

Ten years on: how has family language policy changed between 2012 and 2022?

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In spite of research showing that heritage language maintenance correlates with positive social outcomes (Han and Huang 2010; Kouritzin 1999; Piller 2016: Ch 5; Portes and Hao 2002), in multilingual, multicultural Australia languages other than English (LOTEs) continue to be pushed to the periphery. Family language policy (FLP) is a research program which has emerged over the last 20 years to explore the family level language planning to maintain or transmit heritage languages. However, much research in this space is synchronic and language-focused rather than diachronic and speaker-focused. This study aims to fill this gap by taking a qualitative, diachronic approach to FLP in a group of parents in mixed-language relationships over a 10-year period in Sydney, Australia. The research data consists of 20 qualitative interviews with at least one or both parents in a mixed-language couple conducted twice over the period. Using a deductive content analysis approach, preliminary findings suggest negative effects of the pandemic on FLP, an increase in the use of digital technologies and the ongoing gendered nature of family language work. The study thus demonstrates the interplay of macro and micro factors on FLP in times of rapid individual and social change.

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