instance, interpretations of deferred versus constrained

agency or the categorisation of language practices and strategies may vary with different analysts. Although the study maintained detailed documentation through field notes and audio recordings, the analytical process depended on the researcher's interpretation of family language interactions. This limitation was partially addressed through regular supervisory consultations and documented analysis procedures. Future studies could strengthen analytical rigor by employing multiple coders to validate the classification and conceptualisation of agency types and language practices or by incorporating quantitative measures of language use patterns. Additionally, future research could investigate the socio-cultural and psychological factors influencing the forms of agency identified in this study.

Overall, in this section, I highlighted the theoretical, methodological, analytical, and ethical limitations of the study, focusing on the research's scope, the data collected, and the chosen methodology. While these limitations may have influenced the findings, they do not undermine the study's findings but highlight important considerations for future research seeking to explore family language policy and receptive bilingualism across more diverse contexts in an increasingly globalised world. In the upcoming and concluding section of this thesis, I present final reflections and closing remarks.

8.4 Final reflections and closing remarks

In this study, I set out to investigate how family language policy, mediated by agency, relates to the prevalence of receptive bilingualism among Arabic-English-speaking families in Australia. Through this research, contributions to understanding heritage language maintenance among immigrant families were made, particularly in the area of receptive bilingualism. The study's

significance lies in its ability to integrate theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions, addressing critical gaps in the literature on receptive bilingualism and heritage language maintenance.

Theoretically, this research extended Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy by positioning agency as a mediating process, offering a framework for analysing family language policy. The findings of this study highlighted the role of active parental agency in translating beliefs into supportive practices and strategies, and the complex ways in which child agency interacts with receptive bilingualism. This co-constructed perspective aligns with and builds upon existing models that recognise the collaborative nature of family language policy (Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Palviainen & Boyd, 2013). Methodologically, the ethnographically informed case study approach provided a unique lens to explore the experiences of parents and children. By prioritising depth and context, the qualitative methods captured the complexity of family language interactions and demonstrated the value of incorporating both parental and children's perspectives. Practically, I offered recommendations for families, educators, and policymakers, including encouraging parents to exercise active agency, implementing supportive language practices and strategies, and developing institutional frameworks to support productive bilingualism.

Looking ahead, understanding and addressing receptive bilingualism is essential to prevent heritage language loss. Future studies could build on this study's findings by examining receptive bilingualism across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts, employing mixed-methods approaches, and exploring community-level interventions. This forward-looking perspective highlights the need for sustained, collaborative efforts from academia, families, communities, and policymakers to

develop effective and supportive strategies to maintain and preserve heritage languages. Upon reflecting on this research journey, it becomes clear that understanding family language policy and agency is important to heritage language maintenance. I hope this study inspires further inquiry and collaborative action to preserve linguistic and cultural heritage for generations to come.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Human Research Ethics Committee

Tuesday, 1 August 2023

Dr Bronwen Dyson
Discipline of English; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Dear Bronwen,

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application.

After consideration of your response to the comments raised your project has been approved.

Approval is granted for a period of four years from **01/08/2023** to **01/08/2027**

Project No.: 2023/462

Project Title: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

Authorised Personnel: Dyson Bronwen; Taleb Zeina; Aldahesh Ali; Nordstrom Janica;

First Annual Report due: 01/08/2024

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version number	Document Name
17/07/2023		Final Children discussion protocol questions
17/07/2023		Final interview protocol questions for parents
17/07/2023	Version 2	Final Letter of Introduction
17/07/2023	Version 2	Final Parents information sheet
09/05/2023		Parent consent form in Arabic
09/05/2023		Parents Consent Form in English
09/05/2023		Parent information sheet in Arabic
09/05/2023		Parents Consent Form for child to participate
09/05/2023		Participant consent form to communicate via email
09/05/2023		Proposed theoretical framework Model
09/05/2023		Evidence of approval to work with children
09/05/2023		Child Consent Form
09/05/2023		Child information sheet

Special Condition/s of Approval

- Please ensure you have the necessary approvals in place for the HDR student to conduct fieldwork/research activity off-campus. These may be at the Faculty, Departmental or School level and include researcher safety and insurance arrangements. You do not need to provide evidence to the Ethics Office.

Condition/s of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.

Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Level 2, Margaret Telfer Building (K07)
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 Australia

T +61 2 9036 9161
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ABN 15 211 513 464
CRICOS 00026A

- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.
- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
 - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
 - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate *immediate* risk to participants).
- Personnel working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to personnel must be reported and approved.
- Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.
- Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the relevant legislation and University guidelines.
- Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, applicable legal requirements, and with University policies, procedures and governance requirements.
- The Ethics Office may conduct audits on approved projects.
- The Chief Investigator has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research and is responsible for ensuring all others involved will conduct the research in accordance with the above.
- The Clinical Trials Support Office has been notified as outlined in the University's Clinical Trials Policy where a clinical trial is being undertaken.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

Please contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Sincerely,

[Redaction]

Associate Professor Haryana Dhillon
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 3)

The University of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) current National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2018) and the NHMRC's current Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018).

Appendix B: Participant consent form to communicate via email

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
Discipline of English
School of Art, Communication and
English

✉ Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Phone: +61 2 9351 7514 |
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Student No. 310180309
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social
Sciences)

✉ Email: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

I.....agree to
communicate with the researchervia
email to receive letter of introduction, information sheet, consent and participation forms.

By submitting this form, I agree to receive emails from the form to the researcher unless I opt out
of such communications. I understand that I can withdraw my consent and opt-out at any time.

Participant Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B: Participant consent form to communicate via email [Arabic]

عنوان البحث: البحث في أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها من منظور سياسة تخطيط اللغة الأسري.

المشرفة الرئيسية: الدكتورة برونوين دايسون كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني تلفون: +61 2 9351 7514 البريد الإلكتروني: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au	الباحثة: زينة طالب الرقم الجامعي: 310180309 كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني البريد الإلكتروني: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au
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موافقة للتواصل عبر البريد الإلكتروني مع الباحثة

أنا ..
أوافق على التواصل مع الباحثة .. عبر البريد الإلكتروني لتلقي معلومات ونماذج الموافقة والمشاركة في الدراسة.

بإمكاني الانسحاب وإلغاء الاشتراك في الدراسة في أي وقت.

اسم المشارك/ة	
التوقيع	
التاريخ	

Appendix C: Letter of Introduction

Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
Discipline of English
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English
✉ Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Phone: +61 2 9351 7514
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Student No. 310180309
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social
Sciences)
✉ Email: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

We are conducting a research study about using Arabic at home among family members. Our study aims to understand better receptive bilingualism, where children can understand Arabic but not speak it. Understanding receptive bilingualism can help educators, researchers, and families support children's Arabic production skills.

We are seeking families of mums, dads, and children to participate in our study. Parents need to be able to speak Arabic, and the children need to have some command of Arabic so we can understand how Arabic is used among parents and children.

Taking part in this study will involve an interview with the parents, audio recordings of parent-child interactions and informal chats with the children.

If you would like to participate in this study or receive further information about this study, don't hesitate to contact Zeina Taleb, PhD student, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The University of Sydney, via email at ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of The University of Sydney, HREC Approval No.....

Appendix C: Letter of Introduction [Arabic]

تعريف الدراسة

عنوان البحث: البحث في أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها من منظور سياسة تخطيط اللغة الأسري.

المشرفة الرئيسية: الدكتورة برونوين دايسون كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني تلفون: +61 2 9351 7514 البريد الإلكتروني: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au	الباحثة: زينة طالب الرقم الجامعي: 310180309 كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني البريد الإلكتروني: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au
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حضرة الأهالي الكرام:

نحن بصدد اجراء دراسة حول استخدام اللغة العربية في المنزل بين أفراد الأسرة والهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تسليط الضوء على أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها. كما تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى نشر الوعي بين المعلمين والباحثين والأسر حول كيفية دعم الطفل للتحدث باللغة العربية.

نحن بحاجة لأمهات وآباء وأطفال للمشاركة في دراستنا شرط أن يكون أولياء الأمور قادرين على التحدث باللغة العربية بينما لا يتوجب على الأطفال التحدث باللغة العربية بطلاقة.

في حالة قبولكم للمشاركة في الدراسة، سأقوم بإجراء مقابلة مع أولياء الأمور، ومن ثم نقوم بتسجيلات صوتية للمحادثات اللغوية التي تدور بين الأطفال وذويهم (الأم والأب) إضافة إلى تسجيل بعض المحادثات بيني وبين الأطفال. لذا إن كنت ترغب في المشاركة في دراستنا أو تلقي المزيد من المعلومات، نرجو التواصل معي على البريد الإلكتروني أدناه.

الباحثة زينة طالب،

مرحلة الدكتوراه في كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية

جامعة سيدني

ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

تمت الموافقة على هذه الدراسة من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث البشري (HREC) بجامعة سيدني، رقم الموافقة.....

Appendix D: Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
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Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social
Sciences)

✉ Email: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

What is this study about?

We are conducting a research study about using Arabic at home among family members. Our study aims to understand better receptive bilingualism, where children can understand Arabic but not speak it. Understanding receptive bilingualism can help educators, researchers, and families support children's Arabic production skills.

Your child has been invited to take part in our study. Taking part in this study is voluntary. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

Who is running the study?

The following researchers are carrying out the study:

Zeina Taleb is conducting this study as the basis for the Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social Sciences) degree at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor), Discipline of English, School of Art, Communication and English, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Phone: +61 2 9351 7514 |
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Who can take part in the study?

We are seeking families of mums, dads, and children between the ages of 4 and 13 to participate in our study. Parents need to be able to speak Arabic, and the children need to have some command of Arabic so we can understand how Arabic is used among parents and children.

What will the study involve?

If you and your children decide to take part in this study, the following will be involved:

- Initial contact with you via email to receive written consent from you to allow me to communicate with you via email,
- Following communication consent via email, I will send you a letter of introduction, consent forms and this information sheet,
- If you agree to participate, I will then contact you via telephone to introduce myself and discuss the project,
- A 30-minute interview will be conducted with you to discuss the family's language use. Interviews need to be face-to-face and at family homes. During the interview, we will discuss the use of Arabic at home among family members,
- Fifteen minutes of audio-recording of parent-child interactions is required twice a week for three months, a total of half an hour per week. Recordings could be done during lunch/dinner table, homework, house chores, or playtime. The parents will do the recording,
- Once a month, half an hour of observation by the researcher of parent-child interactions,
- A weekly phone call to discuss how the recording is going or any issues encountered,
- An audio-recorded discussion between the children and the researcher about the children's heritage language use. This will be done over space mapping drawings or a game of Lego with the children,
- Once the results are analysed, there will be a follow-up discussion with the parents to discuss the results,
- Parents can review information generated about them and their children before publication.

Can we withdraw once we start?

Participation in this study is voluntary; you and your family do not have to participate. Your decision will be respected and will not affect current or future relationships with the researchers or anyone else at The University of Sydney. If you and your child participate in an interview or discussion, you are free to refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you and your child decide not to take part in the study and either of you changes your mind, you can withdraw from the study at any time. You can choose what you want us to do with the collected information about you and your child up to that point.

Are there any risks or costs?

Aside from giving up time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study for you and your child.

Are there any benefits?

Your participation in our study may help you better understand receptive bilingualism, where children can understand Arabic but not speak it.

What will happen to the information that is collected?

By providing your consent, you agree to us collecting information about you and your child for the purposes of this study.

We are planning for the study findings to be published through the researcher's thesis, seminars, conference presentations and academic publications. By using pseudonym names, you and your children will not be individually identifiable in these publications. Any information provided to us will be stored securely, and we will only disclose identifiable information with your permission unless we are required by law to release information.

We are interested in collecting information from you and your family about how Arabic is used at home. This will be collected through audio recording. This study involves audio-recorded parent interviews, children, parent-child interactions, and children's language discussions with the researcher. These recordings will be used for analysis purposes only. Electronic and hard copy information will be stored digitally in secured and encrypted files during the study and can only be accessed by the supervisor and the researcher. After twenty years, electronic and hard copy information will be destroyed by the researcher and The University of Sydney. Data collected in the study may be used in future research while maintaining the family's privacy and confidentiality.

Will I be told the results of the study?

You and your child have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. This feedback will be in the form of a discussion following data analysis. If you are interested in receiving feedback, please provide your contact details on the consent form.


What if I would like further information?

When you have read this information, the following researchers will be available to discuss it further and answer any questions. If you or your child would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact:



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Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social
Sciences)

 Email: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of The University of Sydney, HREC Approval No..... according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*, approved the ethical aspects of this study.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted, or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the University:

Human Ethics Manager

human.ethics@sydney.edu.au

+61 2 8627 8176

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Appendix E – Parents Information Sheet in Arabic

معلومات عامة عن البحث

عنوان البحث: البحث في أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها من منظور سياسة تخطيط اللغة الأسري.

الباحثة: زينة طالب

الرقم الجامعي: 310180309

كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني

البريد الإلكتروني: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

المشرفة الرئيسية: الدكتورة برونوين دايسون

كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني

تلفون: +61 2 9351 7514

البريد الإلكتروني: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

تعريف الدراسة:

نحن بصدد إجراء دراسة حول استخدام اللغة العربية في المنزل بين أفراد الأسرة والهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تسليط الضوء على أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها. كما تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى نشر الوعي بين المعلمين والباحثين والأسر حول كيفية دعم الطفل للتحدث باللغة العربية. لذا يسرنا بدعوة طفلك للمشاركة في دراستنا بشكل تطوعي أي أن المشاركة ليست إلزامية. يرجى قراءة التالي بعناية ونحن مستعدون للإجابة عن أسالتكم واستفساراتكم.

من المسؤول عن هذه الدراسة؟

يتم إجراء الدراسة من قبل الباحثة زينة طالب، طالبة دكتوراه في كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني تحت إشراف الدكتورة برونوين دايسون من كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني، تلفون: +61 2 9351 7514 - بريد الإلكتروني: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

من يمكنه المشاركة في الدراسة؟

نحتاج لعائلات مكونة من أمهات وآباء وأطفال تتراوح أعمارهم بين سن الرابعة والثلاثة عشر عامًا للمشاركة في الدراسة ويتوجب على أولياء الأمور أن يكونوا من متحدثي اللغة العربية في المنزل بينما لا يتوجب على الأطفال التحدث باللغة العربية بطلاقة.

تتكون الدراسة من التالي:

- تواصل أولي مع الأهالي عبر البريد الإلكتروني للسماح لي بالتحدث معهم،
- إرسال معلومات عامة ونماذج الموافقة على الدراسة للأهالي،
- اتصال هاتفيا بالأهالي للتعريف عن نفسي ومناقشة الدراسة،
- تحديد موعد مع أولياء الأمور لإجراء مقابلة وجها لوجه لمدة ٣٠ دقيقة حيث سنناقش استخدام اللغة العربية في المنزل بين أفراد الأسرة،
- الحصول على تسجيلات صوتية لبعض المحادثات التي تجري بين الأهل وأطفالهم في اللغة العربية وذلك لمدة ربع ساعة مرتين أسبوعيا ولمدة ثلاثة أشهر،
- كما وتود الباحثة أن تزور العائلات مرة في الشهر لترى كيفية التواصل باللغة العربية بين الأهل وأطفالهم،
- مكالمة هاتفية أسبوعية مع الأهالي لمناقشة أية مشاكل قد يواجهونها بالتسجيلات،

- التحدث مع الأطفال لمناقشة تحدثهم باللغة العربية،
- بمجرد تحليل النتائج ستعود الباحثة لمناقشة النتائج مع أولياء الأمور،
- يمكن للوالدين مراجعة أية معلومات حصلنا عليها قبل نشرها.

هل يمكننا الانسحاب من الدراسة؟

نعم، يمكنكم الانسحاب من الدراسة متى تشاؤون، نحترم قراراتكم ولن يؤثر ذلك على العلاقات الحالية أو المستقبلية مع الباحثين أو أي شخص آخر في جامعة سيدني، كما ولديك الحق في رفض الإجابة على أي أسئلة لا ترغب في الإجابة عليها.

هل هناك أي مخاطر أو تكاليف من وراء المشاركة في الدراسة؟
لا توجد مخاطر أو تكاليف مرتبطة بالمشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

هل هناك فوائد من المشاركة في الدراسة؟
للمشاركة في الدراسة فوائد كثيرة منها فهم أسباب عدم امكانية الأطفال بالتحدث باللغة العربية.

ماذا سيحدث للمعلومات التي يتم جمعها منكم؟

نخطط لنشر نتائج الدراسة في أطروحة الدكتوراه وفي بعض الندوات والمؤتمرات والمنشورات الأكاديمية وذلك باستخدام أسماء مستعارة للحفاظ على سرية المعلومات، ولن نكشف عن هوية وأسماء العائلات إلا بإذن منكم، ما لم يُطلب منا بموجب القانون الإفصاح عن أية معلومات. وكما سنقوم بتخزين كل المعلومات التي نحصل بشكل آمن في ملفات مشفرة لا يمكن الوصول إليها إلا من قبل المشرفة والباحثة. نحتفظ بالمعلومات والملفات لمدة ٢٠ سنة وبعدها تقوم الباحثة وجامعة سيدني بحذف المعلومات إلى الأبد.

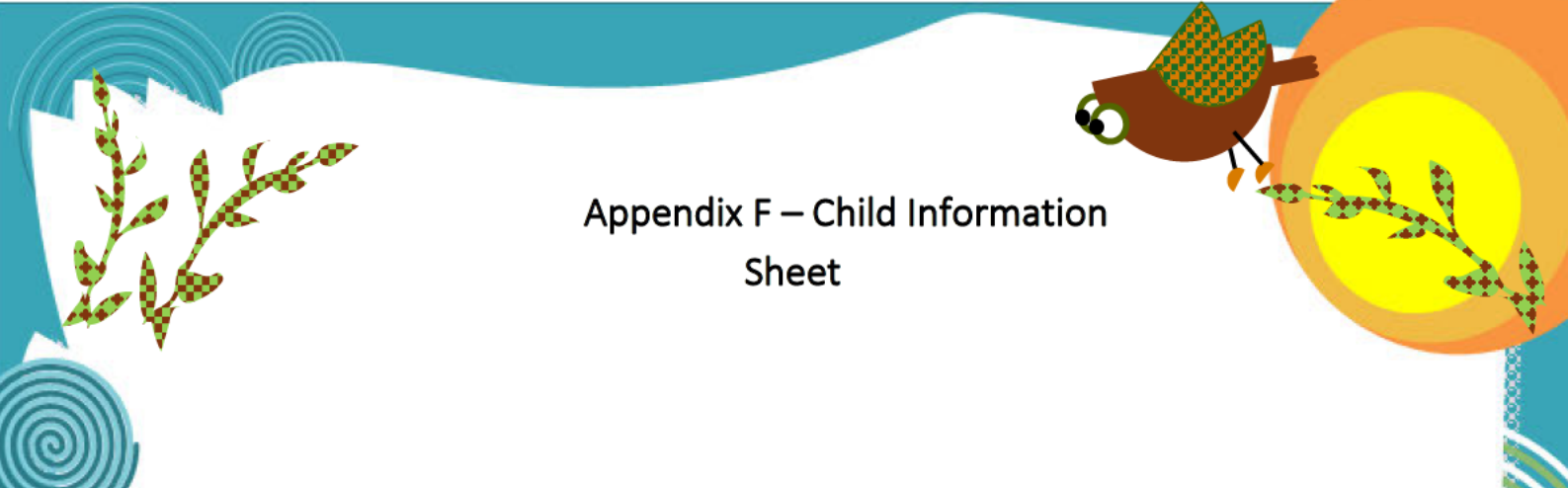
هل سيتم إخباري بنتائج الدراسة؟
يحق لك ولطفلك تلقي نتائج الدراسة بعد تحليل النتائج وذلك من خلال جلسة مناقشة مع الباحثة.

ماذا لو كنت أرغب في مزيد من المعلومات؟
إن كنت ترغب بمزيد من المعلومات فيرجى التحدث مع الباحثة أو التواصل معها أو مع المشرفة على الأرقام أو البريد الإلكتروني الموجود في الصفحة الأولى.

ماذا لو كان لدي شكوى أو أي مخاوف؟

وافقت لجنة أخلاقيات الأبحاث العلمية والبشرية (HREC) بجامعة سيدني، رقم اعتماد HREC وفقاً للبيان الوطني للسلوك الأخلاقي في البحث البشري (2007) ، على الجوانب الأخلاقية لهذه الدراسة. إن كنت قلقاً بشأن الطريقة التي تُجرى بها هذه الدراسة، أو كنت ترغب في تقديم شكوى إلى شخص مستقل عن الدراسة، فيرجى الاتصال بالجامعة من خلال مدير الأخلاق البشرية ، human.ethics@sydney.edu.au ، +61 2 8627 8176.

شكراً جزيلاً.



Appendix F – Child Information Sheet

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
Discipline of English
School of Art, Communication and English
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Phone: +61 2 9351 7514 |
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social Sciences)
Email: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

Hello! My name is Zeina.

My study is about understanding how you use Arabic at home with your parents.

We have asked you to be a part of our study because you could show me how you speak Arabic with your family at home.

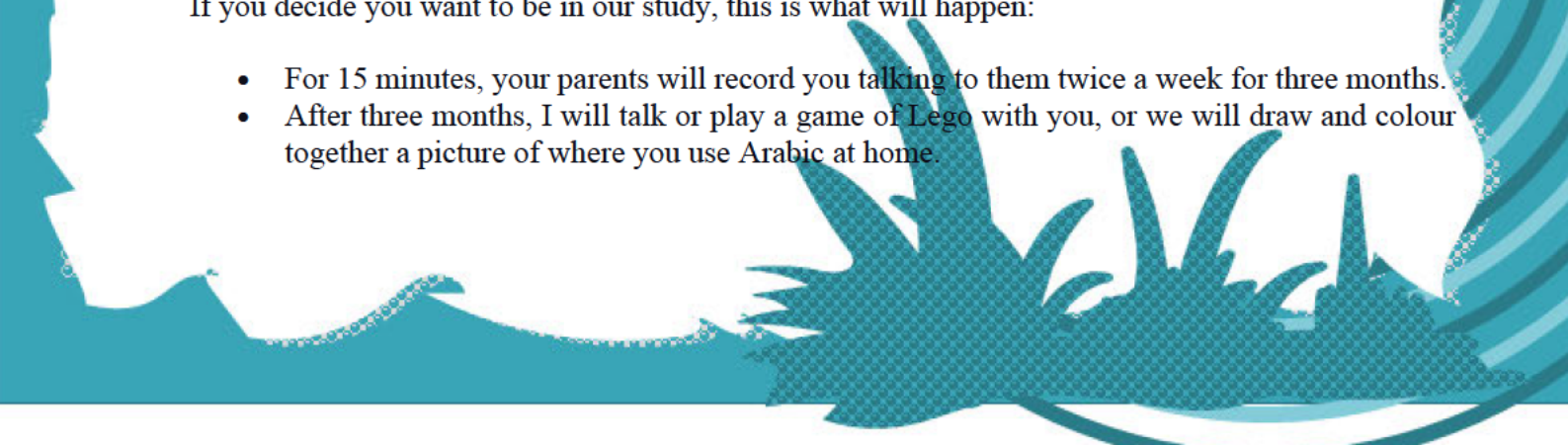
You can choose to take part, but you don't have to. This sheet will tell you more about what will happen so you can make up your mind.

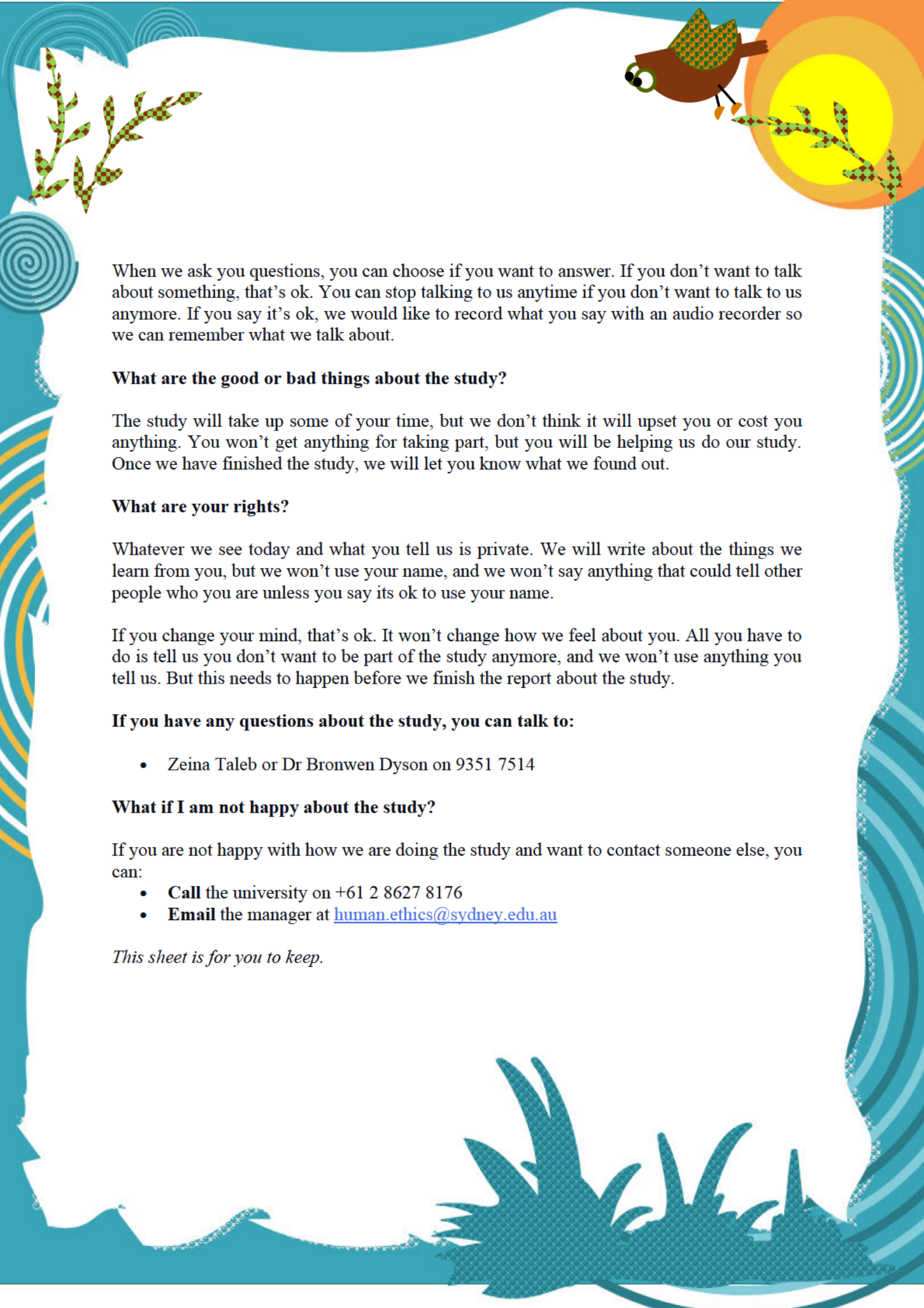
We will also ask your parents if they are happy for you to be part of this study, but even if they say yes, you can still choose to say no.

If you have any questions, you can ask us, or you can talk to someone else who looks after you. If you want to, you can call us on 9351 7514.

What will happen if I say yes?

If you decide you want to be in our study, this is what will happen:

- For 15 minutes, your parents will record you talking to them twice a week for three months.
 - After three months, I will talk or play a game of Lego with you, or we will draw and colour together a picture of where you use Arabic at home.
- 



When we ask you questions, you can choose if you want to answer. If you don't want to talk about something, that's ok. You can stop talking to us anytime if you don't want to talk to us anymore. If you say it's ok, we would like to record what you say with an audio recorder so we can remember what we talk about.

What are the good or bad things about the study?

The study will take up some of your time, but we don't think it will upset you or cost you anything. You won't get anything for taking part, but you will be helping us do our study. Once we have finished the study, we will let you know what we found out.

What are your rights?

Whatever we see today and what you tell us is private. We will write about the things we learn from you, but we won't use your name, and we won't say anything that could tell other people who you are unless you say its ok to use your name.

If you change your mind, that's ok. It won't change how we feel about you. All you have to do is tell us you don't want to be part of the study anymore, and we won't use anything you tell us. But this needs to happen before we finish the report about the study.

If you have any questions about the study, you can talk to:

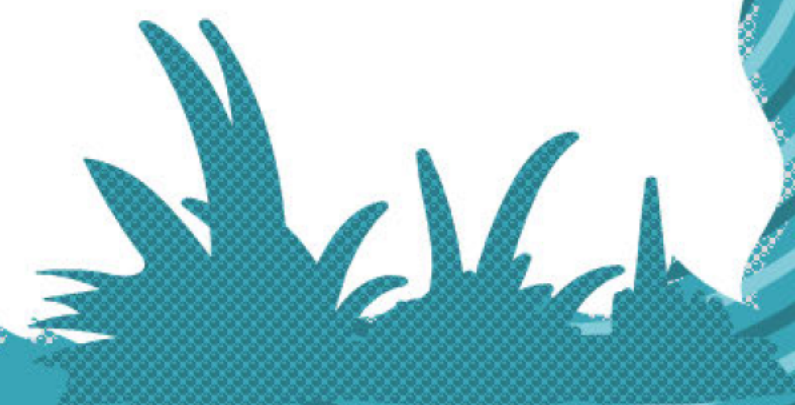
- Zeina Taleb or Dr Bronwen Dyson on 9351 7514

What if I am not happy about the study?

If you are not happy with how we are doing the study and want to contact someone else, you can:

- **Call** the university on +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email** the manager at human.ethics@sydney.edu.au

This sheet is for you to keep.



Appendix G - Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
Discipline of English
School of Art, Communication and
English
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Phone: +61 2 9351 7514 |
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social
Sciences)
✉ Email: zta12711@uni.sydney.edu.au

I agree to take part in this research study. In giving my consent, I confirm that that:

- **The details of my involvement have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written Participant Information Statement to keep.**
- **I understand the purpose of the study is to investigate how Arabic is used at home among family members**
- **I acknowledge that the risks and benefits of participating in this study have been explained to me to my satisfaction.**
- **I understand that in this study, I will be required to have an interview with the researcher, audio record my language interaction with my children and have a discussion with the researcher about the results.**
- **I understand that my participation may be audio recorded.**
- **I understand that my information may be used in future research, such as the researcher's thesis, seminars, conference presentations and academic publications**



ABN 15 211 513 464

stand that being in this study is completely voluntary.

- **I am assured that my decision to participate will not have any impact on my relationship with the research team or the University of Sydney.**
- **I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time and that I can choose to withdraw any information I have already provided (unless the data has already been de-identified or published).**
- **I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be protected and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information identifying me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.**
- **I understand that the results of this study may be published and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.**

· **I confirm the following:**

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| I consent to recordings (audio) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I would like to review my interview transcripts | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I consent to be contacted for future studies | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I consent to my data being used in future research | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I would like feedback on the overall results of this study | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered yes, please provide your preferred contact details (email/telephone/postal address):

- **I understand that after I sign and return this consent form the researcher will retain it, and that I may request a copy at any time.**

Participant Name

Signature

Date

Appendix H – Parents Consent Form in Arabic موافقة أولياء الأمور على المشاركة في الدراسة

عنوان البحث: البحث في أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها من منظور سياسة تخطيط اللغة الأسري.

المشرفة الرئيسية: الدكتورة برونوين دايسون كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني تلفون: +61 2 9351 7514 البريد الإلكتروني: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au	الباحثة: زينة طالب الرقم الجامعي: 310180309 كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني البريد الإلكتروني: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au
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أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية. بموافقي، أؤكد أن:

- تم شرح تفاصيل المشاركة في الدراسة، وتم تزويدي بمعلومات عن الدراسة ويمكنني للاحتفاظ بهذه المعلومات.
- أدرك أن الغرض من الدراسة هو فهم كيفية استخدام اللغة العربية في المنزل بين أفراد الأسرة.
- أقر بأن مخاطر وفوائد المشاركة في هذه الدراسة قد تم شرحها لي.
- أدرك أنه في هذه الدراسة، سيطلب مني إجراء مقابلة مع الباحثة، والقيام بتسجيلات صوتية لمحادثات باللغة العربية بيني وبين أطفالتي وإجراء مناقشة مع الباحث حول نتائج الدراسة.
- أدرك أنه يمكن استخدام معلوماتي، ولكن بأسماء مستعارة في أبحاث مستقبلية، مثلًا في أطروحة الباحثة وندوات ومؤتمرات و منشورات أكاديمية.
- أدرك أن مشاركتي في هذه الدراسة اختيارية وليست إلزامية.
- قراري بالمشاركة لن يكون له أي تأثير سلبي على علاقتي بالباحثة أو بجامعة سيدني.
- لدي الحرية المطلقة في الانسحاب من الدراسة متى أشاء ويمكنني سحب وحذف أي معلومات قدمتها،
- لقد تم إبلاغي بأن سرية المعلومات التي أقدمها ستتم حمايتها ولن يتم استخدامها إلا للأغراض التي وافقت عليها. لن يتم تحديد هويتي إلا بإذن مني، باستثناء ما يقتضيه القانون.
- قد يتم نشر نتائج هذه الدراسة من دون ذكر اسمي أو أي معلومات تعرف عني.

• أؤكد ما يلي:

- لا نعم أوافق على القيام بالتسجيلات الصوتية المتوجبة للبحث
- لا نعم أود مراجعة المعلومات التي حصل عليها من المقابلة معي
- لا نعم أوافق على التواصل في دراسات مستقبلية
- لا نعم أوافق على استخدام بياناتي في أبحاث مستقبلية
- لا نعم أود الحصول على نتائج هذه الدراسة

إذا أجبت بنعم، فيرجى كتابة أفضل طريقة للتواصل معك (البريد الإلكتروني / الهاتف / العنوان البريدي):

- أدرك أنه بعد التوقيع على نموذج الموافقة هذا ستحتفظ الباحثة به، وبإمكاني الحصول على نسخة منه متى أشاء.

اسم المشارك/ة	
التوقيع	
التاريخ	

Appendix I - Parent/Guardian Consent Form for their child/children to participate in the study

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

☒ Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
Discipline of English
School of Art, Communication and English
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Phone: +61 2 9351 7514
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Student No. 310180309
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social Sciences)
☒ Email: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

I,[parent's name], consent for my child
..... to participate in the research study: *Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.*

I acknowledge that:

- *I have read the participant information sheet,*
- *I discussed my child's participation in the study with the researcher,*
- *I have discussed participation in the study with my child,*
- *I agree for my child to participate in the study,*
- *My child agrees to participate in the study,*
- *I understand my child's participation is voluntary, and my child may withdraw at any time from the study,*
- *I understand that my and my child's identity will not be identified,*
- *Should I have any further questions, I can discuss them with the researcher or supervisor.*
- *I understand that after I sign and return this consent form, the researcher will retain it and that I may request a copy at any time.*

Parent's Name		
Child's Name		
Signature		Date:

عنوان البحث: البحث في أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها من منظور سياسة تخطيط اللغة الأسري.

<p>المشرفة الرئيسية: الدكتورة برونوين دايسون كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني تلفون: +61 2 9351 7514 البريد الإلكتروني: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au</p>	<p>الباحثة: زينة طالب الرقم الجامعي: 310180309 كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني البريد الإلكتروني: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au</p>
---	--

أنا، (اسم ولي الأمر) أسمح لطفلي أو لأطفالي..... بالمشاركة في الدراسة المذكورة وأقر بما يلي:

- أنني قرأت المعلومات العامة عن الدراسة،
 - ناقشت مشاركة طفلي في الدراسة مع الباحثة،
 - ناقشت المشاركة في الدراسة مع طفلي،
 - أوافق على مشاركة طفلي في الدراسة،
 - يوافق طفلي على المشاركة في الدراسة،
 - أدرك أن مشاركة طفلي في الدراسة طوعية وبإمكان طفلي الانسحاب من الدراسة في أي وقت،
 - ستقوم الباحثة باستخدام أسماء مستعارة للمحافظة على سرية المعلومات،
 - إن كان لدي أي استفسارات، يمكنني مناقشتها مع الباحثة أو المشرفة.
1. بعد توقيع هذه الاستمارة، ستحتفظ الباحثة بالنسخة، ولكن يمكنني طلب نسخة من هذه الاستمارة متى شئت.

ولي الأمر	
اسم الطفل أو الأطفال	
التوقيع	في

Child Consent
Form

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
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School of Art, Communication and English
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Phone: +61 2 9351 7514 |
Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
Doctor of Philosophy (Arts and Social
Sciences)
Email: ztal2711@uni.sydney.edu.au

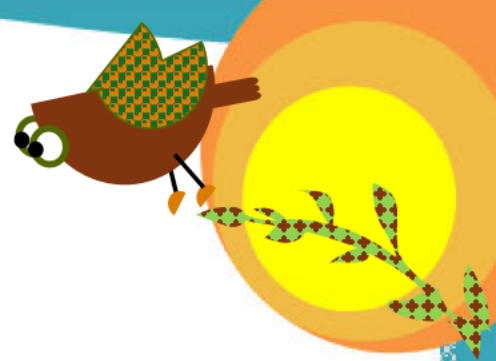
Participant Name: -----

If you are happy to be in this study, please

- Check your name in the space above
- Sign your name at the bottom of the next page
- Provide your contact details if you would like to know what we learn

By saying yes to being in this study, I am saying that:

- I know what I will be asked to do and have been given a Study Information Sheet to keep.
- I know that this study is about using Arabic at home among family members
- Someone has talked to me about the study and what it means for me.
- I know that I will be asked to draw or play a Lego game with the researcher.
- I know that I don't have to be in the study if I don't want to.

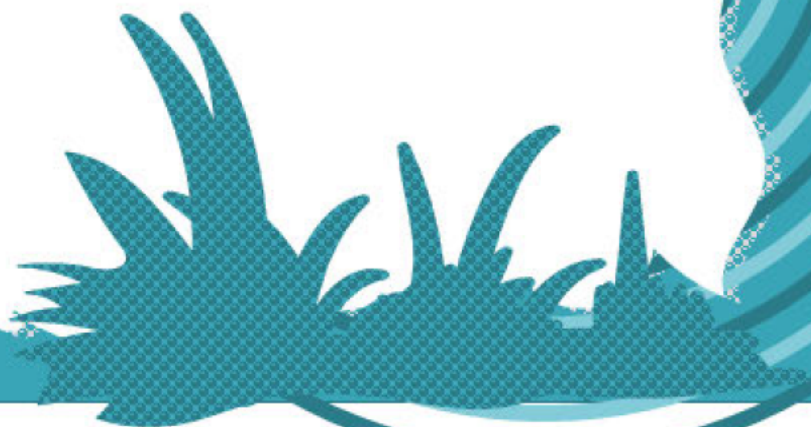


- I know that I can choose not to talk about something if I don't want to.
- I have been asked if it is ok or not ok to record what I say.
- I have been told that I can change my mind if I don't want to take part anymore.
- I have been told that if I say yes or no, it won't change how the study team feel about me.
- I know that what I say or do in this study is private, and when the study team write about what they learn, they won't use my name or anything that could tell other people who I am.
- I understand that after I sign and return this consent form the researcher will keep it and that I can ask for a copy at any time.

Your Name

Your Signature

Today's Date



Appendix K - Parent Interview Protocol

Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

Dr Bronwen Dyson (Supervisor)
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 Phone: +61 2 9351 7514 |
 Email: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au

Miss Zeina Taleb (Student Researcher)
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Question	Purpose (pre-determined themes)	Content
Opening	Provide study details to participants, describe the study's aim and seek permission to record the interview.	Thank you so much for being part of my research and welcoming me into your homes. As discussed at our previous meeting, my study investigates how families speak and use Arabic at home. I want to ask you some questions about how your family uses Arabic at home if that's ok with you.
Question 1	To investigate parental agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about language use at home ; what language do the children speak at home with the adults? What language do the children use with each other? • What are your goals/intentions for preserving Arabic and teaching it to your children?
Question 2	To investigate the family language policy/practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who decides what language to use at home, the children or the adults? • How do you plan or encourage the children to speak Arabic at home? What methods do you use to encourage that?

Question 3	To investigate to child agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do the children think about speaking Arabic at home? • When you talk to the children in Arabic, do they reply in English or Arabic? • If they reply in English, what do you do? <p>Do you find it rewarding when your children speak to you in Arabic, even if it's not 100% and why?</p>
Question 4	To investigate receptive bilingualism	<p>Do your children find Arabic hard to speak? Can you give me some more information or scenarios, please?</p>
Question 5	To investigate the quality of language exposure children receive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you encourage and help the use of Arabic at home with the children? • What sort of Arabic books do you read with your children? Do the children enjoy reading books with you? • Do you feel the kids improve in speaking Arabic after reading books? • How else are the children exposed to Arabic? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do they attend Arabic schools or have Arabic programs at school? - Do they speak with extended family? <p>Is the family consistent with using Arabic at home?</p>
Conclusion		<p>Before we sum up, what do you hope this research will offer you and your family?</p> <p>Is there anything you would like to add to this topic?</p>

Finally, thank you very much for the valuable information you provided me and for being part of my research.

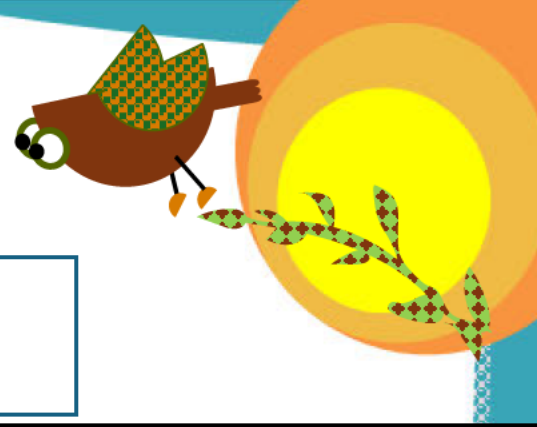
عنوان البحث: البحث في أسباب فهم الأطفال للغة العربية في أستراليا دون التحدث بها من منظور سياسة تخطيط اللغة الأسري.

المشرفة الرئيسية: الدكتورة برونوين دايسون كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني تلفون: +61 2 9351 7514 البريد الإلكتروني: bronwen.dyson@sydney.edu.au	الباحثة: زينة طالب الرقم الجامعي: 310180309 كلية الآداب والعلوم الاجتماعية في جامعة سيدني البريد الإلكتروني: zta12711@uni.sydney.edu.au
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السؤال	الغرض من السؤال	المحتوى
افتتاحية المقابلة	تقديم تفاصيل الدراسة للمشاركين، ووصف أهداف الدراسة واطلب الإذن لتسجيل المقابلة.	شكرًا جزيلًا لكونكم جزءًا من بحثي وأشكركم على الترحيب بي في منازلكم. كما تحدثنا سابقًا، الهدف من دراستي هو فهم كيفية استخدام اللغة العربية بين أفراد المنزل لذا لو تكرمتم أود أن أطرح عليكم بعض الأسئلة
السؤال الأول	فهم نوايا وأهداف الحفاظ على اللغة العربية	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> أخبرني عن استخدام اللغة في المنزل، ما هي اللغة التي يتحدث بها الأطفال في المنزل مع الكبار؟ ما هي اللغة التي يستخدمها الأطفال مع بعضهم البعض؟ ما هي أهدافك / نواياك من أجل الحفاظ على اللغة العربية وتعليمها لأطفالك؟
السؤال الثاني	فهم ممارسات اللغوية المنزلية	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> من الذي يقرر اللغة التي يجب استخدامها في المنزل الأطفال أم الكبار؟ كيف تخطط أو تشجع الأطفال على التحدث باللغة العربية في المنزل؟ ما هي الطرق التي تستخدمها لتشجيع ذلك؟
السؤال الثالث	فهم نوايا وأهداف الأطفال عند التحدث بالعربية	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ما رأي الأطفال في التحدث باللغة العربية في المنزل؟ عندما تتحدث مع الأطفال بالعربية هل يجيبون بالإنجليزية أو العربية؟ إذا أجابوا بالإنجليزية، ماذا تفعل؟ ما هو شعورك عندما يتحدث أطفالك معك باللغة العربية، حتى لو لم تكن بنسبة ١٠٠٪ ولماذا؟
السؤال الرابع	البحث في فهم الأطفال للعربية دون التحدث بها.	هل يجد أطفالك صعوبة في التحدث باللغة العربية؟ هل يمكن أن تعطيني المزيد من المعلومات أو السيناريوهات من فضلك عن ذلك؟

<p>1. كيف تدعم وتساعد على استخدام اللغة العربية في المنزل مع الأطفال؟</p> <p>2. ما نوع الكتب العربية التي تقرأها مع أطفالك؟ هل يستمتع الأطفال بقراءة الكتب معك؟</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - هل تتحسن اللغة العربية للأطفال بعد قراءة الكتب؟ - ما هي الطرق الأخرى التي يتعلم منها الأطفال اللغة العربية؟ - هل يلتحقون بمدارس عربية أم لديهم برامج عربية في المدرسة؟ - هل يتحدثون مع باقي أفراد الأسرة بالعربية، الجد أو الجدة، إلخ؟ <p>هل أنتم مواظبون على استخدام اللغة العربية في المنزل؟</p>	<p>البحث في جودة اللغة التي يتلقاها الطفل</p>	<p>السؤال الخامس</p>
<p>ماذا تأمل أن يقدم لك هذا البحث أنت وعائلتك؟</p> <p>هل هناك أي شيء تود إضافته في هذا الموضوع؟</p> <p>أخيرًا، أود أن أشكر كثيرًا على المعلومات القيمة التي قدمتها لي وأشكر على مشاركتي في بحثي.</p>	<p>الخاتمة</p>	<p>السؤال السادس</p>

Appendix L



Children Discussion Questions

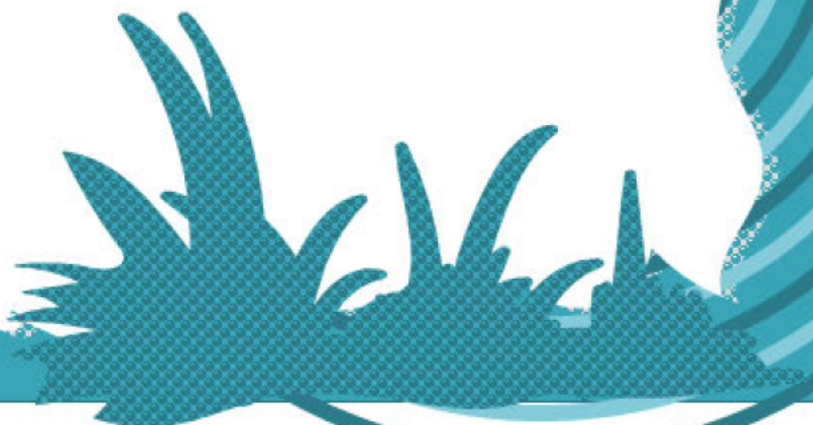
Research Study: Investigating receptive bilingualism and its causes through a family language policy lens.

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Children can answer in English or in Arabic:

- Do you like speaking Arabic at home? Why/why not?
- When do you speak Arabic at home? when talking to parents, playing, etc...
- Who teaches you to speak Arabic?
- What happens if you don't speak Arabic with your parents?
- What is the hardest thing about speaking Arabic at home?
- Do you read Arabic books at home? What's your favourite Arabic story, could you tell me more about it?
- Who else do you speak Arabic with? Does your Arabic improve when you speak Arabic with them?
- How was it growing up speaking Arabic at home?



Appendix M -Data Collection Durations and Descriptions

Parental interview details

Family	Parent present during the interview	Interview time	Duration (h:m: sec)
A	The mother	6.00 pm -7.00 pm	00:33:18
B	The mother and the father	6.00 pm -7.00 pm	00:32:46
C	The mother and the father	11 am- 12:00 Noon	00:33:30

Audio recording of parent-child interactions

Family	No. of parent-child recordings	Average Recording Duration (minutes)	Total Duration (minutes)	Recording emailed to the researcher	Interaction Types
A	7	20	140	Fortnightly	Mealtimes, homework, driving home after school.
B	10	15	150	Fortnightly	Mealtimes, General Family discussions.
C	5	20	100	Fortnightly	Car rides, going out, house chores.

Detailed information about the participant's observation.

Family	Observation	Time	Duration (minutes)	Collected during	Topic discussed
A	1	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	60 minutes	Mealtime	Football matches
	2	6:30 pm - 8:00 pm		Homework	Playing Jenga
	3	10:00 am - 12:00 pm		Homework	Homework
B	1	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	60 minutes	Lunchtime	Cooking Poultry
	2	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm		Playing Connect Four	Playing Connect Four
	3	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm		Playing Twister	Playing Twister
C	1	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	60 minutes	Playing Connect Four	Playing Connect Four
	2	6:30 pm - 8:40 pm		Playing Smash Bros	Playing the Smash Bros Video game
	3	10:00 am - 12:00 pm		Having desserts and tea	Desserts and tea

Informal conversations with the children.

Family	Children present during the discussion	Discussion mode	Time of conversation	Topics discussed	Discussion Duration (h:m: sec)
A	Muhammad, David, Ayman	Face-to-face	11 am	Language beliefs, practices, strategies, agency	00:27:21
B	Rose, Sami	Face-to-face	11 am	Language beliefs, practices, strategies, agency	00:14:27
C	Manal, Fayrouz, Kawthar, Ahmad	Face-to-face	11 am	Language beliefs, practices, strategies, agency	00:17:51