

Multilingual Families Lab Short Presentation Report:

Perspectives from different preschool staff on how COVID-19 changed how to support the language development of multilingual preschool children

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF REHABILITATION MEDICINE
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders



Perspectives from different preschool staff on how COVID-19 changed how to support the language development of multilingual preschool children



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In Spring of 2021, Dr. Catrine Demers and Dr. Andrea A.N. MacLeod presented their research entitled “Perspectives from different preschool staff on how COVID-19 changed how to support the language development of multilingual preschool children” at the 18th Annual Language and Literacy Researchers of Canada (LLRC) virtual pre-conference. The theme of the pre-conference was *Literacy Entanglements & Relationality: Time, Space, Place, and Identity* and was hosted by the University of Alberta and co-sponsored by Language and Literacy: A Canadian e-journal.

Short Presentation Summary

The rapid shutting down of daycares and schools has left many families who speak a minority language at home isolated due to limited proficiency in English and small social networks. We know that it is important to support both the language of daycares and schools as well as the language spoken at home. With few services available to support the home languages of preschoolers, we aim to develop an approach that supports the development of all languages. But first, we assessed the barriers and facilitators present in the context. The goal of the present study was to assess the barriers and facilitators faced by preschool staff in their work to support the language development among multilingual children, before and after COVID-19.

To understand the barriers and facilitators experienced by staff, we completed five online individual interviews via Zoom with staff of a community organization ABC Head Start Society (ABC HSS) working with families and preschool children speaking a minority language at home. We completed a qualitative content analysis of the data using both deductive and inductive coding. We based our deductive coding on Bronfenbrenner (1979) bioecological systems theory and barriers found in literature. The main barriers and facilitators reported by preschool staff were related to: the child; the microsystem with families and ABC HSS staff; the mesosystem with the relationship between the families and ABC HSS staff; and the exosystem with the relationship

between the families or ABC HSS staff with other systems. The two main barriers reported were the lack of training of ABC HSS staff members to support home languages of children and the language barriers between families and ABC HSS staff. To overcome the lack of training, we suggest to immediately implement a dual-language program to support home language development of children and to eventually provide dual-language training to ABC HSS. To overcome the language barriers, we suggest using a mobile app with integrated translations for communication such as the one we are currently developing called linGrow. The results of this study will help us target, develop, and implement practices adapted to the current barriers and facilitators. Those practices will help provide better support of the dual-language development of multilingual preschoolers.

Reference: Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design. Harvard university press.

Presentation Material

Multilingual Families
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Multilingual Families Lab Familles Multilingues
We study multilingual families / L'étude des familles multilingues
bilingualacquisition.ca

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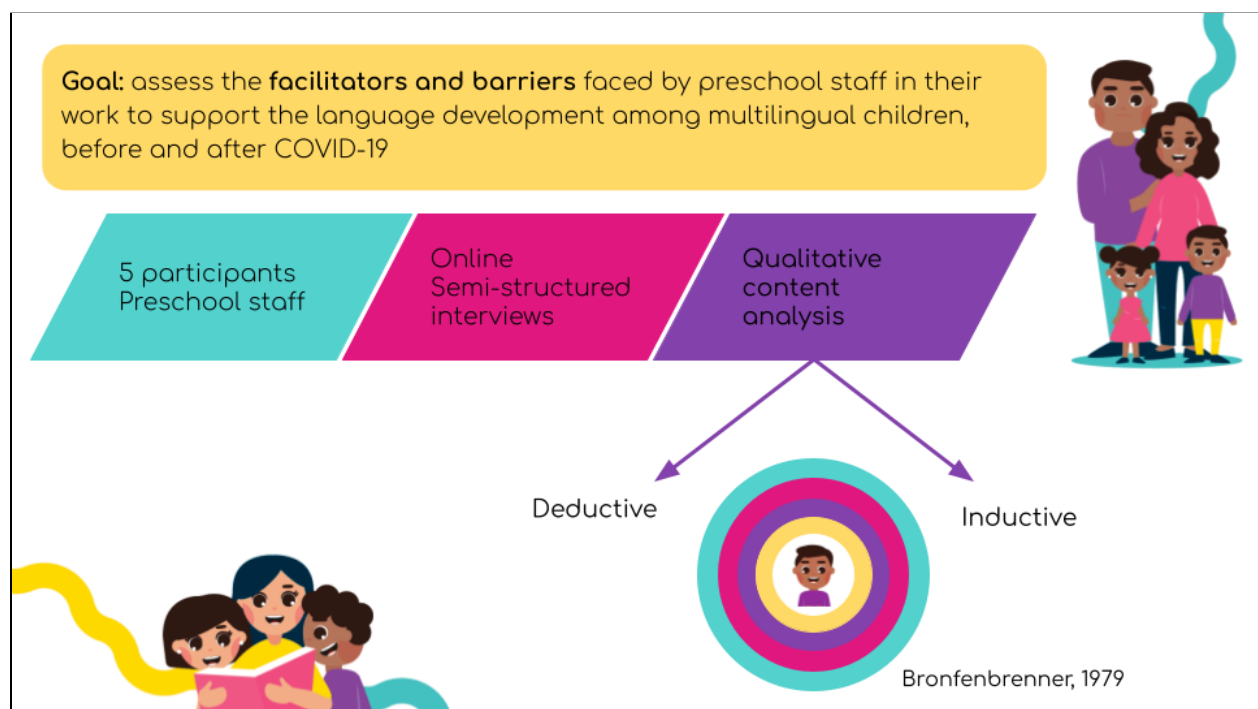
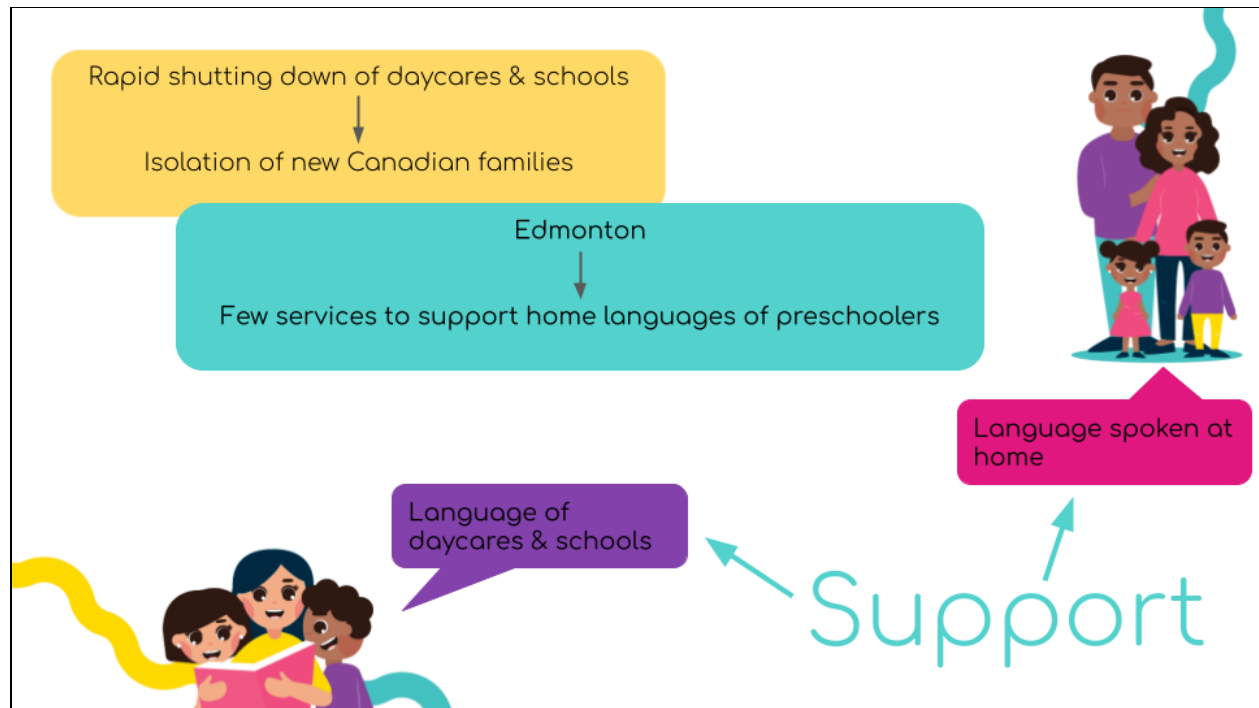
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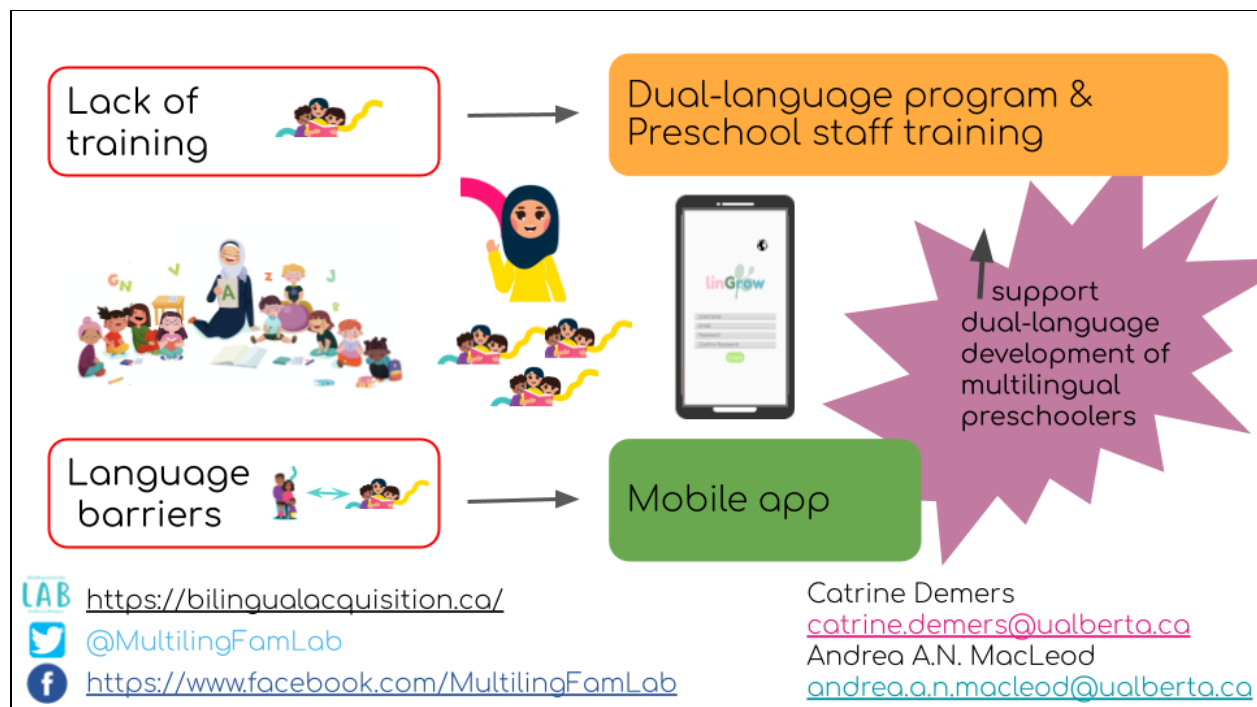
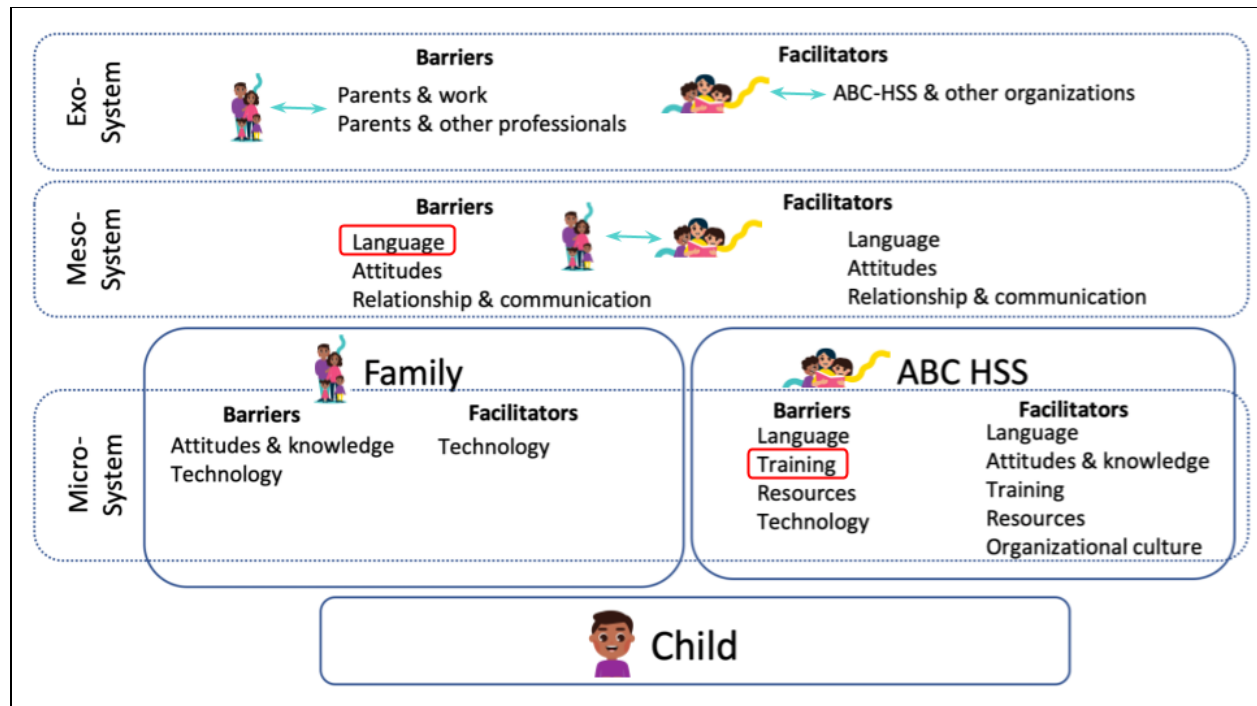
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