

Inspiring the future of Australia: Culturally and linguistically diverse families' engagement in early childhood education

Dr Sarah Verdon, PhD.

Dr Audrey (Cen) Wang, PhD.

Early Childhood Australia Conference

Darwin, NT

8th October, 2016



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016
THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

Cultural and linguistic diversity in Australia

Culture

- 47% of Australians are 1st or 2nd generation migrants
(*Australian migration rates have doubled in the last decade*)
- 3% of the population are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Language

- 23.2% of Australians speak a main language other than English at home
- 15.3% of Australian children speak a main language other than English at age 4 to 5 years

(Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Verdon, McLeod & Winsler, 2014)



Cultural and linguistic diversity in ECEC

2013 ECEC national workforce census

- 17.5% of children had a parent/guardian who spoke language other than English at home
- LBOTE children most commonly attended family day care, occasional care or long day care centre

2013 Access to ECE report

- Lower rates of access among CALD families (especially among more recent migrants)
- Less knowledge of services available and potential benefits

(Baxter & Hand, 2013)



Benefits of supporting diversity in children

Cognitive

- executive functioning
- working memory
- increased abstract and symbolic representation
- attention
- metalinguistic awareness

Social

- ability to form relationships with speakers of the home language (such as grandparents)
- ability to participate in community activities where home languages are spoken
- Sense of identity and belonging

(Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010; Bialystok, 2011; Park & Sarkar, 2007).



Early Childhood Australia

A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016

THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

Key questions

- Do culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children attend early childhood education and care (ECEC) at the same rates as other Australian children?
- What is the long term academic, social and emotional impact of attending ECEC for CALD children?
- Are there differences in the type of care attended?
- Why do CALD families engage/not engage in ECEC?
- What are the implications for practice?



Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)



- A nationally representative study supported by the Australian government
- Matched to the Australian population on
 - Ethnicity
 - Country of birth
 - Whether a language other than English was spoken at home
 - Postcode
 - Month of birth
 - Education
 - Income



Early Childhood Australia

A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016

THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)



- New waves of data being collected at two-year intervals
- Data are collected from two cohorts
 - Birth (B) cohort (studied from age 0-1 year)
 - Kindergarten (K) cohort (studied from age 4-5 years)
- Each containing approximately 5,000 children



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016
THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

The children

B Cohort Wave 3 - (4386 children aged 4-5 years):

- 3973 children who spoke English as their primary language at home
- 413 children who did not speak English as their primary language at home

K Cohort Wave 1 - (4982 children aged 4-5 years):

- 4359 children who spoke English as their primary language at home
- 624 children who did not speak English as their primary language at home



Findings

Do CALD children attend ECEC at the same rates as other Australian children?

	Language background	Attended ECEC	%	Did not attend ECEC	%
B Cohort	LBOTE	292	89.3%	35	10.7%*
	English	3091	94.0%	197	6.0%*
K Cohort	LBOTE	414	87.9%	57	12.1%*
	English	3503	95.3%	172	4.7%*

LBOTE = Language background other than English
 *indicates statistically significant finding



What is the long term academic, social and emotional impact of attending ECEC for CALD children?

Social and emotional measures:

- SDQ pro-social behaviours, conduct problems, emotional symptoms, peer problems (Both parent report and teacher report)
- Social self-concept, general self-concept (Child self-report)
- School liking (Child self-report)

Academic measures:

- NAPLAN outcomes
- Academic rating scale

Health measure:

- Global health measure



Findings

What is the long term academic, social and emotional impact of attending ECEC for CALD children?

B Cohort

Children who did not attend ECEC:

↑ **peer problems** at age 8 to 9 years

Children who did attend ECEC:

↑ parent reported **pro-social skills** at age 4 to 5 years

↑ teacher reported **pro-social skills** at ages 6 to 7 and 8 to 9



Findings

What is the long term academic, social and emotional impact of attending ECEC for CALD children?

K Cohort

Children who did not attend ECEC:

- ↑ parent reported **peer problems** at age 4 to 5
- ↓ **numeracy scores** on NAPLAN at grade 3.



Findings

Peer problems

Prefer to play alone, picked on by other children,
prefer the company of adults, lack of close friendships

Pro-social skills

Kind to younger children, helpful to those in need,
considerate of others' feelings, volunteers to help,
shares with others



Findings (K cohort)

Type of care

Type of care	LBOTE		Non LBOTE	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Preschool program at a school	107	25.8	1273	36.3
Preschool program at non school centre	168	40.6	1207	34.5
Day care centre with pre school program	119	28.7	839	24.0
Day care centre without preschool program	11	2.7	137	3.9
Day care (unsure about preschool program)	9	2.2	47	1.3



Findings (K cohort)

Type of care

Type of care	LBOTE		Non LBOTE	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Preschool program at a school	107	25.8	1273	36.3
Preschool program at non school centre	168	40.6	1207	34.5
Day care centre with pre school program	119	28.7	839	24.0
Day care centre without preschool program	11	2.7	137	3.9
Day care (unsure about preschool program)	9	2.2	47	1.3



Findings (K cohort)

Reasons for attending care

- Family work/study commitments
- So that parents can attend social or community activities
- To establish relationships with grandparents/relatives

Reasons for not attending care

- Cared for by a parent
- Believe child does not need to attend
- Doesn't fit cultural beliefs
- Affordability
- Accessibility



Implications



Early Childhood Australia

A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016

THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

Supporting culturally and linguistically diverse families in ECEC

The Early Years Learning Framework emphasises the need for:

- children to develop strong self identities and a sense of belonging to facilitate active participation in the communities in which they are involved
- early childhood practices to respect families' diversity in history, language, culture, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016
THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

Challenges for working with culturally and linguistically diverse families

- Lack of training and confidence for working across cultures
- Lack of understanding about services among CALD families
- Mismatch between cultural beliefs and values of childrearing, care and education



From challenges to opportunities

- There will always be some cultural/linguistic mismatch between professionals and families
- Therefore, there is a need for all professionals to engage in culturally competent practice

Culturally competent practice

“acknowledges and incorporates —at all levels—
the importance of culture...

vigilance toward the dynamics that result from cultural differences, expansion of
cultural knowledge,
and adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs”

(Betancourt, Green, Carrillo & Ananeh-Firempong, 2003, p. 294).



Early Childhood Australia

A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016

THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

Cultural competence

What it is

- An understanding of, and respect for, cultural and linguistic differences among individuals
- Knowing how to respond in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner when working with **all** children and families

What it is not

- Comprehensive knowledge of every culture and language in the world
- An endpoint – it is an ongoing journey

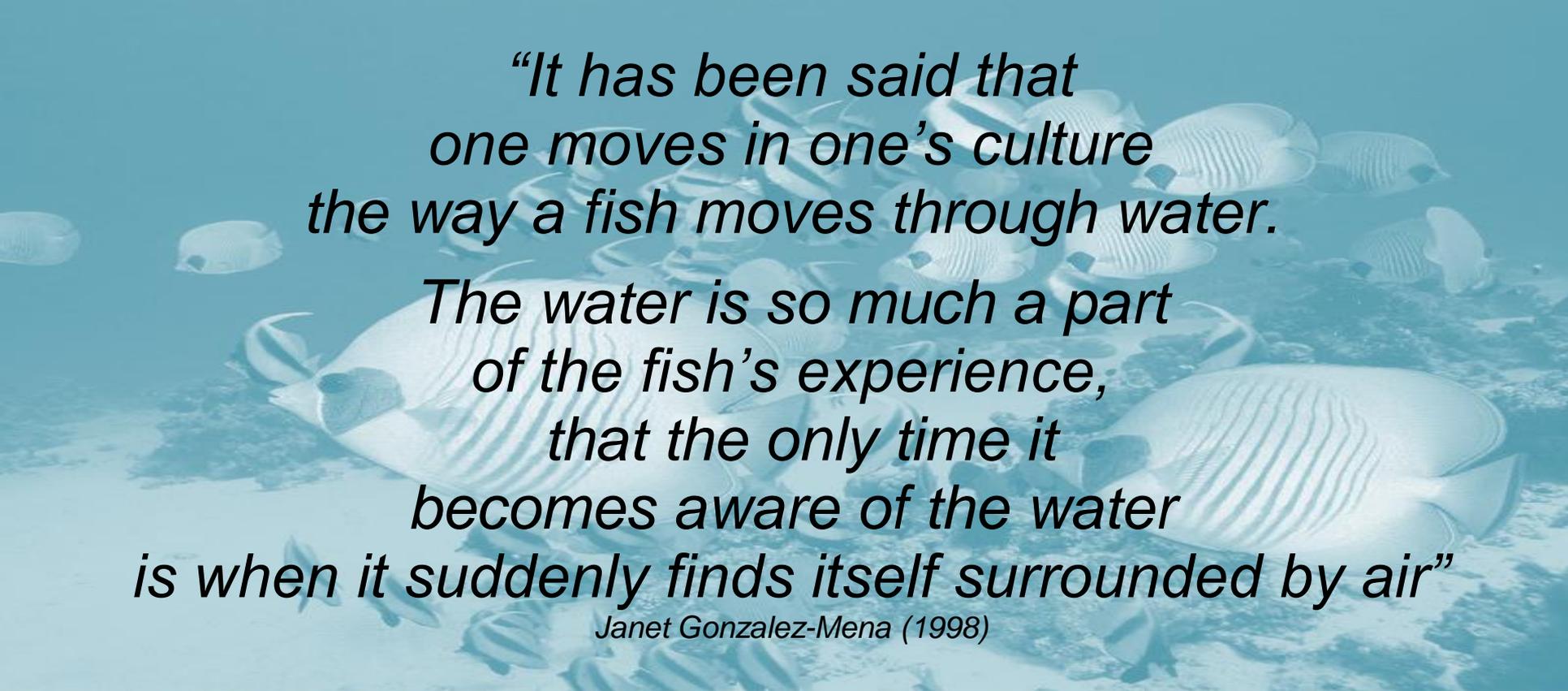


1. Know yourself

CRITICALLY REFLECT

- Every person has a culture – variance within as well as between cultures
- What/who has influenced the formation of your culture?
(i.e. language, religious beliefs, education, country of origin, gender, sexuality, influential people, ancestry)
- How does your culture influence your values, beliefs, judgments and approaches to practice?





*“It has been said that
one moves in one’s culture
the way a fish moves through water.*

*The water is so much a part
of the fish’s experience,
that the only time it
becomes aware of the water
is when it suddenly finds itself surrounded by air”*

Janet Gonzalez-Mena (1998)



Early Childhood Australia

A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016

THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years

2. Know the family

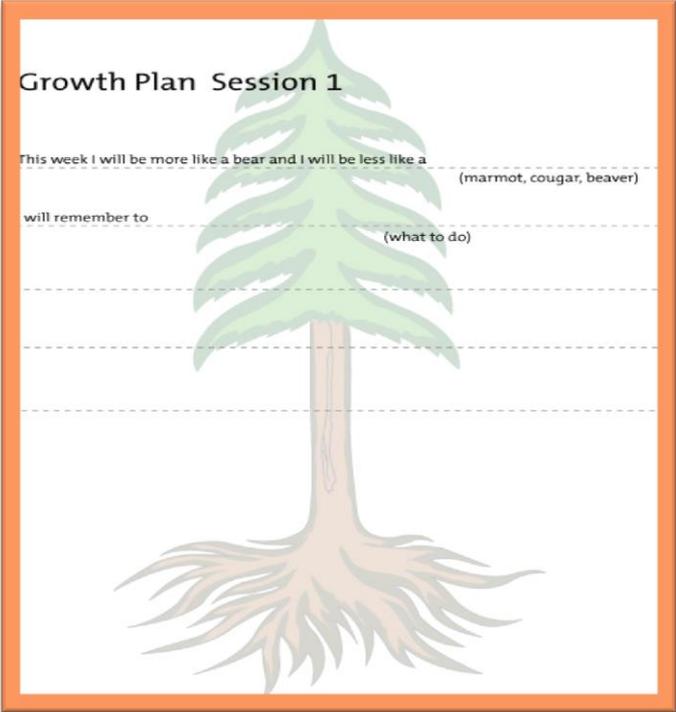
ASK and *LISTEN*

- Undertake a culturally competent enrolment process
- Listen to their story – value their difference
- Invite families in – break down the barrier of the unknown
- Allow families to be involved in service planning and implementation incorporating their own values, circumstances and priorities – belonging is key to engagement



3. Mutually motivating goals for children

Culture can impact upon what parents see as a priority for their children's lives and therefore it is essential that both educators and families are on the same page about the priorities for the child and how this will be achieved



Growth Plan Session 1

This week I will be more like a bear and I will be less like a _____ (marmot, cougar, beaver)

will remember to _____ (what to do)



4. Consider the cultural, social, historical and political context

It is important not to make assumptions about:

- Home routines
- Living arrangements
- Roles of loved ones
- Relationships
- Past events (e.g., there may have been trauma with ongoing implications)



Next steps for this research

Digging deeper into impact of:

- Type of ECEC setting
- Hours at ECEC
- Age at entering ECEC
- Exploring beyond language background as a marker of diversity
- Child/staff interactions/relationships



Key take home messages

1. Embracing our diversity is the key to Australia's future prosperity
2. CALD children are significantly less likely to attend ECEC
3. ECEC has positive social and academic impacts for CALD children
4. ECEC especially important for social-emotional development
5. Barriers and facilitators are unique and culturally dependent
6. Cultural competence is key to engaging CALD families in ECEC



Inspiring the future of Australia: Culturally and linguistically diverse families' engagement in early childhood education

Dr Sarah Verdon, PhD.

Dr Audrey (Cen) Wang, PhD.

Early Childhood Australia Conference

Darwin, NT

8th October, 2016



Early Childhood Australia
A voice for young children

Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2016
THIS IS CHILDHOOD Pedagogy and practice
in the early years