



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**A Parents' Perspective on the
Importance of Maintaining Children's Heritage Language**

Josephine Grech

**A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Education in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the Master in Access to Education.**

May 2022



University of Malta Library – Electronic Thesis & Dissertations (ETD) Repository

The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author's rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

ABSTRACT

Josephine Grech

A Parents' Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children's Heritage Language

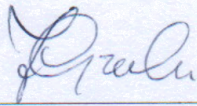
Parents' belief about their heritage language is the key to whether their children learn and/or maintain their heritage language. This thesis explores parents' perspectives on the importance of maintaining their children's heritage language, even though they are far away from their home country. This research also aims to find how parents are teaching/maintaining their heritage language with their children. The parents' expectations from the host country in this regard is also established. Qualitative research was adopted using two research tools, namely questionnaires and interviews, to collect the data. First, prospective participants from a primary school in the central area of Malta were invited to fill in a questionnaire, following which a one-to-one interview with six of the prospective participants took place. The selected participants had to have strong beliefs about maintaining their heritage language with their children to be eligible to take part in this study. Since only six participants completed the questionnaire, with five of them having very strong views in relation to maintaining their heritage language and one also being in favour, all participants were eligible. All participants mentioned different activities and actions practised with their children to encourage positivity towards their heritage language. Most of the participants stated that they had no expectations from the state/school, although feasible suggestions to help in their journey were given. Finally, the study calls for an update to the National Curriculum Framework to allow all students attending Maltese schools to have access to instruction in their heritage language, and to offer them the opportunity to achieve a strong sense of identity irrespective of their country of origin.

Master in Access to Education
(Multicultural Responsive Education)

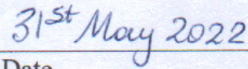
May 2022

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the material that I submitted in this dissertation towards the award of the Master in Access to Education is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part-fulfilment of the award named above.



Josephine Grech



Date

DEDICATION

To my dear husband Ivan for his constant love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci, for her guidance and support, and for encouraging and inspiring me throughout the whole dissertation process.

My most heartfelt appreciation goes to my husband Ivan for his patience, constant encouragement, and for having complete faith in me. A special thanks also goes to my daughters Erica and Thea for their constant encouragement, and my parents-in-law Marisa and John Grech, for all the help and support they give me.

My sincere gratitude and appreciation go also to my beloved parents Maria and Angelo, whom I miss very much, for my upbringing and the love for my national language they instilled in me.

I would also like to thank all the participants in this study for dedicating their valuable time, and for teaching me a lot through their participation in this study.

Finally, I thank God for guiding me and helping me not to give up.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	1
Background to the Study	2
Personal Motivation	2
The Study	7
Overview of Chapters	8
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review	10
Introduction	11
Maintaining Heritage Languages	11
Parents' Agency and Family Language Policy	12
<i>Family practice</i>	13
<i>Language ideology</i>	14
<i>Language management</i>	15
Inner Language/Language of the Heart	16

<i>Inner language</i>	16
<i>Language of the heart</i>	17
Losing the Heritage Language	19
<i>Factors which affect heritage language loss</i>	20
Consequences of Maintaining the Heritage Language	23
Benefits of Maintaining the Heritage Language.....	24
<i>Maintaining family relationships</i>	25
<i>Improving self-image</i>	27
<i>Career opportunities</i>	28
<i>Returning to the home country</i>	29
The Heritage Language as a Means to Support Other Languages and more .	29
Children's Preferences and Attitudes Towards Languages	31
Local Context.....	32
Conclusion	33
 CHAPTER 3: Methodology.....	 34
Introduction.....	35
Research Design.....	35
Ethical Consideration.....	36
The Research Process.....	36
<i>The research questions</i>	36
<i>The questionnaire</i>	37
<i>The participants</i>	38
<i>The interview</i>	40
<i>Data analysis and interpretations</i>	41
 CHAPTER 4: Results.....	 46
Why, according to the parents, is it important to preserve their children's heritage language?.....	48
<i>Identity, cultural heritage, and nationalism</i>	48

<i>Communication with family members</i>	49
<i>Future opportunities</i>	51
What is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their languages?	53
<i>Talking to their children in their heritage language</i>	54
<i>Home-language policy</i>	55
<i>Reading books in heritage language</i>	56
<i>Watching TV or videos</i>	56
<i>Listening to music</i>	56
<i>Playing games</i>	57
<i>Additional language lessons</i>	57
Challenges encountered by parents.....	58
<i>Change in language since the start of school</i>	60
<i>Code-switching and language mixing</i>	61
<i>Child's choice of language to communicate</i>	62
<i>Lack of time to enrol in language lessons</i>	63
<i>Knowing how to speak the language but not how to read and write</i>	64
<i>Archaic language / expressions etc ...</i>	65
Parents' hopes and concerns about child's heritage language.....	66
What type of support services would parents expect or wish to receive from the school or host country in this regard?	66
<i>Presentations at school about different traditions and languages</i>	67
<i>Lending of school infrastructure</i>	68
<i>Language lessons on a weekly basis</i>	68
 CHAPTER 5: Discussion and Conclusion.....	 70
Introduction	71
Discussion of Results	71
<i>The importance of the heritage language</i>	71
<i>Strategies Adopted by Parents</i>	73
Limitations and Recommendations	82

Conclusion	83
REFERENCES.....	88
APPENDICES	99
APPENDIX A	100
APPENDIX B	101
APPENDIX C	102
APPENDIX D	103
APPENDIX E	104
APPENDIX F.....	106
APPENDIX G	107
APPENDIX H.....	109
APPENDIX I.....	111
APPENDIX J	112

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Number of students enrolled in formal education by nationality, in Malta. (Statistics shown should be interpreted in the context of the COVID-19 situation.)	6
Table 2 - Demographic of Participants	38
Table 3 - Duration of Interviews.....	40
Table 4 - Identity, cultural heritage, and nationalism	48
Table 5 - Communicative language with family members	50
Table 6 - Future opportunities.....	52
Table 7 - Practices by parents	54
Table 8 - Challenges encountered by parents	59
Table 9 - Parents' expectations from school/state	67
Table 10 - Parents' ideas about further help by school/state	69

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Language used at School-by-School Sector (n=357) (Vella, 2019 p. 181)	4
Figure 2 - Migrant Learners in Malta 2013-2017	4
Figure 3 - Theory of Common Underlying Proficiency	30
Figure 4 - Colour-Coded Data Corpus.....	42
Figure 5 - Collated Data Sets.....	43
Figure 6 - Codes Under Themes	45
Figure 7 - Layout	47

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Term/Meaning
BEQ	Bilingualism and Emotional Questionnaire
BFLA	Bilingual First Language Acquisition
EU	European Union
FL	Foreign language
HL	Heritage language
HLL	Heritage language learner/s
L1	First language
L2	Second language
L3	Third language
L4	Fourth language
L5	Fifth language
LX	Any other language after first language
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
P	Participant
US	United States (of America)
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Background to the Study

The aim of this research study is to explore the reasons behind parents' desires to maintain the heritage language with their children even when they are living in a new country where the language spoken is not the same as theirs. This research also aims to find out more about how these parents are managing to maintain their language and what support they expect from the host country in this regard.

The 'heritage language' is a language that is different from the dominant language of where someone lives (Kelleher, 2010). The heritage language of the students in this study was also their first language. However, when they eventually started school, they were exposed to another language rather than their native/heritage language. In this research the term 'heritage language' is used interchangeably with the terms 'native language' or 'home language'. This is done to distinguish between the language that is spoken and learnt in the host country versus the language spoken in their home country.

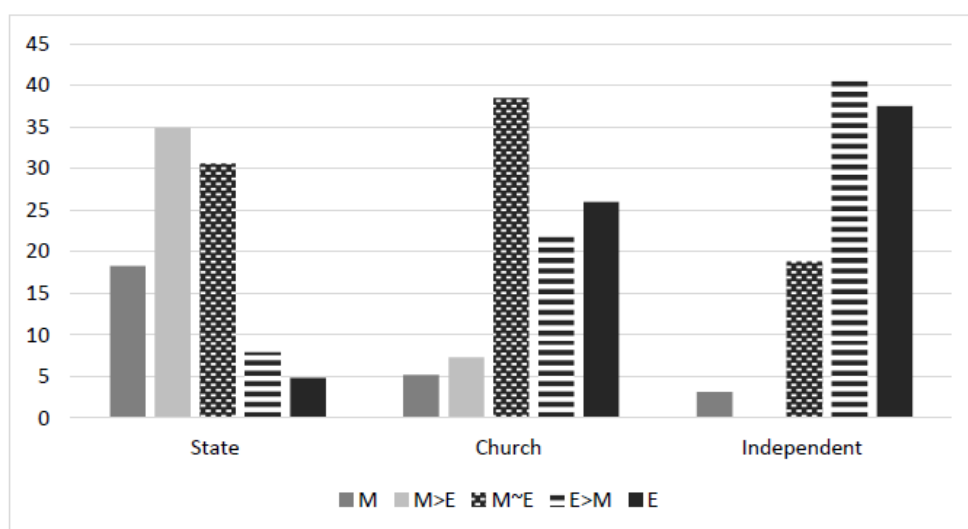
Personal Motivation

Although Malta is a bilingual country, where both Maltese and English are officially given the same importance, Maltese is the national language of the country. However, not all parents whose native language is Maltese speak to their children in this language. According to Gatt et al. (2016), most parents use mainly English with their young ones. I could confirm this during my early motherhood years, where I encountered different Maltese people from all walks of life addressing my daughter, then a baby or a toddler, in English, assuming that it was the language she used to speak. Since speaking to my daughter in my native language comes naturally to me, at the time, I found this strange. This turned to concern after meeting friends whose children could not speak their national language because they were always spoken to in English.

In recent years many have questioned whether the Maltese language will survive in this digital era (Bartolo, 2018). As a practitioner teacher in a state school, I encounter a number of Maltese students who are not able to speak their national language. Reference to this is also made in Azzopardi (2020), stating that “... the reasons behind this include the use of English in the classroom due to the presence of foreign students, and the bombardment of social media, which facilitates the use of the English language rather than their national one”. In addition, as stated by Vella (2019), there appeared to be “... a link between use of English in independent schools and use of Maltese in state schools, and church schools being a sort of middle-ground, with students favouring English in most cases” (p. 188). There are various reasons for this phenomenon. As quoted by Vella (2019), according to Bagley (2001) “[i]t was concluded that the use of English was associated with status and sophistication; English is associated with the more prestigious domains” (p. 174). In addition, the use of English as a lingua franca has gained both political power and economic value in today’s globalised world, as stated by Curdt-Christiansen (2016). Bonnici (2010) argues that Maltese people who speak English are associated with snobbery, while people who find it difficult to express themselves in English are typically associated with lower socioeconomic groups or assumed to have a low level of education.

Whatever the reason for this, it worries me to encounter Maltese students who are not able to speak and understand their own native language.

While reading for this Master’s course, I became intrigued by why and how foreign parents living in Malta feel the need to teach their heritage language to their children despite living miles away from their home country, while many Maltese parents do not teach their national language to their children even though they are still living in their home country.



M=Always in Maltese; M>E= In Maltese more often than in English; M~E= In Maltese & English equally; E>M= In English more often than in Maltese; E=Always in English.

Figure 1 - Language used at School-by-School Sector (n=357) (Vella, 2019 p. 181)

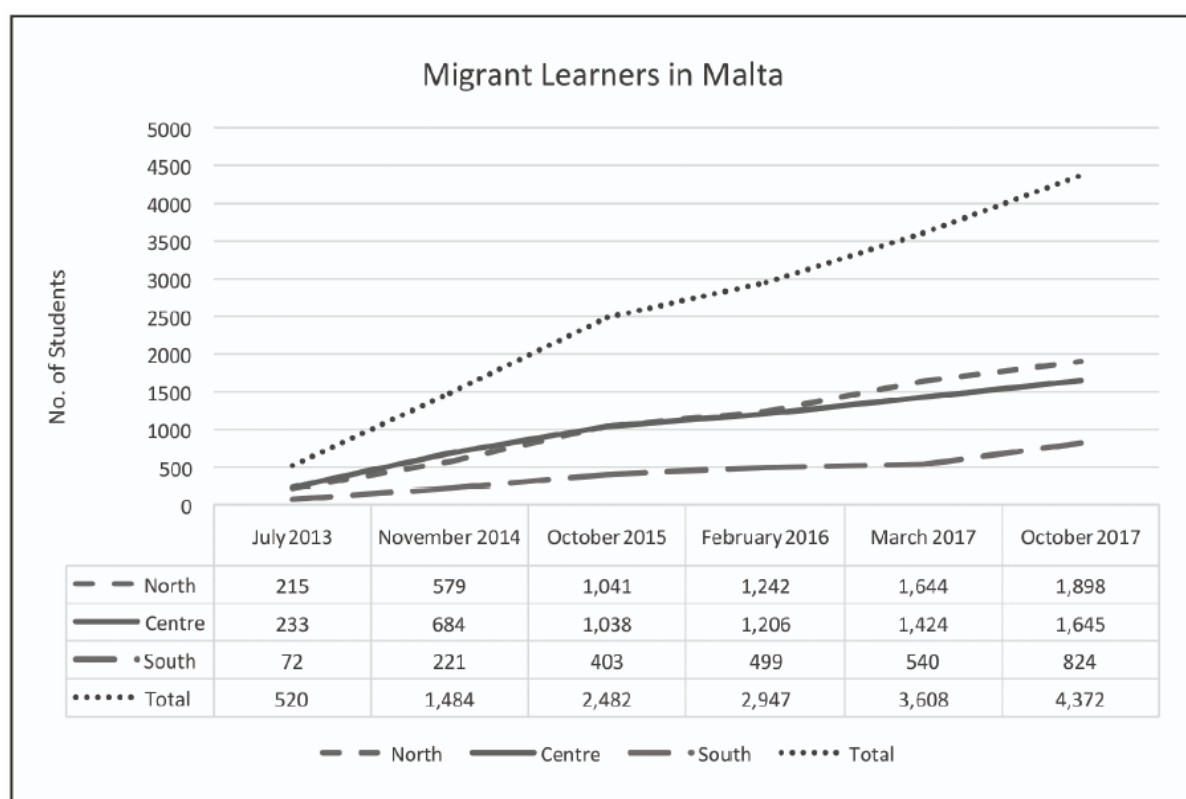


Figure 2 - Migrant Learners in Malta 2013-2017

In the globalised world of today, migration is commonplace. The reasons for these movements of people vary from economic, social, political, to environmental (Cummins, 2001; News European Parliament, 2020). Malta is not an exception to all of this. In the past decades, Malta has had an influx of foreigners, especially since the country joined the European Union. The percentage of migrants among the total population in Malta has increased from 3% in 2004 to 17% in 2019 (EUROSTAT 2020). Figure 2, extracted from a previous study by Caruana, Scaglione, and Vassallo Gauci (2019), also shows an increase in migrant learners in Maltese schools between 2013 and 2017. This significant increase shows a steady trend, like the one shown in Table 1, extracted from a report provided by the National Statistics Office (2021), which indicates a further increase by the scholastic year 2019/2020. The report indicates that 13.5% of the total number of students enrolled in Maltese schools attending formal years during the academic year 2019/2020 are of foreign nationality.

As a result, in all local schools without exception, one may find students who are first- or second-generation migrants whose parents speak a language which is not Maltese. As a matter of fact, according to the MERIDUM Survey of 2010 in Malta (Caruana, Coposescu, & Scaglione, 2013), already 14.6% of the respondents had a heritage language that is neither Maltese nor English (Caruana, Scaglione, & Vassallo Gauci, 2019). Fenech and Seguna (2020) state that in 2019 there was an increase of 700% in the number of international students. Writing in *Malta Today* (2021), journalist James Debono notes that “[t]his is particularly the case in St Clare College, where numbers grew from 24.2% in 2015 to 35.7% in 2019; and in Maria Regina College where numbers increased from 20.1% in 2015 to 28.5% in 2019” (para. 9). Italians represent the largest community of foreign learners in our schools. Figures show that “...there has been a 16% increase of Italian learners in our schools between 2017 and 2019 and that these numbers did not change in 2019-20. In 2018-19, 721

(65%) of these learners were either attending kindergarten or primary schooling” (Caruana & Pace, 2021, p. 149).

Notwithstanding all this, policy makers still ignore this reality and “refer very vaguely to the need to promote the languages and cultures of origin of migrants” (Caruana, Scaglione, & Vassallo Gauci, 2019, p. 331). As mentioned by Caruana, Scaglione and Vassallo Gauci (2019), although various positive measures to support migrant pupils have taken place since 2010, “there are no references to the maintenance and the promotion of the languages of origin of the migrants” (p. 338).

Table 7. Number of students¹ enrolled by academic year and nationality

Nationality	Academic year		Change	Percentage change
	2018-2019	2019-2020		
Maltese	50,481	50,413	-68	-0.1
Other EU ²	3,820	3,236	-584	-15.3
<i>of which:</i>				
Italian	1,044	1,130	86	8.2
Bulgarian	371	384	13	3.5
Romanian	204	211	7	3.4
Hungarian	159	171	12	7.5
British	793	n/a	-	-
Non-EU ³	3,161	4,626	1,465	46.3
<i>of which:</i>				
Libyan	598	609	11	1.8
Serbian	434	549	115	26.5
Syrian	353	448	95	26.9
Russian	192	195	3	1.6
British	n/a	817	-	-
Unspecified	8	9	1	12.5
Total	57,470	58,284	814	1.4

¹ Includes students attending pre-primary (excluding childcare), primary and secondary education only.

² UK is excluded from 'Other EU' as from 2019-2020. Refer to methodological note 8.

³ UK is included in 'Non-EU' as from 2019-2020. Refer to methodological note 8.

Note: n/a = not applicable

Table 1 - Number of students enrolled in formal education by nationality, in Malta. (Statistics shown should be interpreted in the context of the COVID-19 situation.)

Studies show that a language is more than just a means of communication. There is an identity and a culture within a heritage language. Losing the heritage language means also losing culture and traditions (Brown, 2011). A look at the global scenario can help put this

into perspective. The World Watch Institute stated that between 50% and 90% of the languages in the world will disappear during this century (Vizcarra & Mikami, 2005). According to the United Nations (2013), between the year 1990 and 2013 the United States had the largest absolute number of foreign-born populations from around the world. However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau 2011 data, almost 79% of individuals who were five years and older only spoke English at home (Ryan, 2013). This means that a large number of people, alongside their language, may also be losing their cultures and traditions to assimilate their host country's language and lifestyle. Consequently, these students may feel isolated and unwelcome in the schools. In fact, according to OECD-PISA (2017), only 51.5% of migrant learners residing in Malta feel a sense of belonging at school when compared to 70.7% of Maltese-born students. Since this study took place prior to the aforementioned measures in favour of migrant learners, it would be interesting to find out if the situation has improved. The well-being of each student is important, otherwise:

...there is the risk of an increase in the number of learners who could be excluded from the scholastic system, with inevitable negative consequences not only on their performance at school, but also on their behaviour and their contribution to society in its entirety once they become adults (Caruana, Scaglione, & Vassallo Gauci, 2019, p. 340)

As stated by Cummins (2001), even though many people are moving to other countries, some still find the “presence of diverse communities as a problem and see few positive consequences for the host society” (p. 15). While neo-fascists encourage expulsion of immigrants, other more liberal groups encourage ‘assimilation’. However, “[A]ssimilationist policies in education discourage students from maintaining their mother tongues” (p. 15).

The Study

This study was conducted with six parents of primary school children aged between three and eight years old, who have recently relocated to Malta. All the parents who

participated in the study have shown a keen interest in maintaining their heritage language with their children for various reasons. The parents were invited for a one-to-one interview during which they were asked questions about why and how they are maintaining the heritage language with their children. They were also asked about any expectations they have from the school or the state to help them maintain the heritage language. All questions were open-ended, and the interview was conducted in simple English. The interviews were recorded and transcribed with all the necessary permissions and in conformity with the Data Protection Act. The data was then analysed according to the question being answered by making use of the six steps identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis.

The main Research Questions guiding this study are the following:

- Why, according to parents, is it important to preserve their children's heritage language?
- What is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their heritage language?
- What type of support services would parents expect or wish to receive from the school or the host country in this regard?

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Following the first chapter, which is an introduction to the study, the literature review in Chapter 2 highlights findings from published research about different aspects in relation to maintaining heritage languages, namely parents' agency and family language policy, as well as benefits of maintaining the heritage language also as a means to support the learning of other languages. In Chapter 3 a description of the research design and methodology used is given together with the ethical considerations for the study. The process of how the questionnaires were set up and distributed to the prospective participants and how the participants were chosen is also

described. At the end of the chapter, the methods adopted for data collection, data analysis and interpretation are explained in detail. In Chapter 4 the results of the interviews are organised and analysed into themes indicating the connection between codes under each theme and the commonalities of codes between the participants. In the final chapter a summary of the findings is discussed and compared to the existing published studies. In the same chapter the limitations of the study are discussed, and recommendations are made for future research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will present findings from published research in relation to heritage languages focusing on how the heritage language is maintained when families immigrate to other countries, with particular reference to the role of the parents. Any known consequences and benefits of maintaining the heritage language in a foreign country by the immigrants themselves and by the generations that follow will be discussed, together with the children's preferences and attitudes towards both heritage and newly acquired languages.

Maintaining Heritage Languages

A language is acquired through imitation, reinforcement, and active construction (Fisher, 2014). There are three possible ways to maintain a heritage language, namely *formal teaching*, *non-formal teaching*, and *informal teaching*.

As explained by Kamau (n.d.), *formal teaching* is usually known as classroom-based teaching offered in public institutions in line with a curriculum. Teaching is usually done by highly trained teachers and lasts several weeks or months. Formal teaching entails learning outcomes which are measured by some form of assessments or tests (Council of Europe, n.d.). In some countries where a concentration of immigrants from the same country resides, parents have the option to send their children to bilingual schools. Attending such schools, students have the opportunity to attend lessons in their heritage language while attending other lessons in the host society's language. This system may be found in Canada, where examples of these schools are sometimes called Immersion Programme schools (Roy & Galiev, 2011). In their study, Roy and Galiev (2011) refer to schools where students enrol in programmes to study French, either starting from Kindergarten or Grade 1 as 'Early Immersion Programmes', or 'Late Immersion' where students join in Grade 7 but have a two-

year period learning the French language before they join their peers who started in the Early Immersion Program, in Grade 9. Both schools have the same programme for English.

Non-formal teaching takes place voluntarily, and although it may lead to certification, it is not mandatory. It usually takes place in legalised educational structured contexts such as during afterschool programmes or evening classes where students participate at their own will. Studies show that a good number of students learn their native language non-formally. For example, Moroccan women have played an important role in keeping the Amazigh language alive despite it being in danger of extinction (Catama et al., 2018, p. 41). As cited by Catama et al. (2018) “[I]n the same manner, many cultural groups in the United States, including Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Russians, and Vietnamese, attend heritage language programmes on weekends or through after-school programs (Cho, 2000; Draper & Hicks, 2000; Lee, 2002; Siegel, 2004; Wang, 1996)” (p. 40).

Informal teaching takes place in contexts where learning is not the primary goal. It happens by coincidence and without prior intention (Costa Waetzold & Melo-Pfeifer, 2022). Informal teaching of a language is common when parents speak the heritage language at home with their children to help them learn or practise the language.

Parents’ Agency and Family Language Policy

Studies show that the family plays an important role in maintaining the heritage language. It is the parents’ choice of the language used at home that encourages children to learn or practise their heritage language (De Houwer, 2017; Dekeyser & Stevens, 2018). However, parents who migrate with their children to countries where their native language is not spoken may find it difficult to maintain and keep their native language alive, for various reasons. De Houwer (2017), in her survey about parental language input patterns and children’s bilingual use, emphasises the importance of the parents’ frequent and consistent

use of the minority language at home. Dekeyser and Stevens (2019) establish that the “children’s proficiency in the HL is related to measures describing the language use of the parents within the household (but not that of the other children in the family), as well as the mother’s proficiency in the HL” (p. 160). Tse (2001) strongly believes in the parents’ role in maintaining the heritage language:

Parents are in many ways gatekeepers to the heritage language: whether parents speak to their children in the native language; the attitudes parents hold about maintenance of the language; whether opportunities are sought out for the child to be exposed to or to formally study the language; and whether parents provide reading materials in the home or model uses of literacy (...); all may have an impact on whether and to what extent the language is retained by children (p. 37).

In his book ‘Language Policy’, Spolsky (2004) refers to three intertwined dimensions of family language policy, namely: i) practice; ii) ideology and iii) management.

Family practice

The choice of language spoken at home between household members is one of the keys to the children’s heritage language maintenance. Research indicates that the role of the mother is an influential factor in the maintenance of the heritage language in children. Children tend to use the heritage language more often with their mother than with their father. This was also noted by Dekeyser and Stevens (2019) in their study, as they state: “The picture is thus one in which children’s proficiency in a HL is strongly driven by the parents’ (especially the mother’s) proficiency in, and use of the HL” (p. 160). Chumak-Horbatsch (2010) states that the mother’s role is vital to communicate language skills, especially oral skills. However, it is worth noting that family dynamics are changing, and that may not always be the case today. Another aspect may also be that the mother’s and father’s influence may depend on the country of origin and the family’s culture (Nesteruk, 2010).

In her action research, Kouritzin (2000) shares her thoughts and struggles as a researcher and a mother herself. In her article, she describes how and why she and her husband decided to speak to their children in the heritage language only, delaying their exposure to the majority language until they started school. Later, once they began going to school, they adopted the one-language-one-parent strategy, hoping that their children would grow up to be bilingual – speaking, reading, and writing in both languages. This decision was influenced by seeing their friends’ struggles in maintaining their heritage language with their own children. “Even though Japanese was the only language both parents spoke well, these families found that their children became dominant in English and never learnt to read and write Japanese” (Kouritzin, 2000, p. 312).

Language ideology

As explained by Dekeyser and Stevens (2019), the language ideology in a family is often understood to be driven by parents who believe in the benefits of bilingualism. This may not be an easy or automatic decision. The parents whose ideology is strong about maintaining the heritage language tend to practise the heritage language at home. However, parents often find themselves in a dilemma on whether they should talk with their children in their native language to help them learn or maintain it, or whether to talk to their children in the society’s language to help them learn it faster, and in that way be accepted and be able to cope at schools (Suarez, 2002; Kouritzin, 2000). Many parents may believe that unless they speak to their children in the society’s language, their children would take longer to learn it (De Houwer, 2017). The parents’ ideology plays an important role, so much so that parents may feel pressured to use the society’s language, even though they are not fluent in it, because of the high value they place on it. This may be done to help their children increase their proficiency in it (De Houwer, 2017). In her study, Nesteruk (2010) establishes that some parents begin speaking the English language with their children in preparation for when they

begin school in the hope that this prevents them from ‘falling behind’ or being recognised as an immigrant and asked about their origins. Therefore, the language ideology of parents plays an important role about the language choice, and it may not always be in favour of their heritage language. However, one must understand that having a child feeling like an alien in an unknown place with people around all talking in an unfamiliar language may be very traumatic. In fact, Drury (2007) explains that children who cannot speak the majority language may use a disengagement strategy to cope with the situation at school. This strategy may persist throughout the formal schooling years, which results in academic failures. This may also happen if the parents themselves are not very fluent in the majority language. Kratzmann (2011) states that parents are hurt and confused as they wish their children to be able to speak both the minority language and the majority language, while also understanding and supporting the importance of the majority language. As a matter of fact, “negative feelings about their children’s non-use of the minority language are mostly expressed by parents in families where two languages are spoken at home, that is in families where children are growing up with two languages from birth” (De Houwer, 2017, p. 238).

Language management

Language management refers to intentional efforts in controlling the language that people use. This is the third dimension in the Family Language Policy mentioned by Spolsky (2004). Language management by parents intending to maintain the heritage language within their family may lead to their choosing to talk only in the heritage language while at home. “For instance, parents regulate their children’s speech by declaring an ‘only mother tongue at home’ rule, or by not responding to their children when they use English” (Krashen, 1998). In countries where the number of immigrants is high, parents may choose to live in particular neighbourhoods or choose particular schools for their children. These parents may also opt to send their children to heritage language schools (outside school hours) to further increase their

competencies in the language (Brown, 2011). One of the participants in the study by Nesteruk (2010) reveals the extent of the efforts some parents make to preserve their heritage language. “We work very hard on making sure that he keeps his Russian. He goes to a Russian school, we have a Russian nanny for the baby, and we all are trying to speak Russian at home” (Nesteruk, 2010).

The participants in Brown’s study were well-informed of the importance of maintaining the heritage language and clearly stated they do not wish to repeat the mistake made by earlier generations of Korean immigrants. However, it was established that there was a discrepancy between the parents’ beliefs and what they actually did. In this study the parents sent their children to heritage language schools because they were unable to converse entirely in Korean at home, and this was confirmed by the fact that the younger siblings of the participants in this study were unable to speak Korean (Brown, 2011). Brown concluded that although the parents’ beliefs influence the children’s attitudes towards the heritage language, its effective transmission remains a complicated task that cannot rest solely on their efforts if it is to be successful.

Inner Language/Language of the Heart

Inner language

Inner speech, as defined by Guerrero (2005), is “the internal (covert) and nonaudible forms of speech for oneself, such as mental rehearsal and internal self-talk” (p. xii). Pavlenko (2011) describes inner speech as a “subvocal or silent self-talk, i.e., mental activity that takes place in an identifiable linguistic code and is directed primarily at the self (the dialogic function of inner speech)” (p. 242). Most of the time, the heritage language, which is usually the language learnt from birth, is the language used unknowingly while expressing inner thoughts and feelings. However, Pavlenko (2014) found that “inner speech in the L1 is used

for self-regulation and self-evaluation, inner speech in the L2 starts as ‘imitation, repetition of other’s utterances, vicarious responses (. . .), mental rehearsal (. . .), and language play’ before being used more for dialogic purposes” (p. 218). Dewaele (2015) found that it all depends on the person’s thoughts and the situation.

One participant, Michelle (Taiwanese L1, Mandarin L2, English L3), resident in the United Kingdom for 17 years and married to an English speaker, reported that her inner speech shifted from English to Mandarin depending on the linguistic identity of the people she was thinking about (p. 4).

It was concluded that multilinguals mainly use their L1 for inner speech and emotional inner speech while the L2, L3, L4 and L5 were less used. Larsen et al. (2002) also found that the age at which an immigrant arrives at the foreign country may determine the language choice for inner speech. In that study, conducted with Polish immigrants in Denmark, participants who were older at the time they arrived in Denmark reported more use of Polish for inner speech, whereas the group who was younger reported more use of Danish.

Students in a study at Baguio City stated that since they had to use the community language instead of their heritage language at school, they found it difficult to take part in lessons and express their thoughts (Catama et al., 2018). This clearly shows that their inner language is different from the community language that they are expected to use, and this has the effect of limiting their participation in class.

Language of the heart

Typically, the first language(s) is/are found to be more emotional by multilinguals, and is considered as the language of the heart (Dewaele, 2008). In multilingual societies, the language developed in one’s infancy may be different from the language spoken daily as an adult. Nevertheless, researchers still believe that the language of the heart has an important function in one’s life.

The heart language can simply be described as that language we were taught when we were young. It is the language that children use to express what is in their hearts, hence the name heart language. Using this language, children can master different concepts. It is, therefore, pretty effective or most effective for mastering new skills, concepts, and even communication (heartlanguage.org, n.d.).

The language of the heart is the language a person feels comfortable using when talking about inner feelings and inner thoughts. Yu (2013) also states that the heritage language is used to communicate effectively with family members and to express intimacy. Most participants in BEQ [Bilingualism and Emotional Questionnaire] reported that the phrase “I love you” had most emotional weight in their L1 (Dewaele, 2008). However, Dewaele states that “[w]hile most multilingual parents reported a preference for the L1 for emotional communication with their children, some parents reported that as a result of secondary socialisation their LX had acquired strong emotional connotations and had become their language of preference when expressing emotions with their children” (2015, p. 5). Dewaele (2015) argues that the context of acquisition of a language has “significant effects on frequency of inner speech and emotional inner speech” (p. 14). If the language is only learnt through formal instruction, it is less likely to be used later in life. On the other hand, when the language learnt at school is used outside, or when the language is completely learnt outside school, it is more likely to be used for inner speech and emotional inner speech. Pavlenko (2012) identifies this theory earlier and states that the time of acquisition has an effect on one’s feelings. She states that if the language is acquired in childhood, it may have ‘emotional connotations’ as it may affect the limbic system, and if the language is learnt later in life, it is usually seen as ‘disembodied’.

Losing the Heritage Language

Unless any of the mentioned language learning takes place, that is, through formal learning, non-formal learning, or informal learning, there is a high probability that the heritage language of migrants will be lost. As a matter of fact, parents who choose to simply speak to their children in their heritage language might still not be doing enough to support their children in acquiring the four main language skills of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing. Catama et al. (2018) suggest that in order to support full acquisition and/or maintain a heritage language, it is not enough for the parents to speak the language only. Further efforts by the parents, like providing proper resources, are required, including reading and exposure to books at home. Successful transmission therefore often boils down to how strongly the parents feel about maintaining the heritage language with their children (Suarez, 2002). Tse (2001a, 2001b) provides a number of suggestions for higher levels of literacy in the heritage language. Amongst others, importance is to be given not only to speech with family members and peers but also to environmental prints such as newspaper, magazines, road signs and restaurant menus; shared reading by the parents to their children in the heritage language; access to audio books; and the provision of interesting reading material. De Houwer (2007) found evidence that in situations where both the minority and the majority languages are spoken at home, it is not guaranteed that the children will learn and speak both languages. The active use of the minority language is not automatic (p. 417). The same result was evident in Brown's (2011) study. "Parents' beliefs do indeed influence their children's attitude toward HL, but they are apparently not sufficient in helping the children effectively maintain their HL" (p. 36). Other researchers argue that although the heritage language may be used at home, this is not an assurance that the children will learn and speak the language. As Yamamoto (2001) and other researchers before her found, unlike the common belief that children who are born and raised in "cross-native/community language families will naturally

and spontaneously acquire the languages of both parents” (p. 127), such children may actually be highly influenced by the mainstream language. This influence makes them abandon the parents’ language and retain only the local language which is most commonly used.

Factors which affect heritage language loss

There are different factors that obstruct success in maintaining heritage language. The child’s position in the family, the child’s age at migration, and whether one or both parents are able to speak the majority language are amongst some of the factors which will be briefly discussed below. Notwithstanding this, parents hold the key role in heritage language maintenance (De Houwer, 2007).

Child’s position. Research shows that older children tend to be more proficient in their heritage language than their younger siblings. This results because the older children are more likely to be born in the home country of the parents and to have lived for a period in a country dominated by their heritage language. On the other hand, the younger siblings are more likely to spend their early years in the country dominated by a local language which is not their heritage language, and therefore it is more probable that they will be more fluent in it (Stevens & Ishizawa, 2007). Dekeyser and Stevens (2019) also found that “native-born children and children who are the youngest child in the family are less likely to be proficient in the HL than children who are foreign-born or either middle or the oldest children in the family” (p. 156) – (native-born, in this case, refers to children born in the country where the family has re-located).

Moreover, various studies show that the process of fluency of a heritage language over three-generations almost always follows the same pattern. The first generation of immigrants maintain their heritage language while learning enough of the majority language to get by.

The second generation of immigrants learn and fluently speak the majority language while they continue to talk in their heritage language at home, while the third generation replaces its home language with the majority language and completely eliminates the heritage language. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) state that bilingualism in second-generation immigrant children is indeed an exception.

Child's age at migration. Stevens (2015) found a relationship between the age at which children arrive in their destination country and their proficiency in the dominant language of the country. Research states that the 'age of onset' to learn the second language, which is in the early years of a child, may be the reason why children's age at migration may affect language acquisition success. Therefore, the child's age at migration may determine whether the child will be proficient in the dominant language. "Thus, foreign-born children who enter the United States late in childhood or in adolescence are doubly disadvantaged: They have less time to become proficient in English before adulthood, and during that time span, they are slower English-language learners" (Stevens, 2015, p. 995). Looking at this from the heritage language perspective, this theory may mean that the younger the child is at age of migration, the larger the probability they lose their heritage language.

Parents' fluency in the languages. The parents' fluency in the majority language may be the key behind the children's maintenance of the heritage language. Having either both parents able to speak both the heritage language and the majority language or having a one-parent one-language environment will mean that the children will have access to both languages. In such cases, De Houwer (2007) states: "Children growing up with two languages invariably learn to speak the majority language. The minority language is the one that is at risk of not being spoken" (p. 419). De Houwer (2017) emphasises the fact that the language patterns used by the parents remain of utmost importance. He states, "[t]hus parents have a major role to play in making their bilingual families' experience a positive one" (p.

422). The reanalysis of Yamamoto's (2001) study, conducted in Japan, shows that children with whom both parents spoke the minority language – English – at home were more able to speak the language than both those who only had one parent speaking the home language as well as those who had both parents speaking both languages.

The society language. Since children spend a substantial amount of time at school, wherein the majority language is enforced and spoken, their attitude towards their heritage language and the majority language may be affected (Dekeyser & Stevens, 2019). Besides, the heritage language learners cannot use their language in the community, and therefore have fewer opportunities to practise the language. Torres and Turner (2017) state that “[b]ecause HLLs may have limited opportunities to practise the Spanish language within both community and education settings, language loss may occur” (p. 850). On the other hand, some parents who move to the US in the hope for a better future for their children do all it takes for their children to be successful in US society, including ensuring that they learn the English language to a high degree of proficiency. For this reason, the parents themselves contribute to the loss of the heritage language in order for their children to acquire fluency in English. Some opt to use English with their children at the expense of abandoning their own heritage language (Brown, 2011). In her studies, Suarez (2002) found that some Spanish parents, second and third generation migrants, spoke English with their children 90% of the time, resulting in children not having the chance to become proficient in their heritage language. A participant in Brown's (2011) study revealed: “When I was little, 80-to-90% of the conversation at home was in Korean, but it became more like 50% Korean and 50% English as I grew older” (p. 35). This shows that parents themselves reduce their use of the heritage language with their own children, and this could be another reason why the younger siblings in the family tend to speak more fluently in the majority language and use the heritage language less.

Children's attitudes. Studies show that young children attending schools where their native language is not used tend to get the message that their home language is not important. These children try to learn the school language as quickly as possible in order to feel accepted and cope with the situation. This is in line with what has been previously mentioned in relation to the child's age of migration. Therefore, Stevens and Ishizawa (2007) findings may be the reason why, they state that younger siblings make more use of the new language than the older siblings, and in so doing reinforcing the change of language in the household. It is worth noting what Cummins (2001) points out, that although people are amazed by how quickly bilingual children in their early years manage to "pick up" conversational skills in a majority language, they are sometimes less conscious that children may lose their mother language as quickly, even in the home context. This language loss depends on how much the language is used in the community (p. 19). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) state that from a large-scale study of over 5,000 second-generation adolescents, the majority of the participants were English-dominant, preferred to speak English, with only 30% of them being fluent in their heritage language.

Consequences of Maintaining the Heritage Language

There are no negative consequences for maintaining one's heritage language, although it is a known fact that people may suffer from linguistic discrimination. This is also known as "linguicism or languagism" (Catama et al., 2018, p. 52). Moreover, Cummins (2001) states that "[i]f students retain their culture and language, then they are viewed as less capable of identifying with the mainstream culture and learning the mainstream language of the society" (p. 15). Respondents in Catama et al. (2018) stated that they felt insulted and inferior when people uttered words from their heritage language and played around with them in a manner that made fun of how they sounded. Some students confided that they experienced difficulty in socialising with others. They felt inferior when using their heritage language because some

neighbours or classmates made fun of them. Consequently, they had to use other languages which were more commonly understood by locals. Respondents in the same study also stated that their heritage language was only accepted with “their families, relatives and friends who speak the same language as their own outside the university campus” (p. 49). Respondents also stated that their heritage language was also being associated with their way of living. They felt they were being discriminated through the association of their heritage language with their status in life, and in their being regarded as different. Moreover, Gandara and Contreras (2009) claim that schools often look at English learners as a ‘problem’, often sending them to a remedial programme. In this study Gandara and Contreras state that if the learning environment is psychologically intimidating as a result of encounters with undesirable attitudes by peers, this will affect the students’ acquisition of the language. Sofu (2009) also states that “although the parents are reported to wish that their children speak Arabic, they were afraid that their children would be isolated in a Turkish-speaking environment” (p. 251). An excerpt from her study shows that parents give advice to their children to avoid speaking Arabic in public when they leave their hometown to attend university in a bigger city: “Most probably he [the father of the participant] had the fear of my being discriminated in my new environment” (p. 251).

Benefits of Maintaining the Heritage Language

Maintaining the heritage language while acquiring the second language may have many benefits. In being bilingual or multilingual, one benefits from better and more career opportunities, a better self-image, and the ability to communicate with the heritage language community without any difficulties (Krashen, 1998). Above all, as quoted by Cho (2015), being multilingual may have further benefits:

Peal and Lambert (1962) were among the first researchers to find a positive relationship between bilingualism and cognitive ability. Their study showed that bilingual children have greater cognitive

flexibility than do monolingual children and that bilingualism promotes academic achievement, which, in turn, fosters higher academic expectations. (p. 30)

Country leaders have yet to recognise the benefits to giving immigrants the support required for them to maintain their heritage language. This is counter-productive for the host country, as having multilingual individuals, in today's globalised world, is a social and economic asset (Cummins, 2001). Having schools focusing only on the children's abilities to speak English (in the case of USA and Canada) and driving them to assimilate in all possible ways the dominant social system is leading students to put aside their heritage language and culture, wherein later on in their schools years they'll be "(re-)engaged in formal study of their HL in the context of an FL classroom where they are tasked with re-learning what did not have to get lost in the first place" (Moore & Nash, 2020, p. 59). This shows lack of planning and results in waste of time and resources.

Maintaining family relationships

Some parents who ignored the heritage language when migrating to the USA eventually lose their means of communication with their children. Children who are not fluent in their heritage language and parents who are not fluent in English face communicative obstacles when discussing certain matters and values. Tseng and Fuligni (2000) found that the best parent-adolescent relationships from East Asian, Filipino, and Latin American backgrounds were ones where parents and adolescents spoke the heritage language with each other, as compared with similar relationships where each party spoke different languages, or only spoke English at home. King and Fogle (2006) state that various studies show that immigrants usually yearn to pass their heritage language on to their children to be able to transmit their culture and to encourage positive family interaction. Nesteruk (2010) also states that "[r]egardless of the grandparents' country of residence, all the participants emphasise the importance of maintaining their heritage language to facilitate

communication across generations” (p. 278). Better communication with the extended family does not necessarily mean the words spoken. As it is quoted by Costa Waetzold and Melo-Pfeifer (2020), “to learn a new way of languaging is not just to learn a new code, it is to enter another history of interactions and cultural practices and to learn ‘a new way of being in the world’” (Becker, 1995, p. 227). As explained by Kouritzin (2000), Japanese language in itself includes marks of respect for one’s elders, which is an integral part of Japanese culture. Knowing neither the Japanese culture nor the language, a Japanese youngster might be interpreted as rude when addressing an elder. That is why, sometimes, losing the heritage language means losing the cultural heritage as well.

Tseng & Fuligini (2000) note that children who are not so fluent in their native language find difficulties in expressing themselves with their parents in the heritage language, and may likewise struggle to fully understand their parents, leading to frustration. “Adolescents who conversed with their parents in different languages felt more emotionally distant from them and were less likely to engage in discussions with them than were youths who shared the same language with their parents” (p. 473). Meanwhile, Brown (2011) establishes that some Korean parents believe that when a family is unable to speak to each other in its heritage language, it is considered a broken family. This is because losing the heritage language causes loss of cultural heritage and “emotional disconnection”. “[I]t is the HL that connects immigrant identity and cultural heritage” (Brown, 2011, p. 33). Just as Kouritzin (2000) states in her article about the choice of words to be used in showing emotions with her children because her Japanese was not that good, the same experience is encountered by parents who are not so fluent in the society language when needing to communicate with their own children in the only language the children understand.

The emotions I feel do not translate well into the Japanese language, and those which I have seen expressed by Japanese mothers do not seem sufficiently intimate when I mouth them. I have no models

to teach me how a loving mother speaks when she strokes a child's hair, wipes away tears, cradles a newborn, introduces a puppy, points out the moon and the stars, splashes in the bathtub, or spreads her arms and says 'I love you this much'. (Kouritzin, 2000, p. 314)

Not knowing how to communicate in the heritage language may also create difficulties when visiting extended family members. De Houwer (2017) refers to anecdotal data of "children's embarrassment, shame or anger when they are unable to speak the minority language in interactions with extended family members in the country of origin" (p. 238). Additionally, parents may also have negative emotions about it. Anderson (2002) found that parents blame themselves when children do not acquire the heritage language and believe they are bad parents, feel rejected by the children, ashamed towards their own parents, and disappointed with their bilingual child rearing.

Improving self-image

Acquiring the heritage language helps in building self-confidence and in establishing positive cultural identities, besides having an advantage in overall academic skills development (Duff, 2008). Various studies show that children of bilinguals who were not able to acquire or are not proficient in the heritage language feel embarrassed about it. Children of bilinguals who were not given the chance to become proficient in the heritage language often report embarrassment for not being able to speak what they perceive as their native language, and regret the missed opportunities for jobs and deeper cultural connections and understanding (Cho, 2000). This was clearly declared by the participants in the study by Torres and Turner (2017) when they stated that they felt very anxious and uncomfortable speaking their heritage language around people they do not know or around native speakers, as they do not feel good enough in speaking the language. "I know how to speak, but like when I know that people are native speakers and that I stick out, it's embarrassing, because I don't speak it as well as I should, so yeah, I'd say it causes anxiety" (p. 847). Some

participants admitted that they rely a lot on Spanglish and/or code-switching and this is their motivation to learn the heritage language better – “to not look foolish to native speakers” (p. 848). Cho (2000) found that when one develops the heritage language, they may acquire personal and societal benefits as heritage language maintenance is found to be related to ethnic identity and better perception of cultural values. Schwartz et al. (2007) concluded that when the native language is neglected, it may be seen as a ‘steppingstone’ to abandoning one’s culture. This results in low self-esteem and lack of sense of identity. However, it is important to note that the importance of acquiring the heritage language should not lead to neglect of the community language. As Portes and Hao (2002) state, “[c]hildren who have remained attached to their parents’ language without learning English also display high levels of family solidarity, but have much lower self-esteem and ambition” (p. 907). Participants in the study for older children confessed about the embarrassment and shame they experienced when they could not understand what was going on, and how they felt when they were ridiculed for not being able to properly speak the majority language, while others felt proud of their bilingualism when they were able to speak both the minority and the majority language (DJI , 2000). Sofu (2009) states that participants in her study were not only proud of their identity but also worked hard to maintain their heritage language. This shows their positive attitude towards being bilingual.

Career opportunities

Knowledge of more than one language also results in improved career opportunities, giving parents further incentive to encourage their children to maintain the heritage language. King and Fogle (2006) state that parents’ ideology about learning or maintaining a language may be for occupational success among other factors. Having bilingual or multilingual children may be beneficial for every society, for various reasons. Peyton et al. (2001) state that businesses, diplomacy, and national security may benefit from bilingualism while Kuenzi

and Riddle (2005) report that bilinguals or multilinguals are especially important in national security, diplomacy, and international commerce. According to Carreira and Kagan (2011), there are 12 million school-age children in the USA who are bilingual or multilingual. Therefore, one must “protect the culture and linguistic rights of these individuals” as it “is not only beneficial for national security and economy, but it is also an ethical stance” (Moore & Nash, 2020, p. 56).

Returning to the home country

Among the benefits of maintaining the heritage language, there is the advantage of knowing that if the family or the children themselves wish or need to return to their homeland, it would be easier when it comes to communication. Nobody knows how their children’s lives will unfold. Immigrants living away from their homeland may have children as adventurous as themselves and might want or need to return to their homeland later in their life. In the study by Gandara & Contreras (2009), a participant originally from Ottawa also mentioned that one of the reasons she sent her children to the Immersion programme was that her children would be bilingual, and if they ever wanted to return to Ottawa, they would have better opportunities with a second language.

The Heritage Language as a Means to Support Other Languages and more

Some studies indicate that children will be in an advantageous position to acquire the second language when the heritage language is the only language which they have been exposed to by the age of 3 (Moore & Nash, 2020, p. 58). Moreover, Krashen (1998) found that students who develop good levels of literacy in their heritage language acquire their second language more easily. Krashen explains that in bilingual education, students may either experience ‘additive bilingualism’, that is, when they keep their native language while learning the second language, or ‘subtractive bilingualism’, which occurs when they lose

their first language while acquiring their second language. According to Cummins (1981), when students experience additive bilingualism, they tend to experience intellectual benefits, while subtractive bilingualism led to unpleasant educational experiences and eventually early dropouts. Cummins (2001) also stated that when children come to school with good knowledge of their mother tongue, they will be better equipped to learn the school language and be able to “succeed educationally”. In his theory known as ‘The Theory of Underlying Proficiency’ (Figure 3) Cummins states that the skills and metalinguistic knowledge acquired during first language learning will be used during the acquisition of the second language, which makes it easier to acquire. This would mean that the child can comprehend lessons better in the school language and is more likely to be successful. Moreover, Cummins (2001) states that “bilingual children may develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through two different languages” (p. 16).

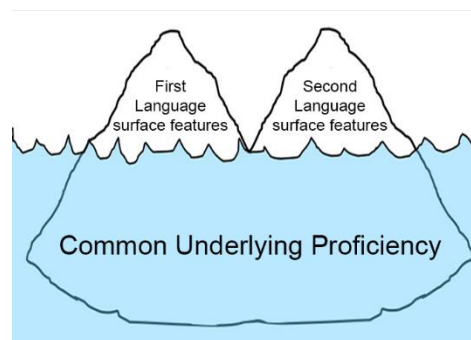


Figure 3 - Theory of Common Underlying Proficiency

In their study, Bailystok et al. (2012) discuss the consequences of bilingualism on the brain and mind. They state that “[t]he need to manage two jointly activated languages apparently leads to an enhancement of frontal-posterior attentional control mechanisms with the consequence that other types of cognitive control are also enhanced” (p. 245). They also describe “the possibility that lifelong bilingualism protects against age-related cognitive

decline and may even postpone the onset of symptoms of dementia” (p. 246). Cummins (2001) emphasises the importance of the promotion of the mother tongue at school and claims that:

Mother tongue promotion in the school helps develop not only the mother tongue but also children’s abilities in the majority school language... [b]y contrast, when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue and, consequently, its development stagnates, their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined. (p. 18)

Nesteruk (2010) also refers to the knowledge of the participating parents in her study who mentioned various benefits for their children when learning the heritage language.

Participants name the following advantages: being better prepared for learning other languages; being well-versed in geography and literature; and having an overall ‘expansion of interests’ that allows the possibility to ‘look at the world from two different perspectives’, thus enhancing one’s understanding of the world and its different cultures. (pp. 278-279)

Children’s Preferences and Attitudes Towards Languages

As mentioned earlier, the parents play an important role in their children’s maintenance of the heritage language. However, an important role is also played by the children – the language users – themselves. Children’s attitudes towards their heritage language and towards the majority language are also important. Stevens and Ishizawa (2007) found that younger siblings usually prefer the majority language and speak it at home as well, which reinforces the change of language within the household. In her study with Japanese parents living in Australia, Oriyama (2016) also establishes that much depends on the children’s attitudes towards maintaining the heritage language. She found that parents’ efforts for maintaining the heritage language may be in vain as some children still shift to English later, even though Japanese has a social prestige in Australia.

Local Context

Although recent years have seen the introduction of policies which focus on the integration of foreign people living in Malta, little has been done with regards to maintaining the heritage language of the foreign students in our schools. The Integration=Belonging Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan (2017) refers to the integration of adult migrants. No reference to school children or heritage languages is made in this document.

‘A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo’ (n.d.) focuses on the bilingual aspect of children in the early years cycle, and how they should be able to learn, understand, and talk in both Maltese and English. “They should also have access to learning materials in both languages to engage in meaningful tasks and within a range of subject specific contexts as appropriate” (p. 9). Although this policy refers to ‘multilingual’ occasionally, in reality, the language of the children seems to be assumed that it is either Maltese or English, as is referred to in many instances in the policy. As a matter of fact, in Appendix 1 - The role of language mediation in classroom (p. 22) reads the following:

EDUCATORS CAN USE THE CHILDREN’S FIRST LANGUAGE/S WHEN:

- Checking understanding of concepts, text, instructions;
- Giving instructions;
- Eliciting language;
- Giving feedback;
- Focusing learners’ attention;
- Informal, friendly talk;
- Translating.

In this case, it is highly unlikely that the document is referring to languages other than Maltese and English since teachers in local schools cannot perform the above-mentioned

tasks by using other heritage languages of students in Maltese classrooms. Nevertheless, the same document states that “Teachers need to be sensitive to the needs of their children and adopt strategies to meet those needs” (p. 13).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented various published findings in relation to heritage language. The role of the parents, the difficulties encountered, and the benefits of maintaining the heritage language are also discussed, alongside the children’s role in the matter. A number of studies conducted over the past 20 years indicate how maintaining a heritage language is not as simple as one may think. There are many obstacles and factors that interfere in the process. However, the importance of the immediate family’s attitude towards the heritage language and about the measures to be taken is quite clear. Notwithstanding this, there are other factors that one must consider in order to successfully maintain the heritage language, and not all factors may be controlled by the parents themselves.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to gain insights into why parents of children with a migrant background feel it is important to preserve their children's heritage language and into the possible actions taken by such parents in this regard. It also aims to investigate how immigrant parents maintain their heritage language and pass it on to the next generation. In this chapter a review of the research methodology adopted for the study is given, starting from the research design and followed by the ethical considerations. The research process is reviewed, wherein the research questions and the process for the selective sampling will be described. A description of the participants will be given along with the process of the data collection. Finally, the process for data analysis and interpretation is described.

Research Design

A qualitative research methodology was adopted for this study, using a combination of questionnaires and interviews. First, a short questionnaire was sent to eligible prospective participants with the aim of recruiting parents that believe in the importance of maintaining their heritage language. The children of prospective participants had to have a heritage language that is neither Maltese nor English, in other words; a language that is not taught in the local state primary schools. Secondly, the respondents needed to be parents that are teaching/maintaining their heritage language with their children. The questionnaire led to an interview with six participants. The aim of the interviews was to obtain "in-depth information from participants" (Mukherji & Albon, 2010, p. 120) about why it is important for them to preserve their children's heritage language, what they are currently doing to encourage their children to maintain their languages, and what type of support services they expect or wish to receive from the school or the host country in this regard.

Ethical Consideration

For this study to take place, first, an approval from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Malta was sought (Appendix A). Further permission had to be obtained from the Research Ethics Committee within the Directorate of Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability of the Ministry of Education, since prospective participants were contacted by the head of a primary school (Appendix B). The prospective participants were given an information letter (Appendix E) about the study wherein they were informed that all the data collected will be anonymised and only the researcher and the tutor will have access to it. Prospective participants were also informed that participation was on a voluntary basis, and that they may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation and without negative repercussions. They were also informed that in participating in the study they will not be entitled to any direct benefits and participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks. Participants were informed that all gathered data will be stored in an anonymised form on completion of the study. The email addresses of both the researcher and the tutor were included in the information letter for any clarifications or queries that may arise.

A consent form (Appendix D) for the participation in the interviews was distributed online to the participants. In the consent form participants had to confirm they understood the information passed on to them in the information letter (Appendix H).

The Research Process

The research questions

The research questions that this study will attempt to answer are the following:

- Why, according to the parents, is it important to preserve their children's heritage language?

- What is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their languages?
- What type of support services would parents expect or wish to receive from the school or the host country in this regard?

The questionnaire

The headmaster of a primary school acted as the intermediary between the researcher and the participants (Appendix C). He distributed a short online questionnaire (Appendix G) to all the parents in the school who have children in their Early Years, that is, from Kindergarten 1 to Year 2 (children aged 3-7 years). The number of students whose parents were eligible to take part in the study from the chosen school was 43, of whom a few were siblings. These 43 students were of 18 different nationalities. Seven parents filled in the questionnaire and all except one accepted to be interviewed for this study.

The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain information about the parents' beliefs on maintaining their heritage language with their children. The questionnaire consisted of 10 closed-ended questions that were estimated to be completed in 8-10 minutes. The questions were about how long they have been in Malta, how many children they have, and if any of them were born in Malta. Other questions covered which languages are spoken at home, the importance they give to their heritage language, and for how long they intend to stay in Malta. In the last question parents were asked if they were interested in taking part in a one-to-one online interview with the researcher. In giving their email address they were giving their consent for the interview. Once the requested information was obtained, a selective sampling was planned, where only the participants who had strong beliefs about maintaining their heritage language would be interviewed. From a scale of 1 being the least important to 10 being the most important, 5 respondents rated 10 in the question of how important it is for them that their child/children learn to speak their native/heritage language, while a

respondent rated it 6. Originally, the intention was to only hold the interviews with parents who showed strong beliefs of maintaining the heritage language, however, in view of the fact that the sample size of respondents in the questionnaire was by far smaller than expected, and after consulting with my supervisor, it was agreed to also have an interview with this respondent. This, we figured, would also help us gain a better understanding into why the parent gave this response.

In addition, from the first part of the study, the questionnaire, it was established that all participants speak in their heritage language with their children, indicating that all questionnaire respondents were eligible for the interview.

The participants

The first and only six parents who accepted the invitation for the interview were given an information letter (Appendix H) wherein all the details mentioned earlier were described. Two of the six participants were from Brazil, one was from Bulgaria, one was from Egypt, another from Italy, and another one from Lithuania. Three of the six participants had been living in Malta for a period of between 1-5 years, two participants had been living in Malta for a period between 6-10 years, and one participant had been living in Malta for more than 10 years. Also, two participants had their children born abroad, one participant had her only child born in Malta, and three participants had only one child born in Malta and the others born abroad. One of the participants had a child with special needs. Two of the participants were males while the other four participants were female. Although the researcher did not ask for the nationality of the participants' partner, all six participants mentioned that one and the same language is used at home with their partner. Table 2 presents the demographic information of the participants.

Number of Participants	Country of Origin	Country of origin of partner	Number of children	Children born in Malta	Number of years living in Malta	Language used between participant and partner/wife/husband	Language used by participant with children	Language used by siblings in same family	Planning to leave Malta
1	Brazil	not mentioned	1	0	1-5	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian Portuguese	Brazilian Portuguese	To decide at a later stage
1	Brazil	Brazil	2	1	1-5	Portuguese	Portuguese/English	Portuguese	To decide at a later stage
1	Bulgaria	Bulgaria	1	1	More than 10	Bulgarian	Bulgarian	English and Bulgarian	In 2 years' time
1	Egypt	Egypt	3	1	6-10	Arabic	Combination between Arabic and English	Combination between English and Arabic	To decide at a later stage
1	Italy	not mentioned	2	1	6-10	Mostly Italian	Mostly Italian	Mostly Italian	To decide at a later stage
1	Lithuania	Lithuania	2	0	1-5	Lithuanian	Mostly Lithuanian sometimes English	Lithuanian sometimes English	To decide at a later stage

Table 2 - Demographic of Participants

The interview

The participants were invited to choose a day and time convenient to them to take part in the online interview (Appendix F). Having an online interview favoured participants as it was less time consuming and no travel arrangements to meet at a particular venue needed to take place. Having the interview conducted online also helped participants feel safe as they did not need to meet the researcher personally and thus mix with a person outside their ‘bubble’ due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions.

Before the commencement of the interviews, participants were reminded that the interview was going to be recorded and later transcribed. The interview consisted of six main questions, four of which had one or two sub-questions (Appendix I). All questions were open-ended and were constructed in simple English. Each individual interview lasted between 16 and 29 minutes.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Duration	16m14s	28m37s	17m55s	20m15s	29m10s	25m46s

Table 3 - Duration of Interviews

The first part of the interview focused on the participants’ need to talk to their children in their native language even though they are currently living in Malta, on how they would feel if their children had to lose their native language, and on participants’ actions for helping their children to maintain their native/heritage language. The next questions focused on the children’s choice of language since attending school, what expectations the participants have for their children vis-à-vis their native language, and if they have any hope or desire for obtaining support from the state/schools in helping their children maintain their native language.

Keeping in mind that none of the participants spoke English as their first language, the questions were shown one at a time on the screen, so that the parents would be able to read the question while the researcher read it out to them, thus limiting possible misunderstandings. This action was also taken in an attempt to help participants feel at ease and to make it easier for them to answer the whole question before them. Having interviews as the method for data collection was ideal, since the questions could be adapted for the needs of the interviewees, such as their level of understanding. Clarifications were sought and provided there and then, and additional questions could be added when the need arose (Fielding & Thomas, 2008). The researcher noted that despite it not being the first language of any of the participants, the level of spoken English of each parent was considerably good.

Data analysis and interpretations

All the data collected through the interviews was transcribed and a thematic approach was adopted in analysing the collected data. From there the six steps identified by Braun and Clarke for thematic analysis were adopted (2006); familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up.

After thoroughly reading the transcribed interviews (Appendix J) several times for familiarisation of data, the 'data corpus' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) was coded by using different coloured highlighters and pens to indicate repeated ideas. The colour coding was done throughout all the transcribed interviews, and this indicated commonalities between the participants.

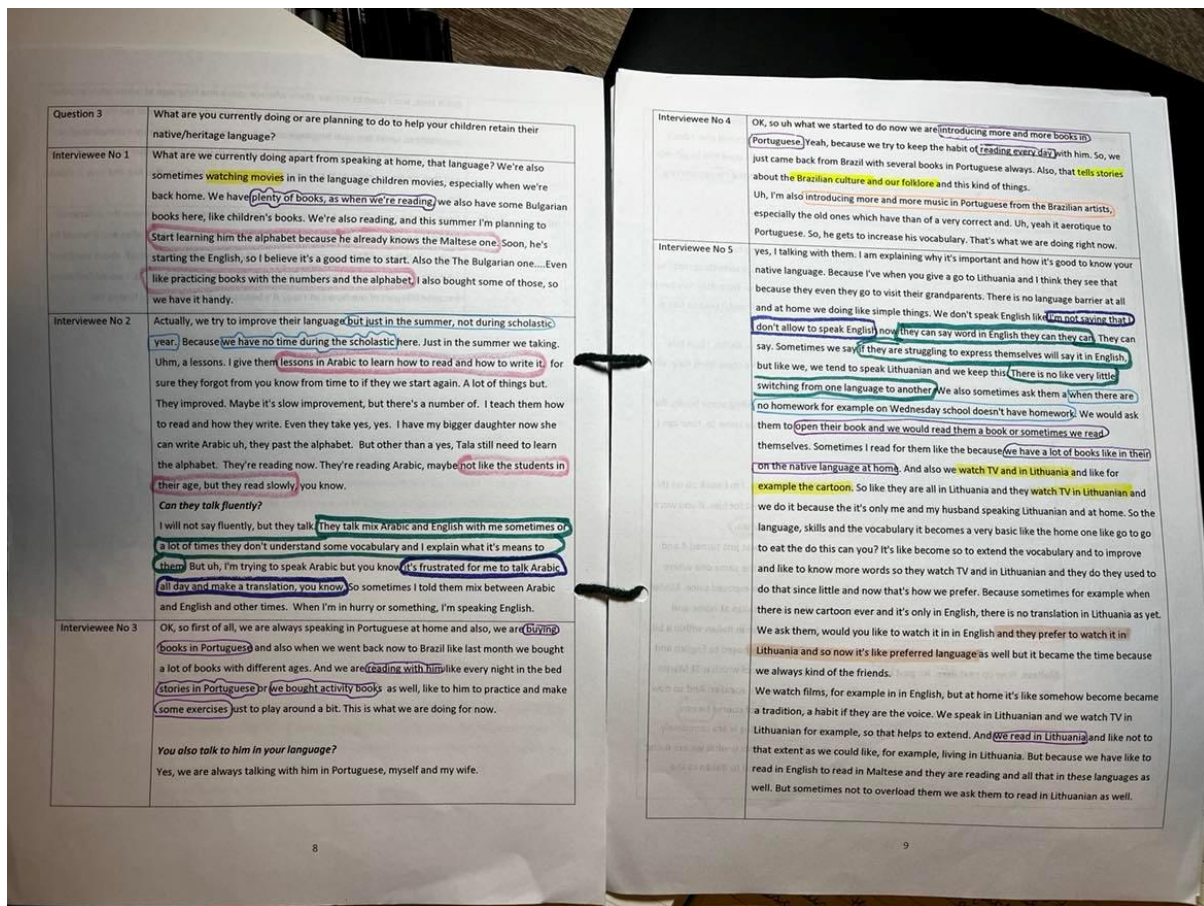


Figure 4 - Colour-Coded Data Corpus

The 'data sets' from different participants were physically collated under each code by cutting out parts from the printed data corpus and sticking them underneath the suitable code. Each extracted data point was labelled, stating from whose participant's interview it was taken and from which part of the interview.

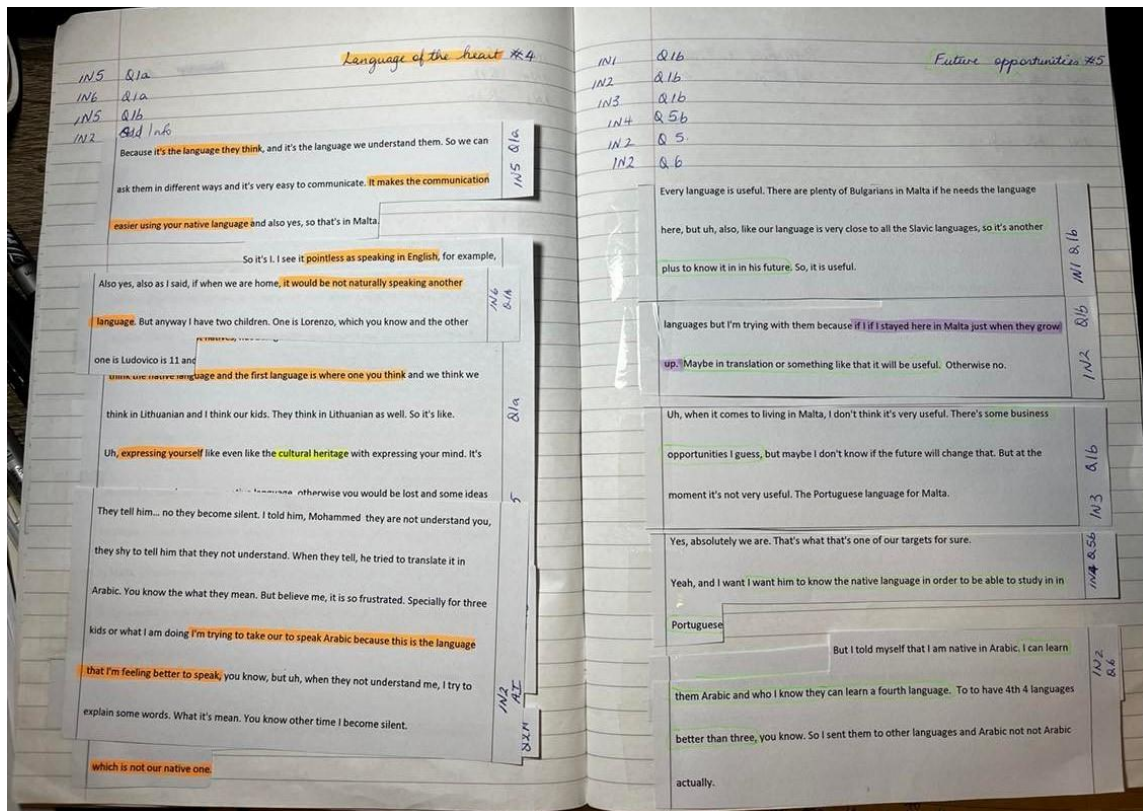


Figure 5 - Collated Data Sets

At this stage a list of codes was identified, namely:

- Identity and cultural heritage
- Communication with extended family
- Patriotic
- Language of the heart
- Future opportunities
- Returning to country of origin
- Child's choice of language
- Change in the language spoken by the child since started attending school
- Fluency in heritage language
- Actions to retain heritage language:
 - Watching movies

- Reading books
- Additional lessons
- Music
- Playing games
- Lack of time to enrol in nonformal language learning lessons
- Parents' reaction when child talks the local language
- Parents' hopes of child being fluent in heritage language
- Expectations from school/state
- Home language policy
- Child's competence in speaking the heritage language as opposed to reading/writing
- Archaic language/expressions
- Code switching
- Parents reading/talking in local languages as a way of supporting their children to integrate and do well at school

Once the coding was ready, the next phase involved the generation of the themes by using the 'inductive approach' mentioned by Patton (1990), derived from the actual data collected. The process to generate the themes was done by grouping the coded findings with common grounds that fit under any of the research questions. "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Therefore, the 23 different codes identified from the data corpus were grouped into seven themes, as presented in Figure 6.

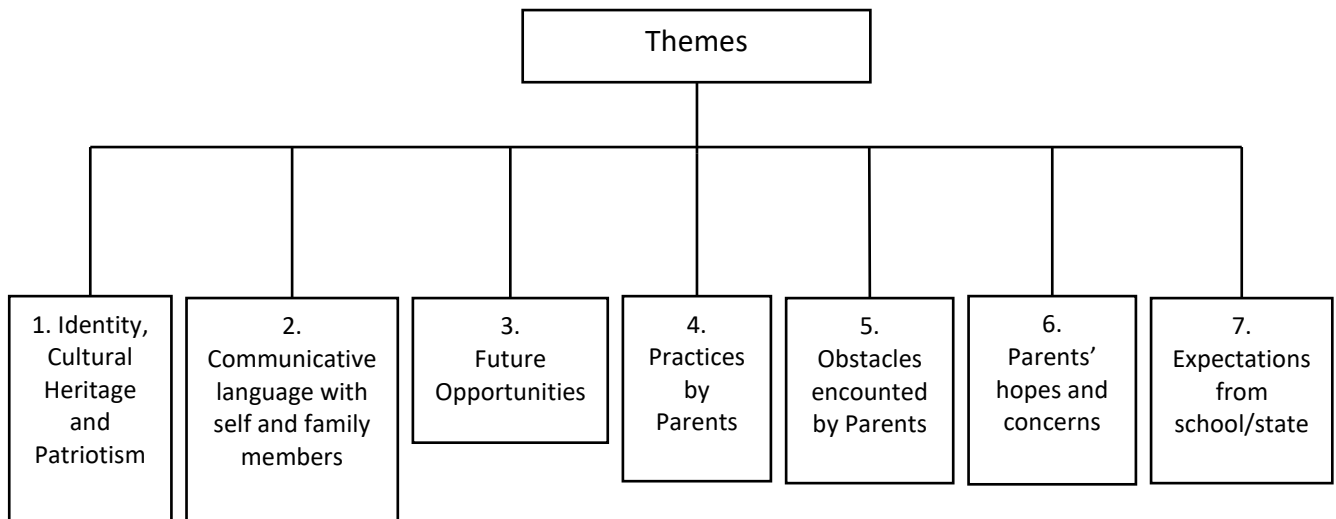


Figure 6 - Codes Under Themes

The themes thus generated, the process of writing down the results was about to start. In the process of reading and reviewing the themes over and over again, some alterations were made, whereby some themes were given a more adequate name to suit all codes falling under them. Once the data was themed and reviewed, the write up of the findings could take place. This is described in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting the results from the interviews conducted with parents of primary school children with a migrant background who believe in the importance of maintaining the heritage language of their children. A total of 43 parents of students attending the chosen school were eligible to participate in this study, but only six parents accepted the invitation to fill in a questionnaire and take part in a one-to-one interview, that is, 13.95% of the total number.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. Each section focuses on one of the research questions. The sections are subdivided into the themes identified from this research, as per Figure 7.

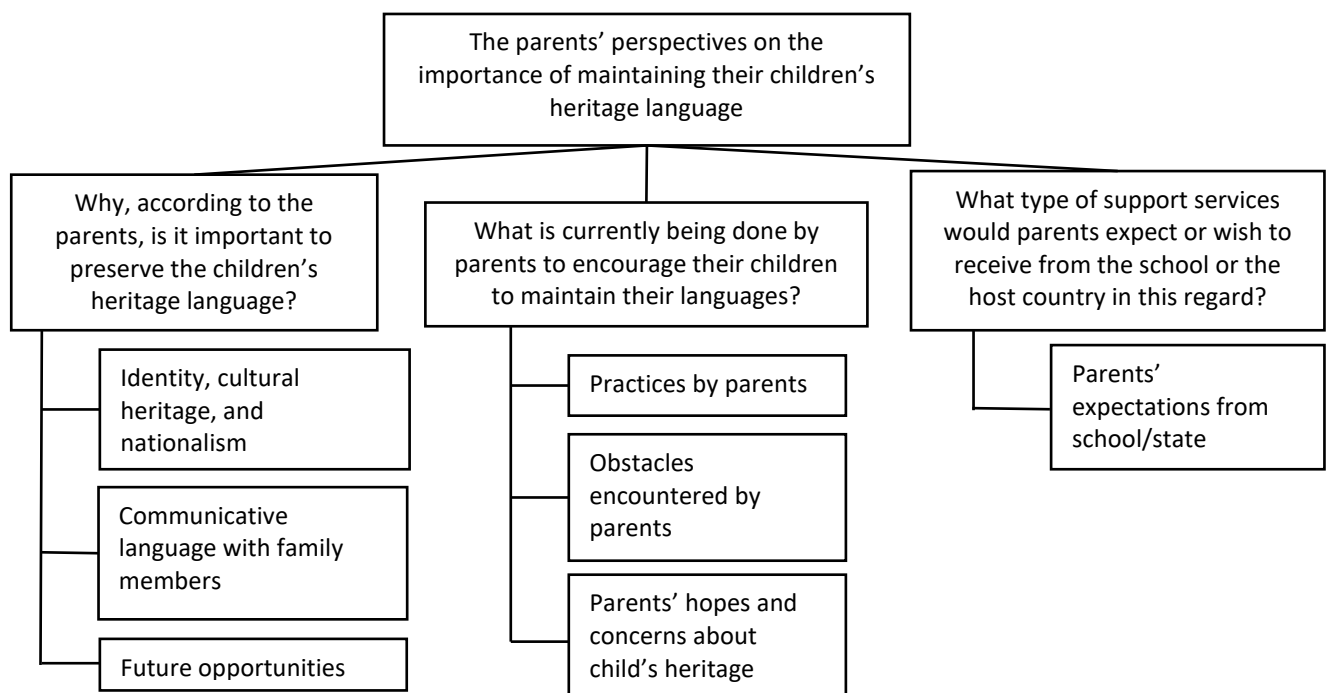


Figure 7 - Layout

The connection between the different codes under each theme is explained and the participant mentioning such coded ideas are indicated in a table. This explains the commonality of ideas between participants.

Why, according to the parents, is it important to preserve their children's heritage language?

In the first part of the interview, the focus was on why the participants felt it important that their children preserve their heritage language. The most common reasons the participants gave were their feelings towards their identity and cultural heritage, the importance of maintaining communication with the family in their home country, and children's opportunities for the future.

Theme: Identity, cultural heritage, and nationalism	
Codes	The participants who mentioned it
Identity	P1 P2 P3 P5
Family roots	P4
Traditions	P1 P6
Cultural Heritage	P1 P3 P4 P6
Nationalism	P1 P2 P4

Table 4 - Identity, cultural heritage, and nationalism

Identity, cultural heritage, and nationalism

During the interviews, all the participants expressed their need to speak to their children in their heritage language in relation to a strong feeling of identity. This sentiment of identifying themselves with the heritage language/home country came up at different parts of the interviews. A participant stated that:

“... we need to keep our identity and being a Bulgarian in Malta even though I’ve lived here for maybe 15 years now, it doesn’t change the point that I’m feeling Bulgarian inside, so even though he’s been born in Malta, he’s still Bulgarian. So, we need to keep the language alive.” P1

A participant also mentioned how patriotic she feels towards her country while another participant mentioned ‘family roots’ instead of identity. Since respondents associated identity with either cultural heritage or traditions, it was decided to group them under the same code.

“... we live in Malta and, but still, we are Italian, and it would be a pity, uh, if they lose language and already, they don’t know so much about traditions.” P6

When it came to categorising the codes, ‘nationalism’ was added to ‘identity and cultural heritage’ as they all represent the individual’s personal feelings about their country and all that pertains to it. ‘Family roots’ is also associated with the identity of a person. Therefore, all these codes were grouped under the same theme.

Communication with family members

This theme incorporates codes where participants mentioned the heritage language as a necessity for communication. Whether they referred to communication with the extended family back in their home country, communication with the immediate family, or the importance of communication in the language they feel most comfortable with and which they use for their inner thoughts, communication was a common area that was mentioned by all the participants.

Theme: Communicative language with family members	
Codes	The participants who mentioned it
Communication with extended family	P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6
Communication with immediate family members	P2 P5 P6
The thinking language	P6

Table 5 - Communicative language with family members

As the above table shows, all the participants mentioned, at some point, that it would be ideal if their children could speak their heritage language for when they go to visit their grandparents and the extended family. Otherwise, communication with them would not be possible, or at least more difficult, potentially leading to the loss of the connection.

“Now basically I think the need of still talking with him with their native languages because his grandmother and grandfather, they don’t speak. Yeah, well, they’re different languages so I want to. Then I want him to keep continuing contact with them. And if he lose the Portuguese language, he will not be able to communicate with them anymore.” P3

Three of the participants also mentioned that their heritage language is the language that they themselves feel comfortable in speaking. They do not feel at ease having to talk to their own children in a language in which they are less fluent or in a language that does not come natural to them.

“And then, uh, it would be weird between us when we are at home speaking in a different language.” P6

Participant 5 emphasised the fact that since her husband and herself are both Lithuanians, it would be better for their children to speak in the same language, their native language, to express themselves better.

“Uh, because it's, uh, I feel we need because it's the language we speak and it's... let me phrase it you have to know your own language. We, both me and my husband we both are Lithuanians and so we have to, so it's, I see it pointless as speaking in English, for example, not being native speakers, because you would never allow it, would be able to express yourself like being not natives, not being native speaker and you, you know how it is like.” P5

The same parent also mentioned the idea that it is usually the language one feels comfortable in that is used for inner thought and feelings.

“And yes, and in Malta Lithuanian and for example, it's not useful in that sense it's not helping them at school, but it's helping them at home to express themselves to the us, how they feel. Because it's the language they think, and it's the language we understand them. So, we can ask them in different ways and it's very easy to communicate. It makes the communication easier using your native language...” P5

Future opportunities

As might be expected, given that the participants were parents, the children's future was one of the predominant aspects arising in the interviews. Some participants specifically mentioned possible advantages for their children's future if they acquire fluency in their heritage language, while others mentioned the importance of knowing their heritage language just in case the children decide to return to their home country. With both aspects affecting the future of the children, a decision was taken to group them under the same theme.

Theme: Future opportunities	
Codes	The participants who mentioned it
Future opportunities	P1 P2 P3 P4
Returning to the country of origin	P1 P4 P5

Table 6 - Future opportunities

Some participants consider teaching/maintaining their heritage language as an advantage for their children's future opportunities. A participant mentioned that knowing as many languages as possible may be advantageous for the future, while other participants left it open, simply saying that it will be useful.

"Yes, uh, but I think the lot if should I send them to Arabic or no? But I told myself that I am native in Arabic. I can learn them Arabic and why not they can learn a fourth language. To have 4 languages better than 3, you know. So, I sent them to other languages and not Arabic actually." P2

Another participant mentioned that he wants his children to know the heritage language to be able to study in Portuguese.

"I want him to know the native language in order to be able to study in Portuguese in case we ever need to come back to Brazil and also in the future. Of course, to use it professionally, so yeah." P4

P1 did not simply see the acquisition of the heritage language in itself as useful but also:

“...our language is very close to all the Slavic languages, so it’s another plus to know it in, in his future.”

Other participants considered it important to learn their heritage language just in case they decide to go back to their country, whether in the near future as a family or maybe later in life when the children grow up and decide for themselves.

“If one day they have to go to live to Lithuania because it was it, it would be our choice or their choice, they would, they wouldn’t, they would struggle less because they would know the language. So, it would be like yes you would need time to improve it, but only improving, it’s not like learning it from scratch.” P5

What is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their languages?

All the practices mentioned by the parents to encourage and maintain the heritage language with their children were put under the same theme, named ‘Practices by parents’. All the participants stated that they talk to their children in their heritage language. Other practices by were common, however these varied from one parent to another.

Theme: Practices by parents	
Codes	The participants who mentioned it
Talking to their children in their heritage language	P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6

Home-language policy	P1 P2 P4 P5
Reading books in heritage language	P1 P3 P4 P5 P6
Watching movies/cartoons in heritage language	P1 P5
Listening to music in heritage language	P4
Playing games to practise the heritage language	P5
Additional non-formal language learning	P2

Table 7 - Practices by parents

Talking to their children in their heritage language

All participants in the study said that they talk to their children in their heritage language.

“...because we speak with him a lot in Portuguese, especially my wife, but I don't think that he would lose it, but he would be in trouble in case he needs to use it for studies or for professional reasons.” P4

One of the participants mentioned that although she strongly believes in teaching her children the heritage language, and she tries to speak it at home, she sometimes switches to English for practicality. P3 stated:

“... but believe me, it is so frustrated. Specially for three kids or what I am doing I'm trying to take our, to speak Arabic because this is the language that I'm feeling better to speak, you know, but uh, when they not understand me, I try to explain some words, what it's mean, you know, other time I become silent.”

Home-language policy

One of the participants stated that she tries to stick to the heritage language at home and the child is aware of that. Another participant said that the intention, when they first came to Malta, was to only speak the heritage language at home. However, although the father stuck to it, she got tired of translating and ended up speaking in a mixture of English and Arabic.

“Uh, at the beginning, this was our rules, but this wasn't help in improving their English language because they need to practice here... Their dad rules that no English at home. We will talk just in Arabic, but by time. But I'm you know they spend in school more time. Then in house here they talk more in school than here in the house. So, they coming back speaking in English when I'm trying to speak in Arabic they tell me. We don't understand what do you mean...” P2

On the other hand, another participant stated her concern that if the language is imposed on the children, it might backfire.

“No, there is no rule. There is no pressure because the way I think if you start imposing as is, it as a rule they don't obey.” P5

Another participant stated that he leaves the child to decide which language to use. Since he uses them both at home, he does not apprehend him from speaking any language. After all, he believes that the child needs to practise both the heritage language and the local languages.

“I don't block or prohibit anything. I try to encourage him to speak as many languages he can. OK and um whenever he expressed some difficulty in English or in Portuguese. I try to correct him and show him the right way to say it.” P4

Reading books in heritage language

Another thing that all participants, except one, mentioned, is the reading of books to their children in their heritage language. They mentioned that their children read in both local languages, but they sometimes include books in their heritage language as well.

“Ok, so uh what we started to do now we are introducing more and more books in Portuguese. Yeah, because we try to keep the habit of reading every day with him. So, we just came back from Brazil with several books in Portuguese always.” P4

“...we also have some Bulgarian books here, like children's books. We're also reading, and this summer I'm planning to start learning him the alphabet because he already knows the Maltese one. Soon, he's starting the English, so I believe it's a good time to start also the the Bulgarian one.” P1

Watching TV or videos

Surprisingly enough, only two participants mentioned that their children watch television or videos in their heritage language.

“And also, we watch TV and in Lithuania and like for example the cartoon. So, like they are all in Lithuania and they watch TV in Lithuania and we do it because the... it's only me and my husband speaking Lithuanian at home. So, the language skills and the vocabulary it because a very basic like... the home one like... go to, go to eat the do this... can you? It's like become... so to extend the vocabulary and to improve and like to know more words so they watch TV and in Lithuanian and they do, they used to do that since little and now that's how we prefer.” P5

Listening to music

One of the participants mentioned listening to music as a practice to help his child increase his vocabulary.

“Uh, I’m also introducing more and more music in Portuguese from the Brazilian artists, especially the old ones which have very correct and archaic Portuguese. So, he gets to increase his vocabulary. That’s what we are doing right now.” P4

None of the other participants mentioned any music, nor any nursery rhymes during the whole interview. Only interviewee P6 mentioned nursery rhymes, but in the context of teaching her child the English language rather than the heritage language.

Playing games

One of the participants mentioned that she used to play with her children by asking them to say particular words in their heritage language – Lithuanian. Other times, when they knew the Lithuanian word, she asked them to say the same word in English. She also mentioned that she asks the children to write text messages to their father on the mobile phone for fun, thereby encouraging them to practice the language at the same time.

“We say listen! Do you know how this word is in Lithuanian? And we say this and this or sometimes we say it’s Lithuanian and we used to do like vice versa when they say something in Lithuanian...” P5

Additional language lessons

From the six participants, only one sends her children to language lessons. Other participants mentioned that they would like to send their children to language lessons, but for different reasons are not yet sending them. Keeping in mind that the participants are talking about children aged between 3-7 years who are still in their early years of schooling, and that this research was conducted in the third scholastic year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is understood that after-school/out of school activities have only recently resumed. This leaves parents deciding for health over other priorities.

“Actually yes, I in the summer they went to a mosque here. They do Arabic language and the religion... because school is just one day a week, one day a week, not enough. So, I’m send them to school to communicate with other children. This is the main purpose for sending them.” P2

Challenges encountered by parents

During the interviews, many issues faced by parents cropped up. Participants mentioned that despite their efforts to maintain the heritage language with their children, difficulties emerge that make them alter their plan or slow the process down. Sometimes the reality they live in makes them put aside their plan. For this reason, all the direct or indirect challenges are gathered under this theme.

No parent would wish their children to be emarginated from society, and some parents fear that this might happen if they speak the minority language. In addition, loving your heritage language may not necessarily mean your children are going to have the same feelings for it. This is especially the case when the children are being exposed to the local languages more than their heritage language, which in turn makes it more natural for them to use the local languages since most of their day is spent away from people who can talk their heritage language. At the same time, even though parents try to impart the heritage language to their children by speaking to them in it, this may not be enough for the children to achieve all the language skills. Living in such a hectic world does not make it easy for parents to find the time to enrol their children in language lessons, which in turn keeps their children from achieving fluency in all aspects of the language. Such reasons were coded and grouped as ‘Challenges encountered by parents’.

Theme: Challenges encountered by parents	
Codes	The participants who mentioned it
Talking/reading in local languages to help the child integrate in the community	P2 P3 P4 P6
Child's choice of language to communicate	P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6
Change in the language since the start of school	P1 P2 P3 P4 P5 P6
Code-switching	P1 P2 P5 P6
Lack of time to enrol in language lessons	P1 P2 P3 P4
Knowing how to speak the language but not how to read and write	P1 P2 P3 P5 P6
Archaic language / expressions etc...	P4 P5

Table 8 - Challenges encountered by parents

Talking/reading in local languages to help the child integrate in the community

Some parents mentioned that their priority was and sometimes still is to help their children succeed in school. This meant teaching them to speak mostly in English, since the Maltese language is a foreign language for them and they feel unable to help their children in that. Talking to their children in English means that they have to put aside their heritage language, at least for a while.

“I will tell you what I was struggling from when we first came here in Malta. Our first priority was to make them know how to communicate and to communicate, they should know their Maltese and English. So unfortunately, I focused with them in English and they was learning the Maltese in school. I, I can’t uh, speak Maltese, you know, and this makes us forgot little bit, uh Arabic language even at home.” P2

Another participant mentioned that he still feels that his child needs to practise English to increase his vocabulary. It therefore emerged that it wasn’t just at the beginning of the family’s move to Malta that this need was strong, but persisted even once the child had grasped the language enough to cope at school.

“...you can speak English because I still feel that he needs to increase his vocabulary.” P4

Change in language since the start of school

When the participants were asked if they had noticed any change in their children’s use of language since they started formal schooling, all participants replied that their children started using the local languages more often. Some participants stated that they use the English language during play or only until they settle back home.

“Once we started attending school, especially in Year 1, that’s when I started seeing that sometimes when they come back home it’s more it takes time for them

to come back to Lithuania because they now, they are like 6 years and they communicate more like in full sentences. They tell stories, so for them it's like the language they use like at school like how it is... it's a lot of it's huge exposure... I notice that sometimes like it's more like English when we are playing, they're speaking English.” P5

Most of the participants mentioned that their children use the English language more than the Maltese one. One participant, who has three children, explained that when they lived in the southern part of Malta, her children used to speak more Maltese than English, yet since they moved to their current town of residence, which is situated in the central part of Malta, she has watched her children switch to the English language.

“They was speaking Maltese very very well and they wasn't excellent in English like Maltese and the Maltese was their favourite subjects. Now when we moved here, they speak English fluently. Here, nobody will speak Maltese, all speaking English, and they started to forget Maltese and started to be weaker and Maltese again. I was hoping to improve them in both Maltese and English, but unfortunately, they started to be strong in English and weak in Maltese.” P2

Code-switching and language mixing

Almost all the participants stated that their children also started code-switching from one language to another. Some participants stated that their children switch to English when they find it difficult to explain themselves in their heritage language.

“... they talk mix Arabic and English with me sometimes or a lot of times they don't understand some vocabulary and I explain what it's means...” P2

A participant also mentioned that her child used to mix up the same written sounds from one language to another.

“Yeah, like I remember once he wrote ‘prosciutto’ with the /x/, because in Maltese /sh/ is /x/ so it was kind of this mistake.” P6

Child’s choice of language to communicate

Children’s choice of language to communicate varies from one another because each child is a different individual with their own ideas and their own characters. Participants mentioned anecdotes/examples of when their children question why there is the need for them to learn the heritage language or show preference in talking in one of the local languages.

“...they feel that there is no need even they ask me why we should learn Arabic mommy we can speak English and Maltese...” P2

Other participants stated that their children are developing their own preferences in choosing when to communicate in their heritage language and when to communicate in one of the local languages, depending on who they are talking to.

“...I know that he is comfortable also in English, ‘cause there’s some friends that come here like they just, they only speak in English. Then when they are here, he speak with them properly. And then when he turns to me, he goes back to the Portuguese language.” P3

Another participant mentioned the fact that one of the aims of sending her children to the mosque is to help them learn the heritage language. However, she noticed that the children there tend to speak to each other in the English language, which means that part of the objective is not being fulfilled. The children are still making their choice and talk to each other in the language more familiar to them.

“This is the main purpose of sending them [to the mosque] which is not happening because all children is speak together in English. But uhm, they learn, they learn especially in orally not reading, not writing, but in oral they learn.” P2

Another participant stated that his child tends to address his mother in the heritage language as he feels she is not that good in the English language. On the other hand, the child addresses his father, and at times specifically asks him to talk to him, in English.

“Ok, sometimes he address me only in English, or he asks to speak in English with me... Because my wife doesn’t speak English very well, you know, so I think he senses it, you know? ... The language of, main language of communication between him and my wife is Portuguese.” P4

Lack of time to enrol in language lessons

As can be seen from Table 8, the lack of time to enrol in language lessons was mentioned by four out of six participants. The lack of time mentioned by the participants may not be directly and specifically said, however, the feeling was clear. Even though the research is about children in early years, lack of time still seems to be an issue. Two of the participants that expressed an interesting in enrolling their child in language lessons mentioned that summer would be the best time to do so because they feel that there is not enough time during the scholastic year. The only participant who stated that her children attend language lessons in fact stated that this takes place during the summer holidays.

“... after this we can learn Arabic but, all of them in, in, during their scholastic, it’s... it’s little bit heavy for all of us, we have no time. Uh, in summer we have spare time to do this...” P2

Another participant mentioned that she prefers to have the extra lesson for language learning during the scholastic week rather than on Sundays, as she likes her son to rest in the weekend.

“I know that there is a Bulgarian school here in Malta, but he still haven't visited that because it's on the weekends and I want him to rest in the weekends.” P1

Another participant considers having the language lessons during the summer holidays/break where they can travel to their home country and learn the language there.

“...you know when it comes for summer vacation, we plan to be, as you know, as much as possible in the current situation, of course, but to be in Brazil during the summer vacations and then use the grandmas to, you know, have a little lesson with him during the days that he's spending with them.” P4

Knowing how to speak the language but not how to read and write

All the participants except one mentioned that their children may be able to talk in the heritage language, but when it comes to reading and writing they may be slower than peers of the same age, or unable to do so completely. Such statements were said without the researcher having asked a direct question in this regard. This finding shows that participants are aware that in spite of their efforts to talk to their children in their heritage language, there are still limitations when it comes to reading and writing. However, one must also keep in mind the age of the children. Usually, children in early years have limited reading and writing skills. Therefore, it is still too early to say whether they will actually be fluent readers and writers.

“I think he will... he will be fluent in the future. The only problem will be like the grammar rules, 'cause Portuguese grammar, it's a bit hard language to learn...I know that he will speak and understand everything, but the only concern is writing properly there the rules.” P3

Another participant specifically mentioned that she is not doing anything with her younger son with regards to reading and writing, not even teaching him the alphabet in the heritage language, as she is afraid he will get mixed up. This was particularly pertinent for her since her child has special needs and has not yet acquired speech.

“Uhm, apart of talking in Italian, not so much I have to say. We have some books... about some book... of course, uh, in Italian. But with my son [the name], the small one. I don't want, you know, is there is behind with the speeching, so, uh, I don't want him to get more confused, so I'm not working a lot in it apart of talking in Italian. But like I'm not working on the Italian alphabet or...” P6

Archaic language / expressions etc...

A participant mentioned that although she talks to her children in the heritage language, and that they have been learning the language from a very young age, she is still concerned that her children can never be as fluent as herself. She believes that in order to acquire fluency in a language, one must learn a lot of expressions and archaic words passed down from one generation to another. She believes that such fluency can only be acquired when growing up in the country.

“You know, a lot of expressions, a lot of ancient words, a lot of like spoken words which you would never know if you didn't grow up in the country...Your grandmother used to say how she called the... for example, the clock. There was special word for clock. There was special word for 'to go' like it's something different, like archaic.... Weird expressions. We had the jokes like coming from the past...” P5

Parents' hopes and concerns about child's heritage language

The participants were asked if they have any expectations for their children and their heritage language, and if they wish their children would be as fluent as they are in the heritage language. All the participants wish and are quite confident that their children will be fluent speakers of the heritage language, except one.

"I wish they would be... but I don't know if this is gonna happen, but I don't know... I'm not expecting ... I wish, but I'm not expecting that." P6

In the meantime, although the other participants believe their children will be able to speak the heritage language, as explained earlier all participants except one are concerned about their reading and writing skills. Besides, one of the participants admitted that her children may be a bit late in achieving fluency in the heritage language, but expressed confidence that they would eventually achieve it. Another participant is aware that there must be a lot of practice to achieve this.

"I hope that he would speak fluently and without the hassle to try and look for words, but this again will come with a lot of practice and later on with reading a lot of books because he need to build up the dictionary like that." P1

What type of support services would parents expect or wish to receive from the school or host country in this regard?

This question seemingly took the participants by surprise. None of them had previously thought of anything that they wished or expected the state or the school to do. However, most of them tried to think of something that made sense or that they thought could possibly be achieved.

Theme: Parents' expectations from school/state	
Codes	The participants who mentioned it
Extra homework/tasks to be done at home	P3
Presentations at school about different traditions and languages	P1 P5
Lending of school infrastructure	P4
Language lessons on a weekly basis	P3

Table 9 - Parents' expectations from school/state

Extra homework/tasks to be done at home

One of the participants mentioned the difficulty in having to prepare tasks for his child in order to teach him. He therefore suggested that extra homework is given by the school, adding that this should be presented as mandatory, as that would be considered as a task that has to be done. It is worth noting that his child experienced something similar in the previous scholastic year with his teacher. On the teacher's own initiative, he was given a daily task which consisted of finding the daily given word in his heritage language and giving a definition to it besides writing it and finding a picture of it.

"Maybe if there is an extra homework coming from the school like mandatory thing and then maybe it will be forced to do like I don't know if the kid is a Portuguese speaker and get everyday homework in Portuguese and then the father and mother needs to teach them then, then will be a solution I guess." P3

Presentations at school about different traditions and languages

Two participants mentioned the idea of having presentations at school related to native traditions and languages, or activities highlighting the cultural differences.

"I would highlight sometimes like the cultural differences that people can speak like in different languages at home... They are being like speak different language at home and if it wouldn't be seen as sort of like strangers..." P5

“They can maybe introduce each other later on in the years. Now it's too early Year 1, but maybe later on they can do some presentations, and something related to their native traditions and languages. And it's going to be interesting for them as well to see the multicultural.” P1

Lending of school infrastructure

A participant mentioned the idea of having the school/state help by lending out a room from the school where the community may have the possibility to meet.

“...if we could maybe use the infrastructure of the school like for this club... if the school could provide this one room so to have a weekly meeting with them you know to help them retain in their native language.” P4

Language lessons on a weekly basis

Another suggestion was that an extra weekly lesson could be held to help the students from the same heritage language practise the language, having emphasis on the grammar rules. On the other hand, three participants mentioned that the state is already helping by giving their children the opportunity to learn their language later in Year 7.

“But I believe this is already happening because he's working, he's doing Italian native language... but in the secondary school also the government school, they do a learn different language.” P6

“Actually, they, they do. They're choosing language, the third language. They choose in Year 7. They have a chance to take Arabic language.” P2

Three participants think that it is difficult for the school to help in heritage languages since so many different nationalities attend the same school, while another participant stated

that it is the parents' responsibility to teach their children the heritage language, and does not therefore expect anyone else to do it.

“Ah, I don't know like I sort of take it as our responsibility as parents and like sort of which something we have to do. We do it not as an obligation. We do it as because we want, and because it's good for us and at school, maybe I don't know... That way I would highlight sometimes like the cultural differences that people can speak like in different languages at home.” P5

“I can't ask that they have to support my language, I don't know.” P6

Parents' ideas about further help by school/state	
Codes	The participants who mentioned it
State already helping	P2 P3 P6
Difficult - so many different nationalities	P1 P3 P4
Parents' responsibility	P5

Table 10 - Parents' ideas about further help by school/state

Conclusion

This chapter presented a description of the relations between the coded ideas identified in the interviews. Their grouping for thematic analysis was explained while the commonalities of ideas between different participants was pointed out. In the following and final chapter, the researcher will interpret and discuss these results in light of similar, previously published studies.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The main objectives of this study were to investigate parents' perspectives about maintaining the heritage language with their children, to understand what they are doing to maintain their heritage language, and to determine any expectations they have from the school and/or the state in this regard.

All the participants in this study confirmed that they are in favour of maintaining the heritage language with their children and that they use their heritage language when speaking with their children. Participants gave various reasons why they wish to maintain the heritage language and described different practices that take place at home. Parents also had different expectations with respect to the support measures they would like to see the state or school put in place.

Discussion of Results

The importance of the heritage language

In this first section I will briefly discuss the reasons why the parents find it important to preserve their children's heritage language. This was the first research question in this study. The data collected by means of the one-to-one interviews shows that all the participants talked about their sense of identity and cultural heritage, indicating that they all have this aspect of the language close to heart. They expressed their thoughts about how important it is for them that their children maintain their heritage language and why they are doing their utmost to keep their heritage language alive. Participants also mentioned that maintaining their heritage language helps communication within the immediate and extended family. Another point raised during the interviews was related to further career opportunities their children may have if they are bilingual or multilingual.

The participants mentioned the connection they find between the spoken heritage language and their culture and sense of identity. This was one of the reasons some of the participants felt the need to teach/maintain the heritage language with their children. Participants expressed their language as a strong indicator of their cultural identity which they would like to hold on to and pass on to their children. This complements King and Fogle's (2006) findings where they state that immigrants' desire to pass their heritage language to their children goes beyond the desire to encourage positive family interaction, but extends to their wish to transmit their culture. Brown (2011) also states that:

The most prevalent rationale for keeping HL expressed by the participating parents was consistent with the research literature, since the parents affirmed the belief that HL is the essence of who they are, given the context that they are immigrants living in the U.S. Being able to speak Korean helps define who they are as individuals, yet these parents provided further dimensions to the relationship between HL and identity. They equated HL with maintaining culture. That is, it is the HL that connects immigrant identity and cultural heritage (p 33).

Therefore, the heritage language is very much considered as an identity factor that a person feels within, which helps an individual sustain a sense of belonging to a country even though they may be living far away from it.

Moreover, maintaining the heritage language to be able to communicate with the extended family members was mentioned by all six participants in this study. This is one of the main reasons why they felt it is important for their children to know the heritage language. This concept emerges very often in published research and various researchers find that the children may feel emotionally distant from their parents if they are unable to converse with them in their language (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). Although all the participants can understand and speak the majority language (English), they expressed concern that their children should learn the heritage language to maintain a healthy communicative relationship

within the family and with the extended family back in their home country. Five participants out of six mentioned that the extended family back in their home country cannot speak in English, and it would therefore be a problem for their children to sustain a conversation with them when they call or visit them if they do not know the heritage language. This complements what King and Fogle (2006) state, that immigrants pass their heritage language to encourage positive family interaction. This is in line with what Nesteruk (2010) states: “[r]egardless of the grandparents’ country of residence, all the participants emphasise the importance of maintaining their heritage language to facilitate communication across generations” (p. 278).

Apart from the sense of identity and the possibility to communicate with family members and maintain family ties, the majority of the participants specified that learning the heritage language would also confer their children with advantages and provide them with future career opportunities. This confirms what King and Fogle (2006) found in their study, where they state that among the factors of the parents’ ideology of learning or maintaining a heritage language is a consideration for occupational success. Moreover, half the participants in this study also mentioned that learning/maintaining the heritage language is important for them to be prepared for an eventuality where they could decide to return to the country of origin for good. This is also mentioned in Gandara and Contreras (2009), where a participant states that the reason to send her children to the Immersion programme was for them to be bilingual, which would help them to have better opportunities if they ever wanted to return to their home country.

Strategies Adopted by Parents

This section analyses the results obtained for the second research question of this study, which focuses on what is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their heritage language. All the participants agreed with and said they are talking to

their children in the heritage language to help them learn/maintain it. Apart from this, other actions are also being taken. Studies show that the parents' attitudes towards the heritage language play a very important role in whether the children learn/maintain the heritage language. Costa Waetzold and Melo-Pfeifer (2022) state that "[i]t seems that it is the quantity of input in the HL at home (thought to be more intensive if both parents are Portuguese speakers) that seems to affect the positive or negative perception of children's bilingual development" (p. 958). Having both parents talking to their children in the heritage language increases the possibility of the children maintaining the language. In the current study all participants were doing this without imposing any hard language rules on the children, although a participant stated that at first, they had a rule to use only the heritage language at home. This rule was maintained by her husband, but she had eased the rule along the years because she realised that her children were not always understanding the language well. Another participant stated that when his child speaks in English or specifically asks him to speak in English, he does not stop him and talks back to him in English. This is done because he feels that his child still needs to practise the majority language. Therefore, this reinforces what Costa Waetzold and Melo-Pfeifer (2022) state in their study that:

... parents do not just strive to transmit HL but also to engage in bilingual education, in which the official and the minority language come closer together, contributing to the construction of a bilingual and 'language identity'. (p. 958)

An observation during this study was the difference in language attitude between siblings. Although all the six participants had children in their early years, two participants had elder children too, who are in their secondary years of schooling. Stevens and Ishizawa's (2007) findings state that younger siblings usually prefer the majority language, which enforces the language change at home. This was confirmed by a participant who has three children. She stated that her eldest daughter could speak and write some words in her heritage

language when she started school, that is at the age of three years and a half. However, while the youngest of the three is now seven years old, she doesn't yet know the alphabet in her heritage language and can hardly speak the language. In this case, only the younger child was born in Malta and was therefore always exposed mainly to Maltese and English, with her only exposure to the minority language being at home with her family. There may be various reasons why the youngest is lagging behind in the heritage language or why she is preferring the majority language. In fact, different studies indicate various factors affecting the learning/maintenance of a heritage language. These include the age of the child at migration (Stevens, 2015), the child's position in the family (Dekeyser & Stevens, 2019), and the parents' fluency in the languages (De Houwer, 2017). Kibler et al. (2014) argue that younger siblings spend their early lives in contexts dominated by the host country's language and are therefore more likely to be fluent in it. Dekeyser & Stevens (2019) state that "[s]ibling position also appears to play an important role in maintaining of a HL and in the acquisition of a new language. Older siblings are more likely to be proficient in the HL than younger siblings..." (p. 150). Moreover, Stevens and Ishizawa's (2007) finding, that the younger sibling is preferring the majority language and is enforcing the language at home, may be confirmed. This case complements also what was revealed in Brown (2011), namely that along the years the parents reduce the use of heritage language with their children. Consequently, the younger children become more fluent in the majority language and the heritage language is used less.

Although the language patterns used by parents play a key role in learning/maintaining heritage language (De Houwer, 2017), research indicates that it is not enough for the parents to speak the heritage language with the children to maintain or acquire the language, with further efforts being needed (Catama et al., 2018). It seems that the participants felt this need

as well, as they mentioned a number of practices during the interview. The second most common action taking place by the participants and their children, as emerged in this study, is the reading of books in their heritage language. Five out of six participants mentioned this. One must keep in mind the age of the children in the study, which is up to seven years old. This is usually the age at which children are read to because they are incapable or not fully capable of reading by themselves. Therefore, the fact that these parents are choosing to read to their children in their heritage language helps them develop the language and “prepares them to understand the written word”, besides the other benefits they gain when shared reading takes place (Cullinan & Bagert, n.d.). This practice may indicate that the participants understand that one needs to acquire more skills than just speaking and understanding to acquire proficiency in a language. Proficiency in the four main language skills – understanding, speaking, reading and writing – should all be achieved. Studies show that to become bilingual, one must possess the mentioned four main language skills in both languages (Mackey, 1962). The majority of the participants in this study mentioned that although their children can understand and to different extents also speak in their heritage language, they have not yet acquired the other language skills. This may be because the children are still in their early years and are still acquiring the skills in either language, most probably in the majority language taught at school. In this case, language lessons would be beneficial for children to become more proficient in the heritage language, especially in the other two skills: reading and writing. However, in this study, the only participant who mentioned using language lessons to teach/maintain the heritage language for her children was the participant with three children. This may be because the other participants’ children are of a younger age, and as studies show, parents rarely make use of extra lessons in minority languages when offered to them at a very young age (Selimi, 2013). Therefore, it may still be a little bit early to enrol the children to extra language lessons outside school

hours. Another drawback is that this study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which clearly wasn't the best time for children to attend extra lessons.

To further encourage the parents to maintain the heritage language with their children, school educators must be aware of the benefits of knowing the first language for learning the languages of schooling. Cummins' (2001) theory states that once the child knows their heritage language, it would be easier to comprehend the school language. Such awareness and knowledge should be communicated to parents, who should be encouraged to maintain their heritage language with their children.

Challenges Encountered. Notwithstanding all the parents' efforts, challenges are always encountered along the way, and parents in this study referred to some of them. All the participants in this study claimed that their children tend to prefer talking in the majority language during specific occasions. They referred to different instances where this might occur, whether it is done with friends, even though they share the same heritage language, or when it comes to elaborating their ideas in a conversation. Two participants in this study stated that their children use the majority language to communicate with their friends. One of the participants stated that when she used to send her children to language lessons, they still talked with their friends in the majority language, defeating in part the purpose of the language lessons. Another participant stated that when they meet with friends of their same nationality, the children still tend to talk in English with each other, confirming what Dekeyser and Stevens (2019) state that:

School-age children, in particular, spend large portions of their day in an environment that is governed by national language ideologies as interpreted and put into practice by educational institutions. Migrant children's attitudes towards their heritage and additional languages are thus shaped by different considerations and experiences than their parents'. (p. 151)

Another common challenge that parents encountered is the language shift that they observed in their children. All the participants in this study mentioned that once their children started attending school, they started using the majority language more often than before, even though, at home, the participants and their spouses or partners talked to their children in the heritage language. This was also stated by De Houwer (2017):

However, once BFLA [Bilingual First Language Acquisition] children start regularly attending a preschool, their language choice patterns often quickly change, and they start to limit themselves to speaking just the majority language, even when parents had done their best to adhere to Ronjat's "one parent, one language" principle. (p. 239)

One of the participants mentioned that his child chooses whom of the parents he addresses in English and whom to address in the heritage language. It seems like the child senses that his mother's English is weaker and so he talks to her in the heritage language. This confirms what De Houwer (2017) found that "[m]ost BFLA [Bilingual First Language Acquisition] children are able to adapt their language choice to their interlocutor soon after their second birthdays, and they adjust their language choice to their interlocutor's language proficiency" (p. 238).

The language shift is a very common challenge that parents encounter when they try to teach/maintain the heritage language with their children in a monolingual environment. Brown (2011) argues that the "[p]arents' beliefs do indeed influence their children's attitude toward HL, but they are apparently not sufficient in helping the children effectively maintain their HL" (p. 36). De Houwer (2007) argues that when both the minority and the majority languages are spoken at home, it is still not an assurance that the children will make use of both languages (p. 417).

The code-switching phenomenon was another challenge encountered by the participants. Four participants in this study mentioned that their children regularly code-

switch between the majority language and their heritage language. One of the participants stated that this occurs when her child needs to elaborate an argument further and is unable to use vocabulary from the heritage language. This is in line with what Torres and Turner (2017) state, namely that code-switching may take place “due to their limited vocabularies in the HL” (p. 838). This was also mentioned by another participant who stated that she uses a mixture of the heritage language and English to communicate with her children, because when they do not understand her well in the heritage language, she starts using both languages. This participant’s action may also lead to further loss of the heritage language. Lao (2004) found that Chinese bilingual parents, who during the interviews showed strong beliefs in the importance of using and maintaining their heritage language with their children, still spoke to their children in English at home. These findings indicate that some parents still act against their beliefs. Notwithstanding the fact that parents’ desire to maintain their heritage language may be eclipsed by other necessities and responsibilities, such actions do not help.

Student with special needs. It is worth noting that one of the participants happened to be a parent of a child with special needs. Her child has not acquired speech yet, even though he is seven years old. The parent in this case specified that she reads more books to her child in the majority language than in the heritage language. However, before reading a book, she explained that she goes through a ritual of explaining to her child that they come from [the name of their country], that they are in Malta, and that in Malta they speak two languages, English and [their heritage language], and that the book is in English/[HL]. The participant does not include the Maltese language as one of the languages spoken, because she stated that although her child is given exposure to the Maltese language at school, special arrangements were made with the school so as to not put a lot of emphasis on the third language, to decrease confusion for the child. Besides talking and sometimes reading in the heritage

language, she admitted she does not do much more regarding the heritage language. The participant sounded somewhat unsure whether she is doing the right thing. She wishes her children would be able to talk fluently in the heritage language, but since her younger one is having difficulty in acquiring speech, she does not want to confuse him further by teaching him other things in the heritage language, like the alphabet. This participant was the one, mentioned earlier in this study, who rated the importance that their children learn the native/heritage language lower than the other respondents, possibly a result of her particular experience as the parent of a child with special needs. This participant is more concerned about her child's abilities to speak and express his feelings than about the language in which he'll be able to do so. She admitted:

I just wish that [name of child] can speak and then any kind of language I don't mind. But just that it can be able to speak and make everybody understand him and he has the...uh...the possibility to speak, to express himself.

This participant explained that she focuses a lot on the present. Therefore, since they are currently in Malta, she works more on the English language with him.

However, it is worth noting that the same participant stated that prior to moving to Malta, she had started preparing the elder child by speaking to him in English and exposing him to English films and nursery rhymes. This happened before the younger child was born. This is in line with what De Houwer (2017) states, that sometimes parents think that unless they speak to their children in the society's language, they will take longer to learn it. This belief was expressed by other parents in this study. Four out of six participants explained that they felt the need to talk to their children in the majority language to help them integrate better in the society. One of the participants stated that she had to put aside their heritage language for a while to focus on the majority language so that her children could communicate at school and do well at school without having a language barrier. She

considered that as a priority even though that meant abandoning their own heritage language for a while. This is in line with what Brown (2011) states, that parents at times opt to use the majority language at the expense of abandoning their own heritage language.

Support Services. The last research question in this study sought to understand the type of support services parents would expect or wish to receive from the school or the host country to help their children maintain their heritage language. The participants' ideas and expectations from the school and the host country in this regard were various. While some parents came up with different suggestions, half of the participants believed that the state is already helping children by offering language lessons of their heritage language from the age of 11/12 years when they move to secondary schooling. This may be true for some, however, the language options at Year 7 are not extensive, with a limited number of languages catered for in the local state schools, namely Arabic, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish (*Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012*). Therefore, while this may be the case for the Italian or Arabic language, surely it is not the same for Portuguese, Bulgarian or Lithuanian.

A suggestion given by one of the participants was to include lessons about different cultures, with explanations about people having different languages, traditions and more. The emphasis of this participant was that it would be nice to learn and know more about other cultures because "it would bring people together", and the more children get to know about other cultures, the better it would be for them. There may be cases where this already takes place, however, it would be on the teacher's own initiative and not as part of the national curriculum.

Another participant suggested that the state/school should provide the infrastructure to communities with languages that are not catered for in state schools, while another suggestion was for the children to have access to at least one language lesson per week. Helping migrant

communities by providing school premises to use as language/culture lessons centres in the same locality outside school hours sounds very interesting and feasible, without entailing too much effort from the school. This is because the participant mentioned that the parents seemed willing to make the necessary arrangements to organise the lessons themselves, but were lacking some major assets. Discussions with authorities may be considered to provide opportunities to heritage language learners to provide language centres using state schools around the island to make such initiatives more accessible for those interested. Moreover, the other participant's suggestion of providing a language lesson on a weekly basis may also be considered outside school hours, and, if organised on a national basis, could be more viable. This could also be done against a nominal fee to encourage attendance.

Another suggestion was that the students be given a task or some kind of homework in their heritage language, in which parents will be encouraged to help their children in achieving all the skills needed for the language. This suggestion needs to be looked at in more detail as one must keep in mind that not all parents may be literate, and unless the teachers are familiar with the child's heritage language, this exercise would not be possible. Moreover, this suggestion entails a considerable amount of time and effort by the parent at home, which may not always be possible.

Limitations and Recommendations

The present qualitative study involved the participation of six parents with a migrant background who relocated to Malta together with their children. Parents taking part in this study resided in the same geographical area and sent their children to the same state primary school. It should therefore be noted that participants are only a small sample from the whole island, and the results can therefore only be indicative. This study would have been more effective if it involved more parents of children in Maltese schools whose heritage language

is not catered for, to find the needs of this section of the population who is being ignored. Moreover, in this study, the focus was on what the parents were doing to teach/maintain the heritage language with their children, without taking into consideration the ideas/attitudes of the children themselves. Although the children referred to in this study were still very young and their attitudes towards their heritage language might still be unclear, it would have nonetheless been interesting to hear about their ideas and how they feel about having to learn the third language, keeping in mind that at school they are already being taught the two local languages – Maltese and English. One of the participants, who has three children, stated that the elder children have asked her why they need to learn their heritage language if they are already learning the two local languages. Therefore, a local study investigating immigrant students' attitudes towards having to learn their heritage language (being the third language), would be interesting. Another interesting study would be a longitudinal study to establish whether the actions being taken with these children would eventually result in learning/maintaining the heritage language and/or whether further action would be needed, like language lessons. It would also help to find out whether along the years the heritage language remains the language used at home, especially if younger siblings are born in the same families.

Conclusion

Teaching/maintaining one's heritage language while residing in a country where it is not used is neither an easy task nor an easy decision to take. Parents desire for their children to be accepted in the community and to be able to understand the school language to set themselves up for academic success, while at the same time wanting and wishing their children to learn the heritage language and the culture that comes with it. De Houwer (2007) states, "Children growing up with two languages invariably learn to speak the majority language. The minority language is the one that is at risk of not being spoken" (p. 419)

because heritage language learners have limited opportunities to practise their heritage language within both community and education settings, therefore language loss may occur (Torres & Turner , 2017, p. 850). When this happens, parents may feel guilty for failing as De Houwer (2017) found:

Parents show a full range of negative emotions in response to their children's non-use of the minority language: They blame themselves for being a bad parent, feel guilty for failing to transmit their language, feel depressed, feel rejected by their children, feel embarrassed and ashamed towards their own parents, feel that they have failed as a person, and are dissatisfied with their bilingual child rearing. (p. 238)

On the other hand, if parents fail to prepare their children to their new reality by talking to and teaching them the majority language, their children may also face difficulties once they enter preschool. As stated by De Houwer (2017), “whenever studies in the EU have looked at minority language children who entered preschool not yet knowing the majority language the reports are of distressed, unhappy, depressed, or aggressive children (p. 242). Goldfeld et al.'s (2014) findings were on the same lines for their large study in Australia.

This dissertation attempted to explore the language ideologies adopted in migrant families as well as their views of and attitudes towards the importance of preserving their heritage languages by engaging with them at home and outside the school. The main findings of this study are that parents feel it is important that their children are able to use their heritage language to communicate with their extended family. They also feel that their heritage language is an important part of their identity and cultural heritage. Moreover, in this study, five out of six participants showed their understanding that communicating with their children in the heritage language may not be enough and are therefore ready to engage in different activities such as reading of books. In addition, the family language policies practised at home are not being followed up at school, where it appears that only Maltese and English feature in the daily teaching and learning school practices. In practical terms, this can be done by having

teachers referring to the child's language spoken at home on a regular basis while creating opportunities to practise and develop language awareness and intercomprehension strategies.

The local state schools follow the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) issued in 2012, in which the first learning outcome in the early years cycle calls for “children who develop a strong sense of identity” (2012, p. 21). However, to date, the NCF has never been updated and still ignores the first language of the child if it is not one of the two official local languages. Therefore, the mentioned outcome can never be achieved by students whose first language is not included in their education system. As Yang (2015) states, “It is believed that when a person cannot speak his or her own language, this individual has also lost his or her own cultural identity.” The languages typically mentioned in the NCF are Maltese and English, while later on in the secondary years cycle a language or a maximum of two languages are mentioned as the options for the children's learning, where the learning outcome is: “Young people who are able to communicate effectively in at least three languages including Maltese and English” (2012, p. 21). Therefore, in the case of foreign learners in local schools, where their heritage language is being ignored, the learning outcomes are contradictory as the sense of identity of these individuals is also being ignored while the respect to diversity mentioned may not be in place either in this area. The NCF states that:

... this theme should seek to imbue values that respect diversity. This encompasses that an individual is unique and recognises individual differences whether these stem from dimensions of race; ethnicity; gender; sexual orientation; socio-economic status, age; physical, mental or intellectual abilities; religious beliefs; political beliefs; or other ideologies. (p. 10)

In this study it was established how important the parents' role is in maintaining the heritage language with the children. However, as stated earlier, one must keep in mind that to become bilingual one must achieve the four language skills. The children need to have formal

language learning to properly acquire the language, otherwise they are very unlikely to maintain the heritage language. In line with what Torres & Turner (2017) found, one of the participants in this study stated that her elder son started having Italian lessons at school, but found it difficult, because although he can understand Italian, the writing, grammar and reading are a completely different area. This is the same argument that participants in Torres and Turner's (2017) study put forward. They "...expressed that they did not understand the Spanish language grammar due to 'learning the language by ear'... stated that their parents 'assumed we would just pick up the language at home'" (p. 846). In the same study, "[s]pecifically, all participants explained that their limited formal educational experiences in the Spanish language were the most significant contributor to their English language dominance" (p. 846). Therefore, the state must consider all options to encourage immigrant students to maintain their heritage language. As cited by Bauman (2012), Europe needs immigrants, otherwise the European economy will collapse (p. 3). This should be the force to encourage immigrants arriving to our shores for economic purposes, and in return the state must provide language lessons to the children. This would avoid what Moore and Nash (2020) describe in their study, namely that students spend their primary years focusing only on the majority language only to later have to "(re-)engage in formal study of their HL in the context of a FL classroom where they are tasked with re-learning what did not have to get lost in the first place" (p. 59).

The time for education policymakers to act on this is overdue, as the number of students with a different heritage language than the languages taught in local schools is on the increase. This requirement needs to be formalised to serve the needs of students who feel otherwise left out of the picture in traditional programmes. As Sapon-Shevin (2007) states, inclusion goes far beyond students with special needs. Inclusion is the right of all children to

have access to mainstream education, perhaps with “modifications, adaptations and extensive support”.

As rightly stated by Leonard et al. (n.d.):

We must move away from the position that diversity is a “problem to solve for” in education. Rather, education systems and policies must shift how they view heritage language instruction as a way to embrace students’ full range of racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds in our schools.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, M. (2002). 'It's a culture thing': Children language and 'boundary' in the bicultural family. In P. Gubbins, & M. Holt, *Beyond boundaries: Language and identity in contemporary Europe. Multilingual Matters* (pp. 111-125). Clevedon.
- Azzopardi, K. (2020). *Will social media be the death of the Maltese language?* Malta: The Malta Independent online.
- Bagley, M. J. (2001). *Attitudes towards Maltese and English in bilingual Malta: a socio-psychological perspective*. University of Malta: (Unpublished Masters of Arts dissertation).
- Bartolo, E. (2018). *How to save the Maltese Language from extinction*. Malta Today. From https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/comment/blogs/83882/how_to_save_the_maltese_language_from_extinction#.Y3ePHnbMLyQ
- Bartolo, E. (2022, July). *Our Endangered Language*. Malta: Times of Malta.
- Bauman, Z. (2012). *On Education*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Becker, A. (1995). *Beyond Translation: Essays Towards a Modern Philosophy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bialystok, E., Craik, F. I., & Luk, G. (2012). Bilingualism: Consequences for brain and mind. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 16 No 4, 240-250.
- Bonnici, L. M. (2010). *Variation in Maltese English: The interplay of the local and the global in an emerging postcolonial variety*. University of California: (Unpublished PhD thesis).
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3:2, 77-101.
- Brown, C. L. (2011). Maintaining Heritage Language - Perspectives of Korean Parents. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 31-37.
- Carreira, M., & Kagan, O. (2011). The results of the National Heritage Language Survey: Implications for teaching, curriculum design, and professional development. *Foreign Language Annals* 44 (1), 40-64.

- Caruana, S., & Pace, M. (2021). Italian nationals in Maltese schools: a case of 'so near yet so far'? *Malta Review of Educational Research* Vol 15, No. 2, 145-164.
- Caruana, S., Coposescu, L., & Scaglione, S. (2013). *Migration, Multilingualism and Schooling in Southern Europe* Eds. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Caruana, S., Scaglione, S., & Vassallo Gauci, P. (2019). Multilingualism and the inclusion of migrant learners in Maltese schools. In C. Bezzina, & S. Caruana, *Teacher Education Matters: transforming lives... transforming schools* (pp. 330-343). Msida: Universita' ta' Malta.
- Catama, B. V., Wacdagang, B. D., Tigbao, J. T., Ventura, G. B., & Viernes, M. Q. (2018). Challenges in Maintaining a Heritage Language. *International Journal for Research Studies in Language Learning* Vol 7 No 1, 39-61.
- Cho, G. (2000). The role of heritage language in social interactions and relationships: Reflections from a language minority group. *Bilingual Research Journal* 24(4), 333-348.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2000.10162773>
- Cho, G. (2015). Perspectives vs Realities of Heritage Language Development; Voices from Second-Generations Korean-American High school students. *Multicultural Education*, 30-38.
- Chumak-Horbatsch, R. (2010). Toronto childcare centres: A language profile. In B. Bokus, *Studies in the Psychology of Language and Communication* (pp. 289-307). Warsaw: Matrix.
- Costa Waetzold, J., & Melo-Pfeifer, S. (2022). How is bilingual development of Portuguese heritage children perceived by their parents? Results from an ethnographic case study of a non-formal learning setting in Germany. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 25:3, 942-962. doi:DOI: 10.1080/13670050.2020.1731415
- Costa Waetzold, J., & Melo-Pfeifer, S. (2022). How is bilingual development of Portuguese heritage children perceived by their parents? Results from an ethnographic case study of a non-formal learning setting in Germany. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 25:3, 942-962. doi:10.1080/13670050.2020.1731415
- Council of Europe. (n.d.). *Formal, Non-formal, and Informal learning* . Retrieved March 19, 2022 from Council of Europe:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/formal-non-formal-and-informal-learning>

- Cullinan, B., & Bagert, B. (n.d.). *Reading with your child*. From reading rockets.org: <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-your-child#:~:text=Reading%20books%20aloud%20to%20children,to%20understand%20the%20written%20word>.
- Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In C. S. (ed.), *Schooling and Language minority students: a theoretical framework* (pp. 3-49). Los Angeles: Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.
- Cummins, J. (2001). Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why is it Important for Education? *Sprogforum* 7 (19), 15-20.
- Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (2016). Conflicting Language Ideologies and Contradictory Language Practices in Singaporean Multilingual Families. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 37 (7), 694-709. doi:doi:10.1080/01434632.2015.1127926
- De Houwer, A. (2007). Parental Language input patterns and children's bilingual use. *Applied Psycholinguistics* 28(03), 411-424.
- De Houwer, A. (2017). Minority Language Parenting in Europe and Children's Well-being. In N. J. Cabrera, & B. Leyendecker, *Positive Development of Minority Children and Youth* (pp. 231-246). New York: Springer.
- Debono, J. (2021). *State schools took bulk of international students with 700% increase: data*. Malta Today. From https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/108013/state_schools_took_bulk_of_international_students_with_700_increase_data#.Y3ukWnbMLyR
- Dekeyser, G., & Stevens, G. (2019). Maintaining one language while learning another: Moroccan children in Belgium. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 40:2, 148-163.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2008). The emotional weight of 'I love you' in multilingual's languages. *J. Pragmat* 40, 1753-1780.
- Dewaele, J.-M. (2015). From obscure echo to language of the heart: Multilinguals' language choices for (emotional) inner speech. *Journal of Pragmatics* 87, 1-17.

- DJI . (2000). *[DJI- Projekt "Multikulturelles Kinderleben"] Wie Kinder multikulturellen Alltag erleben, Ergebnisse einer Kinderbefragung*. München: Deutsches Jugendinstitut.
- Drury, R. (2007). *Young bilingual learners at home and school: Researching multilingual voices* . Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.
- Duff, P. A. (2008). Heritage Language education in Canada. In D. M. Brinton, O. Kagan & S. Bauckus (Eds.), *Heritage language education: A new field emerging* (pp. 71-90). New York: Routledge.
- EUROSTAT 2020. (n.d.). *Population on 1 January by age, sex and broad group of citizenship [migr_pop2ctz]*.
- Fenech, C., & Seguna, A. (2020). Internalisation of Maltese Society and Education. *Malta Journal of Education Vol 1, No 1*, 24-51. From https://institute foreducation.gov.mt/en/Documents/Symposium/Symposium%202020/Malta%20Journal%20of%20Education/Malta%20Journal%20of%20Education_Volume%201_No%201_2020_24-51.pdf
- Fielding , N., & Thomas, H. (2008). Qualitative Interviewing. In N. Gilbert, *Research Scoial Life 3rd edn*. (pp. 123-144). London: Sage.
- Fisher, N. (2014). *Children's Language Acquisition*. From University of Michigan:
http://sitemaker.umich.edu/nicolesling/theories_of_language_acquisition
- Gandara, P., & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino Education Crisis - The Consequences of failed Social Policies*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Gatt, D., Grech, H., & Dodd, B. (2016). Early lexical expression in children exposed to mixed input: A case of monolingual or bilingual development? *International Journal of Biligualism* 20 (6), 639-665. doi:doi:10.1177/1367006915572399
- Goldfeld, S., O'Connor, M., Mithen , J., Sayers, M., & Brinkman, S. (2014). Early developmental outcomes of emerging and English-proficient bilingual children at school entry in an Australian population cohort. *International Journal of Behavioural Development* 38 (1), 42-51.
- Guerrero, M. C. (2005). *Inner Speech - L2: Thinking Words in a Second Language*. New York: Springer.

- heartlanguage.org*. (n.d.). Retrieved March 24, 2022 from What is an Ethnic Heart Language in a Community of Multiple Languages?:
<https://heartlanguage.org/what-is-an-ethnic-heart-language-essay.html>
- Kamau, A. (n.d.). *Difference between formal and informal teaching*. From www.academia.edu:
https://www.academia.edu/8846048/Difference_between_formal_and_informal_teaching
- Kelleher, A. (2010). *What is a heritage language?* From Center for Applied Linguistics: <https://www.cal.org/heritage/pdfs/briefs/What-is-a-Heritage-Language.pdf>
- Kibler, A. K., Palacios, N., & Simpson Baird, A. (2014). The influence of older siblings on language use among second-generation Latino Preschoolers. *TESOL Quarterly* 48 (1), 164-175. doi:doi:10.1002/Tesq.151.
- King, K. A., & Fogle, L. (2006). Bilingual Parenting as Good Parenting: Parents' Perspectives on Family Language Policy for Additive Bilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 9 (6), 695-712. doi:doi:10.1111/J.1749-818X.2008.00076.X
- Kouritzin, S. G. (2000). A Mother's Tongue. *TESOL Quarterly Vol 34, No 2*, 311-324.
- Kouritzin, S. G. (2000). A Mother's Tongue. *TESOL Quarterly, Summer 2000 Vol 34 No 2*, 311-324. From <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3587954>
- Krashen, S. (1998). Heritage language development: Some practical arguments. In S. Krashen, L. Tse, & J. McQuillan, *Heritage Language Development* (pp. 3-13). Culver City, CA: Language Education Associates.
- Kratzmann, J. (2011). *Türkische Familien beim Übergang vom Kindergarten in die Grundschule. Einschulungsentscheidungen in der Migrationssituation*. Münster:: Waxmann.
- Kuenzi, J., & Riddle, W. (2005). *National security education program: Background and issues*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress. From <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/>
- Lao, C. (2004). Parents' attitudes toward Chinese-English bilingual education and Chinese-language use. *Bilingual Research Journal* 28 (1), 99-121.
- Larsen, S. F., Schrauf, R. F., Fromholt, P., & Rubin, D. C. (2002). Inner Speech and bilingual autobiographical memory: a Polish-Danish cross-cultural study. *Memory* 10, 45-54.

- Leonard, D., Vitrella, A., & Yang, K. (n.d.). *Power, Politics and Preservation of Heritage Languages*. From educationevolving.org:
<https://www.educationevolving.org/content/power-politics-and-preservation-of-heritage-languages>
- Mackey, W. (1962). The Description of Bilingualism. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* 7, 51-85.
- Ministry of Education and Employment. (2012). *National Curriculum Framework*. Malta: Salesian Press.
- Ministry of Education and Employment. (2012). *National Curriculum Framework*. Malta: Salesian Press. From
<https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Resources/The-NCF/Documents/NCF.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Employment. (n.d.). *A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo*. Malta: Ministry of Education and Employment. From
<https://education.gov.mt/en/nationalliteracyagency/Documents/Policies%20and%20Strategies/A%20Language%20Policy%20for%20the%20Early%20Years%20in%20Malta%20and%20Gozo.pdf>
- Ministry of European Affairs and Equality. (2017). *Integration = Belonging*. Malta: Ministry of European Affairs and Equality. From
<https://humanrights.gov.mt/en/Documents/Integration%20Equals%20Belonging%20EN.pdf>
- Moore, E., & Nash, A. (2020). Heritage Language Education. In S. Conrad, A. Hartig, L. Santelmann, & (Eds), *The Cambridge Introduction to Applied Linguistics* (pp. 56-70). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
doi:DOI: 10.1017/9781108658089.007
- Mukherji, P., & Albon, D. (2010). *Research Methods in Early Childhood - An Introductory Guide*. London: Sage Publications.
- National Statistics Office. (2021). *News2020_186*. Valletta:
https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Archived_News_Releases/Documents/2020/News2020_186.xls.
- Nesteruk, O. (2010). Heritage Language maintenance and loss among the children of Eastern European immigrants in the USA. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 31:3, 271-286. From
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630903582722>

- OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). (2017). *2015 Results Volume 3: Students' Well being*. Paris: PISA, OECD Publishing. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264273856-en>
- Oriyama, K. (2016). Community of Practice and Family Language Policy: Maintaining Heritage Japanese in Sydney - Ten Years Later. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 289-307. From <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2016.1198977>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods 2nd ed.* California, USA: Thousand Oaks.
- Pavlenko, A. (2011). *Thinking and Speaking Two Languages*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters. From <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847693389>
- Pavlenko, A. (2012). Affective processing in bilingual speakers: disembodied cognition? *Int. J. Psychol* 47, 405-428.
- Pavlenko, A. (2014). *The Bilingual Mind and What it Tells us about Language and Thought*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Peal, E., & Lambert, W. E. (1962). The relation of bilingualism to intelligence. *Psychological Monographs* 76 (27), 1-23.
- Peyton, J. K., Ranard, D. A., & McGinnis, S. (2001). *Heritage Languages in America: Preserving a national resource*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2002). The price of uniformity: language, family and personality adjustment in the immigrant second generation. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 25 No. 6, 889-912.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. (2001). Conclusion: The forging of a new America: Lessons for theory and policy. In R. Rumbaut, & A. Portes, *Ethnicities: Children of immigrants in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies, The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkely CA: University of California Press.
- Roy, S., & Galiev, A. (2011). Discourse on Bilingualism in Canadian French Immersion Programs. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 67, 3, 351-376.
- Ryan, C. (2013). Language use in the United States: 2011. In U. D. Commerce, *American Community Survey* (pp. 1-16). Bureau, US Census.

- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2007). *Widening the circle. The power of inclusive classrooms*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Schwartz, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., & Jarvis, L. H. (2007). Ethnic identity and acculturation in Hispanic early adolescents: Mediated relationships to academic grades, prosocial behavior and externalizing symptoms. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 13 (4), 364-373. doi:<http://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.4.364>
- Selimi, N. (2013). *Familiäre und institutionelle Einflüsse auf die Sprachentwicklung mehrsprachig aufwachsender Kinder*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.
- Sofu, H. (2009). Language Shift or Maintenance within three generations: examples from three Turkey-Arabic-speaking families. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 6 (3), 246-257. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710902878684>
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stevens, G. (2015). Trajectories of English Acquisition among Foreign-born Spanish-language Children in the United States. *International Migration Review* 49 (4), 981-1000.
- Stevens, G., & Ishizawa, H. (2007). Variation among Siblings in the Use of a Non-English Language. *Journal of Family Issues* 28, 1008-1025.
- Suarez, D. (2002). The Paradox of Linguistic Hegemony and the Maintenance of Spanish as a Heritage Language in the United States. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 23:6, 512-530. doi:[10.1080/01434630208666483](https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630208666483)
- The University of Manchester. (2012, September 26). *The University of Manchester*. From Most European Languages in danger of digital extinction : <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/most-european-languages-in-danger-of-digital-extinction/#:~:text=Icelandic%2C%20Latvian%2C%20Lithuanian%20and%20Maltese,extinct%20in%20the%20digital%20world>.
- Torres, K. M., & Turner, J. E. (2017). Heritage language learners' perception of acquiring and maintaining the Spanish language. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 20:7, 837-853.

- Torres, K. M., & Turner, J. E. (2015). Heritage language learners' perception of acquiring and maintaining the Spanish language. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 20:7, 837-853.
- Tse, L. (2000). Student perception of foreign language study: A qualitative analysis of foreign language autobiographies. *Modern Language Journal* 84 (1), 69-84.
- Tse, L. (2001). "Why don't they learn English" *Separating Fact from Fallacy in the U.S. Language Debate*. . New York: Teachers College Press.
- Tse, L. (2001a). Resisting and reversing language shift: Heritage language resilience among US native biliterates. *Harvard Educational Review* 71 (4), 677-708. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.71.4.ku752mj536413336>
- Tse, L. (2001b). Heritage Language literacy: A study of US biliterates. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 14(3), 256-268. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/07908310108666627>
- Tseng, V., & Fuligni, A. J. (2000). Parent-adolescent language use and realationships among immigrant families with East Asian, Filipino, and Latin American backgrounds. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 465-476.
- Tseng, V., & Fuligni, A. J. (2000). Parent-adolescent language use and relationships among immigrant families with East Asian, Filipino, and Latin American backgrounds. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 62, 465-476.
- United Nations. (2013). *International Migration Report 2013*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.
- Vella, L. A. (2019). Learner's Attitudes and Ideologies towards English: Implications for the teaching and learning of English in Malta. *Malta Review of Educational Research Vol 13 No. 2*, 172-192.
- Vizcarra, W., & Mikami, Y. (2005). Endangered Latin American Languages and their place in the cyber space. *Bulletin of Language Science and Humanities* 19, 241-247.
- Yamamoto, M. (2001). *Language use in Interlingual Families: A Japanese-English sociolinguistic study*. Channel View Publications. Retrieved March 8, 2022 from ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ejournals.um.edu.mt/lib/ummt/detail.action?docID=3007699>.

- Yang, T. (2015). Hmong Parents Critical Reflections on their Children's Heritage Language Maintenance. *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement* 3 no. 1.
- Yu, B. (2013). Issues in Bilingualism and Heritage Maintenance: Perspectives of minority-language mothers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology* 22(1), 10-24. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1044/1058-0360\(2012/10-0078\)](https://doi.org/10.1044/1058-0360(2012/10-0078))
- Zhou, M., & Bankston , C. (1996). Social capital and the adaptation of the second generation: The case of Vietnamese youth in New Orleans. In A. (. Portes, *The New Second Generation* (pp. 197-220). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

From: **Research Ethics EDUC** <research-ethics.educ@um.edu.mt>

Date: Fri, 3 Sept 2021 at 12:35

Subject: Your Research Ethics Application Ref. No.8073_30082021_Josephine Grech

To: Josephine Grech [REDACTED]

Cc: Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci [REDACTED]

Dear Josephine Grech,

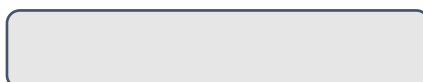
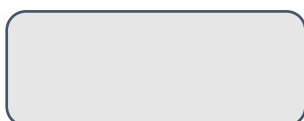
Please be informed that FREC (Education) finds no ethical or data protection issues with your research application 8073_30082021_Josephine Grech, as set out in the Senate approved documents Research Code of Ethics and Research Ethics Review Procedures. **You may proceed to obtain Institutional (eg. Education Directorate, Secretariat for Catholic Education etc) and gatekeeper permissions (eg. Heads of School, Heads of Organisations etc.).**

When requesting permission from the Department for Curriculum, Research Innovation and Lifelong Learning, please also present a copy of this notification with your application.

Once you have obtained all necessary permissions, please save them as PDF documents and forward them to FREC by email on research-ethics.educ@um.edu.mt as soon as possible so that the ethics clearance process can be concluded without undue delay. PDF files should be named using the first part of the Unique Form ID (found at the top of the most recent online application), followed by the year and the name of the file e.g. **123_20052019_Permission Secretariat for Catholic Education.**

Please DO NOT collect any data before you receive an email from FREC confirming that all permissions have been checked and accepted. To collect data before FREC has concluded the ethics review process of your application would be in breach of Senate regulations.

Kind regards.



FREC Secretary
Faculty of Education
Room 231, Old Humanities Building
+356 2340 6033
+356 2340 3058

APPENDIX B



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION
DIRECTORATE FOR RESEARCH, LIFELONG
LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY

Tel: 25982743

researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 1st October 2021

Ref: R09-2021 916

To: Head of School – [] Primary School
From: Director

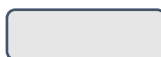
Title of Research Study: *A Parents' Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children's Heritage Language.*

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to Josette Grech to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.



Research Support Teacher
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability



Director
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability
Great Siege Road | Floriana | VLT 2000

t: +356 [] | www.education.gov.mt

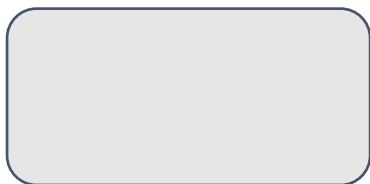


MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION

MINISTERU GHALL-EDUKAZZJONI
MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION

APPENDIX C

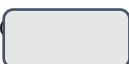
Head of School



18th November 2021

Request for permission to conduct research in school

Dear Mr



My name is Josette Grech and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters in Access to Education (Culturally Responsive Education). I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled 'A Parents' Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children's Heritage Language'. This study aims to learn why, according to the parents, it is important to preserve their children's heritage language, learn what is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their languages and what type of support services would the parents expect or wish to receive from the school or the host country in this regard. This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci.

I am hereby asking you to be my intermediary by distributing the online questionnaire to parents of children in the Early Years whose native language is neither Maltese nor English. My data collection methods will involve a short online questionnaire that takes about 8 minutes to complete. Once the questionnaires are evaluated, a selective sampling will take place to conduct a further 30-45 minutes online interview with six of these parents. The interviews will be recorded via MS Teams and later transcribed and anonymized.

Participation will be entirely voluntary, and participants will be free to withdraw at any point, without any repercussions. Data collected will be treated confidentially and only my tutor and myself will have access to it. The recorded interviews will be transcribed and anonymized.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor; both our contact details are provided below.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Josette Grech

josette.grech.09@um.edu.mt

Dr Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci

phyllisienne.gauci@um.edu.mt

Supervisor's office number - 23406514

APPENDIX D

Participant's Consent Form

A Parents' Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children's Heritage Language

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Josette Grech. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be stored anonymously.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in an interview in which the researcher will conduct a one-to-one interview which will be recorded, and later transcribed. The data will be investigated to see the parents' perspective about teaching/maintaining the heritage language of their children. I am aware that the interview will take approximately 30 – 45 minutes. I understand that the interview is to be conducted online at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.
5. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study.
6. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
7. I understand that all data collected will be stored in an anonymized form on completion of the study and following publication of results.
8. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.
9. I am aware that, if I give my consent, extracts from my interview may be reproduced in these outputs, either in anonymous form, or using a pseudonym (a made-up name or code – e.g. respondent A).
10. I am aware that I may ask to be given the opportunity to review relevant extracts of the transcript of my interview, before the results of the study are published. I am also aware that I may ask for changes be made, if I consider this to be necessary.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Josette Grech

josette.grech.09@um.edu.mt

Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci

phyllisienne.gauci@um.edu.mt

Supervisor's office number - 23406514

APPENDIX E

19th November 2021

INFORMATION LETTER

‘A Parents’ Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children’s Heritage Language’ Online Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Josette Grech and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters in Access to Education (Culturally Responsive Education). I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled ‘A Parents’ Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children’s Heritage Language’; this is being supervised by Dr Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of my study is to learn why, according to the parents, it is important to preserve their children’s heritage language, learn what is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their languages and what type of support services would the parents expect or wish to receive from the school or the host country in this regard. Your participation in this study would help contribute to a better understanding of what the future learners with a migrant background may benefit in acquiring help in maintaining their native language. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to fill in a short online questionnaire that takes about 5 minutes to complete. By filling in the questionnaire you are giving your consent to take part in the study as per the attached consent form. **Please complete the questionnaire via this link: <https://forms.office.com/r/qtfPd1HRJt> by the 31st December 2021.**

Data collected will be anonymized and only my tutor and myself will have access to it.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be stored anonymously.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you. Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be stored in an anonymized form on completion of the study.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail josette.grech.09@um.edu.mt ; you can also contact my supervisor over the phone: 23406514 or via email: phyllisienne.gauci@um.edu.mt .

Sincerely,

Josette Grech

josette.grech.09@um.edu.mt

Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci

phyllisienne.gauci@um.edu.mt

Supervisor's office number: 23406514

APPENDIX F

Dear Sir/Madam,

With regards to the questionnaire that you have completed a couple of weeks ago, I am sending you the information letter about my study.

I am here inviting you to take part in a 30-45 minutes long interview which will be held online at a time that is convenient to you. Kindly indicate a convenient time on any day **during the coming week from 16:00hours onwards**. I will also be available **at any time during the weekend**, if you prefer.

I truly appreciate your time.

Yours sincerely,

Josette Grech

APPENDIX G

Questionnaire for Prospective Participants –

Heritage languages* and the communicative language of children at home

***The heritage language is the language you speak in your country of origin**

1. How long have you been living in Malta?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1 - 5 years
 - c. 6 - 10 years
 - d. More than 10 years

2. How many children do you have?
 - a. 1 child
 - b. 2 children
 - c. 3 children
 - d. More than 4

3. Were your children born in Malta?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not all of them
 - d. If no, where? _____

4. Who is the primary care giver to the children?
 - a. Mum
 - b. Dad
 - c. Both mum and dad
 - d. Grandpa/grandma/other

5. Which language/s do you use at home with your partner/husband/wife?

6. Which language/s do you use with your children?

7. Which language/s do your children use between themselves?

8. From a scale from 1 to 10 (1= not important and 10=very important), how important do you feel it is that your child learns to speak your native/heritage language? (a language which is not Maltese or English)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not

Very

Important

Important

9. Do you plan:

- a. to leave Malta in a year's time
- b. to leave Malta in two years' time
- c. to stay in Malta for good
- d. to decide at a later stage on what to do

10. Would you be interested in participating in a brief interview with me of about 30-45 minutes, on the importance of preserving your native/heritage language? The interview would be held online on a date and at a time that is convenient for you.

___ Yes, of course. Please feel free to contact me on this email address _____

___ Thank you, but I am not interested.

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX H

6th January 2022

INFORMATION LETTER

‘A Parents’ Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children’s Heritage Language’

Interview

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Josette Grech and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters in Access to Education (Culturally Responsive Education). I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled ‘A Parents’ Perspective on the Importance of Maintaining Children’s Heritage Language’; this is being supervised by Dr Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci. This letter is to thank you for taking part in the first part of my study by filling up the questionnaire and accepting to take part in the interview. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement will entail.

The aim of my study is to learn why, according to the parents, it is important to preserve their children’s heritage language, learn what is currently being done by parents to encourage their children to maintain their languages and what type of support services would the parents expect or wish to receive from the school or the host country in this regard. Your participation in this study would help contribute to a better understanding of what the future learners with a migrant background may benefit in acquiring help in maintaining their native language. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

I am here inviting you to take part in a 30-45 minutes long interview which will be held online at a time that is convenient to you. Kindly indicate a convenient time on any day during the coming week from 16:00hours onwards. I will also be available at any time during the weekend, if you prefer. The interview will be recorded via MS Teams to be later transcribed and anonymized.

Data collected will be anonymized and only my tutor and myself will have access to it.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be stored anonymously.

Please note that there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study and your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be stored in an anonymized form on completion of the study.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail josette.grech.09@um.edu.mt ; you can also contact my supervisor over the phone: 23406514 or via email: phyllisienne.gauci@um.edu.mt .

Sincerely,

Josette Grech

josette.grech.09@um.edu.mt

Phyllisienne Vassallo Gauci

phyllisienne.gauci@um.edu.mt

Supervisor's office number - 23406514

APPENDIX I

Questions for Interview with parents

1. Why do you feel the need to talk to your children in your native language? Do you think it is useful in Malta?
2. Do you worry that your children will lose their native language? Does it make any difference for you if they do? Why?
3. What are you currently doing or are planning to do to help your children retain their native/heritage language?
4. Have you noticed a change in the language your children use since attending school? Do your children talk to you back in English/Maltese? What is your reaction if this happens?
5. What expectations do you have for your children and their native language? Do you wish they will be able to be as fluent as you are in your language?
6. What do you hope or wish the state/schools would do to help support your child in retaining your native language?

APPENDIX J

Interview with Participant 1

P1: Today it's a super busy day. OK, can you still hear me?

Researcher: OK. Yes, I can hear you perfectly. Well, I will be sharing my screen OK? We only have 6 questions to go through.

P1: Yeah, sure.

Researcher: That is the first question that I would like to ask you: Why do you feel the need to talk to your children in your native language? Do you think it is useful in Malta?

P1: The first answer to the first question.

Researcher: Yes.

P1: Uh, I believe it's needed because, we need to keep our, how to say, we need to keep our identity and being about getting in Malta even though I've lived here for maybe 15 years now. It doesn't change the point that I'm feeling Bulgarian inside, so even though he's been born in Malta, he's still Bulgarian. So, we need to keep the language alive. And not only the language, but the culture and everything that comes with the language, the traditions, even. So that's why I think it's it's important to keep the native language.

And do you think it's useful in Malta? Every language is useful. There are plenty of Bulgarians in Malta if he needs the language here, but uh, also, like our language is very close to all the Slavic languages, so it's another plus to know it in in his future. So, it is useful.

Researcher: OK. OK, shall we move on to the next one?

P1: Yes, if you need something like an additional questions, just ask me.

Researcher: Yes, sure.

Researcher: Do you worry that your children will lose their native language? Does it make any difference for you if they do and why?

P1: Uh, I was worried in the beginning that he would lose it because I've come across a lot of, uh, Bulgarian friends here whose children doesn't speak Bulgarian. Uh, but uh, the moment when I started worry about that. Actually, it happened on its own that he started speaking the language we contribute it only with more recent visits to Bulgaria that time. So probably at that time he made the difference between the different languages and he realized that it's just another one that he needs to learn. Uh, so anymore I'm not worried anymore because he knows that he sees the difference and he's trying to practice it... And would it make any difference for you if they lose it?... Uh, me personally, yes, because I'm quite patriotic and nationalistic in my heart. Like I miss Bulgaria. I always think very nicely and positively of it. So, to me it would make a

difference if he doesn't know the language. That's why I'm pushing it home, at least so we speak the language.

Researcher: Very good. What are you currently doing or are planning to do to help your children retain their native/heritage language?

P1: What are we currently doing apart from speaking at home, that language? We're also sometimes watching movies in the language children movies, especially when we're back home. We have plenty of books, as when we're reading, we also have some Bulgarian books here, like children's books. We're also reading, and this summer I'm planning to start learning him the alphabet because he already knows the Maltese one. Soon, he's starting the English, so I believe it's a good time to start also the the Bulgarian one.

Researcher: OK, so your child, how old is he?

P1: Yeah, he's 5.

Researcher: Very good. So, he has started learning the alphabet and now you're planning to teach him the alphabet on your own.

P1: Yes.

Researcher: Very good and you mentioned also books in your country and at home. Do you have Bulgarian books now here in Malta?

P1: Yes.

Researcher: OK, that's very good.

P1: Even like practicing books with the numbers and the alphabet, I also bought some of those, so we have it handy.

P1: Very good.

Researcher: Have you noticed a change in the language your children use since attending school? Do your children talk to you back in English or Maltese? What is your reaction if this happens?

P1: Uh, there is a big change since they started school even when he started just before. No, actually, kinder exactly kinder one. It was just in a month that he started speaking so much and he was forming sentences and it was a great experience for us. Happen so quickly. Um, so there is a big big change. And now when they're year one again, they started learning so quickly the Maltese language that I'm amazed that even being a foreigner he already knows a lot, and he knows more than me. Actually, even in writing much more. And do your children talk to you back in English or Maltese? Yes, he talks in both English and notice most of the time. He prefers to speak English. I don't know how it comes up, but now he he's also replying to us in Maltese sometimes. And what is? What is my reaction? I always reply in Bulgarian. This is my reaction. Because I tried to put it that at home we need to speak Bulgarian outside we can speak different language.

Researcher: So, so you have seen the change from the beginning of his school years. So, he grabbed the language, immediately the English and the Maltese. And he tries to answer in those languages. OK, that's very interesting. It's very interesting, but you still reply in Bulgarian to help him realize that now we're at home.

P1: Yes, exactly.

Researcher: And you talk in Bulgarian.

P1: Yes, exactly.

Researcher: That's very interesting, well done. What expectations do you have for your children and their native language? Do you wish they will be able to be as fluent as you are in your language?

P1: To be honest, I haven't thought about expectations because I think this would come with the time and I'm not forcing him or pushing him to do something as soon as possible. So, expectations,

I hope that he would speak fluently and without the hassle to try and look for words, but this again will come with a lot of practice and later on with reading a lot of books because he needs to build up the dictionary like that. So, I wish he is fluent as I am, although I've been living abroad for quite some time and not that fluent anymore. But I wish he's fluent as we are.

Researcher: OK, what do you hope or wish that this state or the schools here in Malta would do to help support your child in retaining your native language? So, what do you expect? Or what would you wish to see? That the schools do to help you support his language.

P1: This is difficult because there's so many different nationalities in each school that it's super difficult to dedicate time to each one of them and resources. So, to be honest, I'm not expecting anything from the state to be done in this way. Uh, for example, I know that there is a Bulgarian school here in Malta, but he still hasn't visited that because it's on the weekends and I want him to rest in the weekends. So hasn't expectation from the state school. I don't have any. Uh, maybe just on a classroom level. They can maybe introduce each other later on in the years. Now it's too early year one, but maybe later on they can do some presentations, and something related to their native traditions and languages. And it's going to be interesting for them as well to see the multicultural.

Researcher: Maybe later.

P1: Uh, surroundings.

Researcher: Uh-huh and earlier on you mentioned that you have friends that their children cannot talk in their language and Bulgarian. And it must have triggered something in you that helped you that like you didn't like it and you made sure that your child would learn the native language. So, did I get that right?

P1: It's not that it triggered me like personally, but I believe that we need to keep our traditions alive and our language alive. And, uh, who knows that maybe one day he decides to go and

live in Bulgaria, for example, he needs to know that. So, it's a necessity to have it since you have it in your blood, you should be able to speak it as well. If I can contribute to that and do it. And I see him that he's eager to learn. Then yes, if I would so that he didn't want to learn, then probably I wouldn't push for anything more.

Researcher: And so far, you said you didn't take him to the Bulgarian school and you said it's because in the weekend would you consider it later on maybe?

P1: Maybe yes. But still depends on the availability because he has some other classes. He goes to karate lessons as well, so it's with time wise it's a bit difficult like if we had the possibility to go during the week, that would be much easier.

Researcher: May I ask you where the Bulgarian school is?

P1: I think it's in Pembroke.

Researcher: OK. That's interesting. And this, of course is something private I assume.

P1: Yes, but I haven't checked much on the details.

Researcher: You don't know much details, OK, alright. Would you like to add something else yourself like? Like the importance like what we were talking about this this whole thing.

P1: It's an interesting topic and there is a lot of things to think about and to talk about. Um, language wise and culture wise it's nice to learn and to know more about everyone because this would bring the people together. If we know more about each other. I think that's it. I have nothing else to add. It was very interesting though.

Researcher: It was interesting to have you so um...Like...you know what you're talking about? It's when I was reading literature, I was learning and then you were saying the same things like it is important for the culture. It's important that maybe if he wants to go back, it's not only important to talk to your child, but to also read with him so that he can see the language written as well. So that is already a very good thing from your side. I hope you will keep this up and your child would grow into having 3 languages in his life, which is so so advantageous. He would have an advantage over me and over you and over whoever knows three good languages like Maltese, English and Bulgarian. Maybe later on, he will learn other languages. So that is.

P1: He's already interested in different languages, but I think it's a bit too much. For example, I know Spanish and we will his father is half Turkish, so he also asked for some words in those languages too.

Researcher: Ah! But it's amazing how young children can grasp and learn very quickly as you were saying. So, there is no limit like it's the child would show you how much you would like to learn and how much he can take.

P1: That's exactly. Yes, I saw the sparkle in him with regards to this and I decided that I'm gonna keep it alive and try to use it as much as possible. But also I need to balance and be sure that I don't overdo it because he might lose affection to it.

Researcher: OK. And when you been to Bulgaria, and he could practice it more, more often it's not just with Mommy and Daddy. Maybe it's just.

P1: In the beginning it was very interesting because, for example we used to go and my parents, they don't speak English and when he was in the nursery he started with the word. The first words in English only. So, when we used to go there sometimes even spend one month or two months he was talking only in English, but he could understand what they say in Bulgarian. But still replied to them in English. And that's how they started learning. Also English from him. So interesting. And then after a few times going, we saw that he start to improve like he start to speak more, even though he makes a lot of mistakes, he was pushing more and more and more until eventually he completely like really started talking. But he still says for example in a sentence full like Bulgarian sentence he would say one word in English.

Researcher: Yes. es, of course. This happens to us as well, I mean. We're talking in Maltese and all of a sudden, we pop some words in English, so it's natural. I mean, once you know the words and the languages, but it's very interesting that at this age he's already switching and knowing that he has to switch the language to... One from the other end, and so on.

P1: Yeah.

Researcher: OK, this was very interesting, um... Knowing your views from what we have talked, um so far. So I would really like to thank you and I appreciate your time. The time that you have dedicated to help me in my study and I I wish you all the best with your son and of course with yourself with whatever you do in your life. Thank you.

P1: Thanks very much.

Researcher: Thank you, I appreciate it a lot.

P1: Thank you too, and good luck with the dissertation and everything that you have to do to complete it and hopefully you'll prosperous in the future.

Researcher: Oh, thank you. Thanks a lot. I appreciate that. Thank you. Good evening.

P1: Thanks, have a nice day. Bye bye.

Researcher: Thanks same to you. Bye bye.

Interview with Participant 2

Researcher: Started recording, OK? Now I will be showing you the questions so that while I am reading them to you, you can also read them and understand them better, OK? OK, so the first question that I'm going to ask you is why do you feel the need to talk to your children in your native language? Do you think it is useful in Malta?

P2: Uh, if it's I will start from the second part if it's useful in Malta for sure it will not, but for me it's so important because it's it will be a better communication for me because it is my native language.

Researcher: It's so important.

P2: Also, if we go to my country, if we went, go back to my country, I need them to know their language very well to talk and communicate with other people with other family member you know, so it's difficult for me if they are not in good knowledge in Arabic. It's my native language.

Researcher: And why do you think it is not useful in Malta to know the Arabic language for them?

P2: Uhm, as a daily life it is not. It is not because even the Arabic people here they are speaking English. So, they they feel that there is no need even they ask me why we should learn Arabic mummy we can speak English and Maltese. It's difficult for us to learn all these languages but I'm trying with them because if I stayed here in Malta just when they grow up. Maybe in translation or something like that it will be useful. Otherwise, no.

Researcher: OK, so that is the first question now do you worry that your children will lose their native language? Does it make any difference for you if they do and why?

P2: Uh, I think they will not lose it, but they will be weak they would be weak in the language, not like the natives it will be for them as a second language. You know?

Researcher: Uh-huh

P2: Does it make any difference for you if they... yes for sure it will make a different for me because I will talk about my language is Arabic and I know that Arabic languages are difficult language. It's not easy to learn so I was hoping that they learn it when they are young because it is easier to learn Arabic when they are younger, better than when they grown. But uhm, they know how to speak Arabic. Maybe they weak and written in writing. They are not strong enough. A lot of vocabulary. They miss it for sure, because the communication is just with me and with their dads. But I think if we went back they will gain more. They will gain more vocabulary, you know. Because language is the most important thing is the communication with the practice. Practice communication in the language. There they will learn better, but if they continue here for sure, they will be weak.

Researcher: Uh-huh, OK. So, what are you currently doing or planning to do to help your children retain their native heritage language?

P2: Actually, we try to improve their language but just in the summer, not during scholastic year. Because we have no time during the scholastic year. Just in the summer we talking. Uhm, I lessons. I give them lessons in Arabic to learn how to read and how to write it, for sure they forgot from you know, from time to if they we start again. A lot of things but. They improved. Maybe it's slow improvement, but there's a number of.

Researcher: So during summer you teach them how to write. Is that correct?

P2: I teach them how to read and how they write. Even they take yes, yes.

Researcher: And to write? So, you're teaching them the alphabet and how to blend.

P2: I have my bigger daughter now she can write Arabic uh, they past the alphabet. So, but other then, yes, still need to learn the alphabet.

Researcher: OK.

P2: They're reading now. They're reading Arabic, maybe not like students in their age, but they read they read slowly, you know.

Researcher: And can they talk fluently with each other and with you? Do you talk in Arabic?

P2: I will not say fluently, but they talk. They talk mix Arabic and English with me sometimes or a lot of times they don't understand some vocabulary and I explain what it's means to them. But uh, I. I'm trying to speak Arabic, but you know it's frustrated for me to talk Arabic all day and make a translation, you know. So sometimes I told them mix between Arabic and English and other times. When I'm in hurry or something, I'm speaking English.

Researcher: I can understand that.

P2: I have three daughters, you know.

Researcher: Yes, I know.

P2: So...

Researcher: I can understand sure, OK, so let's do the next one. Have you noticed the change in the language your children use since attending school?

P2: Yes.

Researcher: Especially in the older ones? Do your children talk to you back in English or Maltese? What is your reaction if this happens so, you were already telling me a bit... yes.

P2: Yes, for sure. Yes, for sure I I'm. I'm not a huge change when they going back to school. Uh, actually, uh, we was living in Paola and then now we we are now in [current town], how they was in in Paola. They was speaking Maltese very very well and they wasn't excellent in English like Maltese and the Maltese was their their favorite subjects. Now when we moved to [current town], they speak English fluently. Here in [current town] nobody will speak Maltese,

all speaking English, and they started to forget Maltese and started to be weaker in Maltese again. I was, I was hoping to improve them in both Maltese and English, but unfortunately, they started to be strong in English and weak in Maltese.

Researcher: And when it came to Arabic, I assume the first children were not born in Malta, right the 1st two.

P2: Yes, yes.

Researcher: And when you came to Malta, they were talking only in Arabic.

P2: Uh, we came here in Malta. My first daughter was in year one, so she was so young yet and the other one she was in Kinder 2 but my oldest one she was speaking Arabic very well. She was reading Arabic she was writing Arabic but the...

Researcher: before she attended school?

P2: Yes, yes, I actually when she was three years and half, I send her to a kindergarten and she was. She was knowing to write 2 words or three words in Arabic. She was fluent in in even in Arabic. We have a heavy Arabic and then the normal Arabic that all people speaking to each other. She was knowing the heavy one so I was so happy because she was... But my oldest daughter, she loved the languages she can gain language very easy. Uh, but she forgot a lot of things, unfortunately, yes.

Researcher: And your reaction about this, what did it make you sad, did it make you give up, did you say?

P2: I will, I will tell you what I was struggling from when we first came here in Malta. Our first priority was to make them know how to communicate and to communicate they should learn Maltese and English, so unfortunately, I focused with them in English and they was learning the Maltese in school. Because I can't uh, speak Maltese, you know. And this makes us forgot little bit, uh, Arabic language even at home. Their father refused to speak English at home. He is speaking all time Arabic with them, but for me because I am with them all day, not like him. So sometimes I'm feel I'm feeling tired. I need them to learn English because I need them to make a progress inside the school. So, this makes me to prefer to learn them all together. At home we need to learn more English, so we should speak English to learn, you know. And for sure, this affect, our Arabic language.

Researcher: Uh-huh, I can understand.

P2: It's difficult here in Malta, especially Maltese people talking Maltese and English. So, they should learn both of them together, you know.

Researcher: Yeah. So, you know and unfortunately, uh, Maltese people are also putting aside the Maltese as you said in [current town], they talk more English.

P2: Yes.

Researcher: Which is they're putting aside their language because the English is the language that communicates with everyone.

P2: yes, that's true.

Researcher: So they think if I have a Bulgarian child I can talk to him in English. We have a Japanese I can talk to him, even have Arabic so they prefer talking in English. And it's a pity as well.

P2: Even me I'm living here in Malta, uh, more than seven years now. I did not learn the Maltese because I found it easier for me to speak English and everybody understand me, so why not? I can understand.

Researcher: Yes, it's true. Even though Arabic people usually can cope in Maltese because we have a lot of similarities as well.

P2: Yes, I understand the Maltese 70% but I can't. I have no courage to speak Maltese. It's little bit difficult.

Researcher: Well, I can understand, I mean, but it's interesting that from your side as well, you can understand but you find it difficult to express yourself in Maltese.

P2: Uh. Yes, uh, I need to have a confident enough to speak and correct myself, you know? And even when you communicate with people outside and they found you that you not know, how to speak. Maybe they feel that you are not understand very well. So, I switch it in English to make it easier for me.

Researcher: Uh-huh, yes I can understand. OK, let's go to the next question.

Researcher: Just this one. What expectations do you have for your children and their native language? Do you wish they will be able to be as fluent as you are in your language?

P2: Yes, for sure I think, I think they will be maybe they are late a bit, but they will be. They will be because now after they gain the... they are fluent in English. They know Maltese good in Maltese so maybe we can focus more in. In Arabic we have a chance to focus more in Arabic. Now you know. But here was our first priority to make them learn English and Maltese. After this we can learn Arabic but, all of them during their scholastic... It's little bit heavy for all of us we have no time. Uh, in summer we have spare time to do this. Even when they go back to school after summer, they forgot little bit. Uh, Maltese and English because we are communicating more in Arabic.

Researcher: Uh-huh, so you wish they will be able to be as fluent as you are in Arabic.

P2: Yes, I wish them to be fluent in three languages because languages is so important.

Researcher: You wish. Yes, yes.

P2: Any language, yes.

Researcher: Very good. OK, so. What do you hope or wish that the state or the schools would do to help support your child in retaining your native language? Do you think there is something that the state of Malta or the schools can do?

P2: Actually, they do, they're choosing language, the third language they choose in year seven, they have a chance to take Arabic language. Yeah, I don't know if you know about this.

Researcher: Yes, yes.

P2: Yes, uh, but I think the lot if should I send them to Arabic or no. But I told myself that I am native in Arabic. I can learn them Arabic and why not they can learn a fourth language. To have 4 languages better than three, you know. So, I sent them to other languages and not Arabic actually.

Researcher: Uh-huh, emm. In the year 7 they have the opportunity to learn the next language so it could be Arabic, or it could be any other language. So, you preferred to, you preferred your elder child... so far I think is it's one or two of them are in secondary now?

P2: two.

Researcher: The two of them, so they did not take the Arabic. They took another language.

P2: Actually, I spoke with them, uh, which language they prefer. One of them choose German and the other one to choose Spanish, which wasn't my choice at all. So, I, asked them.

Researcher: That's very good.

P2: Even my, uh, I was thinking if should I give them Arabic or no? Uh, but when we talk together, both one [name of elder girl], the biggest daughter. She told me that she's preferring German and the second one told me Spanish, that she likes Spanish.

Researcher: Uh-huh, so, when we say you know the language. We don't just say we talk it, we can read it. We can write it and you said you will be. You were teaching them a little bit of reading and writing in summer, so do you consider to send them to classes? Maybe not at school. Maybe in summer that someone else would teach them, not you, Or...?

P2: Actually yes. I in the summer they went to a mosque. You here there is an Arabic language and the religion.

Researcher: OK.

P2: I sent them.

Researcher: So it's not you that you teach them at home.

P2: No, it's me with the school because its school is just one day a week, one day a week, not enough. So, I'm. I'm send them to school to communicate with other children. This is the main purpose of sending them, which is not happening, which is not happening, because all children is speak together in English.

Researcher: OK, yes. Very good. Talk in English?

P2: Yes. But uhm, they learn, they learn. They don't know. Especially in orally not reading, not writing, but in oral they learn.

Researcher: OK, and just the last question that I would like to ask you and OK, in English sometimes. And so you told me that daddy talks to them only in Arabic and you talk in Arabic and sometimes in English, is that correct?

P2: Yes.

Researcher: So actually there is no rule at home. You don't tell them at home we talk only Arabic. There is no rule.

P2: Uh, at the beginning, this was our rules, but this wasn't help in improving their English language because they need to practice here. At the beginning I'm talking about the beginning when we came here first. This is where it was. Their dad rules that no English at home. We will talk just in Arabic, but by time. But I'm you know they spend in school more time. Then in house here they talk more in school than here in the house. So, they coming back speaking in English when I'm trying to speak in Arabic they tell me. We don't understand what do you mean. I'm trying to translate. So, at the beginning I was talking Arabic and then translate. Now there's some word they understand, and I told them if you not understand me, tell me. They tell Mummy I'm not understand what do you mean by this word? I translate words now, you know. But we talk mostly in Arabic but their dad all Arabic.

Researcher: Do they tell him? I don't understand you?

P2: Because he patient... What?

Researcher: Do they tell him? I don't understand?

P2: They tell him no, they become silent. I told him Mohammed they are not understand you, they shy to tell him that they not understand. When they tell, he tried to translate it in Arabic. You know the what they mean. But believe me, it is so frustrated. Specially for three kids or what I am doing. I'm trying to talk to speak Arabic because this is the language that I'm feeling better

Researcher: I can understand... Yes.

P2: to speak, you know, but uh, when they not understand me, I try to explain some words. What it's mean. You know other time...

Researcher: Don't give up.

P2: Other time I become silent.

Researcher: But don't give up, it's important.

P2: I'm trying. I am trying.

Researcher: I can understand it is frustrating. I can truly understand.

P2: Yes.

Researcher: But, uh? It's you that you have to teach them the language. I cannot teach it to them, and your friends cannot, it's...

P2: Yes.

Researcher: So.

P2: You're right, yes.

Researcher: Don't give up. Don't worry, they they are growing and they will learn.

P2: I am not. I am not. I am not a... It's still part of our life. It is not, it's not. It's still about.

Researcher: Have you been home to see the family and they could talk with them?

P2: Uh, yes, but since COVID situation did not go about three years now, so but.

Researcher: Yeah. But when you went, did the children communicate in Arabic?

P2: They improved. Yes, and they improved a lot. Because they have children in same age speaking Arabic. So, they prefer this and they talking together. For sure we actually when we coming back to Malta to learn again. English from the beginning you know.

Researcher: And... but that was when they were, they were younger. Now it's not going to be that.

P2: Yes. Uh-huh

Researcher: But uh, as you could say when they were in a country where almost everyone was talking Arabic, I mean I'm sure you were proud that they could talk in Arabic.

P2: yeah. They, they were because you know the last time they went there was eight years and seven. I think nine and eight so they communicate well. You know people will not take talk a huge words with this small kids that they will speaking a easy language with them. But they will understand them.

Researcher: yes, yes. That's very good. That's very good. It was very, very interesting talking to you and how you're coping with the situation. I really admire you.

P2: Thank you.

Researcher: Thanks a lot for it and dedicating this time. I truly wish you that you don't give up and that your children will learn more and they'll be fluent in Arabic because that is your language. As you were saying. And I, I encourage you, I used to learn Arabic when I was in year seven as well because I took it in year 7. I studied it for two years.

P2: Really?

Researcher: So I had.

P2: You still remember it?

Researcher: Ah, I can say the alphabet and I can write some of it, but I forgot the blending how it is. My husband can read Arabic very well. He can talk Arabic, yes.

P2: Uh-huh, very good.

P2: I know previous in Malta Arabic was a learning in school as a...

Researcher: Yes.

P2: Now it is not like before.

Researcher: It was. No, no, I'm... when I was at school and we had to learn it. It was not an option. So, we had to learn it. But then.

P2: Uh-huh

Researcher: And something has changed and it was free. You can choose, it's not like you have to, but in secondary it was like Maltese, English and Arabic. You have to learn them all.

P2: This so good but...

Researcher: So that was. Yes. But anyways some things change and ideas change, but my husband is very proud that he can still read Arabic and I am very proud to tell my students that I know some alphabet!

P2: Yes. Very good.

Researcher: And now it is very interesting. Thank you for sharing your time and I encourage you all.

P2: OK, if you need anything.

Researcher: OK, thank you.

P2: If you need anything, I'm here for you. So, OK.

Researcher:

Thanks a lot. Very much appreciated.

Interview with Participant 3

Researcher: OK, I will be sharing with you the question so that you can see them and maybe understand them better.

P3: OK.

Researcher: And first of all, thank you for accepting to help me out with this.

Researcher: OK, so let's go to the first one. Why do you feel the need to talk to your children in your native language? Do you think it is useful in Malta?

P3: Now basically I think the need of still talking with him with their native languages because his grandmother and grandfather, they don't speak... yeah, well, they're different languages, so I want to, then I want to him to keep continuing contact with them. And if [name of child] lose the Portuguese language, he will not be able to communicate with them anymore, so, uh, when it comes to living in Malta, I don't think it's very useful. There's some business opportunities I guess, but maybe I don't know if the future will change that. But at the moment it's not very useful. The Portuguese language for Malta.

Researcher: OK, so the main reason is that you would like him to keep the communication with the grandparents and maybe extended family.

P3: Yes.

Researcher: OK, so you don't want to add anything else. We can move on to the number 2, so do you worry that your children, your child in your case, will lose their native language? Does it make any difference for you if they do and why?

P3: Yeah, I do worry a bit 'cause well. It's my native language in the end, so I think there's a kind of culture involved with in the language, so the way we speak there, there's some expressions that we have, so I think it's important as well to him to keep communicating, but at the most. This feeling of worry that I have is like if he loses the contact with the family back in Brazil. Uh, so for me [name of child] loses Portuguese language for me and my wife will make no difference 'cause we can speak other languages with him. But the problem is would be more for the family back in Brazil, so that's it will be a big difference 'cause I would need like when he calls 'cause he calls like quickly to the parents over there. So, I would need to be translating all the time and could lose a bit of a sense within the translation so... Yeah, basically that.

Researcher: OK, So what are you currently doing or are planning to do to help your child retain a native heritage language? What are you doing?

P3: OK, so first of all, we are always speaking in Portuguese at home and also, we are buying books in Portuguese and also when we went back now to Brazil like last month, we bought a lot of books with different ages and we are reading with him like every night in the bed a story in Portuguese or we we bought activities book activity books as well, like to him to practice and make some exercises just to play around a bit. This is what we are doing for now.

Researcher: Very interesting. And I assume you also talk to him at home with your language.

P3: Yes, we are always talking with him in Portuguese. Myself and my wife.

Researcher: OK. So, have you notice the change in the language your child uses since he started attending school? Does your child talk to you back in English or Maltese? What is your reaction if this happens?

P3: OK yeah he has changed a bit some words he's missing in Portuguese. He's like not remembering the words anymore or trying to substitute for the English word instead so we can feel now or some verbs he is not like using correctly the verbs anymore. [Name of child] and uh, he has like kind of shy. He's like shy of speaking English with me, which I think is his good so we can keep talking in Portuguese as much as we can. Because I know that English he will learn in the school, in the street, with the other kids so I don't, I don't mind to not speak English with him so yeah, so I speak a lot with him in Portuguese. And yeah, he's changing. Well, I don't mind if you speak to me in English, and if he does, I probably would answer in Portuguese. Like to try to force a bit, uh, the understanding of the language.

Researcher: Uh-huh. So, there is not a real rule at home that you, for example, tell him only Portuguese at home or...

P3: No.

Researcher: It just the way you feel comfortable or he feels comfortable.

P3: No...Yeah, he is more like his attitude. He feels comfort to speak in Portuguese with me and my wife when I went in the beginning when I got here in Malta, I was afraid that [name of child] would not learn English, at least in the first step, would be very difficult. So, I start to speak English to him and he was

always answering Portuguese. Now that he knows a bit more of English and he can do all his stuff by himself, I started back speaking in Portuguese. And when I try to speak in English with him, he said why you are speaking English with me and not Portuguese? And I said, ah, it just for forgotten, let's go back to Portuguese then. So, he is more like... And demanding what he wants as a language is not as in the end, and he's kind of shy when we speak in English together.

Researcher: That is. That is like strange, funny at the same time because first he started talking to him in English so that he learns and then he asked why are you talking to me in English? So, he is comfortable to talk everything in Portuguese like he knows the language quite well so.

P3: Yeah yeah, but I know that he is comfortable also in English, 'cause there's some friends that comes here like they just, they only speak in English. Then when they are here he speak with them properly. And then when he turns to me he goes back to the Portuguese language.

Researcher: That's very good. Good. It's very interesting.

OK, So what expectations do you have for your child and the native language? Do you wish they, that he will be able to be as fluent as you are in your language? So, we already said he is quite fluent, so.

P3: I think he will, he will be fluent in the future. The only problem will be like the grammar rules, 'cause Portuguese grammar, it's a bit hard language to learn. Even for me that I had this since I was very young. Uh, I still learn things nowadays in Portuguese, so for him I think the grammar will be more difficult in the future, I will try to send him to Brazil to make like some, uh Portuguese course over there. This in the summertime, or only his school break time just to understand the grammar thing. If he wants to, 'cause I don't know kids in the future we cannot control anymore.

Researcher: Uh-huh

P3: So, I wished him to be fluent, but I don't know if it will be possible. I know that he will speak and understand everything. But the only concern is writing properly there the rules.

Researcher: uh-huh, ok. Now what do you hope or wish that the state or the schools would do to help support your child and retaining your native language?

What I mean in Malta now, do you hope or do you wish that the state or the school would do something to help you support?

P3: To be honest, I never thought about that. 'cause I thought like this school has people from everywhere at the moment, so it's a bit hard to have all the languages with the support. Maybe if they have once in a week Portuguese class with a lot of kids like just to practice and tell in and tell them some rules and grammar things. Or maybe some play around with them. But I never never like thought that schools here would help on that language. I know that, uh, give some kind of support like that so. Uh, yeah, so it's basically 'cause I know that it will be very hard because there is not many Portuguese speakers here so. Never thought on this part and I know that probably [name of child] will be able to choose an extra language in the future during the school time. I don't know if he will choose Portuguese and if it's available or not.

Researcher: Uh-huh, well, so far state schools do not give any support to any foreign students. But I mean, it's... you never know, since the globalized world. So many people are... so we never know if things may change in the future.

P3: Yeah.

Researcher: OK, so uhm, that was basically my questions that I had prepared. If there is anything else that you would like to share with me, maybe about all this so.

P3: OK. One thing that I need to mention that when we arrived here in Malta [name of child] went like to hub for the kids that don't have English as a first language and I think was very useful in the beginning 'cause the teacher was very patient, like to help kids in the beginning since they didn't know anything about like even to ask to go to the toilet for example. I think it was.

Researcher: Uh-huh

P3: So, I think for [name of child] at least, we could see like a big improving during that time and when he got to year one he was like. Well, it's a bit more preparing. You know how to deal with the things in English. And one thing that I have to thank you it's your help with [name of child] and a lot with the extra task on the Maltese and Portuguese at that time. Uh, when he was your student, I think this is a good idea and even for the fathers we are discussing within the Brazilians tribe here, that we could have more Maltese mix it with Portuguese

and we could learn a bit and help the kids to develop Maltese 'cause it's the only subject that we struggled a lot to help them in the school so we don't have...

Researcher: thank you.

P3: Ah, well, that's it.

Researcher: Can I ask you to go back a little when you said you, fathers talk with each other? What was it about? I get exactly.

P3: We basically discussed 'cause the most difficult things to help our kids at their homework and the school's task is the Maltese language 'cause it's a very different language for us and we thought that the government could help us like giving the basics of Maltese for the father's in the extra class and we could.

Researcher: Yes. OK.

P3: Even keep the language alive 'cause it's a language that not many people are speaking at the moment so that there are fewer father's interested in learn a bit of Maltese to help the kids.

Researcher: Just to, maybe I will share this with you. I don't know if you have ever heard. University provides a course which is called.

P3: Lifelong learning?

Researcher: No, it's a course called 'I belong'.

P3: I belong? never heard.

Researcher: It's a university course and it's offered by university. It is for foreigners living in Malta who would like to get basic information, basic knowledge about the culture of Malta, the language. And I believe some other things. But uh, it's at university because they offer this course not because it's a postgraduate certificate or something like that. You know, it's just because it helps foreigners that are interested in learning basic Maltese.

Researcher: So, I if you're interested, like maybe you find out a little bit about it and what it's all about.

P3: Yeah.

Researcher: And you mentioned earlier that you would like... you will be interested maybe to send [name of child] to Brazil in summer. Maybe to learn, do you consider teaching him?

P3: Yeah. Yeah.

Researcher: Uh, Portuguese here in Malta.

P3: Yeah, if needed.

Researcher: As an extra.

P3: Yeah, the only problem is like we, we don't have much time 'cause we work like Monday to Friday. It's a lot of things in homework. Maybe if there is an extra homework coming from the school like mandatory thing and then maybe it will be forced to do like I don't know if the kid is a Portuguese speaker and get everyday homework in Portuguese and then the father and mother needs to teach them then... Then will be a solution, I guess.

Researcher: But you think it is a little bit too much to add onto it yourself.

P3: Myself yes, 'cause I need to prepare. It's just not only select something and teach him. I need to prepare the task right?

Researcher: No, no yes, I can understand but what I meant is you send him to a class not the parents teaching it to him, to a class, an extra class. I don't know if Portuguese centre exists or anything. I don't know if you have ever tried to find out, but for example I was talking to another interviewee. She said that there is a uh Bulgarian class, but she's hasn't sent him yet.

P3: OK. No, I didn't.

Researcher: So, you don't by any chance know that there is a Portuguese available, like classes you don't know.

P3: I don't. No, and probably if I find here it would be a Portuguese from Portugal, which is a bit different, and I would rather him to learn the Brazilian one.

Researcher: I see. I see, so there is a difference between the Brazilian Portuguese and the Portuguese from Portugal.

P3: Yeah, it's more or less the English from England and from USA, so difference expressions different...

Researcher: OK, prosit.

P3: Uh accent, but we can understand each other, yes.

Researcher: They can understand. Yes, OK. Alright, I really thank you for dedicating this time. I truly appreciate it and...

P3: No problem.

Researcher: And thank you for all this you've you shared with me and I congratulate you for what you do with your child because I can, I know what you do because he has been in my class. Congratulations and keep it up. Wish you all the best with everything you do and telling him.

P3: Thank you, thank you and sorry for being late again.

Researcher: Don't worry, don't worry, I appreciate it a lot. Thanks a lot. Thank you, good evening bye bye.

P3: Thank you, good day bye bye.

Interview with Participant 4

Researcher: OK, I will be sharing with you the PowerPoint of the questions so that while I am reading them to you, you can see them as well. So that you can understand them better.

P4: OK.

Researcher: OK, so let's go to the first one. Why do you feel the need to talk to your children in your native language? Do you think it is useful in Malta?

P4: Well, first of all, the talking Portuguese is very how can I say that? Uhm, Portuguese is a very beautiful language. OK, well I come from a family of literature teachers so we had the chance to be very much involved in the... our reading the classicals in Portuguese and et cetera. So, I wanted to share this with my kids as well, OK? Uhm, being Brazilian nationals and you know not being European citizens, that might be that maybe a point in time where my kids would need to go back to Brazil for studies or for professional reasons. So, it would be important for them to know that native language too and living here in Malta is, it's not really, the language would not be useful. Very much useful for them here in Malta. I think that. Yeah, Maltese and in English and maybe Spanish or more other language or European languages that are spoken in more countries would be, eh more useful. But yeah, the needs to talk to them in Portuguese is to retain the family roots and to get them to know our culture and etc is more let's say, in the affectionate reason, than, a proper useful reason I guess.

Researcher: Yes, I agree... Do you worry that your children will lose their native language? Does it make any difference for you if they do and why?

P4: No, I don't think that he will lose their native language, but he's already showing some difficulties about verbs and genders and et cetera. So, but because we speak with him a lot in Portuguese, especially my wife, but I don't think that he would lose it, but he would be in trouble in case he needs to use it for studies or for professional reasons. Yeah, and yes, it make a difference if in case he loses it. He will, he will be in trouble to have relations with our family and friends and everyone there in Brazil. No, I think that's that would be the main reason.

Researcher: OK. What are you currently doing or planning to do to help your children retain their native heritage language? So besides, you were telling me that you are talking to them?

P4: Uh-huh. OK, so uh what we started to do now we are introducing more and more books in Portuguese. Yeah, because we try to keep the habit of reading every day with him. So, we just came back from Brazil with several books in Portuguese always. Also, that tells stories about the Brazilian culture and our folklore and this kind of things. Uh, I'm also introducing more and more music in Portuguese from the Brazilian artists, especially the old ones which have then of a very correct and uh, yeah it ?? to Portuguese. So, he gets to increase his vocabulary. That's what we are doing right now.

Researcher: Perfect. Now, have you noticed the change in the language your children use since attending school? Do your children talk to you back in English or Maltese? What is your reaction if this happens?

P4: Ah OK, so the change in language you mean in, he is speaking Portuguese, yes?

Researcher: Yes, so when you talk to them at home to him.

P4: Ah well. Uh-huh OK so uhm... I think that the biggest change from my point of view is that he's using it less and less with me, especially with me. OK, sometimes he addressed me only in English, or he asks to speak in English with me. Uh, that that's the main change. Uh, I entertain this, I reply to him in English and I said OK, you can speak English because I still feel that he needs to increase his vocabulary. OK, so I don't know how to say I don't apprehend him and say no don't speak Portuguese. I just follow through for Maltese. I am the one who usually you know, provokes him to speak Maltese. So, I asked him to read things for me to tell me the name of things in Maltese and because I want him to be curious and be more interested in Maltese than he is today OK. Uh, and well my reaction is this, I don't block or prohibit anything. I try to encourage him to speak as many languages he can. OK and um whenever he expressed some difficulty in English or in Portuguese. I try to correct him and show him the right way to say it. Try to be using as much as formal language as possible so that he can... And also, you know understand and be fluent when he is in a more formal situation. And for Maltese, actually, he's my teacher so, my reaction is always to ask more questions and encourage him to be more interested in the local language.

Researcher: So, if I got it well, your wife is the one that speaks mostly in Portuguese with him, and with you it's sometimes in English and sometimes in Portuguese.

P4: Yes, because my wife doesn't speak English very well, you know, so I think he senses it, you know? So, see it sometimes he corrects my wife for pronunciation or something that she made a mistake. So, I think he's more comfortable to speak English with me because I'm, I'm a little bit better than my wife is yeah. And because of that the main language of communication between him and my wife is Portuguese. Yeah, I understand.

Researcher: That's very good. Very good. So, what expectations do you have for your children and their native language? Do you wish they will be able to be as fluent as you are in your language?

P4: Yes, absolutely we are. That's what that's one of our targets for sure. Yeah, and I want him to know the native language in order to be able to study in Portuguese in case we ever need to come back to Brazil and also in the future. Of course, to use it professionally, so yeah.

Researcher: Very good. Now before I go to that question, uh?

P4: Uh-huh

Researcher: So far you and your wife are teaching him the language by talking it to him and by reading books to him and music that is perfect. Do you ever consider sending him to extra lesson somewhere where he can learn more officially, like with grammar and writing and whatever?

P4: uh-huh, ah yes, yes, and for that my idea now is to use the resources that we have in our family because my mother-in-law, my wife's father she used to work as a teacher. Alphabetizing teach children in Portuguese and my mother too. So, but my mother, you know, will be for late, primary school and more literature and...

Researcher: Yes.

P4: Books and this kind of thing, so the idea. Not for us is it's, you know when it comes for summer vacation, we plan to be, as you know, as much as possible in the current situation, of course. But to be in Brazil during the summer vacations and then use the grandmas to, you know, have a little lesson with him during the days that he's spending with them. If that does not fly for any reason, yes, I wish to have him you know with formal lessons in Portuguese, in case we cannot reach our targets with this informal home-schooling scheme, you know.

Researcher: Very good and then knowing that you have somebody in the family that is able to teach them properly um would you consider like, um...

P4: Uh-huh

Researcher: Having like a... how do you say it? Some... maybe a group of students that are living abroad and need like a class join to... how do you say come to like form a club or something similar so that they are not bored on themselves or they're having fun together and like.

P4: uh-huh

Researcher: Would you consider that?

P4: Yes, absolutely. And we and between us. Let's say there's more Brazilian community that we have here in [current town], we have discussed already if we could find someone to help all the children to be more in touch with Portuguese. To learn more about our culture. Our music in these things because of COVID it all became very difficult. But yes, if we could organize something like this.

Researcher: Yeah.

P4: Yes, so we will be interested.

Researcher: And the... today with the technology. I mean it can also be something online. But of course, knowing your limitations and whatever but. The thing is like, um, have the resources, you just need to put them together. You know, because, uh, it could be also like the rest of the group. um, contribute somehow, like you know, so that it's... it becomes like more of an official thing rather than just...

P4: Uh-huh

Researcher: For fun or whatever, I'm just... a suggestion, has nothing to do with my... just it's um...

P4: Yeah, we thought about it, but uh, you know, let's say. We were very much concerned about. You know, all the difficulty that we have to make them focus on a formal lesson online. Something like this, you know. So, the online lessons we thought OK, that could work, but it's a long shot, you know, because all the kids are very small. Maybe, when they are a little bit older, you know. And then we can. But they, it's easier for them to focus their attention.

Researcher: Ah. Yes.

P4: That would, that would work well, yeah, but uh, what the there is a if there is even a project it's led by Brazilian photographer here in Malta. It's called... uh, about well, there's a big name imports from milk. It's like my.. Uh, my lemon tree. Something like this. Yeah, my little lemon tree is the name of actually it's a demo for a very famous children's book in Portuguese, and before the pandemic she started to organize like our typical Festas that happens in June with our typical foods, and she would have a story telling you know, so tell this the legends that we hear in Brazil, in the countryside.

Researcher: Uh-huh

P4: Uh, every all the stories that are part of our folklore. Uh, I think we had three meetings all in Ta' Qali, but then the pandemic came and, you know, ruined everything. But I believe that this is still like surviving, but you know we are not able to organize any events on that.

Researcher: OK, OK so... I'm moving on to my last question. So, what do you hope or wish that this state, I mean the state of Malta, or the schools would do to help support your child in retaining your native language? Would you, do you wish or do you hope that they can help in a way?

P4: Uh, yeah, I mean, I understand. I know that there are some obstacles you know here, but I think that if we could maybe use the infrastructure of the school like for this club. And as you mentioned, if the school could provide this one of the room, so to have a weekly meeting with them you know to help them retain in their native language. Yes, that that would be great. Yeah, that would be great.

Researcher: And did you ever ask around like or it's because of this COVID thing I can understand now has stopped everything, but did you ever consider asking the head master about it and how it goes?

P4: Yeah. Yes, yes, but as you said, because of the current situation, I understand it's very hard to... for this to happen, but hopefully we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel now and when this all pass, yes it would be. It will be something that I would gladly discuss with him and see if he can give us a hand. Yeah.

Researcher: So that is a very good idea. I mean at least you have the premises.

P4: Yeah, yeah.

Researcher: And then just some other things that you need to add. Uh, before I come. Well, actually this was all that I had prepared to ask you. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

P4: Uh-huh, no, no. I think that you covered everything.

Researcher: [Name of child] has started school in Malta, did he ever go to Portugal? Sorry to Brazil in...

P4: Yeah. Yes, he when he was maybe 2 1/2 years old he went to almost day care in Brazil. OK yeah it for like half a period.

Researcher: So, the formal years...

P4: Yeah, but he started here in Malta with three years old in Kinder one. Yeah, I think Kinder one.

Researcher: OK. Yes, OK, so he has started from the first from the beginning.

P4: Yeah. Yes, since the beginning of formally here, Oh yeah, before was just day care.

Researcher: OK. Yes, OK. Uh, besides all this, you mentioned the little lemon tree something and some culture things.

P4: Uh-huh

Researcher: It would be very interesting if you could encourage [name of child] to share something about culture about something that is really Brazilian, like something that belongs to your culture. To share it with his friends, to teach his peers about something that is, that belongs to Brazil. So come later on I will be sharing the Sace Perere story with the children in class, but it's just ones that I happened to encounter. I mean, I don't know all the cultures of all the students that I'll be having in my class.

P4: Yeah. Uh-huh

Researcher: I'll try to make some find out here and there and I really uhm.

P4: yeah.

Researcher: I really encourage students to share. Especially when they are foreign students to share cultural things or religion wise or about the country or whatever, because it is a very interesting for the children to learn from their own peers.

P4: Uh-huh, absolutely I fully agree and I had a real struggle with him for his show and tell because I tried to convince him to, you know, to tell something about Brazil, but he said no. I think he did something about basketball. Yeah, uh-huh.

Researcher: Doesn't matter. He wanted to tell us, yes, but it's his passion, so that's OK.

P4: Yeah, of course, but yes. But now, like we, we just came back from Brazil, we bought a big book with all the Brazilian legends. Yeah, and it's like in a cartoon.

Researcher: Uhm? Very good.

P4: Uh, it seems so it's not like a boring book, only with lots of lots of figures and we already read it twice, so he really liked it. OK, so yeah, so we encourage him to tell this story like to pick your favourite one. That's it's very nice. It maybe you can show to your friends. Yeah, so we would be delighted him doing that, absolutely.

Researcher: Yes. Yes. Yeah, it's great when I'll be seeing him. I mean at the moment I'm also on quarantine. Hopefully I will be back to school next week and when he'll be back to school, I will ask him how it was his holiday and maybe I'll encourage him to tell us something about it so he will have... as well from my side, now you know like...

P4: So yeah provoke him. It would be great. Yeah yeah.

Researcher: Yes. OK, I'm... I don't want to take more time, I mean more of your time. I truly appreciate the time that you've shared with me and learning about the way you think. About your heritage language and I congratulate you for trying all your best because it is very important that the new generations do not lose their heritage and their background where they have been from. So, thank you for sharing your time and I truly, truly appreciated.

P4: Cool. No problem, it's my pleasure and whenever you feel that we could be useful for your work, please just ping me. I'll be glad to help, OK?

Researcher: Thanks a lot. Thanks a lot, thank you regards to all.

P4: No problem. Ciao Ciao

Researcher: Thank you bye bye thanks.

Interview with Participant 5

Researcher: OK, I will be sharing with you a PowerPoint with the questions so that while I am reading them to you, you can also see them and maybe we understand them better.

P5: OK.

Researcher: OK, so the first question I'm going to ask you is: Why do you feel the need to talk to your children in your native language? Do you think it is useful in Malta?

P5: Uh, because it's, uh, I feel we need because it's the language we speak and it's... let me phrase it you have to know your own language. We, both me and my husband we both are Lithuanians and so we have to, so it's, I see it pointless as speaking in English, for example, not being native speakers, because you would never allow it, would be able to express yourself like being not natives, not being native speaker and you, you know how it is like. I think the native language and the first language is where one you think and we think in Lithuanian and I think our kids, they think Lithuanian well. So, it's like... uh, expressing yourself like even like the cultural heritage with expressing your mind. It's you need to speak your own native language, otherwise you would be lost, and some ideas and feelings would be lost. If you speak in the language which is not your native one, that's how I think. And yes, and in Malta, Lithuanian for example, it's not useful in that sense it's not helping them at school, but it's helping them at home to express themselves to tell us how they feel. Because it's the language they think, and it's the language we understand them. So, we can ask them in different ways and it's very easy to communicate. It makes the communication easier using your native language and also yes, so that's in Malta. But it is very useful when we go to our own country visiting. So that's when the really need is. In Malta, it's more very useful at home. It's not helping at school, but it's very useful at home to express their feelings, the ideas to tell the problems because it's for language. We not only speak, we think.

Researcher: That's it, very good. OK, so do you worry that your children will lose their native language? Does it make any difference for you if they do and why?

P5: Yes, I used now you worry less because they speak but when we were little, and I have twins, so we were quite a delay in developing language skills because

it's because they were born premature and it's because they're twins so they don't feel the need to speak as much, as for example because of their age. And when we started going to ?? in Malta. They were not exposed to English or Maltese, so they it was all new for me because at home we only spoke Lithuanian. So, I was very worried that we will stop speaking and they didn't speak like a large sentences at the time where we were exposed to foreign languages like, Maltese and in English very well. Yep... They were speaking like short words or very short sentences, so the language skills were not that advanced, and I was very worried that way we will start mixing it up and uh, and not understanding us in Lithuanian but like vivid time, they overcame that and they I, and now I worry less because they speak, they understand they can read, know the letters, so I worry less. But at the time, like I used to watch a lot and also like for example, in UK we used to have a lot of friends who those kids would lose their native language once they start going to school. And I was very scared of that because it's the way I see it. It's huge problem for us because, you know, we would be, we would have to communicate in the language which is not our native one. And also when we go to visit, our grandparents in Lithuania. Yeah, it's a huge problem because they don't speak, for example English, so they would lose their connection with them or not being able to speak the language local language. So, it used to bother me a lot. And I would do it I would have been very, very unhappy if they lost anyway, if we were not able to speak, or if they said that they don't want to speak in Lithuanian. And because some kids they choose not to like, they just want to speak one language because it it's easier for them. But they never, they somehow accepted the fact that they are. They use multiple language but one we use at home and other two they use at school. They accepted the fact very well. And I am happy about it.

Researcher: OK. What are you currently...? Yes yes.

P5: But it took, but I used to explain them why we speak one language at home while another languages at school. I used to tell and I still, tell them why it's important to speak our own language and why it's our let's say, life more complicated as we use a little bit complicated more. Because if we that we use another language at home and they never questioned that way accepted that that way it is like and how it should be.

Researcher: OK. So, what are you currently doing or are planning to do to help your children retain their native/heritage language? So, you are already talking to them, yes?

P5: Yes, I talking with them. I am explaining why it's important and how it's good to know your native language. Because I've when you go to Lithuania and I think they see that because they even they go to visit their grandparents. There is no language barrier at all and at home we doing like simple things. We don't speak English like I'm not saying that I don't allow to speak English no they can say word in English they can. They can say. Sometimes we say if they are struggling to express. Will say it in English, but like we, we tend to speak Lithuanian and we keep this. There is no like very little switching from one language to another. We also, sometimes ask them a when there are no homework for example on Wednesday school doesn't have homework. We would ask them to open their book and we would read them a book or sometimes we read themselves. Sometimes I read for them like, because we have a lot of books like on the native language at home.

Researcher: Alright.

P5: And also, we watch TV and in Lithuanian and like for example the cartoon. So, like they are all in Lithuanian and they watch TV in Lithuanian and we do it because the it's only me and my husband speaking Lithuanian at home. So, the language, skills and the vocabulary because it becomes a very basic like the home one like go to eat... then do this... can you...? It's like become... so to extend the vocabulary and to improve like to know more words so they watch TV and in Lithuanian and they do they used to do that since little and now that's how we prefer. Because sometimes for example when there is new cartoon ever and it's only in English, there is no translation in Lithuanian as yet, we ask them, would you like to watch it in English and they prefer to watch it in Lithuanian and so now it's like preferred language as well but it became the time because we always kind of the friends. We watch films, for example in English, but at home it's like somehow became a tradition, a habit if they are the voice. We speak in Lithuanian and we watch TV in Lithuanian for example, so that helps to extend. And we read in Lithuanian and like not to that extent as we could like, for example, living in Lithuania. But because we have like to read in English to read in Maltese and they are reading and all that in these languages as well. But sometimes not to overload them we ask them to read in Lithuanian as well.

Researcher: It's very interesting, well done. I'm so with all this that you were telling me I would like to add another question so there is no rule at home that they have to speak only in Lithuanian. But if they talk in English, you carry on you don't tell them, 'Oh no, tell me in Lithuanian for example?'

P5: OK. No, there is no rule. There is no pressure because the way I think if you start imposing it as a rule they don't obey. They don't want to be... I want to be like a choice the way it is like this is our sort of advantage. We can speak another additional language which is our own. We can communicate in [heritage language] and when we go there is no language barrier. So, I tried to impose it as like not a rule but sort of as advantage and uh, for us so and when we were little, sometimes we used to play the game like, but when they're very little, then we only started being exposed to other languages. Let's say they say something in English, we say, and we say like, not, like, uh, don't say this in English. We say listen, do you know how this word is in Lithuanian? And we say this and this or sometimes we say it's Lithuanian and we used to do like vice versa when they say something in Lithuanian and we say, listen, do you know who or how this word is in English like a tell us because maybe we don't know and that's how like they got used to switching from one language to another like somehow easier.

Researcher: And it was like a game as well. They were having fun.

P5: Yes, it was like when we were little as it was like in a game and now, I don't see like a bad thing. Let's say sometimes we try it now, they are six years and they are more creative. So sometimes if they don't know like the word in Lithuanian and let's say they say but why didn't you know they say the word in English and add Lithuanian ending. So that comes like sort of Lithuanian. Rather, if they don't know like how exactly it is in Lithuanian and so sometimes it's very funny how they tried to make up with words. Like from one language to another like it's...

Researcher: It's true, it's true. That's really interesting, and I've seen that in class. For example, sometimes I have children that don't know the word in English, and they say the Maltese one with a little variation at the end. And it makes me... it's really funny. I mean children can be very creative, it's true.

P5: So. Yes yes yes.

Researcher: OK, so have you noticed that change in the language your children use since attending school. Do your children talk to you back in English or Maltese? What is your reaction if this happens? So, you already mentioned that a little bit so...

P5: Yes. Once we started attending school, especially in year one. That's when I started seeing that sometimes when they come back home it's more... it takes time for them to come back to [heritage language] because they now, they are like

6 years, and they communicate more like in full sentences. They tell stories. So, for them it's like the language they use like at school like how it is. It's a lot, it's huge exposure now it became to other languages. And yes, I notice that sometimes like it's more like English when we are playing, they're speaking English sometimes, like because it's the language of their games like. Sometimes they play at school and probably they play similar games in English. Uh, in and use this language at home. For example, when we go back to [home country] and we stay in [home country] like for a month. I see that how the language improves a lot because like English there is no English, so it's less languages and sort of their vocabulary like expands. There are like new words they start using in because like it and then we go back to school they start and then it's like a little a little bit less. But I don't blame like them because this is normal. Sometimes I say even because I use like English at work. So sometimes for me to express myself in Lithuanian and I have to think twice like how to say it because it's easy. It comes up some phrases, they just come up automatically in English. So, it's like it's understandable and some, and on very rare occasion we would talk to me in English. For example, back normal when they are with their friends.

Researcher: Yes.

P5: And they want like something to ask and they want their friends to understand. They would tell me something in English, especially when they are not happy about something, they need to tell something so they would say to me in English. I would respond in English as well. Sometimes in English, sometimes in Lithuanian. And this depends. Or sometimes they say it for me in [heritage language] and I say it back in English. If we are surrounded by their friends. So, we all understand. So, it's kind of and you know how they are creative sometimes. Uh, for example, kids when we have to complain about something and there are people around, they complain in English. But for example, I had a friend like Italian had kids like they speak in English, but when it comes to complaining to mom about something, Oh no... it comes Italian and so it's like depends on children what, how, what they want to express. Mine all the complaints around people they come in English like for example. I don't know why just everyone understands into... to make it point, probably so it's. It's about... depends on situation and like it's like using both languages and maintain a list. Liberty becomes when we are around other people like friends and...

Researcher: That's very interesting, and uh we are all the time mentioning English. It's not the same with Maltese, so I think Maltese is a little bit slower for them, right?

P5: Yes, it's slower because we don't speak like. Let's say we both are non-speakers. For example, if like my husband was Maltese, that would be different situation and we would be more exposed because we would have family, grandparents and now we don't have that much exposure only at school and sometimes I feel that it's difficult for me to help them because the only exposure we have at school and they are trying their best but teacher, by the way is very happy because they are trying very hard and I always...

Researcher: That's cool.

P5: Ask them, listen, me and dad, we try to help you as much as we can, but try to pick up as much as possible at school because you are better than us and they know that and somehow, they try very hard.

Researcher: Now it's understandable because at school and I tend also to talk a lot more in English because of the children that do not understand Maltese. So, the exposure becomes less and less, so it's understandable.

P5: And I think, let's say if it was, if it was no English and it was Maltese, all the time they would. They would be like more fluent speakers I think, but it's there is always like way out in English. I think they understand quite well, like the phrases and what they are asked to do. But like the other reply always comes in English because... but it's because probably both languages are used to simultaneously. So yes, English and Maltese, so it's...

Researcher: Simultaneously, yes, yes. OK. Alright... What expectations do you have for your children and their native language? Do you wish they will be able to be as fluent as you are in your language?

P5: I hope they would be able to speak. Then we go. There would be no language barrier and I think we are achieving that. Uh, I hope, I hope that we will be able to read. Maybe not to that extent... We are able to read but let's say if one day they have to go to live to Lithuania because it was, it would be our choice or their choice, they would struggle less because they would know the language. So, it would be like yes you would need time to improve it, but only improving. It's not like learning it from scratch. And I wish we would be as fluent as me, but they would... They are not going to be because let's for example, then it's native

language. You know, a lot of expressions, a lot of ancient words, a lot of like spoken words which you would never know if you didn't grow up in the country. But you know what I mean? If you grow up in the country, you know these words. Your grandmother used to say how she called the for example, the 'clock'. There was special word for clock. There were special word for 'to go' like it's something different, like very archaic, because sort of thing like and you know all these expressions, weird expressions. We had the jokes like coming from the past so no. So, to that extent so we wouldn't be able to understand. But at least like the literature language from the like ordinary language people speak in the street and with shop at school they would know and obviously to know like the native language till you'd have to live in the country and use it on daily basis. Otherwise, you will, you are losing bit here or there.

Researcher: Uh-huh. You are mentioning a lot of talking and speaking, which I am sure they will be able because they are already grabbing it now with regards to reading, you are already saying that they are trying to read and they read a little bit, so of course they are still very young because they are still six years old and... Do you think with practice that if you keep on practicing with them as they grow older, they would be able to read and write as well? Or is it too difficult for them to write as well?

P5: They write, but we mix.

Researcher: I mean, I don't know the [heritage language], how it is?

P5: It's very difficult and it's very different from English so, but the...

Researchers: Do you have the same letters or are they different as well?

P5: A little bit different. We have some letters where would be like. For example, 'e' with the dot on the top, which would be 'air'.

Researcher: OK, just like Germans, because I know a little bit of German.

P5: Uh. Yes, yes yes. Yeah. It's still like we have their own letters as well like and what we did when the COVID hit and the school was closed there was less exposure to English and we were still in Kinder so with no online school in the beginning... So, basically that's the time we used to teach them letters and alphabet in Lithuanian and when we started reading like short sentences, short words and that's how it started. So, we use the time like served us conveniently for that.

Researcher: OK.

P5: Because like the exposure, there was no exposure, and we took that as opportunity to teach them Lithuanian and now they can read like.

Researcher: Very good.

P5: Uh, uh, for example, a page of obviously after reading a page, wait, they very, very tight. Sometimes we ask them, could you read it? For example, a postcard to the grandmother in [heritage language] and they try. Or could you like sort of a game... Can you draw me like... and write me instructions for this and we try like to learn. Can you write a message to your father and they like on the phone. We're trying to write him a message like sort of a game like having fun and but...

Researcher: Very good. A fun way to learn. Very good.

P5: Yes.

Researcher: That's very, very good.

Researcher: OK. I'm coming to my last question, so, what do you hope or wish that the state, which means that Malta or schools would do to help support your child in retaining your native language? Would there be anything that you would like to see, or you hope to see?

P5: Ah, I don't know like I sort of take it as our responsibility as parents and like sort of which something we have to do. We do it not as an obligation. We do it as because we want, and because it's good for us and at school, maybe I don't know... That way I would highlight sometimes like the cultural differences that people can speak like in different languages at home. Maybe that thing, but so they would then we would be proud like that. They are being like speak different language at home and if it wouldn't be seen as sort of like strangers or something like because sometimes not so that would but only that, but I'm sure the school does that and they talk about these things at school. I don't know. I'm I hope they do.

Researcher: Uhm?

Researcher: By putting, this question doesn't mean that the school is going to do something 'cause just a query that it's going to be part of my study, you know, with this globalized world that we're living in, everyone is going to different countries and the school. For example, our school and not sure we've got so many different nationalities. So, it's it is quite a struggle to try and help all these cultures.

But you know... and later on in. It could be that, uh, the department would try out things like, you know... Uh so um just my suggestion? UM, that's um when the children have their show and tell, I assume that's your... teacher is Miss X, right?

P5: No, it used to be and now it's Miss Y because they are in year 2.

Researcher: I see they are in year two. OK? Uhm so they have show and tell, right?

P5: Yes.

Researcher: That would be very interesting to prepare a show and tell where they can talk about something that comes out of their culture. Or maybe they can tell them that the alphabet is different or that we say this while you say this. For example, I love my mommy and daddy. We say it in this way so the children can learn from each other, and this is a very beautiful way. How um, children can be the teachers of their own friends and in this way, or for example you show them the flag of [home country] and...

P5: We did that in Kinder 2 I think we'd be prepared like the IT wasn't, uh, like with the slides we prepared my son was telling about [home country] how he goes on with plane for three hours that is the flag of [home country]. He told the colours of this one we could do more of like because one I remember we did it like he put some pictures of his grandparent how he will goes to visit them we did one.

Researcher: Yes. It's very nice.

P5: Off that as well, and they know that there was a kid in their class who did recently about the fun park and I don't know. I think he was from Serbia so he did like about from park something so because my son was telling me.

Researcher: And, it's a very interesting way how they can teach their own friends because it's incredible how students like being taught by their own friends as well, and maybe a short video about the place where they came from and whatever. So, it's just an idea. It's just my idea.

P5: Uh.

Researcher: The questions that I have prepared were those. Is there anything else that you would like to add maybe?

P5: I don't know why I am happy like I'm proud, sort of like what we achieved that way I speaking their own language. There is no resentment towards but it's I

think it comes with respect to the language because for example, I know that some uh, non-Maltese people, they don't want their kids to speak in Maltese, but we never say like this language it's not useful like because I understand Maltese is useful in Malta. Lithuanian would be useful only in Lithuania. It's like the language you used in that own country but we all, we teach them to respect all the languages. It doesn't matter, it's Maltese, English, it's Lithuanian. We treat them the same because at school you're learning Maltese and English, and you have to learn it properly you have to respect it and at home we're speaking Lithuanian so we somehow, we teach them to respect and accept all languages. Whatever comes in the way like that sort of thing we're doing, I think as parents.

Researcher: Well done and I really congratulate you for the way you are teaching your own children how to talk their own language, which is very important because, as you said perfectly that it's important that it's not only we talk, we think and we think with our own language and we can talk about our problems and communicate well, not only with Mummy and Daddy but with the extended family which is very important. Otherwise, they will have something missing like they get distant from each other. So, congratulation for that. I have nothing else to ask you and that was only six questions that I prepared, and I don't want to take more time. You gave me 30 minutes of your time, so I thank you.

P5: No no.

Researcher: I thank you a lot and I appreciate all the that you've shared with me.

P5: Yes, thank you so much. It was my pleasure speaking with you because the topic is very important and it's something we used we speak a lot like how because we've seen the examples people kids losing their language and it's something what used to worry me a lot and now, if you spoke with me like three or four years ago I would have answered some questions differently, for example because I would worry less. Tell him more, happy and sort of proud because, like, uh, I can see the results of the efforts put in and work done. But like and how it stand out. So, it was my pleasure because I'm very passionate about the topic and I feel sorry that like native language which is rich and is lost because of the use of English. I feel sorry like that because I think that people are losing a lot by not speaking their native language.

Researcher: That's true, I agree with you. OK, thanks a lot Miss..., uhm, I don't know how to pronounce your surname properly, correct?

P5: No, no, no, we don't need it.

Researcher: OK, I thank you a lot and I wish you all the success in your own life and in your children's as well. Take care and thank you. Thank you. Bye bye.

P5: Thank you so much. Take care, thank you. Thank you, bye.

Interview with Participant 6

Researcher: Yes, OK, I will be sharing the questions as well with you so that you can understand it better. So why do you feel the need to talk to your children in your native language? Do you think it is useful in Malta?

P6: Uhm, good question. No, I don't think it is useful in Malta, but anyway Malta so many people speaks Italian so. Uh, for sure is not useful. Uh, but we speak in our native language because, uhm, we are all Italian. And then, uh, it would be weird between us when we are at home speaking in a different language then when we are not at home and we are with other people, if they are Italian, of course we ended up speaking in Italian. But if you are, if we are having a conversation with foreign people, we speak in English.

Researcher: OK.

P6: I don't know if.

Researcher: And but you feel you have to talk to your children in Italian because they need to talk.

P6: But

Researcher: To learn how to talk with your family... did I, did I get that right.

P6: uh, also, yes, yes. And it also as I said, if when we are home, it would be not naturally speaking another language. But anyway, I have two children. One is [name of younger child], so which you know and the other one is [name of older child] is 11 and...

Researcher: Uh-huh

P6: Then if my son. Uh, is, uh, speaking to me in English. I'm I answer in English, uh, if it speaks Italian, when we eat dinner, I answer in Italian and when [name of younger child], so my younger one. Uhm? Uh, when we speak... he speaks Italian. He understand very well Italian and English, but like when we do homework... uh, we always work in English. But yes, it is important that also they learn Italian, at least how to speak in Italian. So, they can have a conversation, conversation with the relatives that we have in Italy, like my parents. They do not know English. They are kind of learning some words when we stay together from the children because [name of younger child], so my younger one since uh, not to like most of the words that he says are in English, not in Italian. So...

Researcher: OK. Alright, let's move on to the next one. So do you worry that your children will lose their native language? Does it make any difference for you if they do and why?

P6: Yes. No, I'm not worried that they can, you lose their native language because we I said we speaks Italian at home. Uh, the language, no, but I'm worried that they will miss the... They, uh, tradition or the how do you say the common sense, you know this kind of sentence that? How can I say in English? Uh, I don't know. Uh, this common sense that comes from tradition. They wouldn't know this and they wouldn't understand that one. If someone... it's saying it's saying one of the sentence to them. Uhm? Does it make any difference for you if they do, yes, because it does make the difference because. We are Italian. Ah yes, we live in Malta and... but still we are Italian and it would be a pity, uh, if they will lose language and already they don't know so much about traditions. Uh Italian tradition, or as I said, this common sense sentences. Uhm? And yes, I would feel them. Uh, sorry, because it is part of our how can I say? It's been part of a culture, yes, thanks yes.

Researcher: Culture? Oh, OK. Let's go to the next one. What are you currently doing or planning to do to help your children retain their native language/heritage language? So, you are already talking to them in in Italian. What else are you planning or you are doing already with them?

P6: Uhm, apart of talking in Italian, not so much. I have to say we have some books about some book. Of course, uh, in Italian. Uhm? But the with my son [name of younger child], so the small one. I don't want, you know, is there is behind with the speech thing, so, uh, I don't want him to get more confused, so I'm not working a lot in it apart of talking in Italian. But like I'm not working on the Italian alphabet or. Or, uh.

Researcher: What about the elder one?

P6: It's about the older one. When we came.. Sorry I'm just going back to [name of younger child], so a bit. But every time I read him a book in English or in Italian, this is something that I've started recently. So, to make clear to him that we are Italian, we come from Italy. We live in Malta and we speaks 2 languages.

Researcher: OK.

P6: English and Italian. So, every time I read, I read that one a book in English, I say. Always I remind him about that. And so, I say, this book is in English. And

every time I read the book in Italian, I said this book is in Italian and I always remind him that we are Italian. We come from Italy. We live in Malta and we speak two languages, Italian and English. And this so it doesn't get confused. Then, uh, but then apart of speaking and reading some books. But mostly I read him English book but sometimes. Also, in Italian, just you know to. Uh. How can I say?

Researcher: Force him to more words. Maybe too. He learn more words uh-huh.

P6: Yes, yes. Exactly, but I don't. I mean, I don't, uh, work on learning more words. I'm I work on this one with English, not with Italian. Because since we are here, uh, best for him. If you were you works on his speeching, I mean mostly in English rather than Italian. Uh with [name of older child], my older son is 11. When we moved to Malta it was just turned 4 and they start kindergarten. And it was going in a government school, the same one where [name of younger child]. So, it's [Name of College]. So, [name of older child] has been exposed since, kind of went to English and also Maltese. And uh, the same apart of speaking Italian at home and reading book in Italian, in English. Uh, I didn't work so much. Also, in Italian within a bit, maybe the alphabet, you know, but then it would because mostly exposed to English and Maltese. Now up next year, no past year, he went to a private school which is Saint Martin college.

Researcher: Uh-huh

P6: And, uh, and from this year he started to do Italian for native speaker. And so now is a working with Italian as well and he finds it quite difficult because of, of course he can understand Italian, but then the writing and the grammar and reading are completely different area, you know.

Researcher: Yes.

P6: And so, he finds it quite difficult, and this is what we are doing with [name of older child] starting from this year. So, from this year he is exposed to Italian to the grammar. To uh, Italian history and.

Researcher: That is interesting. So, he is taking Italian not as an extra language, but as a native speaker?

P6: Yes, for the first time this year.

Researcher: That is, that is interesting so, he will be focused more on Italian

P6: Yes, this year is doing a Maltese, German, of course English and Italian for native speaker. It was funny because when I didn't put him so much on writing in Italian, but sometimes you know when you come just to help me and to make some. The exercise I used to ask him to help me to do the list for the supermarket.

Researcher: yes.

P6: And. It was getting confused between Italian and Maltese. Yeah, like I remember once he wrote prosciutto with the x, because in Maltese sh is X so it was kind of this mistake. So which and this one is the funniest that I remember? But there were a lot of this mixing with Maltese and Italian.

Researcher: Well. Uh-huh sure. OK.

P6: But we always said that since we are in Malta best for them to be more focused in English and Maltese for [name of older child] and [name of younger child] English and then is [name of younger child] is exposed to Maltese school. It doesn't do Maltese but is exposed to it.

Researcher: He doesn't. He doesn't do. He is exempted from it, or it's because he doesn't learn much about it. I mean, it's from his side or from the school side.

P6: Indeed. Yes. Uh, we agreed with the school that it would be best for him not to work.

Researcher: OK. To focus on one language OK?

P6: Yes, but then during the lesson is in the classroom, it is exposed to Maltese.

Researcher: Yes.

P6: And the teachers they say that.

Researcher: Yeah.

P6: You understand somebody's and they believe, but I don't know how. I can't understand that.

Researcher: OK.

P6: But when somebody, friends ask him kind of simple question, it seems that he understands what they're asking, because he replies in his own way.

Researcher: Yes.

P6: Yes.

Researcher: All right, I think we can move on to the next one.

P6: OK.

Researcher: OK, now I would like to ask you this question like have you noticed any change in the language your children use since attending school? So do your children talk to you back in English or Maltese, what is your reaction if this happens? You already mentioned some things. So, for example [name of older child] was born in Italy or abroad anyway, but when he came when he came to Malta he was four years old so.

P6: Yes. In Italy, yes.

Researcher: Up till four years old he will... you only spoke to him in Italian, I assume right?

P6: Not really, because since when I was a baby, we were planning to leave Italy, so we were already working on that. We would do because since back when we was in Italy before leaving. So mostly my partner used to talk to him. Umm, mostly because his English is much better than mine. OK. And so he was used to talk to [name of older child] in English already. And we were used to let him watch.... to, uh... you know this a nursery song in English like Hickory Dickory Dock already when we were before we were moving. So uh, starting to get him ready on what was going to be for him.

Researcher: Uh-huh... and when he started going to school, did you see change in his language?

P6: You mean to school kinder or actually primary?

Researcher: When when... both of them, because, uh. If he was more fluent in Italian, maybe? After he started school he started being exposed to English and Maltese and maybe did you see any change?

P6: Ah yes. Uhm, is a swapping from Italian to English and to tell you the truth, when he has to explain something, if feels more confident to do that in English than Italian.

Researcher: Uh-huh

P6: Yes, and this is funny because of course we mostly see Italian friends. We go out with the Italian friends here in Malta. But uh, our children, a most of the time when they played together they speak English.

Researcher: uh-huh

P6: Yes.

Researcher: even even your friends' children?

P6: Yes, yes.

Researcher: OK, so when they are playing and they are free like they, they use English between themselves.

P6: It comes, it comes for them, spontaneous speaking in English, and we always notice this and we can't do mean...

Researcher: Natural. Uh-huh

P6: A laugh about it.

Researcher: and your reaction is you laugh about it. It doesn't worry you. It doesn't bother you.

P6: No, no no I'm not.

Researcher: You accepted because they are exposed to English most of the time of the day. So, for you, it's OK, it's fine.

P6: Yes. Yes.

Researcher: Alright. OK, now. We only have two questions more. So what expectations do you have for your children and their native language? Do you wish they will be able to be as fluent as you are in your language? So, do you have some expectations?

P6: I wish they would be, uh, they could be, uh, fluent, as we are in local language, but I don't know if this is gonna happen, but I don't know. I'm not expecting that. I wish, but I'm not expecting that. Uh, anyway? One day, might be because. Uh. Yeah, how can I say they come pick that up so. Since they were small, they were exposed to different languages, so maybe they can pick it up faster. And get it there maybe not, don't know.

Researcher: Uh. So, you don't expect them to be very fluent or... you ok, you wish they will be, but uh, you're not expecting that they will be very fluent, I mean. Yeah.

P6: I can't tell really.

Researcher: Uh-huh, OK. Alright, so are you OK to move on to the next question then?

P6: Yes.

Researcher: OK, So, what do you hope or wish that the state that means Malta or the schools would do to help support your child in retaining your native language?

P6: It's a good question. But I believe this is already happening because he's working. He's doing Italian native language. And...

Researcher: But I think that's... you mentioned... you said Saint Martin.

P6: Yes.

Researcher: Is that a state school or is it a private school?

P6: It is a private school.

Researcher: OK, that is a private school, OK.

P6: Yes.

Researcher: Yes, so do you expect the government schools to do something about this to help your children? Or do you wish? Or do you expect we don't know...

P6: Umm? I don't know in my case for [name of younger child]. So, I would say. I don't know, I don't know. I can't. I don't know what to answer. But in the secondary school also the government school. Yeah, it is, uh? They do learn different language.

Researcher: Uh-huh

P6: In the primary. I would say. Even now.

Researcher: Uh-huh, no in the primary, we don't offer a language, so it's only the Maltese and English. But then yes, in the secondary they start offering another language so.

P6: No. Yes, yes.

Researcher: For example, if Italians, they can choose Italian, or if they are Germans, they can choose German. Of course, not all the languages are provided.

P6: Yes. Yeah.

Researcher: But there are some languages.

P6: Or wish the state school would do to help support you. Really, since we are living here. I'm. I'm not a. I mean... And they will keep on working. I can't ask that they have to support my language, I don't know.

Researcher: Uh-huh

P6: Because...

Researcher: OK. Earlier on you mentioned that you read books to [name of younger child] and you talked to him in Italian and does he watch cartoons? Maybe in Italian?

P6: Mostly in English.

Researcher: Mostly in English, is it his choice or your choice? Does he prefer English or does he prefer or it's you that you prefer to show him English so that he can grab this language?

P6: Oh, everybody we used to watch. Sure. In English, we don't watch in Italian. Uh, so it is, uh, it doesn't seem to bother him if he is watching in English or Italian and like our family, we mostly watch TV in English.

Researcher: Is there a reason why?

P6: Uhm? No.

Researcher: You don't, you don't come...

P6: Because, because as I told you, we started since when we were in Italy also I mean in Italy we didn't have TV at all actually.

Researcher: Feel better that. Uh-huh

P6: That was a a choice by choice. Uh, we were watching, uh, maybe video or through the computer.

Researcher: OK.

P6: And we bought the TV when we came to Malta and we were already used to watch movies or any videos in English since back when I we were in Italy.

Researcher: OK.

P6: That's why and we continue doing that.

Researcher: Right, those were practically the questions I prepared to ask you. I don't know, maybe you would like to say anything else. I mean, would you like to add anything else?

P6: Uhm? I don't know, my only more than the language. What bothers me is that they will miss the Italian culture. I mean tradition. You know this more than learning Italian. And then we don't know if we will go back to Italy, stay in Malta or I don't know. And then in this situation. We don't really know really what is going to happen.

Researcher: Yes, of course.

P6: Uh.

Researcher: I'm. When you go to Italy and do your children talk to your relatives in Italian or do they find it difficult?

P6: No, they don't find [name of elder child] no. But it's I said sometimes when he has to explain something more.

Researcher: Elaborate yes uh-huh.

P6: More elaborate he prefers to do in English.

Researcher: English.

P6: And, uh, [name of younger child], most of the word that he says are in English and, and as I said, uh, my parents, I mean, they're learning something like juice, Peach juice which are learning so favourite things ice cream. So, it's kind of teaching them.

Researcher: Yes.

P6: Some words in English. Sure. Uh.

Researcher: And does that bother you that?

P6: I just wish that [name of younger child] can speak and then any kind of language I don't mind.

Researcher: Yes, yes.

P6: But just that it can be able to speak and make everybody understand him and he has the... uh, and put him as the how can I say? The possibility to speak to express himself.

Researcher: OK, I don't want to take more of your time because I know time is precious. I appreciate the time that you have given me that you shared this knowledge and how you think about all these. Thanks a lot. I truly appreciate it and I wish you luck with whatever you do in your life and with your children's education and whatever. So, thank you. Thanks a lot.

P6: OK. Thanks to you, thanks.

Researcher: Thank you, goodbye bye, bye. Thank you.