Exploring Family Language Policies:
A study of Australian families of Arabic-speaking background

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Abstract

Despite a general expectation for immigrants to Australia to shift quickly to the use of English, new Australians families of Arabic-speaking backgrounds demonstrate strong affiliations with Arabic as their heritage language. However, there is little research which has explored how such families preserve their heritage language while simultaneously becoming proficient in the use of English. More specifically, few studies have examined family language policy and bilingualism among Arabic-English families in Australia. The study aimed to fill this gap by exploring the linguistic perceptions and practices of four recently arrived immigrant mothers of Arabic-speaking background as they negotiate their new language reality. The study aimed to discover whether they chose to raise their children bilingually, and, if so, how they accomplished this challenge. The study found that the participating mothers perceived bilingualism as a source of pride and a means of improving their families’ future prospects; however, they also acknowledged that raising children bilingually could be challenging and stressful. The mothers employed a range of strategies for developing their children’s bilingualism. These strategies included using the minority language at home, travelling back to the family’s country of origin, using the mixed language strategy to allow children the free alteration between Arabic and English, reading stories in Arabic and English, and using television shows as an educational tool. However, several mothers used these strategies primarily to facilitate the use of Arabic in an effort to counteract the dominance of English in the family environment. A key finding was that the mothers’ limited proficiency in English restricted their ability to communicate effectively in the wider Australian society and thus had adverse effects on their integration. The study concludes by recommending a set of strategies that may assist the mothers in raising their children bilingually with a view to assisting their integration and successful settlement in their adopted country.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signature: Areej
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Abbreviations

FG: Focus Group
SSI: Semi-Structured Interview

Symbols in Quotes from Transcripts:

(Words in brackets): Researcher’s comments
Underlined words: Emphasised.
CAP: Loud utterance.

[Words in square brackets]: Body language.
(../): pauses and silence, number of dots signify number of seconds.
<Speech>: Speaking slowly.
>Speech<: Speaking quickly.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to explore the linguistic reality of four new Australian immigrant families from an Arabic-speaking background who are raising their children bilingually in both English and Arabic. In particular, the study sought to understand their perceptions about each language and the language strategies that they employed to develop both. The mothers were selected as participants because they were more actively involved in raising the children and were easily able to talk about their families’ language perceptions and practices. The research questions were: (1) How do Arabic-speaking new Australian mothers perceive and develop their children’s bilingualism in Arabic and English in Australia? (2) To what extent are the mothers in this study familiar with popular strategies for raising bilingual children? (3) What appear to be the most effective strategies that assist the mothers to raise their children bilingually in Arabic and English in Australia? In the following section, I explain the rationale for conducting this study by narrating my own story about immigration and bilingual parenting.

1.1 The Experience of Being a Recently Arrived Bilingual Mother

I came to Australia as an immigrant from Jordan with my husband and three-year-old son in 2011. We happily welcomed our second child in 2012. Like most new immigrants from a non-English speaking background, my husband and I were highly conscious of the need for our children to acquire proficiency in English. In Jordan, Arabic is the official language and English is perceived to be highly prestigious, being used in many sectors – especially education. Fortunate to be educated in English to postgraduate level, my husband and I considered ourselves to be competent English speakers; in fact, it would be reasonable to describe us as high-level bilinguals in Arabic and English. While we appreciate the importance of being highly competent in English for our children, at the same time we are keen for our Arabic heritage to be preserved in our family. By the time I came to Griffith University to enrol in a Master’s degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), I was already primed to be interested in raising Arabic-English bilingual children. One particular course in bilingualism and bilingual education caught my attention and sparked my interest in searching the research literature for successful stories of bilingual families. I was happy to find that I was not alone in my
desire to raise my children bilingually and that many families around the world are taking this bilingual journey. This discovery has motivated me to develop a language plan for my family and adopt more informed strategies in order to facilitate bilingual language use in our home.

As part of a social network of Arabic mothers, I could see that my interest in raising bilingual children was a shared one. Every time we met and discussed our children, the issue of language would come up. The mothers constantly brought up the challenges of being bilingual and learning a second language and often expressed the desire to find professional help to achieve it. One of them even admitted: “I wish we had only one language. It would be so much easier!” Her remark stirred up other emotions for many of the mothers. One of them confessed that, even after living in Australia for ten years, she still did not feel she belonged. Hearing them speak about the struggles and isolation they felt as immigrants made me see the potential for a research study.

1.2 The Problem for Investigation

The experience of the mothers within my social network is not unusual. In Australia, there is a strong expectation that new immigrants will quickly shift to the primary use of English (e.g. Clyne, 2007). In many immigrant groups this prevalent attitude has resulted in a rapid language shift to English (e.g. Kipp & Clyne, 2003). When many immigrant mothers from non-English-speaking backgrounds come to Australia, they are faced with the pressures of settling in a new country, understanding the values of their new society and acquiring English, a process that can be both daunting and lonely. Arabic-speaking mothers are no exception. For many, there is a conflict between ensuring that their children acquire English, which is considered an essential part of being Australian, and preserving Arabic, which is a treasured part of their personal identity and cultural heritage. Against this context, this study aims first to explore how a group of Arabic-speaking mothers understand their new linguistic situation. Second, it intends to explore whether and how they promote bilingualism in their families. It further sets out to evaluate their familiarity with available strategies for raising bilingual children. Finally, the study aims to provide the mothers with a set of recommended strategies that could assist them in raising children who are bilingual in Arabic and English.
To investigate these issues systematically, the study makes use of Spolsky’s (2004) language policy model which provides a tool for examining language ideologies, practices and planning actions on the part of different linguistic minority and immigrant groups. This framework was selected as one that is suitable to explore the language ideologies i.e. beliefs and attitudes towards English and Arabic (Spolsky, 2004, p. 14), the language practices i.e. the language pattern of selecting among English and Arabic that make up the families’ linguistic repertoire (Spolsky, 2004, p. 9) and planning efforts i.e. the direct and indirect interventions the mothers perform to maintain Arabic as a heritage language and support their children’s learning of English as a second language (Spolsky, 2004, p. 8).

Moreover, the study explores the relatively new body of literature on family language policy (henceforth FLP). Family language policy is defined here as clear and explicit plans employed by bilingual families to ensure appropriate language use within the home (King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 1). My initial survey of the literature found that, although several studies have been conducted with different immigrant groups, very limited research has been done with Australian families of Arabic-speaking background. In this respect, this research study provides an understanding of how these mothers understand and develop FLPs in a way that assists them in bilingual rearing.

The mothers recruited for this study were all from my social network and therefore they were a convenience sample. The decision was made to talk to the mothers and not the fathers because, in Arabic-background families, it is usually the mother who is regarded as responsible for taking care of children (I acknowledge that this is the case for other cultures too). Arab mothers are generally not expected to work for money as this is considered the responsibility of the father and therefore it is considered that the mother is the primary caregiver in the family. The women in this study are all stay-at-home mothers and are therefore the most involved in planning and facilitating language use at home. Talking to them through a focus group and subsequent semi-structured interviews provided insight into their ideologies, practices and planning actions regarding bilingual rearing and FLPs, which elicited valuable data for this study.
1.3 Theoretical Framework

Although an extensive review of the literature failed to uncover a theoretical framework that adequately represents language practices and family language policies among Arabic-speaking families, several theoretical models were identified that have influenced understandings of issues related to this topic. These are: Fishman’s Reversing Language Shift Model, Spolsky’s Family Language Policy Model and Language Ecology. In the Reversing Language Shift Model, Fishman (1991) asserts that the family is “the most common and inescapable basis of mother tongue transmission, bonding, use and stabilization” (p. 94). In this sense, the families interviewed for this study represent the foundation for bilingual development for their children. Consequently, their roles are considered crucial for maintaining Arabic and developing English for their children. This model is aided by Spolsky’s Family Language Policy framework which presents a guiding tool for exploring the families’ language policies through the exploration of three particular topics: their language beliefs, their language practices, and their planning efforts to maintain and develop languages in their families. Notably, these two frameworks help investigate language experiences at the micro level i.e. the family and therefore a more comprehensive exploration requires investigating how the families’ language experiences are affected by the wider context i.e. Australian society. Haugen (1972) defines language ecology as the inter-relationship between any language and it's wider cultural and political environment. As such, language ecology is relevant for exploring how the Australian political and social environment shapes the language experiences of the chosen families.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be of benefit to Australian society as it raises awareness about the linguistic realities new-Australian families experience as a cultural group that is often subject to unsympathetic media representation. A neglected element in the research on Arab-Muslim communities in Australia is their bilingualism and their efforts to maintain Arabic as a heritage language. Thus, the scarcity of research in this area, accompanied by the increasing association of Arabs and Muslims with terrorism by some media providers makes researching this group’s linguistic realities more important. By drawing a connection between the language perceptions of the participating mothers and
the language strategies they implement to develop bilingualism/maintain Arabic, it may help shed light on their struggles to integrate into Australian society. This research study will also lead to providing the mothers with effective strategies that could aid them in their quest to raise bilingual children. By conducting this study, I also endeavour as a mother of two bilingual children to adopt more informed strategies for raising my children bilingually.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The thesis is organised into 5 chapters. The following is an overview of each of the chapters following on from this introductory chapter.

Chapter 2: This chapter reviews the literature on bilingualism as a result of immigration and explores the issue of language planning. Next, it surveys the studies available on FLP. After that, this chapter examines heritage language maintenance and shift with respect to the Australian educational system. Lastly, it highlights some important characteristics of the Arab-Australian population in Australia, and the Arabic language.

Chapter 3: This chapter outlines the methodology used for the study and explains the research design. It also describes the four data collection tools used and a reflection on my position as an insider-researcher. It then provides information about the participants, location, and the recruitment methods. Next, it summarises the qualitative data analysis strategy that was followed. It finally acknowledges the possible limitations and delimitations to this study and the ethical procedures that were followed.

Chapter 4: This chapter presents and analyses the findings from this study. It begins by presenting demographic/personal information about the participants. The qualitative thematic analysis then is presented in two broad sections, language perceptions, and language practices. Language perceptions encompass five themes, which are as follows: (1) Bilingualism as a source of pride; (2) Speaking two languages can be difficult; (3) English is the language of the era; (4) Arabic is the foundation; and (5) raising bilingual children can be challenging. Language practices include three themes, these are: (1) Familiar strategies (2) Supplemental strategies and (3) Arabic weekend schools.

Chapter 5: The concluding chapter summarises the key findings from the study and provides synthesised answers for the research questions. It outlines the study’s
contributions to theory and knowledge and provides a number of implications for education. Lastly, it points out a number of directions for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research study is written with the purpose of exploring and explaining the language experiences and language planning strategies of a group of Australian mothers from an Arabic-speaking background. Naturally, these experiences can be understood from different angles and perspectives so it is essential to review the literature available on topics related to language and minority groups. In order to gain this understanding, four topics are reviewed: bilingualism and immigration, language planning and family language policy, heritage language maintenance and shift with perspectives from education in Australia and lastly Arabs in Australia and the nature of the Arabic Language. The main focus will remain on understanding the language experiences of Arabic-speaking families as a minority group in Australia. First, in order to understand the linguistic experiences of these families it is essential to shed some light on what it means to be a bilingual immigrant.

2.1 Bilingualism: A Brief Overview of Definitions and Attitudes

There are an estimated 6700 languages in the world with about 200 countries to host them, which means that bilingualism and multilingualism is a feature of most of the world’s peoples (Grosjean, 2010; Romaine, 2008). Baker (2011), distinguishes between “individual bilingualism” and “societal bilingualism”. By individual bilingualism Baker refers to: individuals who have the ability to use two languages according to the context (place or addressee) or function (purpose) in which they are used. Grosjean (2010, p. 4) defines bilinguals as “those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives”. However, Baker argues that bilingual individuals do not exist separately; rather, people who use two or more languages are usually a part of a language community and therefore “people who speak a minority language within a majority language context… form a speech community or language community” (Baker, 2011, p. 66). The many books, journal articles and websites dedicated to bilinguals and bilingualism is a marker of researchers’ strong interest in this field. Grosjean (2010) presents a general description of what it really means to be a bilingual child and adult, using reports from actual bilinguals. He discredits a number of myths associated with bilingualism such as the idea that bilinguals are rare; or that switching between two languages is a mark of laziness in
bilinguals or that bilinguals have dual personalities as a result of their bilingualism. Baker’s (2011 and numerous earlier editions) presents perhaps the most comprehensive overview of bilingualism and bilingual education in the modern world. His volume includes a wide range of central issues in bilingualism and bilingual education, including definitions of bilingualism, how minority and majority languages interact in bilingual settings, bilingual development in children, and the effects of bilingualism on personal and societal identity. Baker also discusses how languages are maintained or lost by minority language groups and what efforts could be made to save endangered languages. In addition to providing a strong argument for making bilingual education available to bilingual children through schools, Baker also discusses the changing attitudes towards bilingualism over time. Similarly, García (2011) presents a global perspective to bilingual education and argues that it is “the only way” to educate children in the 21st century (p. 34) because it is a way that promotes inclusiveness of all backgrounds and languages.

Attitudes towards bilingualism continue to interest researchers in the field of bilingualism and bilingual education. Studies conducted on bilingualism between the 1920s and 1960s took predominantly negative views (Cummins & Swain, 1986), in which bilinguals were perceived as being two monolingual persons in one. A bilingual person was thought to be confused as a result of switching between two languages, which was thought to reduce their academic ability (Cummins & Swain, 1986). As a result, bilingual children were described as having language problems (Safford & Drury, 2013). While bilingualism was perceived negatively prior to the 1960s, it was later that attitudes to bilinguals and bilingual education became more positive. This change was marked by a famous study by Peal and Lambert (1962), which showed that bilinguals outperformed monolinguals in a range of activities that required the application of verbal and non-verbal intelligence. Recent research into the benefits of bilingualism provides compelling evidence of the positive impact of bilingualism on cognitive ability (e.g. Bialystok, 2001; Bialystok, Luk, & Kwan, 2005). Additional research into the neurolinguistics of the bilingual brain has shown conclusively that the two languages are always active, which may lead to better performance in abstract thinking activities and, as a result, increase cognitive ability and intelligence (Kroll, Bobb, & Hoshino, 2014). Moreover, bilingualism has been associated with other benefits including but not limited to, increased employability and access to different cultures (Romaine, 2008). On a personal
level, bilingualism can be regarded as a source of individual pride (Grosjean, 2010) and sophistication (Bani-Khaled, 2014; Pedersen, 2010).

2.2 Bilingualism and Immigration

The era in which we are living is described as a period of globalisation, in which increased connectivity and movement shape our lives in multiple ways including how we use languages. The Oxford Dictionary defines immigration as “the action of coming to live permanently in a foreign country” (Dictionaries, 2016). While immigration does not necessarily lead to bilingualism, living in a new country and immersing oneself with a new culture can increase the opportunity for a person to become bilingual. Researchers often state that bilingualism in an immigration context is usually driven by immigrants’ needs to adapt to their new countries (e.g. Clyne, 1991; Grosjean, 2010; Romaine, 2008). However, this is not always the case; the research literature shows that the status of a language plays a pivotal role in this process. As Andrade (2016) notes, the status of English is increasingly heightened by its established importance in wider communication, trade and education. Hence, the status of English as a global language has a direct effect on the need to learn other languages (e.g. Hill, 2010). For example, an American immigrant to Jordan would not necessarily need to learn Arabic to function in his/her daily life and as a result would not necessarily become bilingual. As Rosenhouse (2013) explains, since English enjoys a prestigious standing in the Middle East, there would simply be no need for a native English speaker (aside from a personal interest) to learn the new language, i.e. Arabic. Nonetheless, it is important to note that languages carry cultural significance, so if an English-only speaker living in an Arabic country did not learn Arabic for example, he/she may not be able to interpret some cultural aspects of their new country. Yet, within an immigration context, the relationship between one’s first language and the language of the new nation is complex. One aspect of this complexity is that newly arrived immigrants are faced with a new language reality in their host country. In Australia for example, migrants who lack proficiency in English will find themselves in an English dominant environment in which they need to learn English for functional purposes (Yates & Terraschke, 2013). Moreover, for immigrants in Australia from a non-English background “maintaining their heritage language often becomes crucial” (Yates & Terraschke, 2013, p. 105). Valdés (2005, p. 441) provides a widely
used definition of heritage languages as: “non-societal and non-majority languages spoken by groups often known as linguistic minorities. Such minorities include populations who are either indigenous to a particular region of a present-day-nation (e.g. Aborigines in Australia) or populations that have migrated to areas other than their own regions or nations of origin (e.g. Mexicans in the US)”.

Researchers in the fields of bilingualism and heritage language maintenance have studied how different immigrant groups around the world deal with their new language reality and how it shapes language practices within their families. Hispanic families, for example, are one of the most studied groups in the United States (US). Fantini’s (1985) case study is an iconic contribution to such investigations because it provides an extensive account of how the researcher raised his son Mario bilingually in Spanish and English in America and followed his son’s language development from birth to age ten. With the help of several Spanish-speaking maids in Mario’s home, and his parents’ decision to speak only Spanish at home, Mario was Spanish-dominant by the time he entered preschool. He was equally competent in English after two years of schooling and slowly became more dominant in English as a result of assimilating with school and friends. Despite his increased proficiency in English, he continued to use Spanish and considered it a positive dimension to his personality. His father believed that his attachment to Spanish was due to the positive bilingual environment Mario was raised in and the multiple opportunities he was given to use Spanish. Similarly, Kennedy and Romo (2013), present an auto-ethnographic action research study documenting how one English-Spanish bilingual family in America maintained Spanish as a heritage language and introduced English as a second language to their young daughter, Nelia, who attended a dual language program from kindergarten. They concluded that Nelia’s success in learning both Spanish and English from an early age relied on two factors: her parents’ positive attitude to bilingualism and school support. Although Fantini’s and Kennedy’s studies took place in an American-Spanish/English context, they provide valuable insights and implications for other types of bilingual-immigrant families. One important conclusion that could be deduced from studies like Fantini’s and Kennedy’s, is that the role of parents and families in raising bilingual children is vital in immigration contexts.
2.2.1 Parents’ role in bilingual child-rearing.

The important role of families in individual bilingual development has been established in a number of research studies on bilingual families around the world. These studies have mainly documented the efforts, struggles and emotions that go into bilingual child rearing and the recommendations that could be made to other families facing similar situations. For example, a recent study by Melo-Pfeifer (2015) emphasises the crucial role of parents and grandparents in preserving heritage languages. By analysing the implications of multilingual (Portuguese-English-Dutch) children’s drawings and entries to an online discussion forum, the researcher reported that families had two main roles in heritage language maintenance: an emotional role, important for identity development and a verbal role, important for linguistic development. Thus, Melo-Pfeifer concluded that, without providing children with emotional and verbal language input, maintaining a heritage language could become a problematic goal. Similarly, in her ethnographic research study, Curdt-Christiansen (2009) explored how ten Chinese immigrant families in Quebec perceived and planned Chinese, English and French language use with their children. The study draws attention to the strong influence of parental ideology on language learning experiences and the implications of such influence on family language policies. While these studies mention the parent’s role in general, other studies have emphasised the mothers’ role in bilingual parenting more specifically. It is to the role of mothers in children’s bilingual development that the literature now turns.

2.2.2 Mothers’ role in children’s bilingual development.

Scholars in bilingualism highlight the mother’s essential role in raising bilingual children and the implications of this role. Okita (2002) for example, provides a vivid picture of how raising bilingual children in Japanese-British families in the United Kingdom (UK) placed imperceptible burdens on the Japanese mothers. By drawing on in-depth interviews with 28 Japanese-mother/British-father families in the UK, Okita demonstrates how bilingual child rearing added invisible workloads to the everyday responsibilities of the mothers in her study. In a similar context, Kirsch (2012) examined how seven mothers who were raising their children bilingually in Luxembourgish and English in Great Britain interacted with their English monolingual setting. The study further illustrates the extent to which the mothers perceived and actively planned effective language practices.
to maximise the exposure and use of Luxembourghish with their children. In a study about bilingual parenting, King and Fogle (2006) show how Spanish-English bilingual parenting is gaining more popularity among U.S parents who do not necessarily have a heritage association with Spanish. By interviewing a mixed group of families they found that parents, usually mothers, described bilingual parenting as good parenting. They examined the sources the mothers drew upon to justify why they were raising their children bilingually and concluded that the mothers’ personal encounters with language learning were the main motivation that led them to adopt bilingual parenting. Like the mothers interviewed in the aforementioned studies, the mothers interviewed in King and Fogle's study expressed the view that choosing to raise their children bilingually presented many challenges. From this perspective, researchers of bilingualism and bilingual families have suggested developing language specific plans for immigrant-bilingual families in order to maintain their heritage language and also engage with the dominant language of their country of settlement. These language plans are widely referred to as family language policies. In the next section, I will begin by discussing language planning in general and then move on to more specifically describe family language planning.

2.3 Language Planning and Family Language Policy

When exploring language-planning actions within families, it is important to consider language planning on a national level as an influential factor on any family’s language policy. Language planning was not formalised as a discipline until the 1960’s with Haugen’s study in 1966 being the first scholarly contribution to describe the process of language planning in Norway (Haugen, 1966). While Haugen discussed the standardisation of Norwegian, his work presented a model for language planning which continues to be influential (G. Ferguson, 2006). Language planning refers to actions that intend to implement changes “in the structure (corpus) and functions (status) of languages and/or language varieties using sociolinguistic concepts and information to make policy decisions and to implement them, in order to deal with linguistic/ or extra-linguistic problems at the national, international or community level” (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1997, p. 15). One addition to the corpus-status planning dimensions is acquisition-planning (Cooper, 1989, p. 33). Cooper (1989) defines acquisition planning as the attempt to
expand the use of a language by increasing the number of its speakers by encouraging people to learn it and use it (p. 33). In their volume *Language Planning from Practice to Theory* Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, p. 52) distinguish between *macro* level and *micro* level language planning. By macro-level language planning Kaplan and Baldauf refer to the corpus, status and acquisition language planning activities that occur on a large scale e.g. at national level. Language planning on a macro level involves creating “top-down” policies by authorities and people with power for groups to follow (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 196). Micro-level planning on the other hand, refers to language policies that serve to regulate language use within smaller entities such as schools, work places and families. As such, micro planning involves “bottom-up” policies that are developed by individuals or groups “to utilise or develop their language resources” in a way “that is not directly the result of some larger macro policy, but in response to their own needs” (Baldauf, 2006, p. 155). Following this description, mothers promoting the use of one language over another in bilingual families can be described as language planners within their own domain, i.e. the family. The family, therefore, has become a major focus for research in language planning and maintenance as a variable that impacts language choice the most (Rubino, 2011).

Schwartz and Verschik (2013) describe the family as a community of practice that has the most important role in children’s language development. This portrayal of a family as a community of practice, echoes Haugen’s long-established definition of language ecology as the study of interactions between any given language and its environment, since the family is the first language environment with which a child interacts (Haugen, 1972). Schwartz and Verschik (2013) report that researchers started considering the family as an important linguistic community of practice after the introduction of the iconic “Reversing Language Shift” model developed by Fishman, which emphasises the vitality of the family structure in terms of intimacy and care in developing children’s first language. Most notably, Fishman (1991) stresses the use of ethnic languages at home between mothers and children because this is a critical setting for transmitting language between generations, otherwise known as “intergenerational language transmission” (Fishman, 1991, p. 6). Studies of immigrant families’ language practices increased following the work by Fishman (1991) on language maintenance and the importance of the family in resisting language shift (Kayam & Hirsch, 2012; King et al., 2008; Schwartz, 2010; Schwartz & Verschik, 2013; Spolsky, 2012). Studies on the
role of the family (mostly immigrant families) in fostering bilingualism and resisting language shift mark the introduction of family language policy as a newly emergent field.

Family Language Policy (henceforth FLP) is defined by King et al. (2008) as explicit and implicit strategies implemented by bilingual families to ensure appropriate language use in the family. Scholars researching families and languages maintain that developing FLPs is crucial for developing children’s languages in bilingual settings (e.g. Kayam & Hirsch, 2012, 2014; King et al., 2008; Spolsky, 2012). Spolsky’s (2012) analysis of the family as a critical domain that requires planning in the form of bottom-up policies is considered a guiding conceptual framework for many researchers in the field of FLP (King et al., 2008; Schwartz, 2010). In particular, Spolsky’s (2012) framework includes three components he considers necessary for examining any language community. These components are: language ideologies or beliefs (how people perceive language), language practices (how people use language) and language planning (how people modify language according to their needs).

Even though FLP as a field is still under development, as King and Fogle (2013) note, there have been some significant shifts, mainly in the increased interest in including a diverse range of families, languages and social contexts. In their research timeline on FLP, King and Fogle (2013) produced a summary of the most influential studies on language policies, strategies and ideologies in bilingual families. Their research timeline ranged from 1965-2012 and therefore provides an extensive account of the available literature on FLP. Studies include accounts of French/English bilingual families like Métraux’s (1965) study on reports US/French bilingual mothers’ made regarding their children’s bilingualism. Métraux (1965) provided detailed accounts from mothers participating in her study about difficulties they had encountered when raising their children bilingually. Similarly, Harrison and Bellin (1981) explored language practices among a group of bilingual Welsh/English mothers. In particular, Harrison and Bellin were interested in identifying why some of these mothers were raising their children monolingually in English. Their findings suggested that, despite the mothers’ strong desire to maintain Welsh in their families, the pressure to support English was far stronger. This pressure, accompanied by their lack of knowledge about language development, led to the loss of Welsh among their children. Other studies in King and Fogle’s (2013) timeline report parents’ longitudinal accounts of their children’s bilingual development. For example, Hoffmann (1985) described how her two trilingual
Spanish/German/English-speaking children developed their languages. She explained the differences and similarities in the language practices associated with each language and how these differences/similarities could be attributed to environmental and personal influences. Other studies mentioned in the timeline explored specific strategies for bilingual development. One example was Döpke’s (1992) study, which explored the effectiveness of the one-parent-one-language (OPOL) approach on the bilingual acquisition of a group of six German/English bilingual children in Australia. Döpke revealed that the degree to which any of these children attained bilingualism was strongly related to the parents’ concentration on placing the child at the centre of conversations and language learning activities. Further studies stress the importance of research into parental beliefs and attitudes as major influencers on children’s bilingualism. De Houwer (1999) for instance, stresses that parental beliefs and attitudes towards languages shape language practices and strategies at home, which in turn affect children’s language development. More recently, De Houwer (2007) expanded her findings by investigating why some children aged 6-10 who were exposed to two languages from an early age, failed to speak those two languages. By drawing on data from 1,899 questionnaires, De Houwer found that the degree by which children used the minority language was mirrored by their parents’ language input at home. Her research study is described by King and Fogle (2013, p. 18) as the “most convincing evidence to date that the OPOL approach provides neither necessary nor sufficient input conditions for balanced bilingual development”. King et al.’s (2008) careful observation of the literature reveals that categorising strategies and their advantages along with their disadvantages has been an important part of research in the field of FLP. Studies of FLP have revealed three predominant strategies used by parents of bilingual children: one person/parent one language (OPOL), minority language at home (mL@H) and mixed language strategy.

2.3.1 One person/parent one language (OPOL).

OPOL is a strategy that parents with mixed linguistic backgrounds adopt to teach their children two languages. It works by effectively associating one language with one parent. According to Barron-Hauwaert (2004), it is by far the most researched strategy in bilingual rearing. OPOL has been proven to be successful in many families, such as the pioneering famous case study of Hildegard, the daughter of the linguist Leopold, who
adopted this strategy to raise his daughter bilingually in German and English in America in 1930. Leopold spoke only German while his wife spoke only English, even though she understood and could speak German. Leopold documented and published a number of books about his daughter’s bilingual journey from age two months to seven, by which time, Hildegard was competent in both English and German (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004, p. 3). At the heart of this strategy was Grammont’s (1902) idea that languages should be taught independently in early childhood because assigning a different language to a different parent would reduce language mixing and achieve more balanced bilingualism (p. 1). However, as mentioned earlier, recent research in bilingual development has discarded the idea that languages are mixed in a bilingual child’s brain. In fact, despite continuing controversy, it is now almost conclusively proven that bilingual children retain unique linguistic systems that encompass both their languages (Baker, 2011; Grosjean, 2010).

### 2.3.2 Minority language at home (mL@H)

In mL@H language strategy the minority language is spoken at home by one or both parents, and the majority language is spoken outside the home. This strategy is usually followed by minority groups, particularly in immigrant bilingual families, who speak their native languages at home for the purpose of preserving their heritage language (Grosjean, 2010; King et al., 2008).

Families that adopt mL@H strategy can be of several types. For example, parents might share the same minority language or might each have a different minority language (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004). A recent account of one family that adopted mL@H strategy is documented in Caldas’s (2006) book. Caldas who was also the parent, followed the bilingual challenges and achievements in raising three English/French bilingual children in Louisiana. Caldas was a native English speaker from Louisiana and his wife was a native French speaker from Quebec. His children, an older boy and twin girls, are two years apart in age and lived with their parents in Louisiana. Caldas and his wife adopted a French-only family language policy from an early age and the children perceived their bilingual stance positively up to the age of 10. However, when they reached early adolescence they rejected using French and favoured English in a desire to assimilate with the mainstream society. With a patient and conscious approach, the parents eventually
overcame the hurdles and the three children had become fully bilingual by the age of 17. Close examination of Caldas’s book provides the reader with crucial components for successful bilingualism. These are: a suitable FLP that is explicit and modified constantly, a patient and determined approach and extensive use of different resources, such as television and video, summer camps, bilingual immersion programs and visits to the family’s home town where the minority language is spoken.

In a very different context, Kayam and Hirsch (2014) explored how one family adopted the mL@H strategy to promote the use of English as a minority language in Israel. It was one of the rare studies that focus on English as a heritage language rather than as a majority language. Interestingly, they found that, despite English being a global language and despite its wide popularity in Israel, there still needed to be constant effort from the English-speaking mother (since her mother-tongue was English) to promote its use at home (Kayam & Hirsch, 2014). Despite the vast differences between languages it would appear reasonable to conclude that less popular languages will require more effort to preserve and maintain (e.g. Borland, 2005).

**2.3.3 Mixed language approach.**

In the mixed language approach, the majority and the minority languages in a bilingual home are used interchangeably without predetermined restrictions on particular language choices for particular times (Grosjean, 2010). Factors such as topics, addressees and situations mark the language choice and codeswitching can be heavily used during conversations. Grosjean notes that although this strategy has not been extensively researched in academic contexts, it is among the most widely used strategies in bilingual families. Scholars have tended to disregard this strategy, as they believe it is a form of laziness which causes confusion for children who are being raised bilingually (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004). However, as noted earlier, mixing languages is often systematic and is a sign of good language management (Baker, 2011). On the other hand, Grosjean (2010) notes that this strategy usually creates an imbalance in language exposure as a result of limited opportunity to practice the minority language.

The previous overview explored issues in language planning on a national level with more focus on language planning within the domain of the family. Studies in FLP have investigated several topics such as: case studies of bilingual children, successful strategies
for raising children bilingually and the emotions associated with bilingual rearing. In the next section, I will review the topic of heritage language maintenance and present some important implications for the Australian education system.

2.4 Heritage Language Maintenance and Shift: Perspectives from the Australian Education System

While there is no doubt that Australia is widely diverse in terms of culture and language, it essentially remains an Anglocentric nation i.e. favours white Australians (Rubino, 2011). Clyne (2007) states, in accordance with this view, that despite Australia’s vast linguistic diversity, it is primarily dominated by what he calls a monolingual mindset. In fact, it is Clyne’s work that marked the commencement of multilingualism as an important field of research (Rubino, 2011). Clyne was interested in the different aspects of immigrant minority languages in Australia and how best these different linguistic groups could be supported by language policies. He believed that Australia’s vast linguistic diversity was an important resource that governments needed to utilise. His comments in 1991 on language policy in Australia captured the enthusiastic start by the Australian government in 1987 when the then Prime Minister, the Hon R. J. Hawke, announced the Commonwealth (Federal) government’s endorsement of the National Policy on Languages:

*The implementation process of Australia’s language policies still has a long way to go. But a very significant start has been made, one that should encourage the Australian government to continue its financial commitment* (Clyne, 1991, p. 249).

Yet, sixteen years later Clyne (2007) observed a change in attitude towards community language development on the part of successive Australian governments. He attributed this change in attitude to a number of reasons but primarily what he called “economic rationalist agendas” (Clyne, 2007, p. 5). What Clyne was referring to was the fact that Australia’s language policies were being informed principally by the nation’s economic needs. As a result, languages other than English (LOTE), were primarily chosen according to their value in enhancing the trade market (Lo Bianco, 2009). Following this perspective, certain languages, notably Asian languages, were promoted over others (e.g. Japanese, Korean, Indonesian and Chinese). This preference highlights tension between the view that additional languages are a source of economic prosperity and the view that
they are a source of empowerment and a social right (Hajek & Slaughter, 2014). Nevertheless, the fact remains that given the established research on the value of exploiting a nation’s linguistic resources to enhance its way of living (e.g. Baker, 2011; Clyne, 1991, 2005, 2007; Kipp & Clyne, 2003; Liddicoat, 2009), the number of immigrants shifting to the use of English-only as a result of coming to Australia is dramatic (Kipp & Clyne, 2003).

Language shift by immigrants is often attributed to the lack of institutional support for immigrant languages (Lo Bianco, 2009; Rubino, 2011). Consequently, argues Clyne (2007), even though Australia is witnessing continuing demographic changes, it is not adapting to the linguistic needs of new immigrants because this is not a priority for the Australian government. According to Scarino (2012), in Australia there is a discrepancy between multilingual policies and practices in education in general. This discrepancy has resulted in a standardised one-size-fits-all approach to educating children from different linguistic backgrounds. Scarino (2012) further argues that in any particular community it is necessary to take into account the demographic features of languages. However, careful observation of actual implementation of heritage language programs in Australia reveals low attendance rates to language classes if made available (Lo Bianco, 2009). This is particularly prevalent in Queensland which despite having a strong regional approach to language teaching, it has recorded the lowest proportion of students completing a language in school (Lo Bianco, 2009).

This inconsistency is also noted in a report entitled “Queensland’s Cultural Diversity Policy” where the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs of Queensland listed a set of aspirations and aims Queensland intended to adopt in early childhood and school educational departments (Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 2013, p. 7). They aimed at:

- Ensuring schools with high numbers of culturally diverse students are provided with adequate support
- Ensuring Queensland is considered the best practice state for providing English-as-a-second language programs in schools
- Ensuring strategies are implemented that support access to and participation of families and children from culturally diverse backgrounds in a quality early childhood education program.
Yet close observations of actual implementation of such aims come with little or no representation in state school classrooms in Queensland (Crawford, 2002). As a result, parents tend to carry the sole responsibility for passing language to their children. While parents might succeed in transferring the language, Hatoss (2013) indicates that long-term language maintenance requires an ecological approach. In this sense, Hatoss (2013) argues that if families happen to succeed in transferring their language to their children, they usually fail to do so in terms of literacy. Hence, she concludes that language intervention on a national level is necessary to provide literacy in the minority language to children from backgrounds other than English so that they can become both bilingual and bi-literate.

From another point of view, Shin (2012) has argued that developing the child’s heritage language is an important factor for developing their identity. According to Sainsbury and Renzaho (2011), immigrant children often come into contact with the host culture for the first time through school, which plays a central role in shaping their attitude towards their new country. Lee and Oxelson (2006) agree and assert that it is therefore critically important that the school and teachers celebrate the children’s differences by adopting more positive attitudes towards their heritage languages. Shin (2012) too argues that this understanding can enhance the child’s confidence and improve his/her sense of belonging in the new environment. Other researchers (e.g. Kirsch, 2012; Okita, 2002), suggest that since bilingual rearing carries several responsibilities, particularly for mothers, it can be inferred that providing alternative settings (e.g. school) where children learn their heritage language would ease the burden of maintaining it. Overall, the research literature is united in stating that an important factor to consider when discussing the effects of the classroom on a child’s heritage language development is the degree of parental involvement in their child’s education process.

Extensive research links parental involvement in children’s school activities to improved academic achievements and social outcomes (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Jeynes, 2007). In their investigation of the educational concerns of Arabic-speaking migrants from Sudan and Iraq to Melbourne, Sainsbury and Renzaho (2011) highlight how parents regarded education highly and viewed it as an important resource for their children to move forward. However, the parents in Sainsbury and Renzaho’s study expressed the view that they felt under pressure as they coped with their new host country’s expectation of their involvement in their children’s education. This
frustration was mainly attributed to the language barrier, i.e. the parents’ difficulty in communicating in English. The parents’ limited English compared with their children’s ability to learn English rapidly, resulted in an inconsistency between the children’s linguistic ability and social engagement, and their parents’ limited English proficiency and isolation, and this has been shown to affect many immigrant families directly (p. 296). As a result of this inconsistency, parents become reliant on their children to translate for them what is being said or written, thus children become language brokers for their parents (Orellana, 2009). This role, Orellana (2009) and others (e.g. Bauer, 2015; Eksner & Orellana, 2012) argue, poses many challenges for the children in terms of their identity development and their relationship with their families. It is also a major concern for educational professionals who try to engage parents in their children’s schooling issues but cannot do so because the parents do not understand the language used for education. It is therefore necessary to bridge the difference presented by this intergenerational gap and this bridge could be achieved by accommodating the linguistic needs of immigrant parents, as Sainsbury and Renzaho (2011) advocate. Moreover, it is crucial to study each group separately in order to understand their particular linguistic needs and practices. In the next section the topic of discussion will be Arabs and Arabic as a distinctive group/language in Australia.

2.5 Arabs in Australia and the Nature of the Arabic Language

Arabs, like many immigrants across the globe, experience a sense of loss that is natural to the process of immigration (Kennedy & Romo, 2013). El-Zain, a Lebanese scholar, has described how his sense of being a foreigner has never left him despite the many years he lived in Sydney. This, he argues, is a sad truth for many migrants in Australia. He describes eloquently how Arab immigrants negotiate their new identity in Australia:

*If faces and buildings and streets are unfamiliar, it is not only because we cannot recognise them, do not understand their stories... It is also because we cannot get them to recognise us and cannot tell them our stories. The migrant loses the concise language of familiarity and shared memory, the ability to evoke worlds of associations with few hints and words... It is much harder, however, to overcome our own strangeness to the place...because it is a matter of creating a new language. Eyes and ears, after all, are much more adaptable than tongues...If we resist a place, refusing to let it define our identity...because we feel... that this is a threat to our older allegiance, belonging... becomes a form of betrayal.* (El-Zein, 2002, p. 230)
Hage notes the conflict of identity and the sense of loss many Arabs feel after migrating to Australia. He explains this identity conflict by describing how Arabs, especially those of first generation, regard themselves as guests in Australia. This representation, Hage suggests, is a strategy Arabs adopt to safeguard their feelings of honour and self-respect. It is because guests are so honourable and cherished in the Arabic tradition, that they choose the term guest rather than refugee or immigrant. However, Hage warns that while this terminology can provide Arabs with the comfort of knowing they are honoured and respected, it can make them feel they are in debt for what has been given to them, which can make them passive and silent within Australian society (p. 13). In other words, many Arabs fail to integrate into the Australian culture because they feel that they need to guard their honour by not showing their true emotions or expressing their true feelings. Nevertheless, there are other dimensions that affect Arab integration into the Australian society, and one of these is public perception.

Recent research highlights the growing tension towards Arabs and Muslims as a result of terrorist attacks carried out by extremists around the world (Johns, Mansour, & Lobo, 2015; Mansouri, 2012; Mansouri & Wood, 2008). This growing tension is due to different reasons but a major influence on Australian public opinion is the mass media (Mansouri, 2012; Rane, Nathie, Isakhan, & Abdalla, 2011). Before I go on, it is crucial to denote the complexity associated with media productions that essentially involve different agendas and biases that are designed to influence public opinion but may not necessarily reflect them. Nevertheless, the Australian media has been projecting negative opinions about Lebanese-Australian youth since the 1990s, as shown in a significant body of related research (e.g. Collins, Noble, Poynting, & Tabar, 2000; Noble, Poynting, & Tabar, 1999; Poynting, Noble, & Tabar, 1999). In a study about migrant Muslim identity and belonging in Melbourne, Australia, Mansouri (2012) explains how Muslims and Arabs are often considered a threat to the social cohesion of the Australian society. This portrayal, Mansouri argues, is the result of anti-Muslim sentiments reproduced by the media, which leads the public to associate Muslims with terrorism. Notably, Muslim women wearing the hijab are at the most visible forefront of this association (Mansouri & Wood, 2008). However, Mansouri states that this association is both naïve and unfair. Many migrant Arab Muslims, for example, fled the recent political conflicts in the Middle East to secure a more prosperous future for their families in Australia. Continuing to associate them with what they have escaped excludes them and impedes their full
integration into the Australian society. A number of scholars including Johns et al. (2015), Rane et al. (2011), and Hage (2002) argue that a possible way of moving forward is to understand some important aspects about Arabs and Muslims in terms of religion and language as main constituents of their ethnic identity.

In their research on a group of young Australian Muslim in Melbourne, Johns et al. (2015), conclude that the ways Muslims in Melbourne interact with the wider community in Australia are shaped by key Islamic principles such as generosity and responsibility. Hence, the authors recommend that Islam and Muslims should not be perceived as ‘foreign’, because “despite constant challenges and tests, Muslims continue to practise their religion in an integrative manner that encourages active participation and engagement rather than its opposite”. (p. 187). In another research study, Jaspal and Coyle (2010) emphasise the strong association between Islam and Arabic as a language that most Muslims will identify themselves with.

According to the 2011 census, there are approximately 476,291 Muslims in Australia which makes Muslims the fourth largest religious group in Australia ("Australian Bureau of Statistics ", 2012). Among them, 243,672 speak Arabic as a first language, making Arabic the fourth most widely used community language in Australia (Conteh & Meier, 2014). Aided by these numbers, researchers on Arabic-speaking background migrants in Australia acknowledge the multi-faceted relationship between Arabs and Islam (e.g. Hage, 2002; Johns et al., 2015; Rane et al., 2011). One main representation of the relationship between Islam as a religion and Arabic as a language is the Quran. It is no secret that Muslims regard Arabic highly because of their Holy Book, the Quran. Muslims believe that the Quran is the literal word of God recited to his Prophet Mohammad and written shortly after the Prophet’s death. Further, since God spoke to Mohammad in Arabic, the Quran itself, as spoken by God, can only be read and recited in Arabic (Ali-Karamali, 2008). Even though it has been translated into several languages, these versions are considered only as aids that could help readers from different backgrounds achieve a better understanding of the Quran. Thus these translated versions are not favoured and are considered impure as Muslims believe that preserving the Arabic linguistic form of the Quran is part of preserving its divine content (Saeed, 2008). As such, Muslim prayers which involve reading several verses of the Quran must be in Arabic (Ali-Karamali, 2008). Other important aspects of Islam involve Arabic as well, such as, learning the Prophet Mohammad’s sayings.
Given the absolute importance of Arabic as a heritage language for the Arab-Muslim population, immigrants from Arabic-speaking background to Australia project the view that they value their language and wish to teach it to their children (Hatoss, 2013). For example, while there are numerous language maintenance programs offered in Queensland, there are no Arabic language programs available in state schools in the time of writing ("Languages and specialist programs," 2016). Further exploration for weekend schools or after-hours schools in Queensland reveals that there is currently only one school available operating through the Ethnic Schools Association Queensland (ESAQ personal communication, August 18, 2015).

In a context where Australian parents of Arabic-speaking background hold high educational aspirations for their children that translate into low academic achievements (Mansouri & Wood, 2008), understanding the different reasons for the children’s low achievement could be key in improving their academic results. One frequently underestimated problem could be the vast difference between the children’s languages (Arabic/English) in terms of spoken and written conventions (Palmer, El-Ashry, Leclere, & Chang, 2007).

At this point it is worth noting some unique features of the Arabic language to understand the difficulty of teaching it to children at home. One of the key characteristics of Arabic is its diglossic nature. For the purpose of this thesis I shall use a basic definition of diglossia as a situation where two or more languages or dialects of the same language co-exist (C. A. Ferguson, 1959). These language varieties are ranked according to factors such as their domains of use and status of its speakers. In Arabic, children learn a colloquial variety (low variety) at home, Modern Standard Arabic or MSA (high variety) at school and Classical Arabic or CA (also a high variety) for religious use, e.g. the Quran (Saiegh-Haddad, 2003; Zughoul, 1980). These are three different, yet intertwined varieties of Arabic and thus are considered a primary reason why Arabic is difficult to learn in a foreign country. Therefore, if immigrant parents decide to raise their children bilingually they will be faced with a challenging task of introducing several varieties of one language (Arabic) while also learning a second language (English). Another key feature of the Arabic language is its “shallow orthographic structure” (systematic sound-letter correspondences) as opposed to English, which has a “deep orthographic structure” (many irregular sound-letter correspondences) (Palmer et al., 2007, p. 10). Arabic is written from right to left with no orthographic representation of short sounds. Letters in
Arabic change, depending on their position in the word. There are masculine and feminine nouns and verbs and a very different system for pluralising nouns and verbs. Moreover, word order and sentence structure in Arabic is very different from English (Abu-Rabia & Siegel, 2002). From this perspective, Palmer et al. (2007) urges parents and educators of bilingual Arabic-English children to consider the vast difference between the two languages and promote an environment of acceptance that will help children develop their bilingualism.

The previous overview explored the characteristics of Arab immigrants to Australia, who experience, like many immigrant populations around the world, a sense of loss and inbetweeness. This struggle, accompanied by a growing public tension towards Arab immigrants as a result of terrorism carried out by Muslim extremists, has left many Arab-Muslims in Australia feeling alienated (Johns et al., 2015; Mansouri, 2012; Mansouri & Wood, 2008). Muslim women in particular are at the forefront of this perception (Mansouri & Wood, 2008). In response to these perceptions, researchers argue that it is important to build a dialogue between Australian Arab-Muslim populations and the wider community that promotes information against assumptions and sympathy against hostility (e.g. Johns et al., 2015; Mansouri, 2012; Mansouri & Wood, 2008). In addition, the research literature revealed that one particular issue important to Australians from Arabic-speaking background was maintaining their heritage language (Hatoss, 2013). However, with the lack of sufficient support, heritage language maintenance was a challenge, particularly in Queensland (ESAQ personal communication, August 18, 2015).

The previous summary concludes the literature review which explored the relevant literature in five particular areas. The first section reviewed bilingualism and bilingual education, highlighting how bilingualism has become the norm in the 21st century (García, 2011). The second overview explored the relationship between bilingualism and immigration, emphasising the role of the family, especially the mother, in negotiating a new language reality for the family in the host country (e.g. Kirsch, 2012). The third section investigated language planning and family language policy as key components for successful bilingual education/rearing (e.g. Kayam & Hirsch, 2012, 2014; King et al., 2008; Spolsky, 2012). This description was followed by an exploration of heritage language maintenance with reference to the Australian educational system, adequate support for Arabic heritage language maintenance is currently lacking, especially in Queensland (ESAQ personal communication, August 18, 2015). There is also a general
lack of understanding of the linguistic characteristics employed by Arab-English bilingual children, suggesting a need for further research in that area. In the next chapter, I explain how these factors led to the identification of an appropriate methodology to investigate how a group of Australian families from an Arabic-speaking background understand and implement an FLP so as to successfully negotiate their language reality in Australia.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The literature review confirms that studies on Arabic-speaking immigrants to Australia are limited. While some explore the identity of Arab-Australians (e.g. Hage, 2002) and the relationship between Arab immigrants to Australia and Islam (e.g. Johns et al., 2015; Rane et al., 2011), few have investigated the family domain (Spolsky, 2012) as a critical influence on children’s language acquisition and bilingual development. In particular, few studies provide a comprehensive description of beliefs, attitudes, and practices within the framework of FLP in Arabic-English speaking Australian families. Moreover, few studies explore the attitudes of Arabic-speaking mothers toward educational institutes in Queensland in terms of heritage language education and support available to help them maintain the Arabic language with their children. A lack of institutional understanding has resulted in a lack of support for these families, which in turn often results ultimately in language loss. This study therefore explores the understanding and implementation of FLP with a group of four mothers who represent their families. The next section explains the research design for this study and lists the research questions.

3.1 Research Design and Questions

This research study takes the form of an exploratory case study where a qualitative approach was followed in order to gather and analyse the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2012) with FLP and bilingualism. As Yin (2014) states, case study research helps identify and build contextual knowledge of a case by drawing on multiple sources of data. In a broader sense, this case study falls within a social constructivist paradigm where the participants’ detailed accounts of their experiences provided the data for the study’s research questions (Crotty, 1998). By choosing a qualitative approach, it was possible to explore the participants’ language ideologies and practices, without using any predetermined hypotheses. This approach helped achieve an authentic understanding (Creswell, 2013) of bilingualism and FLPs in the selected families. A constructivist model was beneficial for this study because it encouraged the participants to describe their lived experience in detail. Given the exploratory nature of this case study, the research questions were designed to allow an interpretive exploration of the topic. The research questions were as follows:
1. How do Arabic-speaking new Australian mothers perceive and develop their children’s bilingualism in Arabic and English in Australia?
2. To what extent are the mothers in this study familiar with popular strategies for raising bilingual children?
3. What appear to be the most effective strategies that assist the mothers to raise their children bilingually in Arabic and English in Australia?

The interpretative nature of this study pointed towards a qualitative approach to data collection. My data collection instruments comprised a questionnaire, one focus group session, semi-structured interviews, and a researcher diary. These instruments are discussed in the following section.

3.2 Data Collection

A key characteristic of qualitative studies is wide collection of data, the backbone of qualitative research as Creswell (2012, p. 43) states. For this reason, I employed several instruments for data collection in order to gain better understanding of the mothers’ language beliefs, practices and plans, within their families. Four instruments were designed and the diagram in Figure 1 below describes how each instrument relates to the others.

1. One questionnaire
2. One focus group session
3. Semi-structured interviews
4. A researcher diary
Figure 1 shows how the chosen data collection methods informed and complemented each other. Responses to the questionnaire were analysed before the focus group discussion and therefore these responses informed the questions raised at the focus group discussion. In a similar way the focus group discussion informed the following semi-structured interviews. While there was one general semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix A), some questions were tailored to each participant in order to elicit further information about particular topics.

It is worth noting before I go on to describe each data-collecting tool, that because the participants’ first language is Arabic, both the focus group and the semi-structured interviews were conducted in Arabic. Allowing the mothers to discuss bilingualism and FLP in Arabic freed them from any linguistic restriction and helped them express their ideas effectively. All data was transcribed in Arabic and relevant parts were translated and added to the discussion. A professional Arabic/English translator has reviewed the translated quotes from both the focus group discussion and the semi-structured interviews.

3.2.1 Questionnaire.

A questionnaire was designed in order to collect demographic data and general information about the mothers (see appendix B). It was essential at the beginning of the study to compile as much data as possible about the mothers’ linguistic background and language practices within their families. Eliciting such data helped guide the study and
provided a context for the following data instruments that were employed (Creswell, 2012). Filling out the questionnaires also helped prepare the mothers for the focus group session that followed. Since talking about languages can require some abstract thinking, completing the questionnaire first helped activate their ideas. Even though the questionnaire appears to be lengthy, most of the questions were closed with multiple-choice answers and the mothers completed them quickly and easily. The mothers were asked to provide further explanations if they chose specific answers and if they wished to comment on certain topics. However, most of them provided short answers and preferred to discuss issues verbally rather than in writing. For practical reasons, the questionnaire was prepared in English and the participants were offered translations and explanations when required. The data collated from the questionnaires informed the design of the questions in the focus group, as I adapted the questions according to the mothers’ questionnaire responses.

### 3.2.2 Focus group.

A focus group session was chosen for this study as a method that would allow the participants to share their language experiences in a comfortable setting. Ho (2011) suggests that through group interactions, a researcher can uncover ideas that would otherwise remain hidden. Furthermore, using focus groups allows the researcher to gain initial insights (Krueger & Casey, 2009) by discussing participants’ beliefs and attitudes about a topic (Litosseliti, 2003). Having read several guides on how to conduct a successful focus group, I was confident that this method would help me to effectively explore the topic and answer the questions proposed in this study. Understanding the values and pitfalls of a focus group was also useful for facilitating the discussion.

Taking into account these reasons and considerations, I conducted a single focus group session of approximately one hour in order to explore the mothers’ initial thoughts and identify those who were most interested in further participation in this study. Conducting a focus group with these mothers was an excellent method for eliciting their ideas on bilingualism and FLP. From the start, they were all excited to be part of the study and were keen to begin the discussion. I started by thanking them for attending and explaining the purpose of the study. The value of respecting each other and allowing everyone to speak freely without passing any judgments was also established early by
emphasising the importance of answering the questions truthfully without worrying about how they would be perceived, a phenomenon known as the halo effect (Silverman, 2013). I then moved on to describe the order of the discussion, explaining that there would be three main areas of discussion: beliefs, practices, and plans. This plan was part of the focus group schedule, which had been developed earlier (see appendix C for focus group schedule). Each section was introduced and then the questions were asked. Questions were prepared carefully so that they were neutral, non-judgemental, non-leading and open-ended. The mothers were responsive and answered each question in detail. Everyone had a chance to answer each question and they were gently prompted whenever further explanation was needed to gain as many opinions as possible. Continuous probing helped me elicit a rich and extensive account of their views.

Given that the participants all had different personalities, I had to draw on my knowledge of how to moderate focus groups effectively. For example, I encouraged one quiet mother to participate in the discussion by asking her direct questions and by asking her if what someone had just shared was her experience as well. On the other hand, it was also necessary to identify and moderate responses by a dominant speaker. Having that knowledge and bringing it to the process was very useful and resulted in a successful, cooperative and enjoyable discussion. After the discussion was completed the mothers were served some refreshments and were invited to a light lunch. Those mothers who expressed interest were contacted in the following weeks to arrange for individual semi-structured interviews.

### 3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews.

The third method for data collection was semi-structured interviews, which were carried out approximately two weeks after the focus group. Semi-structured interviews are considered highly appropriate for qualitative studies because they allow the researcher to elicit rich data (e.g., Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2012; Kumar, 2005; Nunan, 1992). As with, Merriam (2014) argues that interviewing participants becomes necessary when exploring people’s beliefs and attitudes about an issue, as talking about these topics can be difficult. Accordingly, choosing semi-structured interviews as a data collection method was suitable for this study because it provided an opportunity to discuss issues related to
FLP in a structured yet relaxed environment. The outcome of these interviews was therefore a rich data set that was helpful for answering the proposed research questions.

The questions raised in the semi-structured interviews were tailored according to the responses of each participant to the previous focus group discussion. In other words, key points and ideas discussed during the focus group could be taken up and discussed in personal detail. Thus, the act of funnelling general questions from the focus group session to more specific and refined forms in semi-structured interviews offered further insights for this exploratory study (Krueger & Casey, 2014) (see appendix A for semi-structured interview schedule).

The mothers who expressed interest in future participation in the study were contacted to schedule a meeting. Three mothers out of four expressed interest and were contacted by telephone and invited for a 30-minute interview with me. Choosing the location for the meeting was left to them, and they all chose to meet at their homes during school hours. The timing and location were convenient and comfortable for them and helped the mothers to discuss their beliefs, practices and plans regarding FLPs and bilingualism in a relaxed setting.

3.2.4 Researcher’s diary.

The fourth method for collecting data was a researcher diary. Silverman (2013) states that keeping a research diary can help the researcher reflect and document relevant material that can be helpful to draw upon as they progress in the research process. Being an insider-researcher, as opposed to an outsider-researcher, was also something that I took into consideration that made reflecting on my own position imperative. Insider-researchers are broadly considered to be those who choose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers are not considered to belong to the group they study (Adler & Adler, 1994; Breen, 2007). Therefore, after gaining ethical clearance I started a research diary where I documented how the research progressed and reflected on my position. By the time I had almost finished writing the thesis, I had approximately 50 pages of reflections in my diary. Moreover, as the research developed and it was time for analysing the data, it was important to note any conflicting issues I faced as a result of being a close friend to the mothers participating in the study. These entries helped remind me that I had to remain neutral and that it was my responsibility to respect and protect the participants’
anonymity. Lastly, relevant entries from the diary were incorporated in the data analysis chapter, which provided further interpretations for discussion and analysis. I will comment on my position as an insider researcher in the next section.

3.3 Researcher’s Position

As previously noted, because the mothers participating in this study are part of my social network, I am researching this topic as an insider researcher. Being an insider researcher proposes several advantages and disadvantages that have been noted by many researchers (e.g. Coghlan, 2003; Herrmann, 1989; Mercer, 2007; Rooney, 2005; Unluer, 2012). There were invaluable advantages associated with my role as a mother, friend and a trusted member of the participants’ social network. For example, sharing the same mother tongue (Arabic) allowed me access to the participants’ detailed experiences that might not have been available to a researcher who did not share the same language background. Knowing their culture, their values and the taboos that had to be respected were also important to take into consideration and affected data collection and analysis positively. For example, my understanding of the nature of Muslim families and the boundaries that needed to be respected when interviewing the mothers helped the focus group session and the semi-structured run smoothly. I also know that being a close friend of the mothers allowed me exclusive access to conduct the study that would not have been granted to an outsider researcher. The participants declared this view honestly after I called to invite them to the study, saying something in the meaning of “if it wasn’t you, we would not agree to talk”. Consequently, they were all very positive and happy to assist me with any further explanations or clarifications even after the focus group session and the semi-structured interviews were conducted. In addition, because I am a mother, I also understood the universal nature of protectiveness mothers have for their children and their belief that, despite their flaws, they are the best! This understanding made me respectful and non-judgmental to the mothers’ opinions, which made them comfortable and therefore able to share their stories openly.

On the other hand, I also acknowledge that being an insider researcher presented certain challenges and shortcomings that I needed to be aware of so I could try my best to minimise their affect. The disadvantages that I confronted as an insider researcher were mostly associated with bias and the role duality, two issues that are common among
insider researchers and have been documented by several researchers (e.g. DeLyser, 2001; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002; Unluer, 2012). Bias was an issue I was aware of from the moment I decided to conduct this research. I understood that to the best of my ability I had to overcome my blind spots in order to see the whole picture and thus I came to the data collection without predetermined ideas. I wanted to listen and document their views as they said it, not as I thought I understood it. Opting for openness and transparency was possible by the use of diary entries and reflections. Keeping a researcher diary to acknowledge research-related issues helped me reflect on my position and overcome any possible shortcomings. For example, I was out at the park one day with my friends (the participants) and we were discussing the issue of language schools and the effectiveness of having a good Arabic weekend school. One of the mothers kept projecting the view that there were no solutions and that the only thing to do was to go back to an Arab country so that the children can learn Arabic. This incident happened just before I was going to start the data analysis and I remember getting slightly annoyed with her negativity, but when I went home, I wrote it down in my research diary and reminded myself that I had to respect her opinion and not let my emotions cloud the analysis of the data. This reflection had to do with the role of duality that was mentioned earlier. Given my previous qualifications in TESOL and English Literature, my friends were viewing me as a language expert and expected me to react and respond to anything they say about language or do about their children’s bilingualism. However, when I was collecting the data I had to remind myself to be neutral by only listening and probing the participants to share as many of their experiences as they could. Another equally important aspect of my position is the fact that I am a woman researching women and therefore the gendered perspective becomes undeniable. Even though this study does not adopt a feminist lens to interpret the data, it is influenced by researchers like Reinharz and Davidman (1992)who extol the value of adding women’s views to contemporary research studies, “because this way of learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women” (p. 19). The participants all conform to strong social expectations that they will remain at home as primary caregivers while their husbands work or study outside the home, a phenomenon not restricted to Muslim families. However, it is acknowledged that with this particular cultural group, the relationship between language and gender is complex and multilayered. The following section will shed more light on the crucial role these mothers have in raising their families.
3.4 The Participants, Location and Recruitment

Participants for this study were gathered from my social network and therefore it was a convenience sample. Initially, six mothers were contacted but only four showed an interest in participating. Mothers were selected because they are usually assigned the role of primary-care givers in their families, and also because they are considered to be primarily responsible for raising their children; consequently they are the parents most involved in guiding language use at their homes. Given that I am from the same cultural background as the mothers, I understand and share a comparable role with them. The four mothers that participated were all relatively new immigrants to Australia. Two immigrated in 2004, one in 2009 and the last in 2013. All of them were born and raised in Arabic-speaking countries. Three were originally from Jordan and one from Syria. They all obtained a high school diploma from their home country. One completed a Bachelor’s degree, and another two started Bachelor’s degrees but ceased studying a year before graduation. One dropped out because she got married and immigrated to Australia along with her husband; she could not continue either as a distance student nor could she transfer to an Australian university. The other was studying in Syria while living with her husband in Saudi Arabia, but she had to drop out because she was unable to attend the final year exams after war broke out in Syria. They each have three children whose ages vary between two and ten years.

The mothers were contacted by telephone and email and invited to participate in the study. Initially, they were invited to my house for a focus group discussion and afterwards the interested mothers were invited to participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews that were scheduled in the following weeks. Conducting the focus group session at my house was a natural and comfortable choice that allowed me to talk to the mothers in a relaxed and controlled environment. Since they have previously been to my house and enjoyed less formal conversations, lunches and dinner parties, the location was very comfortable and appropriate for them to freely discuss issues raised at the focus group session. The mothers who expressed their interest in participating in a following semi-structured interview were contacted by telephone to arrange a suitable time and location. The three mothers who expressed interest chose to meet me at their homes during school hours. This choice was for two reasons, first for convenience and second because they felt comfortable and secure in sharing their stories at their own homes.
3.5 Data Analysis

To analyse the data, this study followed the guidelines of qualitative thematic analysis. Creswell (2012, pp. 236-264) provides six steps for analysing qualitative data: (1) arranging the data; (2) exploring and coding the data; (3) building themes from coded data; (4) selecting and reporting the qualitative findings; (5) understanding and interpreting the findings; (6) and validating the accuracy of the findings. It is important to note that these steps were not necessarily performed in sequence, since qualitative data analysis is an ongoing and evolving process (Merriam, 2014). In this sense, data analysis for this study began in the focus group discussion where I listened to and interpreted the mothers’ responses according to the research questions. However, it was after collecting and transcribing the data that Creswell’s steps for analysing data were applied systematically.

The first step was to arrange the collected data. I stored four completed questionnaires in a locked drawer in my desk. After transcribing the single focus group session (55 pages in length) and three semi-structured interviews (approximately 20 pages in length for each interview) into Word documents, I created an electronic folder that encompassed these documents along with the audio recording of each interview. As previously noted, the focus group and semi-structured interviews were conducted and transcribed in Arabic, and therefore I analysed the Arabic versions and translated relevant excerpts which signified themes. At first, I considered using the software package *Nvivo* for analysing the data; however, I became aware that *Nvivo* was not compatible with the Arabic language. Therefore, I used *Quirkos*, a data analysis package that supports Arabic. The software was an effective tool for exploring the data as a whole in the second part of my qualitative thematic analysis.

The second step in data analysis was exploring the data. Many scholars have noted the importance of reading all of the data collected in order to get a sense of it as a whole before dividing it into parts (e.g. Agar, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2012). Therefore, I invested a considerable amount of time reading through the questionnaires, transcripts and entries in my research diary. While reading, it proved very useful to keep observation notes that helped in exploring and conceptualising the data. Later these notes guided categorising the data into *Quirkos* into thematic groups.
As the exploration progressed I started coding the data according to topic, which is the third step of data analysis according to Creswell (2012). This coding required describing, classifying and interpreting the participants’ speech, which formed the heart of the qualitative study, as Creswell maintains. By using Quirkos, I was able to identify and code each quote according to topic. Quirkos’s interface is a dark blue canvas where Quirks (bubbles) can be added. These bubbles signify themes that represent the collected data (see appendix D). Thus, after creating bubbles according to the research questions, I was able to highlight, drag and drop specific parts of the transcripts into relevant bubbles. This process was useful for keeping all the data in one place and was a helpful method for visualising the themes and subthemes that were emerging. As the coding progressed, some bubbles expanded and it became clear that some issues were of more interest to the participants than others. Quirkos also allowed me to move the bubbles around and to connect different bubbles. Additionally, a report could be generated at any stage of the work, which included a list of all the quotes according to theme and colour.

After coding and identifying themes in the study came the important step of choosing which themes best represented the study. To achieve this, I kept the research questions always visible so that it was possible to identify which themes best answered the proposed questions; in particular, which themes highlighted the participants’ beliefs, practices and plans in relation to bilingualism and FLP. It was equally important to maintain a critical stance during this process by allowing myself to revise and re-revise the themes to report only relevant findings that would add elements of authenticity and validity to the study. After that, when all the quotes were coded and grouped, they were analysed using Spolsky’s family language policy framework (2004).

Spolsky’s family language policy framework was chosen as a guide for analysing the data as a means of illustrating how these mothers saw their new linguistic reality and how they adapted to their new social and cultural environment in Australia. The analysis also made use of several sources to support and validate the findings. These sources were: (1) the mother’s quotes, (2) literature studies, (3) inferences from education, and (4) researcher diary entries. It is worth noting here that only relevant quotes from the mothers’ talk were translated into English. Since the quotes were coded and grouped using the Quirkos program, it was practical to translate the relevant quotes as the analysis progressed.
The final step of data analysis was evaluating the findings. Although this step was continuous throughout the analysis, Creswell (2013) notes that reevaluating the interpretations at the end of the study can enhance its credibility and authenticity. Creswell (2013) lists several methods for evaluating qualitative data analysis. For example, using rich descriptions to explain findings can help the reader comprehend and relate to the study. It was indeed this factor of relatedness that drew me to this field from the start and therefore I tried to develop my discussion in a way that would allow readers to reflect on their own experiences. Another important method of evaluating this study was to find a professional Arabic/English translator to review the translated quotes.

3.6 Limitations/ Delimitations

There are several limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. First, as an insider researcher I have taken all possible measures to ensure that my own preconceptions and biases did not influence the findings and the data produced by this study, which I have discussed in Section 4. However, I recognise that some of my ideas may have influenced the interpretations of the data and thus affected the objectivity of the study. Another limitation is that only four mothers were recruited to reflect the ideas of a very specific population of Arabic-speaking families in Queensland and therefore the findings are not necessarily generalisable. Moreover, the fact that mothers were the sole interviewees means that fathers and children were not part of the discussion and therefore the mothers were the sole representatives for their families. Among other reasons, excluding fathers from the interviewing process relates back to cultural reasons that do not favour a female interviewer meeting with male interviewees. On the other hand, even though children’s language practices were a main focus for this study, they were not interviewed because this would have meant that many ethical considerations would have to be made, and these were beyond the time limit and the scope of this study. Given that qualitative research focusses on exploring a particular issue in detail, exploring the mothers’ language beliefs and practices in detail was possible because these previous issues had been taken into consideration.
3.7 Ethical Procedures

Ethical clearance to collect data for this study was sought from the Human Research Ethics committee at Griffith University. After I submitted the application, I was granted conditional approval and further information was required regarding: (a) the estimated number of participants, (b) the text that would be used to recruit the participants, (c) preparing a separate information sheet and consent form for each data collection tool, (d) amendment of statements in these forms to address issues of privacy and storage, and (e) adding a point to the focus group schedule that recommended asking the participants to respect the privacy and confidentiality of other participants. I have responded to each concern separately by (a) stating that an estimate of four participants was likely to attend the focus group session, (b) writing the text that will be used for recruiting the participants (c) preparing a separate information sheet and consent form for different data collection items, (d) amending the specified privacy and storage statements, and (d) adding a recommendation to the participants in the focus group schedule that encouraged them to respect each-others privacy (see appendix E). One particular ethical complexity associated with this study was that it was exploring families. The Human Research Ethics committee wanted to make sure that the participants recruited for this study were going to be interviewed in a safe environment. I assured the committee that the location (my house) was absolutely safe and familiar to the participants. As a final step, the application needed to be signed by the director of HDR who was on leave at the time, and this further delayed the approval. However, shortly after, I was able to obtain the required signature from an acting director and ethical clearance was granted (see appendix F). Afterwards, the participants were called and invited to attend a focus group discussion at my house. They were also sent an email with the invitation and details of the time and location (see appendix G). Later, they were asked by telephone if they were interested in participating in follow-up semi-structured interviews at a location of their choice. Information sheets and consent letters were given to the participants before each of the data collection sittings (see appendix H for focus group information sheet and consent form and appendix I for semi-structured interview information sheet and consent form). All the participants understood what was asked of them, including their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or explanation. The signed information sheets and consent forms were stored in a secure locker. The transcripts, the audio-recorded files, and all the written
notes taken during the study were stored in a password-protected computer and on Griffith’s storage platform. All the participants were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

This chapter has outlined the methodology used for this study. It began by describing the qualitative research design and described the data collection tools that were utilised. It then acknowledged the researcher’s position and provided information about the participants and the recruitment method. Next it explained how this study applied Creswell’s data analysis framework for analysing the data obtained. It then observed a number of limitations and possible delimitations for certain aspects of the study. Finally, the chapter presented a summary of the ethical procedures that were necessary for conducting this study. In the next section, chapter four, the data findings and analysis will be presented and discussed.
This chapter aims to present and analyse the data collected for this study. To recall, the key purpose of this study is to understand how Arabic-speaking mothers (the participants) negotiate their linguistic reality as a result of immigrating to Australia. From a linguistic perspective, the participants being immigrants from Arabic-speaking countries will essentially mean that they have to learn English as a second language and maintain Arabic as a heritage language. The same applies to their children; they are required to learn English in order to be able to succeed in school and integrate into the Australian society and they are also taught Arabic as a heritage language that represents their background. As explained in chapter two, this study adopts a Whorfian view, in which language is considered to be a lens through which we see the world. It is also a social marker that represents who we are and how we are perceived. Given the current intense political conflicts around the globe, understanding how the mothers view language, both Arabic and English, and what they do to develop English and maintain Arabic with their children can act as a window into their lives. Achieving this understanding can help raise awareness of the issues these mothers face and open opportunities for offering them much-needed support. To start with, I will present some general information about the four mothers participating in this study.

4.1 Information about the Participants

Tables 1 and 2 below represent the findings of the first data collection tool, i.e. a questionnaire. By analysing the mothers’ responses to the questionnaire, it was possible to identify how they rated their proficiency in English. It was also possible to highlight some of their attitudes towards language learning and how they practiced language at home. Other questions were designed to explore their children’s language experiences and were therefore listed in a separate table.
### Table 1:

**Questions Related to the Mothers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Jomana</th>
<th>Maya</th>
<th>Noor</th>
<th>Huda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country of Origin</strong></td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of children.</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ages of children</strong></td>
<td>10, 7, 6</td>
<td>9, 7, 5</td>
<td>3, 8-year-old</td>
<td>4, 2, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers Fluency in English (self-evaluated)</strong></td>
<td>Somewhat fluent</td>
<td>Somewhat fluent</td>
<td>Somewhat fluent</td>
<td>Somewhat fluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers level of understanding English (self-evaluated)</strong></td>
<td>Completely understand</td>
<td>Somewhat understand</td>
<td>Completely understand</td>
<td>Somewhat understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language used with children</strong></td>
<td>Mix of Arabic and English</td>
<td>Mix of Arabic and English</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Mix of Arabic and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concerns about children speaking Arabic in the future.</strong></td>
<td>Somewhat concerned</td>
<td>Not concerned</td>
<td>Concerned</td>
<td>Not concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language they were more concerned about</strong></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic and English</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the media influence children’s bilingualism</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support they received to develop children’s bilingualism e.g. from husbands, family members or schools.</strong></td>
<td>No support</td>
<td>No support</td>
<td>No support</td>
<td>No support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsibility for language maintenance</strong></td>
<td>The mother</td>
<td>The mother and father</td>
<td>The mother</td>
<td>The parents but the mother more as she spends more time with the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparedness to pay for language development</strong></td>
<td>Prepared but only for Arabic</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>No to language lessons but yes to educational toys</td>
<td>Prepared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2:

*Questions Related to Their Children*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Jomana</th>
<th>Maya</th>
<th>Noor</th>
<th>Huda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did they all speak Arabic, how fluent</td>
<td>Yes, very fluent</td>
<td>Yes, very fluent</td>
<td>Yes, very fluent</td>
<td>Yes, somewhat fluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did they all speak English, how fluent</td>
<td>Yes, very fluent</td>
<td>Yes, very fluent</td>
<td>Yes, very fluent</td>
<td>Yes, fluent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where they spoke Arabic</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>At home</td>
<td>At home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When and where they spoke English</td>
<td>At school, with friends</td>
<td>At school, with friends</td>
<td>At school, with friend</td>
<td>At daycare, with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language used to communicate with extended family</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Mix of Arabic and English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables above outline the similar and dissimilar characteristics of each participant’s situation but only offer a small window into their lives. It is, therefore, imperative that a short profile for each participant be provided to help understand basic information about each mother and her family before presenting further data. Highlighting the similarities and differences between each participant’s approaches to language is essential for understanding their shared and distinctive language experiences.

4.2 Participants’ Profiles

This section presents a summarised version of each mother’s story about her experiences as a new immigrant to Australia, her family and her apparent attitude towards bilingualism, which includes either preserving Arabic or developing English or both.

4.2.1 Jomana.

“I feel really lost…like something is missing… the children need to learn Arabic”.

I have known Jomana since I came to Australia in 2012. She is a 31-year-old mother and she immigrated to Australia at the beginning of 2004. She came immediately after her wedding in Jordan and resettled with her husband in Brisbane, Queensland. Her husband was working as a taxi driver at the time, and she was attending English language classes in TAFE Queensland. Later in 2004 she had her first son, who is 10 and a half at the time.
of writing, and stopped attending Technical and Further Education Institute (TAFE) classes. After four years she had another son, who is almost 7 at the time of writing, and a year later she had a daughter, who is almost 6. As her friend, I would describe her as being outspoken. She regularly expresses that she sees Australians as foreigners and that even though she likes Australia, would prefer to live in Jordan. Her children all speak Arabic and English fluently, but she struggles on a daily basis with maintaining Arabic and facilitating Arabic literacy activities. She regularly expresses her desire to find better educational facilities to accommodate the linguistic needs that her children have in order to be bilingual in Arabic and English.

4.2.2 Maya.

“I feel that it’s a must. They must learn and be excellent [in English] because we are here (.) ... So we need to be clever wherever we are so that we can prove ourselves I mean we can do something for ourselves (.) So that they stop [saying] whenever they hear Arabs or Muslims that these are stupid, they don’t understand, they whatever. So yes like this we should develop ourselves and develop our children”.

Maya is a 32-year-old mother of three. She immigrated to Australia in late 2004 straight after she got married. Before this time, she was pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Law at a university in Jordan. Although she completed three years out of a four-year program, she was not able to complete the degree and graduate because she had resettled in Australia and was soon expecting her first baby. Within two years she had had another child and those children, both daughters, are now 9 and 7 years old respectively. Two years after her second daughter, she had a son who is now 5. Maya is usually reserved; she only talked about herself and her family if she was asked directly. In saying that, she always adopted a positive and friendly attitude. Like Jomana, she attended English language classes at TAFE. She believed that she and her children should be more involved in the Australian cultural lifestyle but felt that this was harder for her because she was not completely fluent in English. As a result, she sometimes felt lonely and isolated.
4.2.3 Noor.

“I think it is my responsibility, my duty, mine, because they are spending more time with me... if it was for Arabic or English they finish school and come home. So they sit for six hours at school, and six hours with me...So it should be me. Maintaining this or strengthening that”.

Noor is a recently arrived immigrant from Syria. She is a 32-year-old mother of 3; twin girls aged 8 and a 3 year-old daughter. Like Maya, Noor began a bachelor’s degree in English Language and Literature in Syria before she was married. After her marriage, she moved to Saudi Arabia with her husband, and she continued to go back and forth to attend her exams. When she became pregnant with her twin girls, she was no longer able to travel for health reasons. She wanted to continue her studies shortly after giving birth, but the war had already broken out in Syria, and it was no longer safe for her to go back. In the focus group, she expressed her sadness at not getting the chance to complete her studies as she had only a few courses left to complete. In 2013, she arrived in Australia with her family and soon became a close friend after I met her at a playground in a shopping mall. She is a very sociable character who enjoys making friends and is always keen to practice English when interacting with people. Among the mothers, she appears to be the most interested in developing her children’s bilingualism and is always independently implementing better ways and strategies to accommodate her children’s bilingualism.

4.2.4 Huda.

“That’s what I keep saying, that I don’t want to teach her Arabic. I want to teach her English because I am sure or I am feeling or hoping that I will go back”.

Huda came to Australia in 2009 shortly after she got married. She is a 33-year-old mother of three children all under school age. Her eldest daughter is 5 and her two sons are 2 and 1 respectively. Before she got married and came to Australia, she completed a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration in Jordan. Given that her degree was taught in English, her proficiency in English is a little bit better than the other mothers. She is very open to
relationships with Australian people and is keen on making new friends and using English with them. On some occasions in the focus group, she reported feeling disappointed because she was unable to express her thoughts accurately due to linguistic barriers. As a result, she was keen on teaching her children English for communicative purposes and was not worried about Arabic. She believed that her family is only living in Australia temporarily and that one day they would go back to an Arab country where her children would eventually learn Arabic.

Huda’s profile concludes the section dedicated to participant’s profiles. In the next section, I will present the themes identified after analysing the collected data for the study. The themes have been organised into two broad categories: language perceptions and language practices. These categories were drawn from Spolsky’s family language policy model and are considered as a guiding framework for understanding the mothers’ family language policy. First, I will review the mothers’ perceptions of and beliefs about bilingualism. Second, I will explore practices that the mothers implement to encourage use of either Arabic or English. Each category will encompass several themes that are outlined in Figure 2.
4.3 Language Perceptions.

In this first section, the first component of Spolsky's language policy model “perception” is explored. Perception is defined by Spolsky (2004) as a general set of beliefs or ideologies about appropriate language practices held by a language community. These ideologies shape how a certain language community uses language, assigning positive and negative connotations to different languages or aspects of one language. In simple terms, language perception can be a basis for language planning efforts (Spolsky, 2004). Within the context of this study, the interest is in exploring the mothers’ beliefs and values regarding their linguistic situation in Australia. Whether their experiences are positive, negative or a mix of both, understanding their inner thoughts is essential for understanding their current situation and attitude to bilingualism. Both direct and indirect questions were asked in the focus group and the semi-structured interviews, where the
mothers were encouraged to delve into their feelings and speak freely about how they saw Arabic, English, and bilingualism in Australia. Within the broad analytical category of ‘perception’ as the first component of Spolsky’s language policy framework, the most recurrent ideas in the data will be presented as themes. The findings presented and analysed will be supported by studies from the relevant literature. Each theme discussed will also carry significant implications for the children’s education in Australia. Finally, I will use entries from my research diary to reflect on the ideas presented in each theme. Five sub-themes are under language perceptions, these are: (1) Bilingualism is excellent, (2) Speaking two languages can be difficult (3) English is the language of the era, (4) Arabic is the foundation, (5) Raising bilingual children can be challenging.

4.3.1 Bilingualism as a source of pride.

*I feel proud of course... you don’t feel the (value) of what you have but because foreigners come and tell you how lucky you are you speak two languages, “we only speak English”, and so you start feeling oh yeah... this is excellent!* Jomana, FG

Jomana’s words summarise the way that each of the mothers participating in this study perceives bilingualism to be a source of pride and advantage. The discussion about their attitudes to this took place at the beginning of the focus group session when I was exploring their awareness of bilingualism. Their initial responses indicate that they were aware of their own bilingualism as a result of immigrating to Australia. They realise that they get noticed and/or praised in Australia for having a different language as well as English. Huda mentioned that bilingualism was not only good for her, but that “it is definitely an advantage for them (her children)”. This sense of pride is common among migrant families (Grosjean, 2010; Shin, 2012) and corroborates King’s and Fogle’s (2006) description of bilingual parenting as good parenting.

The mothers reiterated on several occasions that bilingualism was an asset that will benefit their children in the future. Maya said: “I think that in the future when they want a job, they will have job opportunities. More doors can be open for them if they had two languages”. When I asked how they thought their children feel about using two languages, Maya said that she does not believe her children are aware of it, but they will
value it later as adults: “Yes of course it’s positive, I feel it’s something good for their future. More than now I mean. Now because they are children umm they don’t need it as much”. Huda agrees with Maya’s view of bilingualism as an asset for both she and her children, given that even in Arab countries English is widely accepted and highly regarded: “now (in the Arab world) there is lots of mixing... lots of other nationalities...” Huda’s view echoes Grosjean’s (2010) assertion that bilinguals enjoy the ability to speak to different people and to learn different experiences as a result of knowing two languages.

Noor also believes that her children need to be bilingual in Arabic and English because they are of Arabian origin, and they live in Australia. “Absolutely, they need to learn the language spoken here. The idea is that we don’t know when we might get back so they learn the language to be able to participate in the society as well...but they know (Arabic) is our language, and we need to preserve it”. By saying that, Noor appears to have embraced the linguistic and cultural reality of her situation as a new immigrant to Australia. However, the fact that Noor’s hometown in Syria is a part of a warzone cannot be ignored, because this has led her to believe that Australia is where they will be living permanently as a result, and therefore they must adapt. According to her, adapting means that they must learn English and preserve Arabic. Hence, even though she believed that bilingualism was good, she also believed that it is no longer an option for her children (e.g. Al-Malki, Kaufer, Ishizaki, & Dreher, 2012).

Having established the value of bilingualism among the mothers, I explored whether they feel that their children’s bilingualism is balanced; in other words do they think that their children are equally competent in Arabic and English? Maya said that she believed her children’s spoken English and Arabic is at the same level, but that this is not the case for reading and writing where her children are much more competent in English. “According to what I see.. um they are almost at the same level. They are able to comprehend both in the same level... But yeah reading and writing is obviously stronger in English”. The mothers all agreed that their children’s literacy in English was higher than in Arabic. Given that the children attend English-only educational institutes (childcares and schools), their higher English literacy level is understandable.

While the mothers reported that there are many children from non-English speaking backgrounds in their children’s classrooms, they did not feel that this has affected the language policy of their schools. On one occasion Jomana wondered what her children’s
language even meant for the school. “They only put in his folder that he has a different language at home”. Huda also described a similar disappointment when she first enrolled her daughter at a childcare centre. She explained that at age three, her daughter did not know a lot of English and hence was unable to express her needs clearly to the teachers. She said that there was a Lebanese teacher who knew Arabic and even though she was called in when other teachers could not understand what Sara wanted or why she was crying, the teacher was not allowed to speak Arabic with the child. The childcare management insisted on English only for communication. “I enrolled Sara in a day care centre where a Lebanese teacher worked... The first day Sara only spoke Arabic because she still didn’t enter the English world. There was a Lebanese teacher who spoke Arabic so when Sara wanted something... there was someone who understood her... so if there was someone from different nationalities who understand both languages. She will understand the children who still don’t know how to express (themselves)”., Maya asked for further explanation “You mean if there was an Arabic teacher they don’t let her speak Arabic with the child?” Huda replied: “She speaks English (only) so that’s the problem”. I checked with her to see if she meant that she would like the day care to let her teacher speak Arabic so that her daughter could make her needs clear. She said: “this is what I am saying”. It is therefore questionable as to what educational policies mean in practice, given that intercultural understanding is set as a curriculum priority in Queensland (Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 2013). In fact, the same doubt is projected by scholars like Clyne (2005) who questions Australia’s understanding and support for heritage languages.

By nature I am an optimistic person. I enjoy hearing a good story and seeing a happy person. Today as Maya spoke I couldn’t help getting a little bit excited about her positive attitude towards bilingualism and her strong belief in herself and her children. She appeared aware of it more than I expected and I believe her positive energy was contagious as the mothers started sharing their positive views afterwards.

Research diary 11.08.15
4.3.2 Speaking two languages can be difficult.

When I asked the mothers about the challenges of bilingualism, they discussed the difficulty of using two languages on a personal level. Their discussion here was not related to their children. Their problems were mainly related to communicative difficulties as they felt that they did not interact as well as they would have liked when using English. Noor put it simply when she said it was “easier if (what you speak) outside is like the inside”. Huda also agreed: “it is really easier”. Given that the mothers in this study are all native speakers of Arabic, and were all born and brought up in the Middle East, their sense of belonging has been challenged by their recent immigration to Australia, where they were confronted with new realities and circumstances. An important challenge they described was a linguistic one; Maya for example, expressed her frustration at not being able to convey her message clearly and efficiently in English “I feel that it gives me a hard time ↑ when I face situations where I need to speak Arabic (.) I reeeally need to talk↑ talk really express myself”. Although Maya considered herself somewhat fluent in English, she felt that sometimes she needed to speak in Arabic in order to express herself clearly. Therefore, she believed that it would be easier if she only spoke the majority language (English) so as to be able to communicate better with people: “you would know exactly which word ummm that really expresses your idea”. Huda acknowledged the same issue again saying: “I feel... if we speak only in English, it is easier not only for dealing with the little ones but with the society. Anything that happens with you will be courageous... you will be confident”. Huda drew attention briefly to the idea that using only English would make it easier to deal with her children because she would not be worried about developing another language. Her concern matches one of the main findings of Okita’s study (2002, p. 222) on bilingualism and language choice among Japanese-British mothers. Okita discussed that some of the mothers preferred not speaking Japanese with their children (the heritage language) because they wanted to avoid the “language teaching work”.

For me (speaking Arabic only) is definitely easier... because it is simply your language which you are used to speaking with. It’s easier to keep using it outside and inside; the same terms will be repeated so it’s easier definitely easier” Maya, FG
The mothers’ need for effective communication is not unusual. In fact, it is a basic need for a person to have a sense of belonging to the place where they live and this can be achieved by effective interaction with society in that place (Clarke, 2011). Thus, the mothers’ desire to develop their English is a reflection of their desire to interact and engage more effectively with Australian society. This reflection is not unusual and is documented in a research study that investigated the way that 418 Muslims in Queensland felt about integrating into Australian society (Rane et al., 2011). A majority of 71% reflected the view that in order to successfully integrate in Australia Muslims need to learn English (p. 131). It can be inferred from the mothers’ frustration that they feel English fluency is fundamental in becoming involved in Australian society.

The mothers’ levels of fluency in English are particularly relevant in this discussion (see Table 1). The mothers all reported that they were “somewhat fluent” in English, and they felt that any lack of fluency was a negative impact of bilingualism. In other words, their limited fluency is a direct reason for the communication breakdowns they all mentioned. The language problem was not only affecting their everyday interactions with English-speaking people in Australia but was also causing emotional stress. They admitted that speaking fluent English would increase their sense of confidence; as Huda expressed “anything that happens with you will be courageous... you will be confident”. As Maya talked she also highlighted the inseparable relationship between language and people’s perceptions. She believed that there was a strong correlation between competency in English and how the Australian society viewed Arabs and Muslims. She said that it was through interactions with Australians that Arabs and Muslims would be able to successfully convey their beliefs - and to do that they needed to have a good command of English. “We should give a good picture of Islam we should understand we should interact better with people and all that and so all this you need to be good in English so that you can transfer what you really want”. All the mothers agreed with Maya and shared similar sentiments. These sentiments mirrored their frustration at not being able to use English freely in such interactions, describing themselves as non-fluent English speakers. With the stress of maintaining their children’s Arabic, learning English was an added burden alongside their other responsibilities and an issue that clearly worried them. However, this issue is common among Arab immigrants who experience challenges while adjusting in Australia because of the language barrier (Hage, 2002).
On the other hand, Jomana talked about how she was not at all concerned about the fact that she was not fluent in English because her daily interactions were with people from her community and therefore, most of the time, she had no need of English. “I am not tired of it honestly (...) ... I talk Arabic only with my community the people I know and when I am outside it is really OK it is basic things that you will say”. In our semi-structured interview, when I asked her if she used English to talk to her children when they are out with their English-speaking friends, she said: “honestly, we do not go out with foreigners (..) at all”. The fact that she calls people in Australia, who are different from her social background “foreigners”, is interesting but not uncommon. As Clarke (2011) argued, by excluding herself from interacting with English-speaking people, Jomana could be her way of reducing unwanted humiliation or social discrimination because she does not speak English fluently.

Seeing the frustration and isolation, the mothers feel as a result of their limited English proficiency is saddening. It is hard enough to settle in a new country and create a new lifestyle. But to live for a long time without knowing how to interact effectively with the people in your new country is disappointing. I wonder if the mothers need to put more effort into learning English and engaging with the society. Doing this might bring for them a much-needed sense of belongingness and comfort.

Research diary, 08.11.15

4.3.3 English is the “language of the era”.

To get a broader idea about the mothers’ perceptions of bilingualism it was essential to explore Arabic and English separately. We started the discussion by exploring what English meant to them, asking them to describe in one word what came to their mind when they heard the word English. Their responses were as follows:

Jomana: “Education”
Maya: “The language of this era”
Huda: “Optional”
Noor: “A necessity”

It was clear from these responses that the women valued English highly. Maya thought it was crucial that she and her children speak and comprehend English well
because they were representing their background and religion. “I feel that it’s a must. They must learn and be excellent because we are here (...) we came to represent our country when they know that (we are) Arabs or Muslims you feel like we have something on us like you are blacklisted (...) So we need to be clever wherever we are so that we can prove ourselves I mean we can do something for ourselves (. ) So that they stop whenever they hear Arabs or Muslims that these are stupid they don’t understand they whatever. So yes like this we should develop ourselves and develop our children”. Maya believed that her children should not only be well-developed in English linguistically, but she also stated that it was important for her children to learn the values of the Australian society and be able to distinguish the values that suit them as Arab Australians. "I also think that they should learn the values of Australia... they don’t necessarily need to do everything ... but they should know the right from wrong... What suits us and what doesn’t”. Noor strongly agreed with Maya’s idea by explaining how important it was that her children learnt English. “Absolutely, they need to learn the language spoken here the idea is that we don’t know when we might get back so they should live here and learn the language to participate with the society”. Quite simply as Jomana put it, “we live here so the children need to learn English”. Even Huda, who said that English was “optional” for her at the beginning of the discussion, contradicted herself afterwards and agreed with the other mothers. She explained how knowing English was necessary for her family because they lived in Australia and her children needed to understand when they were spoken to: “For me when she goes to daycare she needs to understand what is happening with her, she should come tell me the miss did this and did that so (. ) I insist on this issue so that she knows how to talk to me”.

When looking more closely at the mothers’ perception of English, they projected the view that English was an important language because it was highly regarded in the Middle East. Moreover, there was a general agreement that teaching the children English was important for their future endeavours, e.g. if they decide to work in the Middle East. Noor even stated that English was important worldwide and therefore equipping her children with good English will boost her children’s professional pursuits. “It’s the main language in the world now so anything they want to apply for they will need English they will immediately be asked about English so I am all about them learning it”. The prestigious status of English in the Middle East is well documented in the literature (e.g. Turki Ahmad
where the general attitude to English is positive, and proficiency in English is often perceived as a source of empowerment (Pedersen, 2010; Rosenhouse, 2013).

The interpretation of English as a language of sophistication aligns with an anecdote Jomana related during the focus group discussion. In one of their vacations in Jordan, Jomana decided to enrol her eldest child in a primary school. Her idea was to send him to school for a month to immerse him in an Arabic learning environment. She said that he received special attention from the teachers and by the end of the period it turned out that he taught the children English, more than he learned Arabic, because he was praised continuously for being a fluent English speaker. “They still see him as an outsider... so he is like WOW... so they respect him more”.

The respect that Jomana’s son received in Jordan echoes the previous discussion about the prestigious status of English in Middle East. While this status did not lead her son to learn Arabic (which could also be due to the short length of time the child attended school), it raises the question whether similar respect and understanding is offered to children from less-prestigious linguistic backgrounds in Australia. As mentioned earlier, although Australia is witnessing continuing demographic changes (including the increasing number of Arabic speakers throughout the country), it is not adapting to the linguistic needs of these new immigrants. While there are different reasons for this neglect, Clyne (2007) attributes it to Australia’s economic agenda which seems to inform Australia’s language policy directly.

The status that English enjoys as a world language makes me think what can we do to help our children become competent English users? Is it enough to rely on school and the community to facilitate English learning? Or should parents enhance their children’s knowledge by talking and reading to them in English. The majority of the mothers seem to think that English is the responsibility of school. But perhaps if we also pay attention to the quality of our children’s English exposure at home (whether it is books, television, or conversation) we can help them achieve better proficiency that could help them in school activities. I understand that promoting Arabic at home is a priority for the mothers, but engaging the children occasionally in English language activities might also be beneficial.

Research diary, 02.09.16
4.3.4 Arabic is the “foundation”.

The mothers were asked to describe in one word what came to their mind when they heard the word Arabic. Starting our discussion this way useful for stimulating their thoughts about what Arabic meant to them and their responses were as follows:

Jomana: “My mother tongue the language of dhad¹”
Maya: “Quran”
Huda: “the base I say”
Noor: “really the base”

A quick review of the mothers’ answers highlighted their central perception of Arabic as a heritage language. Since it is their first language, Jomana said that Arabic for her was her “mother tongue”. She also added that it was “the language of dhad”; this is a special expression that refers to the unique letter ض pronounced dhad, which is found only in Arabic. This expression highlights how special Arabic is to Jomana as she understands its uniqueness and difference to English. The other mothers shared similar sentiments. Maya, for instance, noted that Arabic was important because it is “our background”, and Noor agreed saying it was her “origin”; Huda also agreed. For the mothers, Arabic was a significant part of who they were and where they came from. It was a marker of their identity, and they all stressed their need to maintain it so that their children could grow up knowing Arabic along with English. For these mothers, forgetting Arabic or shifting completely to English was not an option. They strongly believed that Arabic represented them and their culture and holding onto it was critical. Their attachment to Arabic is understandable because people usually relate more to their heritage language than a newly acquired language (Kramsch, 2006). With heritage languages, people are also prone to experience feelings and emotions that are not necessarily felt when using other non-heritage languages (Pavlenko, 2007).

Further analysis of the data revealed the mothers’ belief that Arabic was crucial because it was the language of the Quran and Islam. Noor explained this clearly when she said that Arab was important because “for our religion we have to read the Quran… (and)

¹ Dhad ض is a special letter in the Arabic alphabet that has an unusual sound and therefore has been used to describe the uniqueness of Arabic.
we have to read it in Arabic”. She stressed this further when she said that Quran was the “the most important thing! yes the most important thing”. Like Noor, the other mothers were keen to mention the strong correlation between Arabic, the Quran, and Islam. For example, Jomana described why it was crucial for her to teach her children reading in Arabic because “(they) need to learn how to read the Quran”. Huda agreed and stated a similar thought “(yes) for the Quran or our religion you feel (we need) Arabic↑... we also have the prayers it requires you recite Quran in Arabic”. There is a general agreement then on the value of Arabic as the language of the Quran and Islam. The mothers’ attachment to Arabic as the language of the Quran is shared by most Muslims around the world. Muslims believe that the Quran is the message of God spoken in Arabic and the language of the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (Saeed, 2008).

Closer investigation of the mothers’ views revealed their firm belief that Arabic was necessary because it was the language they use to communicate with their families back in their home countries. Huda expressed this clearly when she said: “For example my family, my mother she can’t speak English at all so you need Arabic... you feel Arabic is essential because there are people that you need to communicate with in Arabic”. Noor immediately agreed with her: “Yes that’s right with the relatives... (my daughters also) have that idea that when they will go to Syria they want to talk to their grandma and their aunts in Arabic so that they understand them”.

Maya and Jomana also agreed that Arabic was essential for talking to their families, and hence it was important to teach it to the children so that they could communicate with their relatives. Preserving Arabic for these mothers was crucial for keeping their children connected to their families and culture. Immigrant families around the world share the same interest, where preserving their heritage language becomes significant not only for keeping the minority language alive but for maintaining a link (linguistic and cultural) between the different generations of the family (Wong Fillmore, 2000). Schwartz and Verschik (2013) argue that young children are raised as social entities in their cultural group and thus teaching the children the heritage language so that they can interact with the extended family, was a positive role the mothers played in establishing family cohesion.

Further interpretation exposed the mothers’ concern for teaching their children how to read and write in Arabic. Jomana insisted that her son had to learn reading and writing in Arabic: “he NEEDS to learn reading and writing”. This “need” the mothers expressed
was something they felt and tried to act upon but were not successful most of the time. As Maya once said, “you try and try and it just doesn’t work”. For the mothers, the best solution for this problem was an Arabic school or even regular Arabic classes in their children’s schools that would take into consideration their needs as Australian-Arab children. Jomana argued: “look, the best thing would be that the school itself teaches Arabic!” The mothers offered only a few reasons for their insistence on teaching Arabic reading and writing to their children and these were mainly rooted in a cultural and religious aspect “he needs to read the Quran”, “it is our heritage”. However, further investigation revealed other indirect reasons the mothers cited. One was their concern that lack of heritage language programs through the standard schooling system affected their children’s identity development. Jomana depicted this clearly when she said that if her son did not learn Arabic, he would “be lost”. Noor and Maya agreed with her instantly. As a result, the mothers were determined to find schools that ran Arabic language programs to ensure their children grew confidently and positively. The mothers’ concern about heritage language education corroborates findings in the literature that confirm the direct link between a child’s self-perception and their association with their heritage language (e.g. Baker, 2011; Kramsch, 2006; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Shin, 2012; Willoughby, 2014). The mothers’ concern for the absence of formal heritage language programs through their children’s schools in Queensland echoes similar concerns expressed in other contexts e.g. in California (Lee & Oxelson, 2006).

I read a beautiful quote the other day by Fishman (2008, p. 417) where he openly urges people to realise the great contributions of heritage languages to a nation. He writes: “It is just scandalous and injurious to waste (native) language resources as to waste air, water, mineral, animal and various non-linguistic human resources. How long must languages and cultures be trivialised if they are learned at home, in infancy and childhood, and only respected if they are acquired later, during adulthood, when they are usually learned less well and at much greater cost in competence, time and money?” Fishman’s quote reflects how the mothers participating in this study feel about maintaining their children’s Arabic language as part of their heritage and identity. They viewed losing Arabic due to of the lack of support through state school programs as a waste and shame, which caused them substantial emotional distress. They worried about their children’s
Jomana and Maya agreed that raising bilingual children presented stressful challenges. They were particularly worried about maintaining Arabic because they felt English was sufficiently supported by schools and the community. For them, this difference in representation meant that the presence of Arabic was endangered. Jomana explained how she felt, saying: “You know I feel [sighs] that. I feel that we really (...) mmm REALLY stressed about this topic... you really want to want your children to learn Arabic but you can’t find a place to put them there”. Maya responded saying: “Yes it is really like you said it remains a worry”. As a result, they felt that maintaining Arabic was their responsibility, and little or no support was available to them to do so. Jomana, for instance, was particularly aware of this responsibility and felt that without her efforts her children would not maintain Arabic and would ultimately be lost. She reflected on this concern by giving an example of families she knew who had abandoned Arabic with their children because it was easier to communicate with them using only one language (i.e. English). “Some people take it easy ... they like start speaking English with him because it is easier... but I feel that the child could (...) um I mean (he could) be lost in this way”.

This idea of a child getting lost because they no longer used Arabic was particularly interesting to explore further. Jomana expressed this notion on a number of occasions in the focus group discussion, which led me to ask her about it in her one-on-one semi-structured interview. Her initial response was laughter and then she said: “Because basically I consider myself an Arab I mean I am an Arab... so why won’t they speak Arabic”. For her, the reason is simple. She is an Arab, so she speaks Arabic and her children should follow. While her response neglected other factors that contributed to
language loss or attrition, she acknowledged how language is part of a person’s identity and so, for her, if she or her children stopped speaking Arabic they would not be considered Arabs anymore.

In this light, it is no wonder Jomana displayed concern about preserving Arabic. The strong correlation that Jomana indicated between her children’s roots and language placed a constant burden on her consciousness and led to her expressing feelings of helplessness on many occasions:

- “There is no solution”.
- “I am tired here”.
- “You are really lost… you feel like you are lost like there is something missing for us”.
- “You know there is no real solution I can’t find one you are always stressed about this”.

Although the majority of the mothers perceived the maintenance of the Arabic language as a positive and important duty, they did not hide the fact that on many occasions they felt pressured and burdened as a result. Maya at one instance wished that someone was there to help her: “it would be nice if someone took the load off you”. However, their emotions were common among parents raising bilingual children in immigration contexts, as discussed in detail in the literature review (Okita, 2002; Pavlenko, 2007). The role of mothers as holders of cultural knowledge and as responsible for maintaining cultural identity has been documented in several case studies that share a similar focus to this study. Tatar’s (2015) and Becker’s (2013) recent case studies on parents’ role in their children’s maintenance of a heritage language confirms that mothers believe it is their responsibility to teach their children the heritage language at home and that this responsibility presents them with a number of challenges.

Noor expressed similar sentiments and explained how she had been searching for a bilingual school that supported English and Arabic since she arrived in Australia. When she found one in late 2014, she decided to enrol her children and move closer to the school. Even though her husband was not working at the time and they were settled in their home, the decision was not a difficult one for them. She frequently stated that their priority since they came to Australia was to ensure that their children had the best chance of developing both languages. Therefore, finding this school has given her some sense of
relief and comfort: “Psychologically, I am comfortable now there are people who can help me with this burden”. She also explained how her efforts at home for maintaining Arabic were now complementary to the schools’ efforts which made her feel happy: “Yes now I need to follow up with them at home... they even give them Arabic homework so I am happy about this”. When I asked the other mothers if they had considered enrolling their children in the same school, Jomana and Maya said that they had, but it also depended on their husband’s work and the possibility of moving closer to the school.

On the other hand, Huda did not feel that maintaining Arabic was stressful for her as she was more concerned with developing her daughter’s English at that moment. Developing her daughter’s English was mainly important for communicative purposes: “For me when she goes to daycare she needs to understand what is happening with her, she should come tell me: the miss did this and did that so (...) I insist on this topic so that she knows how to talk to me”. She was also concerned that learning Arabic and English together made her daughter confused and so she preferred teaching her one language at a time. “My daughter got confused so I told the daycare... take care of her and insist on English, at least, she speaks one better than mixing both and the mix is wrong”. While simultaneous bilingualism is heavily debated in research on bilingual children (Grosjean, 2010) it was the mixing that Huda was worried about. This mixing she was referring to has attracted many research studies under the topic “codeswitching”. As mentioned earlier, scholars have argued that codeswitching is not a sign of confusion, rather it is usually systematic and can be a sign of good language management (Baker, 2011; Genesee, 2015). Huda also mentioned that because her daughter had switched completely to Arabic the last time she went to Jordan, she was no longer worried about Arabic. “I am not worried about her at all regarding Arabic because when I went um six months when I had the baby, she forgot the English and she only spoke Arabic. So I feel that if every vacation is the same thing and everyone over there speaks.... They have no choice but to speak Arabic, so she has the potential, so I am not worried”.

In Jordan, her daughter was in an Arabic-dominant environment and thus became a fluent Arabic speaker. This phenomenon is documented in the literature where children acquiring two languages in early childhood become more dominant in one language depending on the environment and the amount of language exposure they are receiving at different periods (De Houwer, 2009; Grosjean, 2010). Huda also stated that because her children were young and still had not started school, she was less worried about
teaching them Arabic: “Sara (her eldest daughter) is still at daycare so I am not worried that she is at school or anything”. While it has been documented that many parents raising bilingual children feel teaching their children languages is more productive and effective in early childhood (Genesee, 2015), Huda did not seem bothered by her daughters’ linguistic situation at the time of conducting this study. Her idea is supported by research, that suggests that the correlation between bilingualism and age is much more complex than has been thought and it is still not clear whether age is critical to language learning (Genesee, 2015).

_I understand and share the challenges of raising bilingual children with the mothers. It is a challenge that many bilingual families around the world face. The mothers’ worry is understandable; however it should not be a reason to give up on bilingualism. For example, realising that balancing the exposure of English and Arabic is difficult to achieve might relieve the stress they are feeling. And knowing that bilingualism can be achieved with a family language policy that includes informed strategies and a consistent approach can be a relief to some of the mothers participating in this study._

Research diary 13.3.16

### 4.4 Language Practices

This section reviews the mothers’ practices regarding bilingualism and family language policy in light of Spolsky’s family language policy model. First, it is important to define “practices” before moving on to discuss the findings of this section extensively. In Spolsky (2004, p. 5) language practice is defined as the language pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up an individual’s/ community’s linguistic repertoire. In other words, according to Spolsky (2007, p. 3) language practices are the observable behaviour of a language community. The mass media appeared to be a major resource for language input and the mothers spoke in length on how they made use of different media outlets to facilitate language learning. Another topic that generated controversial views was weekend Arabic Schools as the mothers expressed their desire to find other more creative methods to maintain Arabic as a heritage language in Australia. First, I discuss
the mothers’ knowledge and application of familiar strategies that are famous in the literature on bilingualism and bilingual education.

### 4.4.1 Familiar strategies.

In the literature review, I examined three particular strategies that were adopted and by bilingual families around the world. These strategies were: One Person One Language strategy, minority language at home strategy and the mixed language strategy. The one person one language strategy, (OPOL), was used by parents from different linguistic backgrounds who wanted to teach their children both languages by assigning each language to a parent or caregiver. This strategy was also used by parents who shared a similar linguistic background but believe that to develop a child’s bilingualism it would be better to provide language input separately by assigning each language to a parent. While this strategy was quite popular in the research and among different bilingual communities, the mothers’ in this study did not mention it at all. The mothers exclusively adopted the minority language at home strategy and the mixed language strategy, discussed as follows.

**Minority language at home strategy.**

*As long as you speak Arabic with them… it is really the most important thing… the best way. Maya, SSI*

Analysis of the data revealed that the mothers demonstrated some understanding and application of the minority language at home strategy without specifically knowing its name or referring to its significance on bilingual development. In the context of this study, using the minority language at home meant using Arabic only at home. Three of the mothers (Maya, Jomana and Noor) said that they used Arabic exclusively at home. Maya went on to emphasise that this strategy was by far the best approach to maintain Arabic in her family because she was able to be consistent with it. Put simply; she believed that if her children, at least, kept speaking Arabic at home they would not forget it and they would have a better chance at becoming bilingual adults. “Really. I truly believe that talking at home as long as you talk Arabic… the language will not be lost … so I feel that this is really a good way”. She further argued the importance of this method by comparing
it to other methods she used before. “It’s right that schools are good ah >going to Quran memorising schools and whatever < but all this needs practice and we get lazy sometimes um sometimes there is no place sometimes whatever so it looks like the best way is to keep talking to them in Arabic”. Jomana agreed wholeheartedly with Maya’s views and said that: “at home> I only speak Arabic, their dad is the same<”. 

The mothers’ wide acceptance and application of this strategy is understandable. Many immigrant families around the world have implemented and reported the success of this strategy in their attempt at raising their children bilingually (e.g. Fantini, 1985; Kouritzin, 2000). However, the degree of success varied widely, and consistency was generally cited as an essential element for achieving optimal results when using this strategy (e.g. Lanza, 2004; Pan, 1995). This view aligned with Maya and Jomana’s interpretation of the minority language at home strategy, where they stressed the importance of consistently using Arabic only with their children. While research promotes consistency as a key factor for achieving the best results from this strategy, other influences could have direct effects on its success, such as the context in which language is used (King et al., 2008).

Additional examination of the data showed that Maya and Jomana used Arabic with their children all the time even when they were not at home or were in the company of English-only speaking people. Maya justified her decision by explaining that she believed English was getting enough attention through school and society. “I don’t pay attention to it at all most of the time because they will a 100% learn it even better than Arabic because everyone around them is speaking English. Even the Arab children when they meet they speak English so I feel there is no fear for it at all”. Even when her children met their friends from school she kept addressing her children in Arabic. “I also even when, they even might think it is rude to speak to your child in Arabic and there are English people sitting um they don’t understand.. but I don’t know I feel like Arabic just comes out easier for me so I can make him understand what I am saying”. While Maya realised that people might view her as a rude person for not switching to English, she justified it by referring to her limited competence in English and her ability to express her thoughts better in Arabic.

On the contrary, Noor observed that she and her children spoke Arabic with each other unless there was another person who only spoke English and in that case they used English. “Between us together the communication is in Arabic but if there was someone
else if they wanted to speak English I let them... we speak it... I don’t mind”. Noor did not mind speaking to her children in English if there were English-only speaking people present, as she believed that it was more appropriate “it’s better”. However, for Noor, it was crucial to speak only Arabic at home “because there (was) nowhere else but home for them to practise Arabic”. It is reasonable to draw upon the mothers’ backgrounds and levels of English competency to understand their different approaches when speaking to their children in the company of English-speaking people or in other words to “code-switching”. Even though the mothers all self-evaluated their English competency as “somewhat fluent”, Noor’s English proficiency appeared to be higher than the other mothers when speaking or listening to English-speaking people. Given her modest nature, she may have reported a lower level in the questionnaire to appear humble. However, her educational attainment in English and her competency was clearly higher than the other mothers and as a result, this could be the reason for her comfort in switching to English with her children. This assumption is in line with research findings that support the importance of considering the influence of the parents’ educational level on their attitude and practices of bilingualism (e.g. King & Fogle, 2013; Martin, 2009). Even though it is not directly stated, it could be interpreted that Jomana and Maya did not feel positive about code-switching in general. This assessment reflects a common misconception about bilingual people that code-switching is a form of laziness that led to impure language output (Baker, 2011; Grosjean, 2010). Nevertheless, the majority of the mothers recognised and asserted the value of utilising the minority language at home strategy to maximise the amount of Arabic input their children were receiving in Australia.

Every once in a while I hear someone blatantly saying that you should only be speaking Arabic at home with your children and you should be very strict applying this rule. My immediate response is that children are not robots! Communication is dynamic... and I feel that it violates my children’s rights to speak their minds if I do not allow my 6 year old son to tell me what happened at school one day... if he refused to tell it in Arabic. Let alone my 3 year old who just learnt how to speak! While I firmly believe in the importance of consistency, I feel that there are more flexible and non-invasive ways for introducing language that could lead to much more positive experiences of bilingualism. However, I confess that my interpretation might have been influenced by the way I was raised
as a bilingual Arabic/English child. Although I appreciate my mother’s efforts immensely, I remember sometimes feeling oppressed by bilingualism as a child. As far as I am concerned, as a child, I paid a high price at that time when my mother made me pay 50 cents for each English word I uttered by mistake at home. Speaking English at home cost me a fortune at that time and led me to complete silence in some instances. I therefore question the value of this strategy and whether more creative ways could be developed for applying it. In my opinion, letting the child express their ideas freely is imperative. It is natural that children want to speak English after coming from school as they have spent the majority of their day speaking only English. A switch to Arabic could be difficult and should not be forced. Rather as a mother I try to engage my children in more creative ways to practice Arabic, where my focus would be on quality rather than quantity. For example, once in a while, I set a challenge for my six-year-old son where he has to retell me a story that he had just told to me in English, in Arabic. He finds joy in deciphering and translating each word as he retells the story. Of course, he is not up for it all the time, so choosing the right time and the right language activity is necessary. I realise that this is not easy all the time and that mothers by nature are busy people, but I feel that a more understanding and dynamic approach could lead to better long-term effects on children’s bilingualism.

Research diary 22.10.15

Mixed language strategy.

Yes I speak in a mix, even though my husband Khaled speaks only Arabic with them I feel that there (should be) someone speaking Arabic with them and the other (should talk) in a mix. Huda, F.G

Following its name, the mixed language strategy allows for freely alternating between the minority and the majority language (Grosjean, 2010). Alternating between the languages can be the result of a change of topic, people or locations. Among the mothers, Only Huda appeared to adopt this strategy with her children consciously and naturally. She explained how she alternated between Arabic and English most of the time with her children so that they understood what she said. When I verified what she said by asking her if communication was her main concern she replied: “Yes exactly... so if English suits
her now I am with English I am not going to worry”. As the mothers were discussing how they worried that Arabic would be lost in their families if they did not maintain it, Huda defended her decision saying that she was more concerned with communicating with her children. Her children’s ages could be a factor in this since they were all quite young, aged five, two and one. She even acknowledged this factor when she maintained that: “I will say this again and again it’s because my children are still young”.

Further into the discussion, Huda explained that this was her preferred strategy with her eldest daughter when they were on holidays in Jordan. “In Jordan I also speak in a mix because everyone speaks to her in Arabic... so that she doesn’t forget. Because we are coming back here (to Australia) so it’s better if she doesn’t forget”. She also mentioned earlier in the discussion that when she went back to Jordan, her daughter would switch to exclusively speaking Arabic, which led her to believe that it was hence more important to teach her English in the present. “Also another thing, I am not worried about her at all regarding Arabic because when I went um six months when I had the baby... she forgot the English and she only spoke Arabic. So I feel that if every vacation is the same thing and everyone over there speaks. They have no choice but to speak Arabic, so she has the potential, so I am not worried”. For Huda, going back to the Arab World was something they considered as a family and therefore teaching her children English at this stage was an opportunity she wanted to seize. “I say it again I prefer English . . . we are going back (to the Arab World), and we are not living here forever”. Holding onto this idea seemed critical for Huda as it was one of the main reasons she cited for speaking a mix of Arabic and English with her children. Since her views were different to those of the other mothers, she firmly repeated that her motives were logical and that they shaped her family’s linguistic practices, in particular, why she chose to use the mixed language strategy with her children.

Relevant to this discussion was Huda’s strong attitude to English as a language of sophistication and prestige. Although all of the mothers shared the idea that English was valuable, Huda demonstrated greater appreciation and held it at a higher value. A possible explanation for her English-first approach may have been the fact that she once lived in a high-status town close to the city of Amman, where English was seen to be even more prestigious. When Huda went back to her hometown she wanted to demonstrate her sophistication and kinship to both her hometown and Australia by using a mix of Arabic and English with her children. It was established earlier in this discussion that English
enjoyed a high status in Jordan (Rosenhouse, 2013). As a consequence of this status, Huda’s desire to become bilingual as a child may have shaped her choice to primarily promote English with her children. Parents’ earlier experiences of bilingualism or desire to become bilingual are cited as critical influences in shaping their family language policy (King & Fogle, 2006). Another conceivable explanation may have been her relatively shorter experience in raising bilingual children. This justification was supported by Jomana when she humorously responded to Huda’s views about speaking a mix of English and Arabic in Jordan: “To be honest really you feel this feeling just at the beginning I mean when I first came here I went back (to Jordan), yes I wanted to (speak English) or so that your family don’t know everything so you speak English with him but now. No. Arabic a 100% [laughs] because really you become more aware or you grow up”. Huda acknowledged her children’s young ages and how these had led her to choose the mixed language strategy so as to maximise the amount of exposure to English. However, recent research indicates that the idea that it is more effective to teach children language at a younger age is something of a myth (Genesee, 2015). In fact, the question of age and language learning has proven to be more complex than once thought. Like Huda, supporters of second language teaching at a young age believed that children learning a second language in early childhood were exposed to a greater quantity of language (Genesee, 2015). Nevertheless, this view has proven to be overly simplistic, and other factors should be taken into consideration, such as the quality of exposure and the amount of exposure the first language was getting (e.g. Caldas, 2006; Grosjean, 2010).

_Huda came to me the other day saying in a sad tone that her five-year-old daughter does not speak a word of Arabic. I comforted her by telling her how children are quick language learners and that if you expose her to a high quality Arabic environment she will speak eventually. Perhaps Huda needs to rethink the language strategy she is using with her children. I cannot stress how important English is, but it is equally important to try finding a balance between the amount of exposure to English and Arabic. I realise that balancing language input is not be a simple task, but offering more English input at home will only minimise the amount of time left for Arabic, which could eventually lead to it being lost. It is wonderful to be understanding and considerate of the children’s needs and language preferences, but children are adaptable and need rules to manage their linguistic practices. This argument is not to contradict_
what I have said earlier about being flexible; rather it is about following an informed approach. This approach may be useful for Huda, a clearer and assertive language plan that ensures her children are exposed to high-quality input in Arabic and English in an enjoyable and comfortable environment.

Research diary 10.1.16

4.4.2 Supplemental strategies.

Additional analysis of the data revealed several other strategies the mothers implemented as part of their linguistic practices while raising their children bilingually in Arabic and English Australia. Three strategies were mentioned, these were: reading stories, travelling back to the family’s hometown, and utilising television shows. These strategies have been grouped in this theme and classified as supplemental for two reasons. First, they were usually mentioned as additional methods to the mothers’ broader approach to bilingual rearing. Second, they were discussed briefly by some mothers, and more extensively by others; yet ultimately, they generated almost equal amounts of discussion and thus were grouped together in this theme. In the following section, I will analyse each strategy separately, providing evidence from the mothers’ discussions along with references from relevant literature to support the findings.

**Reading stories.**

*We have at least two stories a week Arabic stories I mean they read Arabic stories... so this really improved their ... Arabic. Noor, F.G*

All the mothers agreed that routinely reading stories to their children was an effective activity that encouraged them to practice language at home. It is important to note before starting our discussion that the mothers spoke only about reading stories in Arabic although my question included both Arabic and English. One possible reason for this could be the limited opportunities they had for practicing Arabic with their children, and so stories became an important opportunity that they needed to exploit. Among the mothers, Noor appeared to be the most enthusiastic about stories and their effect on her children’s language. She said that she found reading stories extremely useful for improving her daughters’ Arabic language “they read Arabic stories...so this really
really improved... their Arabic". On a similar note, Jomana excitedly announced that she read lots of books and stories for her children “We read stories or we read books A LOT”. Huda also mentioned that her daughter liked a bedtime story every night, and she often tells her one in Arabic: “Sara before she sleeps she likes to hear a story so if I want to tell her a story I tell it in Arabic”. Although Huda had said earlier that she preferred using English at home with her children, she explained later that when it came to storytelling, she preferred using Arabic. Her main reasons were that she wanted her daughter to learn Arabic and also that she felt more comfortable telling a story in Arabic. “So that she learns Arabic and because I also feel that in stories... it’s better for me in Arabic”.

Maya on the other hand, noted that that her children only read stories occasionally, and she was thinking of ways to encourage them to read more for instance, by leading them by example. “I feel that if I get them used to seeing me read holding a book (.) they might get used to it”.

Even though the mothers’ level of commitment to reading stories differed, they all agreed that it was a useful strategy for practicing Arabic as a heritage language at home. Stories, in fact, have repeatedly been mentioned in the literature as an essential and very influential method for practising the minority language at home (e.g. Caldas, 2006; Grosjean, 2010; Kennedy & Romo, 2013). Researchers in language maintenance have also linked heritage language stories to other psychological benefits like helping the child form an emotional connection with his/her mother tongue (Kondo-Brown, 2006; Shin, 2012). However, it is imperative that a distinction is drawn here between what heritage language stories involve and what Arabic stories the mothers in this study read to their children. While this notion is beyond the scope of this study, analysis of the data revealed one basic certainty, that the mothers employed stories as an instrument for Arabic language maintenance and as a way to keep their children connected to the Arabic culture these stories helped describe. This argument was confirmed by the mothers on several occasions, as when Huda described how it was easier for her to tell stories in Arabic because she could not communicate the same meaning in English and she wanted her daughter to be familiar with the Arabic interpretation of events. “For me.. I feel that the imaginations and umm meanings are better in Arabic”. Another factor that might be recalled here was the mothers’ limited English proficiency, which may have indirectly affected their preferred language for storytelling.
Before I move on to the next point, it is important to take into account the children’s Arabic reading ability. Since Noor’s eldest twin daughters were the only ones that were able to read in Arabic, access to Arabic stories was limited to parents and was dependant on the time they had available for reading. Consequently, initiatives like Maya’s intention to read in front of her children so that they would be encouraged to read more would only apply to English. Nevertheless, this reality did not seem to discourage the mothers. For example, at one point, Maya reassured herself and the others as she said: “Even though they might choose English books but you can also transfer it to Arabic”. A similar notion was also expressed by Noor, which demonstrated the mothers’ high level of commitment to reading and their creativity in negotiating ways to overcome their children’s Arabic reading incapability.

I remember when I was at sixth grade in Brisbane; we had a special teacher that would come once a week to tell us ancient stories about the Greek Gods and Hercules. I remember waiting eagerly for this class each week and sitting quietly listening and imagining the exciting events he was telling us about. Having talked to the mothers about the aspirations they had for their bilingual children and having seen their clear frustration for the lack of support in Arabic language maintenance, I wonder if more can be done through schools to help the children form a better connection with Arabic as a heritage language. What if there was a teacher telling stories from the Arabic culture to students of Arabic backgrounds, or any interested student for that matter? How could this be facilitated? I realise that facts like logistics and practicality need to be taken into consideration but stories are a powerful tool that could achieve long lasting impacts on children’s perceptions, one that would probably last longer than many regular lessons. It was my previous experience and a quote I read one day by Marcus Garvey, the Jamaican political leader: “A people without the knowledge of their history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots” that provoked this thinking. How can a tree be a tree without roots? This quote makes me wonder, how a child from a different background can grow confidently without having strong knowledge of his/her cultural background. Although preserving culture starts from the home, schools, play a crucial role in children’s lives. Schools have a direct effect on children’s perceptions, identities, behaviours, and dreams.

Research diary, 25.01.16
As the discussion on language practices progressed, the mothers revealed that travelling back to their home countries was a very effective strategy for getting their children to practice Arabic more extensively. Jomana specifically referred to this strategy in the beginning of our focus group discussion. “There is something else too, it might be that we also speak in Arabic and they (her children) speak Arabic because we go a lot to Jordan”. Interestingly, she offered her opinion in the form of a suggestion which received acceptance and agreement from the other mothers. As Maya signalled a similar viewpoint, Huda declared that she too was convinced that travelling to Jordan for vacations was a good way to get her daughter to speak Arabic: “When I went um six months when I had the baby, she forgot the English and she only spoke Arabic.. So I feel that if every vacation is the same thing and everyone over there speaks (Arabic).. They have no choice but to speak Arabic, so she has the potential so I am not worried”. Indeed, travelling back to the family’s home country to immerse children in the heritage language was a common strategy among migrant families in the world. Caldas (2006) for example, documented how his three children developed French as a heritage language in Louisiana by following several strategies; among these was travelling to their mother’s hometown, Quebec. He noted that using this strategy presented a comfortable, non-invasive way for language maintenance, because the children were able to practice language in meaningful and enjoyable settings. Researchers observed that bilingual children needed to be constantly reminded of the relevance and value of their bilingualism and so travelling to a home country where the heritage language is spoken can offer a perfect opportunity for this purpose (Grosjean, 2010).

Moreover, the mothers believed that immersing their children in an Arabic-only environment would help balance their bilingualism. Since the children’s English was already strong, as a result of living in Australia, they felt that an Arabic focussed setting would help their children achieve this balance. Maya proposed this view “we want them good in English and Arabic... so vacations can help”. The mothers saw travelling as a
valuable opportunity to counterbalance the dominance of the majority language. They expressed the view that frequent travel to and from Jordan helped support both their children’s Arabic maintenance and their bilingualism (see also, Grosjean, 2010).

Noor, on the other hand, believed that although it was beneficial to keep her children connected with their relatives, she had not travelled back to Syria since she arrived in Australia. In fact, she had not seen her family since 2010, as she was not able to travel to them after war broke out in Syria. Nonetheless, she explained that she encouraged her daughters to keep practicing Arabic so that when they could travel they would be able to speak to their grandmother and aunts in Syria “they have the idea that when they go to Syria they want to talk to their grandmas and their aunts so that they understand them”. According to Kennedy and Romo (2013), connecting with relatives offers an added value for using one’s heritage language as it provides a sense of purpose for bilingualism. As a result, children become more accepting of practices that encourage them to use their heritage language. This was observed by Noor, after I asked if her daughters agreed to her “Arabic only” approach: “No they don’t say anything they don’t really mind”.

Although the mothers indicated that travelling from Australia to the Middle East cost the families a substantial amount of money, they did not seem to mind the high cost and expressed the rewarding nature of their travels. Visiting their home countries also gave the mothers a much-needed emotional boost and they found comfort and help in developing their children’s Arabic literacy. Maya for example said: “Even my mother in law, when we went to Jordan she sat with them and she would write sentences for them and like this umm (they would) write it and read it”. Thus, it can be inferred, that even though travel presented a financial burden, it was a rewarding practice that supported the mothers in carrying out their duties in maintaining the Arabic language.

*Today at the park Jomana was excited to tell us that she was planning a trip to Jordan for the family in July this year (2016), Huda also said that she was thinking about travelling but was not sure because her daughter just started school. As they talked I remembered the substantial cost a trip from Australia to Jordan has. Having known that these mothers had visited Jordan less than two years ago, it occurred to me that it would be interesting to hear the fathers’ opinions about travels. Since they were the payers for these trips, it would be interesting to hear from the fathers and see if they shared the same “linguistic” goal for their travels.*
Utilising television show.

Television is the main way. Noor, F.G

One of the major strategies the mothers employed to facilitate language use at home was utilising television. Because the mothers were all worried about the limited amount of Arabic exposure their children were subjected to, they used the media to provide more Arabic input at home. Many times during our focus group and semi-structured interviews, the mothers stated that they relied heavily on television for maintaining Arabic with their children. Jomana, for instance, explained that the television was always turned on in her home so that her children were always able to hear Arabic being spoken. “(We) always have movies (running) in Arabic for children. We don’t turn it off. The Arabic TV is not turned off in our house... Even so, they listen that’s how I feel. They will pick up somethings from it”. Surprisingly, as Noor mentioned a similar sentiment she cited research to argue that leaving the television open was a good strategy for maximising the amount of exposure to Arabic. “Because they hear it (Arabic) that’s good... I heard it’s like a study that (...) children who live in foreign countries if your child speaks English at home you leave the Arabic TV on he will learn... I have no problem I am convinced that whatever they pick up even though they might not notice their subconscious mind is saving words”.

Television shows were one of the popular strategies for learning a language at home among bilingual families (Shin, 2012). Several reasons could be behind this popularity by means of it being an enjoyable activity for children where parents did not need to do much talking and teaching while their children watched. However, it was a recent trend where websites and marketing professionals in bilingual language resources have been encouraging parents to buy products designed to help them in their children’s bilingual development (King & Fogle, 2006). Whether these resources are helpful or not is another question, but researchers argue that it was crucial for parents to critically review such resources before committing to buy (King & Fogle, 2006). More importantly and within the context of this study, I turn to discuss the question of if it is beneficial to expose
children to television shows, and if so, what are the actual benefits? This issue can be analysed from two perspectives: first, the quality of television programs the children were exposed to and second, the question of whether children learn language subconsciously.

Regarding the quality of television shows the children were watching, the data from this study suggests that the mothers were not being particularly vigilant about certain shows. They mainly believed that having Arabic television on was a good strategy to keep their children exposed to the sound of Arabic. Moreover, Noor said that she sometimes let her children watch Arabic series for adults so that they could pick up the Syrian accent and the culture. “Sometimes they even watch with me um (...) series so that they can pick up the Syria accent and culture ... so this really helps”. While children respond enthusiastically to graphics and motions presented in television shows, it is vital to monitor the content of what they watch (Mallett, 2010). Matching children’s ages and interests were particularly important factors when selecting appropriate television shows. For example, the Arabic version of the BBC children’s programme “In the Night Garden” would be appropriate and perhaps prompt some language learning to pre-school aged children. However, the same show would not be suitable for older children. It can be inferred then that watching Arabic adult series would not be appropriate for Noor’s children. As such, even though all of the mothers believed television to be an excellent tool for teaching their children Arabic, their selections were not always appropriate for the children and henceforth, were not necessarily successful for learning Arabic. The question of whether children learn language subconsciously is of main concern to this discussion.

In a survey exploring a decade of research conducted on language learning through television and media resources, Vanderplank (2010), argued that despite the limited research on the effects of television shows on young bilingual learners’ language, it has been found that the frequency of watching television was not significantly related to a vocabulary growth in either languages. Moreover, it was found that little learning happened when no reinforcement or discussions was happening after the children watched the television shows (Vanderplank, 2010). This finding suggested that the mothers’ belief in keeping the television on at home was not necessarily an effective strategy for learning Arabic.
A sweet grandmother came to me at a barbeque the other day asking how she could encourage her 3-year-old grand-daughter to watch Arabic cartoons. I told her about a popular channel for children in her age but she told me that she tried it and she doesn’t like it. After that we had a brief conversation where I offered her some strategies I have been using with my children. I note first that I have not met with the little girl, but I suspect that she might not be interested in the Arabic cartoon because she simply does not understand what is being said. To address this, I suggested they would find her an Arabic-dubbed version of her favourite English cartoon. This arrangement would set a familiar scene and might help her comprehend something from the show from the visuals only. Also, it might be good to have an adult sit with the young girl and discuss the cartoon with her. This discussion could engage her interest and help her understand and accumulate Arabic vocabulary. The grandmother was interested and said she would try this method with her granddaughter. It would be interesting to follow-up with her and see if it worked. What would be even more interesting though, is to get to sit with the little girl and observe the efficiency of this strategy.

Research diary, 23.01.16

4.4.3 Arabic weekend schools.

“At the end you are between two difficult decisions. Either they don’t learn anything or they go learn and hate Arabic” Maya, SSI

Jomana, Maya and Noor discussed quite extensively the issue of Arabic weekend schools and expressed their disappointment with the lack of organisation and discipline among the schools that their children had previously attended. They were also concerned about their children’s attitude towards these schools, as the children disliked going most of the time. Several reasons triggered these reactions and the mothers expressed them on many occasions during our discussions. The issue of language schools from the mothers’ point of views could be broken down into three parts: the limited availability of Arabic weekend schools in the first place, the disorganisation of such facilities if made available and the lack of trained and professional teaching. First, I will discuss the fact that these schools are currently hard to find in Queensland.
Jomana initiated the discussion on the scarcity of Arabic weekend schools by stating that she has been looking for a place for a while but could not find any “I am looking, I keep looking but there is none”. Maya agreed with her immediately. Jomana pointed out that there were schools that taught Islamic studies, but she was more interested in finding Arabic-teaching schools as she believed she was able to teach her children religion without the school’s help. “There is a school, it teaches Quran and the prophet’s story and all that. I am against that, we are religious we can teach them ... but we need Arabic... so I would not enrol them in it because I want Arabic”. Noor justified Jomana’s views explaining that “if they learn Arabic they will go into the other topics” meaning that the children will benefit from both aspects if they learned Arabic through an Islamic context.

The mothers’ desperate search for Arabic weekend schools further reflected their previously discussed perceptions, which valued Arabic as a marker of their ethnic identity and the language of their religion. Analysis of the data revealed that the issue was highly emotive for the mothers. The mothers continued to discuss the topic by retelling their previous experiences with Arabic weekend schools.

Further examination of the data revealed that the mothers had previous negative experiences with Arabic weekend schools. For example, Noor explained how she was keen to find a place for her daughters where Arabic and Quran were taught as soon as she arrived in Australia. However, after a short period she was inclined to take them out of it as it was very disorganised. “I looked for a place where they gave Arabic and Islamic and all that. We found a place at the beginning, but I found it disorganised, so I got them out of it. So I put them for about 2 to 3 months and then I got them out. There was no organisation at all”. Maya and Jomana agreed with her and cited that disorganisation was the main reason that led them to withdraw their children from these schools. While the reasons for the unsystematic approach adopted by previously functioning weekend schools remain ambiguous, the mothers offered other observations that could assist further understanding of this topic. One reoccurring opinion was that teachers in these schools were volunteers and therefore were not necessarily qualified to teach children.

The majority of the mothers were concerned with the quality of teachers and teaching in previously held Arabic weekend schools. Jomana stated this clearly: “Look, I am not against it, but the people (directing it) need to be understanding and educated, I mean for example they bring us people with no experience normal people and she start just memorising memorising memorising and they make the children hate the school, and
Arabic. So I am with it but it has to have specialised professional people. And it should be supported by the government; it should be in a school not a mosque or something”. Jomana later clarified that she was aware of a couple of Arabic and Quran classes that were held in the mosque but she believed that they were not suitable or interesting for her children. Similarly, Maya expressed that she was not happy with the way teachers in the weekend schools dealt with children: “I feel that teaching is a responsibility, here you feel that any one available comes and teaches, so this is really not good. You need to deal with the children depending on their personality you should make each one of them enjoy it”. The children’s wellbeing was a major concern for Maya and the other mothers, she explained that comprehensively as she gave one example: “I hear that they are tough with the children . . . regarding clothing [signals with her hand about wearing the veil] . . . so I don’t know it’s like they annoy the children”. She sadly concluded that as a result, she found herself torn between two difficult decisions. “But at the end you are between two difficult decisions either they don’t learn anything or they go learn and hate Arabic”. This distress stemmed from Maya’s desire to maintain Arabic as a marker of her family’s heritage and identity and her simultaneous worry for her children’s comfort. Given that the other mothers expressed the same desire and shared similar thoughts about Arabic weekend schools, it was obvious that they shared the same emotional distress. As a result of this distress, Jomana pleaded rather helplessly for a good school to be opened so that she could enrol her children. “Let them open something... I mean OK let it be supported by the government and we pay I don’t have a problem but let them do something”. Jomana’s latter comment contradicts with what she said earlier about Arabic maintenance being her responsibility and shows that this issue causes her distress and confusion.

It is imperative to mention a shared perception among the mothers about Arabic weekend schools conducted by Arab/Muslim teachers. Jomana mentioned this view as I asked the mothers towards the end of the focus group if they had any further comments on the topic: “I just want to add ... that when the government supported the opening of Islamic schools... even the Muslims exploit it, it becomes expensive and they bring teachers who do not speak proper Arabic. So the child does not learn properly... so you feel that it is us, the problem might be from us not from the government”.

Jomana admitted that the reason these schools seem to fail in Queensland was because there was a problem within the Arab-Muslim community. Again a lack of literature on the topic makes validating her observations difficult, but the other mothers
also shared this view. I note, however that the argument in Jomana’s comment was related to “Islamic schools” which were different to the schools we had been discussing. Nevertheless, future research for reasons behind such failures to operate effective Arabic weekend schools, whether responsibility for this fell back to teachers, parents or the community, could be the first step in understanding and implementing more successful frameworks for these schools.

Even though my experience with a previous Arabic weekend school was brief where my 5 year-old then attended for a few months, I felt that there were several issues. The first thing I noticed was that teaching did not follow a specific curriculum. It was up to the volunteer teacher to teach whatever he/she might like, given that it was an Arabic language lesson of course. Second, the ratio of teachers to children was disproportionate since there were only a few teachers available. This distribution meant that children were divided into two or three groups and varied in age considerably. For example, in my five-year-old’s classroom, there were children aged ten and above which meant that the content was probably not suitable for some the children. Moreover, some of the teachers did not have a high sense of commitment since they were not paid and had to come on a Sunday morning, so they would be absent on weeks and result in cancelling classes. Hence, the mothers’ views along with my brief reflections could only suggest that major issues are preventing the success and continuity of these schools. Accompanied by the mothers’ expression for urgent help to maintain Arabic in their families, investigating the problems and determining the reasons behind the number of previous unsuccessful schools could be the key to offering these mothers the support they desperately need.

Research diary, 10.02.16

This reflection concludes the data findings and analysis chapter, in which analysing the mothers’ interactions in the focus group and the semi-structured interviews highlighted their language perceptions and practices. In summary, the mothers projected positive views about bilingualism but maintained that raising bilingual children in Australia can be challenging. In particular, they were all concerned about maintaining Arabic as a heritage language and expressed a need for further support from schools and
the community. A summary of the key findings and a conclusion for the study will be presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the understanding of a group of Australian mothers from Arabic-speaking backgrounds in terms of: their linguistic situation in Australia; their perceptions and practices of bilingualism; and whether they implement effective strategies for raising their children bilingually. The study also aimed to provide the participating mothers with a set of recommended strategies, tailored to their specific linguistic needs, which would potentially help them promote bilingualism more effectively within their families. In doing so, the study contributes to knowledge in the relatively new field of family language policy, in which there is limited research on immigrant families from Arabic-speaking backgrounds. More importantly, it delivers an in-depth account of the language experiences of a group that is under-represented in the Australian context. Given the common expectation for new immigrant families in Australia to switch to the use of English only (Clyne, 1991), understanding the language perceptions and practices of immigrant families from an Arabic-speaking background is essential to address the potential language attrition that the children in these families face. In addition, an understanding of the mothers’ language perceptions and practices highlights their frustration at not being able to integrate effectively in the Australian society because of their own limited proficiency in English. As a result, the study has been able to highlight a number of suggestions for the Australian educational sector that could be utilised to assist these families in maintaining their heritage language. To recall, the study sought to answer three questions:

1. How do Arabic-speaking new Australian mothers perceive and develop their children’s bilingualism in Arabic and English in Australia?
2. To what extent are the mothers in this study familiar with popular strategies for raising bilingual children?
3. What appear to be the most effective strategies that assist the mothers to raise their children bilingually in Arabic and English in Australia?

The following sections of this chapter will first restate the findings of the study and provide a set of summary answers to the research questions. It will then highlight the theoretical implications of the study and draw out a number of implications for
policymakers in the Australian educational sector. Lastly, it will highlight possible directions for future research.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The main findings of this study were discussed in detail in chapter four. This section will synthesise these findings so as to directly answer the study’s three research questions.

1. How do Arabic-speaking new Australian mothers perceive and develop their children’s bilingualism in Arabic and English in Australia?
   - In terms of perceptions, the participating mothers demonstrated an understanding of the importance of bilingualism for their children. However, they also expressed the view that this goal was difficult to achieve, and that bearing sole responsibility for it created a stressful burden for them. Interestingly, the mothers’ discussion on language perception covered not only their views of their children’s bilingualism but their own interpretation of what it means to be a bilingual Arabic-English speaker in Australia. While they conveyed several positive opinions, they all revealed a sense of isolation because their own limited proficiency in English made it hard for them to integrate into Australian society.
   - In terms of development, interviews with the mothers revealed different strategies that they employed for developing their children’s bilingualism. However, given that the children attended state schools in Queensland, they were learning English from school and the wider community. Thus the majority of the mothers were more focussed on facilitating Arabic-language activities with their children to minimise Arabic language attrition. Hence, the most common practices included: speaking only Arabic at home, reading Arabic stories, travelling back to the family’s home town and encouraging their children to watch Arabic television shows.

2. To what extent are the mothers in this study familiar with popular strategies for raising bilingual children?
   Despite not formally identifying popular strategies, the mothers were aware of and implemented two particular strategy-types: the minority language at home strategy and the mixed language strategy. The minority language at home
strategy was adopted by the majority of the mothers for the purpose of increasing their children’s Arabic use at home by speaking to the children in Arabic only, reading them Arabic stories and encouraging them to watch Arabic television shows. One mother, who held that it was essential to allow her children free communication without any linguistic restriction, adopted the mixed language strategy. This mother allowed her children to mix Arabic and English whenever they talked and encouraged them to articulate their needs in either language. However, it is worth noting that the children of that particular mother were relatively young in relation to the children of the other mothers in the study i.e. under school age.

3. What appear to be the most effective strategies that assist the mothers to raise their children bilingually in Arabic and English in Australia?

This question will be answered in two parts. The first part will summarise the strategies that the mothers found useful for promoting Arabic-English bilingualism in their homes. The second part will provide a list of recommended language strategies for the mothers to use.

a. Strategies used by mothers:

- Reading stories: All the mothers agreed on the usefulness of reading stories to promote language use at home (of both English and Arabic). However, they were keener on reading/encouraging their children to read Arabic stories, so as to maximise Arabic practice at home. While reading stories to children has been cited as an effective strategy for increasing children’s vocabulary, regular and consistent reading may enhance the efficacy of this strategy.

- Travelling back to their hometowns: The mothers agreed that travelling with the children to their home countries was one of the best strategies to balance their English-Arabic bilingualism. In the Arabic-speaking countries the families travelled to, the children were immersed in an Arabic-only environment and they had no choice but to use Arabic. The famous longitudinal case study by Caldas has established the value of this strategy in improving the children’s minority language and increasing their connection with relatives and culture, which can be important for language learning.
• Utilising television shows: Television and media were a main source for language teaching for all of the mothers in this study. They all stated that they encouraged their children to watch Arabic and English shows as a means of learning language. However, because they believed that their children were exposed to English for a long time at school, they tried to encourage them to watch more Arabic television shows than English. However, they were not always successful, because their children sometimes resisted watching Arabic TV.

b. Recommended strategies:
(See appendix J for a list of recommended strategies that will be handed to the mothers).

5.2 Contributions to Theory and Knowledge

Having previously established the theoretical underpinnings of this study, it is important that they are revisited here to further understand how the chosen families’ perceptions and practices of family language policy align with or differ from the research literature. The first theoretical tool used in this study was Fishman’s Reversing Language Shift Model (Fishman, 1991). Fishman emphasises the role of families in introducing and preserving heritage language because they act as transmitters of their mother tongue. The mothers recruited for this study did indeed act as transmitters of their mother tongue i.e. Arabic, and believed that it was their responsibility to encourage their children to learn Arabic. They also believed in involving their extended families in this process and made use of frequent trips to their home countries to promote their children’s proficiency in Arabic. These findings are consistent with those of Caldas, 2006; King & Fogle, 2006; King et al, 2008; Rubino, 2011; Schwartz, 2008; Schwartz & Verschik, 2013 who also stress the importance of the role of the family in shaping children’s language practices. The findings also add to the understanding of language perceptions, practices, and plans of new Australian families from Arabic-speaking backgrounds in particular. All the mothers in this study perceived Arabic as the “foundation language” that would allow their children to access and connect with their Arabic-Islamic heritage. They also perceived English as an essential addition to their children’s linguistic repertoire because it would allow them to access better educational/employment opportunities. Moreover,
the strategies the mothers employed to practise and plan language at home were mainly for the purpose of increasing Arabic use, since the children learned and practised English in school and with their friends.

The second tool that acted as a guiding method for exploring the mothers’ family language policies was Spolsky’s Family Language Policy framework (2012). Similarly to Fishman, Spolsky argues that the family domain is critical for developing language, because it influences language usage in a natural setting. He also states that when a family immigrates to a new country, these circumstances are challenged and thus, studying how the families’ language beliefs, practices and plans influence their bilingualism is as important as studying language policy on a national level. The mothers who participated in this study believed that Arabic and English were equally important for their children. Since each language possessed certain characteristics, as explained earlier, they were interested in developing both Arabic and English. However, they found that it was difficult to improve their children’s Arabic given the limited institutional support for Arabic language learning in Australia.

Even though they did plan language-learning activities for their children, they were not always successful in implementing these. Reasons for this lack of success varied but were mostly related to the mother’s limited understanding of the nature of bilingualism and their daily (personal) struggle to integrate into Australian society. The mothers’ sense of isolation is consistent with other research literature that highlights the sense of isolation and foreignness many immigrant populations around the world experience (e.g. Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; El-Zein, 2002; Johns et al., 2015; Kennedy & Romo, 2013; Kirsch, 2012). Given that this linguistic/cultural gap is general among immigrant families around the world, it was appropriate to draw on Haugen’s (1972) theory of language ecology to understand the distinctive situation of the interviewed mothers by exploring how their language policies interacted with the Australian community.

Haugen’s (1972) language ecology construct helped in exploring the interrelationship between Arabic and the cultural and political climate in Australia. The majority of the mothers who participated in this study said that they felt anxious as a result of frequently unsympathetic discourses in the media about Arab-Muslim people. Several mothers expressed the view that the media was responsible for encouraging a perception that Arab-Muslim communities support terrorism and oppress women. This media stereotyping is heightened whenever extremist groups who affiliate themselves to Islam
carry out an attack. For example, after the Lindt Café Siege in Sydney in December 2014, one mother told me how a man had approached her in a shopping mall and, in front of her children, told her to get out of Australia because she was a Muslim and all Muslims were terrorists. She said that this incident had made her feel extremely insecure and she feared that her children would be subjected to the same abuse one day. Another frequently mentioned concern among the mothers was their frustration at not being able to respond to such abuse because they lacked the language to do so. In other words, their limited proficiency in English affected their ability to be articulate and stand up for themselves in Australian society. Consequently, they adopted different approaches in their interactions with the Australian community. While some of them chose to isolate themselves, others were determined to engage and help their children engage in an effort to change that negative image. However, without further exploration one cannot judge the outcomes of either of those approaches. Nevertheless, it could be concluded that aiding the mothers to acquire a greater proficiency in English will likely influence their ability to interact more effectively with the wider Australian community. More prominently, encouraging a more moderate approach among Australian media providers when reporting issues related to Muslim populations might be a key factor in enhancing the mothers’ integration, as several researchers have stressed (Hage, 2002; Johns et al., 2015; Rane et al., 2011).

5.3 Implications for Education

Although Australia defines itself as a multicultural nation, very little is being implemented in school classrooms as regards language education, which continues to favour an English-only approach to education (Clyne, 2005, 2007; Rubino, 2011). This aptly named monolingual mindset has left the nation’s linguistic resources untapped as Lo Bianco (2009) remarks. Furthermore, this study has shown that lack of support for heritage language maintenance outside the home increased the mothers’ sense of isolation and had an adverse effect on their children’s identity development. The mothers reported that they were concerned for their children’s Arabic language development and that this issue consumed a significant amount of their energy. Consequently, they were driven to interact more with families from a similar background and travel frequently to their
hometowns to facilitate an Arabic learning environment for their children. They believed that these strategies were crucial as a means of balancing their children’s personalities. In light of these findings, some recommendations can be made about education in Australia in general and Queensland in particular.

One possible way forward could be by providing professional training for school teachers with a focus on the importance of valuing bilingual children’s linguistic resources and making use of their languages in daily classroom activities. These activities do not necessarily need to be in the form of direct language teaching strategies, but rather in the form of embedded acknowledgements of children who speak English as a second language (Anderson, 2008; Bekerman, 2011). These acknowledgments can be carried out by reading stories, for example, that reflect the children’s cultures and traditions and ultimately their languages. Since research shows that a child’s language is directly related to their personal and social identity, as discussed in the literature review, positive identity formation can be fostered by teachers taking children’s other languages into account. Arabic-speaking families in Australia have been said to value honour and tradition (Hage, 2002). Therefore, a teacher can for example, find out about the languages spoken in their class (other than English) and dedicate a week for each language. In Arabic week for example, children can be introduced to popular phrases in the Arabic language and these phrases could be written and hung around the classroom. Children could then try practise writing and saying these phrases all week and, depending on their year level, more advanced activities could be given, e.g. learning a popular song, designing a menu of famous Arabic food and playing games like “Simon Says” using Arabic words.

Based on the analysis of the mothers’ perceptions of Arabic as a cultural/religious marker of their children and in light of the current tension towards Arab-Muslim communities in Australia, an urgent recommendation should be made to all teachers to promote a culture of acceptance and friendliness in their classrooms. Promoting facts over assumptions is a strategy that teachers could adopt to help their students achieve this understanding. For example, with slightly older children a teacher could design a task that asks students to list ten assumptions they have (or have heard of) about Arab-Muslim communities and then research through reliable resources for facts that either confirm or deny the previously listed assumptions.

On another note, this study endorses Hatoss’s (2013) recommendations for adding literacy education in minority languages for the growing population of primary school-
aged children from Arabic speaking backgrounds. Henceforth, establishing weekend schools in Queensland that teach young children Arabic could be a welcome solution to many of the participants’ concerns. The platform for initiating such schools is available in Queensland through the Ethnic Schools Association of Queensland. However, successful application of such schools should take into account the needs and concerns of the mothers in this study. One recurring concern for all of the mothers was that teachers in previous weekend schools were not professional and lacked basic teaching skills. Therefore, equipping future Arabic schools with adequately trained teachers could enhance the quality of teaching and learning. There are several ways to facilitate training teachers: one possible way could be recruiting Arabic-speaking citizens who wish to teach Arabic but have no teaching qualification and place them in a government-funded program that could equip them with strategies for teaching Arabic to Australian children from an Arabic-background.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Selecting only four mothers to participate in this case study helped construct a deep understanding of each of the mothers’ language experiences but it limited the study, as discussed in the methods chapter. Therefore, involving a larger number of participants could confirm and enhance the analysis presented in the findings of this study. Also, taking the children’s points of view into account would provide insight into their perspectives on bilingualism and family language policy. Additional approaches might consider interviewing the fathers to explore their roles in family language planning.

It is also important to acknowledge that, while the quantity and quality of the data collected for this study was extensive, it was implemented within a constrained time frame that aligns with the requirements of a Master’s program. Therefore, performing the same case study within a longitudinal time frame could produce more significant findings. For example, a future study might explore the long-term effects of having a family language policy on raising bilingual children in Australian families from an Arabic-speaking background.

One other approach could mix qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate the effects of having a family language policy for raising bilingual children in Australia. Using quantitative methods such as online surveys would help access a larger
number of participants that could later be the basis of recruiting participants for qualitative data collection methods, like focus-group discussion and interviews, which in turn may enhance the accuracy and generalisability of findings. Another direction could be to investigate the way that the perceptions of the Australian public have been affected by the criminalisation of Arabic by the Western media, as a language that is associated with Arab-Muslim communities.

Although more research in this topic area is yet to be conducted, this study has, nevertheless, made a first attempt to understand how new Australian families from Arabic-speaking backgrounds perceive and manage their linguistic reality in Australia. Given the scarcity of research on this particular group, the study provides a basis for future studies. In a final summary, the sum of the evidence collected suggests that in spite of the positive attitude the participants displayed towards bilingual child rearing, they needed more support in terms of better language teaching strategies and formal schooling alternatives so as to successfully maintain their heritage language. This conclusion reaffirms and reinforces the findings of the cohort of previous studies that call for heritage languages to be identified and utilised as a resource for improving the integration process of new immigrants into Australian society.
Appendices

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Introduction
Hello and thank you for meeting me today. This is a follow up interview after our focus group discussion. We will discuss some issues related to raising your children bilingually in Australia. This interview will be a part of the data I am collecting in order to investigate whether and how do you as an Arabic mother perceive and develop family language policies and bilingual rearing. Your thoughts and insights will be highly valuable as research in the area of family language policy and Arabic families in Australia is still very limited. Please do not hesitate to add and elaborate on any topic you find relevant. Your responses will not be judged and your anonymousness in the final dissertation is guaranteed.

Questions

Section One/ Beliefs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you regard your children’s bilingualism?</td>
<td>Can you think of any advantages or disadvantages?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think they would have been bilingual if they were in Jordan?</td>
<td>How so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you think of benefits of bilingualism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you think your children see their bilingualism?</td>
<td>Are they aware of it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have you ever discussed the issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you think they feel about it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section Two/ Practices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **What do you do at home to promote language use?** | **Do you promote one language over the other?**  
Do you do a lot of code switching?  
When and where do you speak Arabic?  
When and where do you speak English? |
|---|---|
| **Whose responsibility is it in your opinion to develop your children’s bilingualism?** | **Do you feel you get sufficient support?**  
What would be the ideal environment for supporting your bilingual child-rearing endeavour? |
| **How do you think your children’s birth order affects their language proficiency?** | In Arabic.  
In English.  
Do you think older siblings influence younger siblings when it comes to language use? How so? |
| **How does the media affect your children’s language at home?** | Do they prefer watching Arabic or English medium TV?  
Do you recommend specific material for them to read or watch?  
How do they respond to your suggestions? |

**Section Three/ Planning:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Can you think back to when you first came to Australia? Do you remember making a plan for your children for using English and Arabic? | How useful is it to have a language plan in your opinion?  
What about following a more relaxed approach?  
Do you think children will learn language either way? |
| Do you discuss issues related to language planning with your husband or friends and family? | How do you feel after those discussions? |
## Concluding Comments:
Thank you for coming today and for providing your insights. Your views are very valuable and are an important asset for this project. Please don’t hesitate to contact my supervisor or me should you have any questions or comments.
Appendix B: Questionnaire

1) What is your country of origin?

2) How fluent are you in English?
   □ Very fluent
   □ Fluent
   □ Somewhat fluent
   □ Not fluent

3) If “somewhat fluent” or “Not fluent” do you understand English when you are spoken to?
   □ Completely understand
   □ Somewhat understand
   □ Do not understand

4) If you do not speak English do you wish to learn it?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ It depends

5) If you answered ‘it depends’ can you provide further explanation?

6) Do you have any children?
   □ Yes
   □ No

7) If “Yes” how many? And how old are they?

8) Do they speak Arabic?
   □ Yes
   □ No

9) If “Yes” how fluent are they in Arabic?
□ Very fluent
□ Fluent
□ Somewhat fluent
□ Not fluent

10) Do they speak English?
□ Yes
□ No

11) If “Yes” how fluent are they in English?
□ Very fluent
□ Fluent
□ Somewhat fluent
□ Not fluent

12) Do you speak Arabic or English to them or a mix?
□ Arabic
□ English
□ Mix of Arabic and English

13) Do they reply back to you in Arabic or English or a mix?
□ Arabic
□ English
□ Mix of Arabic and English

14) When and where do they speak Arabic?
..........................................................................................................................
..........................................................................................................................

15) When and where do they speak English?
..........................................................................................................................
..........................................................................................................................
..........................................................................................................................

16) When your children speak to their extended family using phones or video calling what language do they use?
□ Arabic
□ English
□ Mix of Arabic and English
□ They do not speak to their extended family

17) Do you receive any support for bilingual rearing from schools, institutions or the society in Australia?
□ Lots of support
□ Some support
□ No support

18) In which language do your children watch TV or play video games?
□ Arabic
□ English
□ Both

19) If ‘both’ how much do they watch in Arabic and in English?
□ Mostly in Arabic
□ Mostly in English
□ Equal amount of English and Arabic

20) Do you feel that TV shows and video games impact language learning?
□ Yes
□ No
□ Maybe

21) Are you concerned that your children will not speak Arabic as they grow up?
□ Yes
□ No
□ Somewhat

22) At this stage which is more important to you English or Arabic? Please explain.
□ Arabic. Why?
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
......
□ English. Why?
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
......
23) In your opinion whose responsibility is it to maintain Arabic in the family?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

24) Would you be prepared to pay for language lessons, materials and time to develop either Arabic or English?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

25) Do you want your children to speak Arabic in the future?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ It depends

26) Do you have any further comments? Please add them here.

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

……..
Appendix C: Focus Group Schedule

Before the Group Assembles
1. Test the recording equipment to make sure it is working and that the sound is recording at an acceptable level. A digital audio recorder and second backup recorder will be used for the focus group interview. Files will be password-protected.
2. Make sure suitable seating is provided for all participants.
3. Collect consent forms; I will provide extra consent forms at the beginning of the focus group for those participants who have not returned their signed consent form.

Before the Start of the Session
1. Check to see if everyone is comfortable and offer refreshments.
2. Read a statement about confidentiality (in Arabic):
   “Opinions expressed will be treated in confidence by my supervisors and I and used for the purpose of investigating your beliefs, practices and planning actions while raising bilingual children in Australia. Your responses will remain anonymous”.
3. Distribute information sheets and consent forms to participants. Go through them with the participants and make sure they understand the information and sign the papers.
4. Check that there is no objection on recording the session and turn the recorder on.

Introduction to Session
1. Thank everyone for coming and sparing sometime over their busy schedules.
2. Explain the purpose of the study.
3. Remind participants of general guidelines for the discussion; participant’s need to speak one at a time for recording requirements and respect the privacy and confidentiality of other participants outside the focus group discussion.
4. Explain to the participants that I am interested in their views and that they will not be judged and that there are no right or wrong answers.

Discussion One/ Beliefs
This section aims to explore your ideas about language as a part of who you are and how you perceive it in terms of your children’s identity development and sense of belonging. It could be viewed as a brainstorming exercise to get you thinking about the topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
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</table>

97
What languages do you speak at home (Arabic or English or a mix)?

What are the reasons for your child to speak fluent English in Australia?

Think about when you are in Jordan... How do you feel your children manage interacting with the extended family?

Discussion Two/Practices

In the next section of our discussion we are going to look at your language practices at home. Mainly what language activities you are engaged in at home as a bilingual family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you facilitate Arabic learning at home? What do you do?</td>
<td>Do you feel it is useful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of support do you receive from your husband, family and school</td>
<td>How do you feel about it? Can you tell us more?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for teaching language at home (Arabic or English)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you think of the word *Arabic* what first comes to your mind?

How about English?

How does it feel to have two languages?

How do you feel in Australia being a speaker of a different language?

Do you feel that coming from Australia affected your language behaviour? Can you explain?

How do you feel in Jordan because you come from Australia where English is the main language?

How about Arabic?

Do they engage in codeswitching?

Do you ever speak about it?

How do they feel about it?
In the next couple of questions we are going to explore media sources and its effect on language learning and use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do your children watch Arabic medium TV?</td>
<td>Do they watch English medium TV? Which do they prefer? Do they prefer specific programs in a certain language? How about computer games and apps? Do you feel that they affect language learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think of weekend language schools?</td>
<td>Did your children attend any? How did they feel about it? What for you, are its advantages and disadvantages?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For you, what would be the ideal way for teaching your children Arabic in Australia?</td>
<td>Do you think your children will like that?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion Three/Planning:**

In this section we will discuss whether you engage in any planning actions with your family regarding language choice and practices at home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Probes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell us if you and your husband have discussed how to raise your children bilingually?</td>
<td>Did you consult any other family members or professionals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you remember making a plan for language use at home when you came to Australia?</td>
<td>Can you tell us more? Do you feel planning language use is important or following a more relaxed approach is better? What do you prefer? Is this anyone else’s experience?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summarising the Session:**

1. Wrap up and summarise the main points discussed.
2. Ask if anyone has further comments or stories they would like to share.
3. Thank participants for their time and invite them to lunch.
4. Turn off the recorder.
Appendix D: Quirkos Canvas View

Main Canvas Views

Quirks Canvas - Primary
Appendix E: Response to HREC

Dear Kim,

Please find attached my responses and further clarification as requested. I have discussed these points with my supervisors. Please advise if any further clarification is needed.

Yours sincerely,

Areej

EDN/45/15/HREC “Examining Family Language Policies: A study of Australian families of Arabic-speaking background”

This application has been reviewed administratively by the Office for Research via a mechanism applied to research that has been assessed as involving no more than negligible risk. This project appears to qualify for E1(NR) provisional approval, subject to:

1- Please provide an estimate of the total number of participants that are expected to take part in the research.

Estimated number of participants: Four.

2- Please provide the text that will be used for participant recruitment purposes (e.g. copy of the telephone script calling for volunteers). Please note that recruitment materials should also contain contact details for the researchers (phone and e-mail addresses) and the GU Human Research Ethics reference number.

Participants will be contacted by email or telephone to be invited to attend a focus group discussion at the student researcher’s house.

Text that will be used for participant recruitment purposes:

“Hello, I am calling you today to see if you would like to participate in a research study about Arabic speaking mothers and how they engage with bilingualism and family language policies in Australia. If you agree, I would like to invite you for a focus group discussion at my house at a mutually convenient time, where we will discuss these issues in a relaxed environment over a cup of coffee and some snacks. I will hand out a questionnaire for you to complete before the focus group session which will help me
gather some basic information about you and your linguistic background. Your participation will be highly valuable for my study and it will be appreciated. Should you have any questions please don’t hesitate to contact my supervisor or me”.

Supervisor contact details:
Name Kerry Taylor-Leech
Tel 07 3735 5860
Email k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au

Student researcher contact details:
Name Areej Yousef
Mobile 0401525673
Email areej.yousef@griffithuni.edu.au

Griffith University Human Research Ethics reference number:
EDN/45/15/HREC
Tel 07 3735 4375
Email rick.williams@griffith.edu.au

3- In section E4 of the application, you indicate that the questionnaire research and focus group activity will occur at the same location, on the same day, with the same participants. However, only some of these participants who express particular interest in the topic will be invited to take part in the semi-structured interviews. As these data collection methods will be conducted at different times, with potentially different participants, it is recommended that two separate participant information sheet and consent forms (PICFs) be prepared for each data collection activity (i.e. one PICF for the questionnaire/focus group activity and one PICF for the semi-structured interviews). Please submit these amended PICFs with your response to these conditions.

Please ensure that each of the participant information sheets list the principal supervisor as the chief investigator and the student as the student researcher. The material should also explain that the research forms a component of the student’s academic program. In each of the participant information sheets under “What you have to do in the study” please indicate the expected duration of each relevant data collection activity.
In each of the participant information sheets under “What happens to all the information I collect” it is recommended that you rephrase the third sentence as follows: “With your permission, the researcher is allowed to use it again for researcher purposes”. It is also suggested that you include a separate tick box on the consent form that states: “I agree to use of my data in future research projects that are an extension of, or closely related to, this research”.

In each of the participant information sheets, please provide further information in relation to data storage and deletion. Sample wording could include: “As required by Griffith University, all audio recordings will be erased after transcription. However, other research data (survey responses, interview transcripts and analysis) will be retained in a locked cabinet and/or a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed”.

In each of the participant information sheets under “What happens to all the information I collect”, rather than stating that “I am willing to give you a copy of the final thesis if you ask me for it” it is recommended that an alternative mechanism if offered by which participants can access a convenient, appropriate summary of results (e.g. via email request). Please note that generally access to an academic paper or thesis is not considered a timely or appropriate summary of results for participants.

In each of the participant information sheets, please include some expected benefits of the research. Please also identify whether any potential risks may be associated with the research. If no significant risks are identified, you could include a risk statement such as “There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research”.

As per section 7.13 of Booklet 22 of the Griffith University Research Ethics Manual, please ensure the participant information sheets also include the standard reference to the independent contact for concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research as the Manager, Research Ethics, Griffith University on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Please amend each of the participant information sheets to include a legal privacy statement. Sample wording for such statements is as follows: “The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other
research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at [http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan](http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan) or telephone (07) 3735 4375”.

Please refer to appendix 1 for information sheet for questionnaire and focus group session.
Please refer to appendix 2 for information sheet for semi-structured interviews.
Please refer to appendix 3 for updated consent form.

4- **In the focus group schedule, it is also recommended that you ask participants to respect the privacy and confidentiality of other participants.**

Please refer to appendix 4 for updated focus group schedule. (Appendix C in this document).
Appendix F: Ethical Clearance Granted from HREC

GRiffith University Human Research Ethics Committee

13-Jul-
2015

Dear Mrs Yousef

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the conditional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "NR: Examining Family Language Policies: A study of Australian families of Arabic-speaking background". (GU Ref No: EDN/45/15/HREC).

This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards

Ms Kim Madison
Policy Officer
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: +61 (0)7 373 58043
Researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.
You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting
http://policies.griffith.edu.au/pdf/Code%20for%20the%20Responsible%20Conduct%20of%20Research.pdf

PRIVILEGED, PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
This email and any files transmitted with it are intended solely for the use of the addressee(s) and may contain information which is confidential or privileged. If you receive this email and you are not the addressee(s) [or responsible for delivery of the email to the addressee(s)], please disregard the contents of the email, delete the email and notify the author immediately.
Appendix G: Email/ Telephone Script

Participants will be contacted by email or telephone to be invited to attend a focus group discussion at the student researcher’s house.

Text that will be used for participant recruitment purposes:

“Hello, I am calling you today to see if you would like to participate in a research study about Arabic speaking mothers and how they engage with bilingualism and family language policies in Australia. If you agree, I would like to invite you for a focus group discussion at my house at a mutually convenient time, where we will discuss these issues in a relaxed environment over a cup of coffee and some snacks. I will hand out a questionnaire for you to complete before the focus group session which will help me gather some basic information about you and your linguistic background. Your participation will be highly valuable for my study and it will be appreciated. Should you have any questions please don’t hesitate to contact my supervisor or me”.

Supervisor contact details:
Name Kerry Taylor-Leech
Tel 07 3735 5860
Email k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au

Griffith University Human Research Ethics reference number:
EDN/45/15/HREC
Tel 07 3735 4375
Email rick.williams@griffith.edu.au
Appendix H: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Questionnaire and Focus Group Session

Faculty of Education and Professional Studies
Griffith University, 176 Messines Ridge Road
Mt Gravatt, Qld 4122

Information Form

Research Project: Examining Family Language Policies, a study of Australian mothers of Arabic speaking background who are raising bilingual children in Australia
Chief Investigator: Dr Kerry Taylor-Leech
Student Researcher: Areej Yousef

What is this study about?
I would like to invite you to act as a participant in my research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate what Arabic-speaking mothers in Australia think and do in relation to raising their children bilingually. This research project forms a component of my postgraduate study program.

What do you have to do in the study?
If you agree to participate, I would like you to:

- Complete one questionnaire. (Duration: approximately 10 minutes)
- Participate in one focus group session at my house. (Duration: approximately one hour)

What happens to all the information I collect?
As required by Griffith University, all audio recordings will be erased after transcription. However, other research data (questionnaire responses, focus group transcripts and analysis) will be retained in a locked cabinet and a password protected...
electronic file at Griffith University storage platform for a period of five years before
being destroyed. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan
at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-
privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4375”.

If you agree to participate, the data I collect from interviews with you and your
responses to the questionnaire will be used for my research purposes only. Any
personal details or information about you gathered in the course of the study are
confidential. Only my supervisors and I will have access to the data you provide. Your
name will be changed in the final thesis and any publications to ensure confidentiality
and protect your privacy – however, some of the things you say will be quoted in the
thesis. If you would like to know the results and outcomes of this study I am happy to
provide you with a short document containing a set of recommendations (strategies) for
raising bilingual children from an Arabic background in Australia. Additionally, if you
are interested you are welcome to a follow up interview to discuss the results of this
study.

**What are the benefits of this study?**

By participating in this study you will help shed more light on family language policies
and bilingualism of Arabic speaking families in Australia. Understanding the language
beliefs, practices and planning actions you do or don’t do can help raise awareness and
provide insights that can be helpful to other mothers in a similar situation. By
participating in this study, you will be able to discuss with mothers from similar
circumstances the joys and challenges of bilingualism and how it is reflected in your
home.

**What are the risks of this study?**

There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.

**Privacy Statement**

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your
identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not
be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or
other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used
for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded.

Note

Participation in this study is **entirely voluntary**: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

If you have any queries about this project please contact my supervisor:

Dr Kerry Taylor-Leech, Lecturer in TESOL/Applied Linguistics on 07.3735.5860 or [k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au](mailto:k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au)

If you have any concerns that you cannot discuss with either me or my supervisor please contact the manager of Research Ethics at Griffith University on 3735 4375 or [research-ethics@griffith.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@griffith.edu.au)
Consent Form

Examining Family Language Policies: A study of Australian mothers of Arabic speaking background

I………………………………………………have read and understood the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research project, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form and the information sheet to keep.

☐ I would like to be given a short document with a set of recommendations (strategies) for raising bilingual children from an Arabic background in Australia.

☐ I would like to be invited to a follow up interview to discuss the results of this study.

☐ I agree to the use of my data in future research projects that are an extension of, or closely related to, this research.

Participant’s Name:_____________________________________________________________
(Block letters)
Participant’s Signature:________________________________________________________
Date: __________

Investigator’s Name:_____________________________________________________________
(Block letters)
Investigator’s Signature:____________________________
Date: __________
Appendix I: Information Sheet and Consent Form for Semi-Structured Interviews

Griffith University
Faculty of Education and Professional Studies
Griffith University, 176 Messines Ridge Road
Mt Gravatt, Qld 4122

Information Form

Research Project: Examining Family Language Policies, a study of Australian mothers of Arabic speaking background who are raising bilingual children in Australia

Chief Investigator: Dr Kerry Taylor-Leech
Student Researcher: Areej Yousef

What is this study about?
I would like to invite you to act as a participant in my research study. The purpose of the study is to investigate what Arabic speaking mothers in Australia think and do in relation to raising their children bilingually. This research project forms a component of my postgraduate study program.

What do you have to do in the study?
If you agree to participate, I would like you to:

• Participate in one semi-structured interview (Duration: One hour maximum)

What happens to all the information I collect?
As required by Griffith University, all audio recordings will be erased after transcription. However, other research data (semi-structured interview transcripts and
analysis) will be retained in a locked cabinet and a password protected electronic file at Griffith University storage platform for a period of five years before being destroyed. For further information you can consult the University’s Privacy Plan at [http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan](http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan) or telephone (07) 3735 4375”.

If you agree to participate, the data I collect from interviews with you will be used for my research purposes only. Any personal details or information about you gathered in the course of the study are confidential. Only my supervisors and I will have access to the data you provide. Your name will be changed in the final thesis and any publications to ensure confidentiality and protect your privacy – however, some of the things you say will be quoted in the thesis. If you would like to know the results and outcomes of this study I am happy to provide you with a short document containing a set of recommendations (strategies) for raising bilingual children from an Arabic background in Australia. Additionally, if you are interested you are welcome to a follow up interview to discuss the results of this study.

**What are the benefits of this study?**

By participating in this study you will help shed more light on family language policies and bilingualism of Arabic speaking families in Australia. Understanding the language beliefs, practices and planning actions you do or don’t do can help raise awareness and provide insights that can be helpful to other mothers in a similar situation. By participating in this study, you will be able to discuss with mothers from similar circumstances the joys and challenges of bilingualism and how it is reflected in your home.

**What are the risks of this study?**

There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
Consent Form

Examining Family Language Policies: A study of Australian mothers of Arabic speaking background

I……………………………..……have read and understood the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research project, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form and the information sheet to keep.

☐ I would like to be given a short document with a set of recommendations (strategies) for raising bilingual children from an Arabic background in Australia.

☐ I would like to be invited to a follow up interview to discuss the results of this study.

☐ I agree to the use of my data in future research projects that are an extension of, or closely related to, this research.

Participant’s Name: ____________________________________________
(Block letters)
Participant’s Signature: __________________________________________
Date: __________

Investigator’s Name: ____________________________________________
(Block letters)
Investigator’s Signature: ________________________________
Date: __________
Privacy Statement
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at [http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan](http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan) or telephone (07) 3735 4375.

**Note**

Participation in this study is **entirely voluntary**: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

If you have any queries about this project please contact my supervisor:

Dr Kerry Taylor-Leech, Lecturer in TESOL/Applied Linguistics on 07.3735.5860 or k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au

If you have any concerns that you cannot discuss with either me or my supervisor please contact the manager of Research Ethics at Griffith University on 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au
Appendix J: Recommendations to the Mothers

- **Talk to your child about bilingualism:** your child might not be aware that they are learning two languages. Talk to them and encourage them to share with you their thoughts about being bilingual. You may be surprised to see their responses. If for instance, they convey a positive attitude encourage it and build upon it by telling your child some of the benefits of bilingualism, like we discussed in our meetings. Even if they express negative views or they don’t understand what you are talking about, listen and gently encourage them to see how being bilingual might distinguish them and be a marker of their identity.

- **Encourage learning through playing:** help your child experience the joy of learning language in a comfortable environment. You don’t have to sit with books and pencils to teach them, make use of realia (real objects from your surrounding) instead. For example, if you want to teach them the letter (س) you can tell them to bring you five objects that begin with that letter. Make it a competition, but level the playing field between older and younger siblings, one way of doing that could be by giving extra points for the older children if they help their siblings gather the objects. For more ideas on how to teach children Arabic through play refer to this website: [http://www.walaadarkal.com/search/label/%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A](http://www.walaadarkal.com/search/label/%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A)

- **Be mindful of what your child is watching on television:** having the television on for language teaching purposes can be a useful strategy if the show your child is watching is appropriate to their age and you keep an open dialogue with them about what’s being shown. However, letting them watch an adult series for the same purpose is not advisable as it is neither child appropriate nor it is designed to promote language learning.

- **Encourage fathers to help in language learning:** talk to your husband about the value of his participation in teaching your children language. If he is back from work and feels tired, gently encourage him to read your younger daughter a bedtime story while relaxing on the sofa. This will give your husband the rest time he needs and your child the benefit of being in her father’s company and the joy/value of reading.

- **Be attentive to your child’s changing situation:** Being patient is essential when it comes to developing your child’s bilingualism, or any skill for that matter. At times you may feel discouraged because your child is refusing to speak one language in favour of the other. Don’t get stressed about it and try to remember that language choice for bilinguals is highly dependent on the circumstance, addressee and the context they are within. For
example, trying to increase Arabic use in a situation where your child is surrounded by an English speaking environment is going to be a struggle. Instead, try to embrace the reality of them favouring English and gently introduce meaningful alternatives for practicing Arabic e.g. phone calls to relatives, give them language challenges like “change the English sentence into Arabic”, and sing Arabic songs in the car.

- **Be consistent:** just like acquiring any skill, raising bilingual children needs time and consistency. Develop a plan for your family. Call it “our family language policy”. Write it in on a big colourful poster and hang it somewhere everyone can see it. Explain to your children your policy, i.e. what is required of them in terms of language use at home. You can have statements like: (1) At school, and with friends we should speak English, at home we try to speak Arabic, (2) You are required to read a (number) of Arabic/English books per week, and if you read for your little brother/sister, you will get rewarded. Don’t expect to see instant results, but be consistent. Research shows that the chances of your children growing into bilingual adults are higher if you have a language plan and you stick to it.
References


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Crawford, J. (2002). Do languages have a place in the curriculum?: a Queensland view. Babel, 36(3), 12.


