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Parents' Perceptions of Barriers and Facilitators to Their Children's Multilingual Language Development Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract

Multilingual students, according to the deficit framework of "English language learners," are at a disadvantage compared to their monolingual peers. This framework fails to recognize the assets that accompany home language development, referred to as Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso 2005). In this study, we asked what do parents of multilingual children identify as barriers and facilitators to supporting their children's language development before and during COVID-19? Six semi-structured interviews were conducted online with parents of children between 3 and 5 years old who spoke a language other than English at home. These interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using the qualitative method of directed content analysis, employing both inductive and deductive coding to identify themes. We organized these themes according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bioecological Model. Results revealed most barriers and facilitators to children's multilingual development are at the microsystem level of the family. The themes were related to attitudes and knowledge, English fluency, exposure, resources, and parents' experiences. Additionally, we found that COVID-19 mostly negatively impacted the child, microsystem, and exosystem. We discuss how these barriers and facilitators are related to the different Capitals of Community Cultural Wealth. Moving forward, this study can contribute to addressing how systems have marginalized families within our community and elevate the knowledge and cultural capital these families offer.

Keywords: COVID-19, critical race theory, language development, multilingualism, minority families, preschool children.

Résumé

Les étudiants multilingues, selon le cadre déficitaire des "apprenants de langue seconde," sont désavantagés par rapport à leurs pairs unilingues. Ce cadre ne reconnaît pas les atouts qui accompagnent le développement de la langue à la maison, appelés la richesse culturelle de la communauté ("Community Cultural Wealth": Yosso 2005). Dans cette étude, nous avons posé la question suivante : qu'est-ce que les parents d'enfants multilingues considèrent comme des obstacles et des facilitateurs pour soutenir le développement langagier de leurs enfants avant et pendant le COVID-19 ? Six entrevues semi-structurées ont été menées en ligne avec des parents d'enfants âgés de 3 à 5 ans parlant une langue autre que l'anglais à la maison. Ces entrevues ont été enregistrées, transcrites et analysées à l'aide de la méthode qualitative d'analyse de contenu, en utilisant un codage inductif et déductif pour identifier les thèmes. Nous avons organisé ces thèmes selon le modèle bioécologique de Bronfenbrenner (1979). Les résultats ont révélé que la plupart des obstacles et des facilitateurs au développement multilingue des enfants se situent au niveau du microsystème de la famille. Les thèmes étaient liés aux attitudes et aux connaissances, à la maîtrise de l'anglais, à l'exposition, aux ressources et aux expériences des parents. De plus, nous

avons constaté que la COVID-19 avait surtout un impact négatif sur l'enfant, le microsystème et l'exosystème. Nous discutons de la manière dont ces obstacles et ces facilitateurs sont liés à la richesse culturelle communautaire. Dans l'avenir, cette étude pourra contribuer à aborder la façon dont les systèmes ont marginalisé les familles au sein de nos communautés et à promouvoir les connaissances et le capital culturel qu'offrent ces familles.

Mots-clés : COVID-19, théorie critique de la race, développement du language, multilinguisme, familles minoritaires, enfants d'âge préscolaire.

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INTRODUCTION

There is increasing linguistic diversity amongst Canada's population, with more Canadian children growing up speaking a language other than English or French at home (Statistics Canada 2017). According to the commonly employed deficit framework, "English language learners" are at a disadvantage compared to their English-monolingual peers because they are thought to lack the necessary knowledge and skills to excel in the English-language learning environment (Auer and Wei 2007; Horton 2021; Yosso 2005). This deficit framework fails to recognize the assets that multilingual children hold and how their home language (HL) and culture are valuable sources of knowledge. Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a powerful alternative to understanding the lived experiences of "English language learners" and their parents. Within the field of education, CRT has provided a theoretical and methodological framework that can shed light on how racism and systemic inequities are built into the education system (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995; Ledesma and Calderón 2015). With origins in American legal scholarship, CRT, within the field of education, proposes that the intersection of race and control of property becomes a framework and methodology to understand social inequity, including who has access to education and the policies that influence educational institutions (Ladson-Billings 2009; Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). This critical framework is applied to challenge dominant ideology and to advocate for social justice (Solórzano and Yosso 2001). Building on CRT in education, Yosso (2005) proposed a framework to understand how multilingual and multicultural families use assets and resources to create and sustain Community Cultural Wealth. The present paper discusses what multilingual families identify as barriers and facilitators to support their children's language development before and during COVID-19.

Community Cultural Wealth

In 2005, Yosso proposed the Community Cultural Wealth framework as a response to the Bourdieuean framework, which focuses on the Cultural Capital held and transmitted by those who hold power (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). By drawing specifically on CRT and Critical Pedagogy (e.g., Freire 1970) more generally, Yosso's framework contributes toward the anti-oppressive, or liberatory, potential of education (Yosso 2005). Yosso (2005) highlights the Cultural Capital built and held by marginalized children and their families and thus centers knowledge and experiences of racialized individuals and communities. She argues that children and their families are not deficient or disadvantaged but rather have resources and assets, which she calls Community Cultural Wealth (CCW). CCW is composed of 6 types of Capitals that overlap and interact over time (Yosso 2005). Linguistic Capital refers to intellectual and social skills that individuals attain through communicating in multiple languages. Familial Capital relates to the cultural knowledge supported and transmitted through family and carried forward as a sense of shared community, history and memory. Social Capital refers to an individual's network of people and community resources. Navigational Capital refers to an individual's ability to maneuver through social institutions, often designed for the mainstream or majority community. Aspirational Capital refers to an individual's ability to maintain ambitions and goals about the future. Lastly, Resistance Capital refers to an individual's ability to actively challenge inequality. Together, these Capitals provide a framework for identifying abilities and resources that a child and their family can center, value, and draw on.

As researchers particularly interested in language development and language transmission, we bring a specific lens to this conceptualization of CCW. In particular, we see Linguistic Capital as not only providing cognitive and social abilities to communicate across more than one language but also as a Capital that can further support, enrich and amplify other Capitals. Research has shown that children who can communicate in their HL and the language of school develop Linguistic Capital and demonstrate higher self-esteem and a stronger sense of identity than their peers who have limited abilities in their HL (Fillmore 2000; Portes and Rumbault 2001). Some studies have shown that bi-/multi-lingual development contributes to children's cognitive abilities that translate into school success (Adesope et al. 2010). As children age, fluency in the HL helps them access their faith practices and participate in their community (Betancourt et al. 2015), thus building Social Capital. For multilingual children, speaking their HL also allows them to build Familial Capital with a strong connection between generations and allows parents to communicate directly in the language they master best (Walsh et al. 2011). By viewing Linguistic Capital as a form of knowledge that can amplify CCW, we aim to highlight the importance of language transmission within marginalized communities.

Language transmission is a shared responsibility of parents, families, communities and the broader society. In marginalized and minoritized communities, this responsibility often rests on parents' shoulders and local community organizations (MacLeod et al. 2022). While community can support parents in using their HL (e.g., MacLeod, Meziane and Pesco 2020; MacLeod et al. 2022; Makarova, Terekhova, and Mousavi 2019), parents often require Navigational Capital to find these supports. In addition, parents may need to use their Resistance Capital when confronting barriers to HL transmission, including negative attitudes that lead some parents to primarily use the dominant language to access mainstream resources and establish social connections in hopes of increasing their children's future success (e.g., Yamamoto 2002).

Accessing these resources was made even more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions due to COVID-19 required families, including linguistically diverse families (Neece, McIntyre, and Fenning 2020), to adjust how they accessed work, school, activities, and support systems. Using the CCW model, Trujillo (2021) conducted semi-structured interviews with American caregivers of school-aged children who spoke a language other than English at home to examine their experiences, needs, and support systems in supporting their child's education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Trujillo (2021) demonstrated that these marginalized families experienced many difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic and that their CCW was essential to manage those challenges.

Bioecological Model

While the CCW Model provides a framework for understanding and valuing the knowledge that marginalized families and communities build, this model does not shed light on where barriers and facilitators may impact a child's development. From developmental psychology, the Bioecological Model of Development (Bronfenbrenner 1979) was proposed to center children within a complex set of nested systems that interact, but the extent to which they are co-constructed is not clear. The nested systems include the immediate systems such as their family, preschool, and peers (Microsystem), the interactions between the microsystems such as between family and the preschool (Mesosystem), the interactions between a microsystem and other systems (Exosystem), the broader society regarding values, attitudes, and ideologies (Macrosystem), and the changes occurring through time (Chronosystem). Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model has been used as a framework to understand how factors can act as barriers, facilitators or both, and how different systems can impact children's development. For example, Sawyer, Manz, and Martine (2017) distinguished between barriers and facilitators within the home and at school that impacted the bilingual language development of Spanish-speaking preschool-aged

children in the USA. Similarly, using this model, Vera et al. (2012) found that parents who perceived a positive school climate were more likely to communicate with their child and child's teacher about school and were less likely to need and use community resources. Conducted in Canada, our previous research identified barriers and facilitators to supporting dual-language development before and during the pandemic with preschool staff (Demers and MacLeod in preparation). In summary, the Bioecological Model can provide a framework for exploring barriers and facilitators within a complex system, with children and their families at the center. However, the Bioecological Model does not address power and oppression but its use can be guided by critical theories and aligned with those value systems (Levine and Breshears 2019; Rogers et al. 2021; Ungar 2002).

Present Study

For the present study, we have paired Yosso's CCW with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model to identify where breakdowns in the system occur, how these may continue systemic inequities, and to gain a better understanding of what more we can do to support change. Thus, within this community-based action research, our research is informed by CRT methodology (Hylton 2012; Solórzano and Yosso 2001) as we sought to bring forward the voices of parents who were marginalized to provide a counter-story to the stories heard in mainstream media regarding the experiences of COVID-19. In particular, the monolingual majority often overlooks, ignores, or dismisses the important role of dual-language development in multilingual families.

   The present study fits within a larger project aimed at developing and implementing a program that supports preschool children in developing all of their languages, carried out in conjunction with parents and an urban community-based preschool. This dual-language program included theme-based activities such as dialogic book reading, songs, and games. We incorporated the different languages of the families with bilingual books and translations of the keywords with the help of online translations and parents when they were present. We thus created an inclusive space where marginalized languages were welcomed, explored, supported, and promoted. Within this context, we aimed to reach out to these families to learn more about the barriers and facilitators they faced in supporting their children's dual-language development and how restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted this. Our research question was: What are the barriers and facilitators families identify in different levels of the Bioecological Model to support their children's language development before and during the COVID-19 pandemic? In our discussion, we will explore how these results enhance our understanding of CCW.

METHODS

Participants

Collaboration with our community partner supported the recruitment of the participating 6 families who had a child between the ages of 3 and 5 years (M = 55.5 months; *SD* = 7.42), and who spoke a language other than or in addition to English at home. The six children were three girls and three boys, including one child with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Two children had 1 younger sibling, two other children had 1 older sibling, one child had no siblings, and one child had 3 older siblings and 1 younger sibling. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the parents, home language and other languages spoken. While it was not a criterion for participating, all parents were proficient in English.

TABLE 1. Parents Interviewed, Their Home Languages, and Their Other Language(s) Spoken

Families	Parents interviewed	Home language parents	Other language(s) spoken
Family 1	Mother	Tunisian Arabic	French, English
Family 2	Mother	Tamazight	Arabic, French, English
Family 3	Mother and Father	Malayalam	Hindi (F), English (M & F)
Family 4	Father	Urdu	Punjabi, English
Family 5	Father	Hindi	English
Family 6	Mother	Somali	English

Note. F=Father; M=Mother

Interviews

The six semi-structured interviews were conducted online in English via the Zoom videoconferencing platform for 30 to 45 minutes and took place between March and July 2021. The authors AM and CD conceptualized the study and developed the interview guide. Parents were asked about barriers and facilitators to supporting both English and the HL before COVID-19 (before March 2020) and during COVID-19 (after March 2020) in the province of Alberta (See the questionnaire in Supplementary Material). The authors NG and RC asked parents about their attitudes towards supporting language development and bilingualism, and external

supports (i.e., school) that would have benefited them in supporting their child's language development.

Analyses

These interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed using the qualitative method of directed content analysis, employing both inductive and deductive coding to identify themes amongst the interviews (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). We used deductive coding to identify previously reported themes in similar studies (Demers and MacLeod in preparation; Sawyer, Manz, and Martin 2017; Trujillo 2021; Vera et al. 2012). To understand how the family's context influences their experiences, we organized these themes according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bioecological Model (see Table 2 for summary). We used inductive coding to capture themes that emerged from the interviews and were not captured in previous research.

Two authors (NG and RC) completed the thematic coding of the interviews. They completed one interview together and met to discuss an initial set of codes. Next, they met with the two other authors (AM and CD) to discuss the codes. The following 5 interviews were coded independently followed by a second meeting to discuss an updated coding scheme, collapsing some codes under larger themes, adding codes based on inductive reasoning, and removing irrelevant or contradictory codes. When they could not agree, they met with the other two authors (AM and CD) to help resolve the conflicts. Finally, the two authors (NG and RC) revised the coding of all interviews according to the final codes established.

RESULTS

Table 2 provides an overview of the systems, the themes identified, the number of parents who contributed to each theme, and the number of instances where a particular theme was identified in the transcripts. All changes that parents identified as the result of COVID-19 (including themes which only emerged for the COVID-19 context) are discussed in the Chronosystem at the end of the results section. Although our methodology allowed us to explore different system levels, parents concentrated their discussion on the Family Microsystem.

Child: Internal Characteristics

This code captured the knowledge, attitudes, and skills parents attributed to their children that support language learning. All parents identified factors facilitating language development, including comprehension skills in at least one language, eagerness to learn, curiosity towards languages, and a sense of pride in bi/multilingualism. As discussed below in interactions with other systems, Parents 1, 2, 3, 4, and

TABLE 2. An Overview of the Themes Identified Within Each System and the Number of Parents Who Contributed to Each Theme and the Number of Instances Related to These Themes, and Whether it has Changed with COVID-19

System	Theme	# Parents who contributed to the theme		# Instances of the theme in the transcript	Changed with COVID-19
		Fac.	Bar.		
Child Microsystem – Family	Internal Characteristics	6	5	31	
	Attitudes & Knowledge	6	4	81	Yes
	English Fluency	2	2	6	
	Exposure	6	5	31	Yes
	Parents' Experiences	4	4	22	
	Resources	6	6	47	Yes
Microsystem – Preschool	Language	5	4	19	
	Practices	4	2	15	Yes
	Resources	2	2	7	
	Socialization	2	4	7	Yes
Microsystem – Peers	Language	0	2	6	
	Social Interaction	4	4	9	Yes
Mesosystem	Attitudes	4	3	8	
	Language	0	2	2	
	Relationship & Communication	3	2	9	
	Resources	2	3	8	
Exosystem	Accessibility	2	2	7	
	Community of HL Speakers	6	3	14	Yes
	COVID-19 Regulations	4	3	21	Yes
	Educational Organizations	2	4	13	
	Government Policies & Funding	0	2	2	
	Parents & Other Supports	4	3	14	Yes
	Parents & Work	2	2	4	Yes
Macrosystem	Majority Language	6	4	15	Yes
Chronosystem	COVID-19 Pandemic	4	3	23	Yes

Note. Fac.=Facilitators; Bar.=Barriers

6 also noted barriers to HL learning, including children refusing to speak the HL, children choosing to watch media in English, and pressures from English-only environments. Parents noted that the barriers to English learning were partly due to the children's age and English being a second language, and spoke of modifying their expectations for English development. Finally, parents commented that potential language difficulties or disorders impacted how they supported their child's language development overall.

Parent 1's story demonstrates the interplay between these internal characteristics and language development. Her child went through a period of language refusal for Arabic: "...he always say 'oh I don't want to say in Arabic.' And we always insistent that he have to express, to say the phrase in Arabic or something like that. [. . .] Sometimes he doesn't accept." However, Parent 1 noticed that her child was more motivated to use Arabic during preferred activities (e.g., songs, games) and with his father who he did not get to see often. She focused on Arabic during those times and used English the rest of the time. Now her child has become proud of his bilingualism and willing to use Arabic: "...when we are together, he says, 'I speak two languages, I speak English and Arabic.'"

Microsystem: Family: Attitudes & Knowledge

This code described the attitudes and knowledge of parents towards all languages and what they were doing to support language development. All parents identified facilitators to multilingual development, felt positively towards their HL, and desired to pass it on to their children: "I would be very happy to communicate with him in the language which I spoke to my father" (Parent 4). All participants expressed the importance of using their HL(s) for children to maintain connections to their family, country of origin, religion, or values, and to foster identity development. For example, Parent 2 mentioned: "And also it's kind of uh learning culture. [. . .] I can't teach her culture with English language. I mean I can, but … she's not gonna understand real culture if she doesn't speak the language." Parents 1, 2, and 5 reported advantages to knowing their specific HL such as being able to communicate with speakers around the world and work internationally. Parents 1, 2, and 4 expressed a sense of responsibility in transmitting their HL. All participants had language transmission strategies such as having family language plans, using the HL more often and resisting pressures to focus on English.

In addition, these parents felt positively about the English language. Parents 3, 4, and 5 viewed English as a way to integrate or connect with the broader Canadian society, necessary for accessing higher education, and felt responsible for teaching their children English. For example, Parent 4 said: "Schools will help you along the way, but ultimately we are responsible." All except Parent 5 felt everyone should try

to learn more than one language, touting various personal and practical benefits. For example, Parent 3 stated: "Yeah if they can learn ten languages, I'm the happiest mom." All except Parent 5 also shared their knowledge regarding child language development that supported their practices or confidence in multilingual transmission.

Regarding barriers, all except Parent 6 shared feelings of frustration and dismay in struggling to transmit their HL. Parents 1, 2, 3, and 4 felt their language was not supported in the larger community: "We are in Canada so English is the language we use here. So yeah it's better to learn English than our own language" (Parent 3).

Microsystem: Family: English Fluency

We used this code to discuss how parents perceived their own English fluency as impacting something beyond English exposure. Parents 2 and 6 discussed their personal English fluency as facilitating their children's *HL development,* such as translating English materials and activities into the HL. Parents 1 and 3 discussed how their lack of English fluency prevented them from supporting their child's *English development,* for example: "…sometimes [child] ask a question about the word or something he doesn't understand in English, and if I don't have a very good explanation for him, it's not something good to acquiring the language" (Parent 1).

Microsystem: Family: Exposure

This code captured how parents relied on informal communication activities to increase language exposure. All parents described speaking in their HL with their child as critical to supporting HL development: "…my two older children, they never speak Somali before. So I took them home in 2016. Even the understanding was very little when I took them. I take them there for six months. When I came back, well they speaking Somali" (Parent 6). With Child 6, she focused on using Somali at home even more: "I've been trying my best to speak Somali at home. That's all I did, and grandma was there to support us."

Families differed in how they discussed English exposure within the family. Parent 5 noted that siblings speaking English together benefited his child's English development, but Parents 2 and 3 saw this as negatively impacting HL development. Parents 2 and 5 felt their English was different compared to first language English speakers and identified this as a barrier to English language development.

Microsystem: Family: Parents' Experiences

This code captured how parents' past experiences and those shared by other multilingual families impact their current strategies or confidence in supporting their children's language development. Parents 1, 2, 4, and 6 had or witnessed positive and encouraging experiences in learning a second language or transmitting their HL.

The same parents, however, also recounted negative experiences which diminished parents' confidence in transmitting the HL, making them feel discouraged, hopeless, or "panicked" (Parent 2). Parent 2 shared some of these experiences and the overall feeling she was left with:

> When I live here in Canada, I seen two families. One family like uh succeeded in teaching their kid their language… Right now her kids are becoming like adults, but they speak Egyptian language very good. [. . .]. But another family is discouraging… told me, even if you teach your kids your language they are gonna lose it because they are using English more.

Microsystem: Family: Resources

This code described when parents discussed the resources they had access to, their ability to find resources, and their knowledge and use of resources to support language development. All parents identified facilitators and barriers related to resources. Parents identified books, television, other media (e.g., YouTube videos), and pre-made activities or materials for teaching language skills to support either the HL or English. Regarding barriers, some parents noted lacking time (Parents 2 and 3), knowledge of resources (Parents 1 and 3), and appropriate resources for supporting HL and bilingual development (Parents 3, 4, 5, 6).

Microsystem: Preschool: Language

This code captured parents' opinions concerning the language of their child's schooling. Parents 1, 2, 3, and 5 believed the increased exposure to English benefitted children's English development. Parents 1 and 6 believed the English-only environment helped their children differentiate between their two languages and improve both: "…now, after being exposed to the people outside, to the kids and the teacher, he knows that there is an English language and our Arabic language, and he is now willing to to express himself, sometimes with me and his father in the Arabic language…" (Parent 1). However, Parents 1, 4, 5, and 6 identified the language of school as a barrier to HL development. Parents 4 and 5 commented how none of the staff members were able to speak their HL and work on their children's HL development. For example, Parent 4 stated: "So that means having somebody in a school or home care or daycare system who knows the language, would you speak at home, it can definitely be an added benefit." Parents 1 and 6 noticed that after beginning school, their child preferred to speak in English, and she believed English-only learning environments had the following effect: "Those eight hours the kids to school is more like important than the kids being in the house now learning their mother tongue" (Parent 6).

Microsystem: Preschool: Practices

This code captured parents' discussion surrounding the school's structure, routines, and curriculum, which Parents 1, 2, 3, and 4 identified as facilitative to the development of all languages: "…there is a well-structured way in a school environment, there you have to do a list of activities in a structured manner, and then you would be, I think, maybe even to better organize yourself and maybe start, I mean it might be helpful for kids" (Parent 4). Children's school learning expanded their vocabulary, improved grammar skills, and helped children become better communicators.

Microsystem: Preschool: Resources

This code discussed parents' descriptions of the resources the preschool had access to. Parents 1 and 2 discussed the online Dual-Language program, provided by the authors in partnership through the preschool, as facilitating their child's language development and bilingual identity: " …that's why I'm with you guys. Because I need someone to help me, like um have an idea about how to support my kids uh development language…I got some strategies from you" (Parent 1). Barriers included a lack of human resources at the school (Parent 4) and issues with transportation (Parent 1).

Microsystem: Preschool: Socialization

This code captured parents' discussion surrounding their children having the opportunity for social interactions at school. Parents 2 and 3 identified this socialization through in-person learning as a facilitator and enhancement of fun and learning: "[Child] is gonna enjoy [the same activities she does with me] with her friends and her teacher more" (Parent 2). Parents felt this socialization improved their children's education and overall development, including language development.

Microsystem: Peers: Language

This code described peers as a linguistic group to practice skills in certain languages with or not. Parents 5 and 6 identified the language of peers as a barrier to HL development as there were no children in the community who comfortably spoke the HL with their child. Parent 6: "…now their kids, they don't even try to speak Somali because *pause* they don't even try."

Microsystem: Peers: Social Interaction

This code captured children's specific interactions with peers at school and elsewhere in the community. Parents 2, 4, 5, and 6 discussed how making and interacting with friends drives the development of communication skills and facilitated language development. However, because those interactions relied on children's use of English, Parents 2, 3, 4, and 6 identified them as a possible barrier to HL development.

Mesosystem: Attitudes

This code identified the attitudes expressed between parents and other systems of the Microsystem. Facilitating HL development, Parents 1, 2, 3, and 6 said their children's teachers were supportive of them using the HL: "…I can speak to her in Malayalam because I'm good in Malayalam… her teacher also told me the same; […] she can learn English from her school and Malayalam for me. I'm doing that" (Parent 3). Parents 1 and 2 discussed how the Dual-Language program directly benefited their resolve and confidence in HL transmission: "Dual program is very good because like it keeps reminding us that we have to work on teaching our kids their native language" (Parent 2).

Regarding barriers, Parents 3 and 6 discussed negative attitudes towards the school's ability to support HLs: "It won't be possible, yes. There are so many languages. It's not possible" (Parent 6). Parent 2 discussed negative interactions with healthcare providers when they encouraged her family only to use English at home after suspecting her daughter may have a language disorder. She identified the preschool as "support number one" for switching back to using their HL.

Mesosystem: Language

This code captured parents' discussion of the language used at school and by educators. Parents 1 and 6 noted English-only speaking staff and English resources were a barrier to parent-school communication as illustrated here: "…when I was filling that registration form… a question there is asking me what language spoken at home. I said Somali, but I'm not receiving any document written in Somali, all I received is in English […] if they could have sent it in Somali, maybe I would pay more attention" (Parent 6).

Mesosystem: Relationship and Communication

This code described the relationship that parents built with the preschool staff. Parents 1, 2, and 3 stated they had open, ongoing communication with preschool staff and the Dual-Language program implementers. Parent 1: "I always keep in touch with the teachers." Parents 3 and 6 described barriers related to how they "didn't understand there is support in the school [for HLs]" (Parent 6) and other resources; "when she went to grade one I didn't know that they have a French immersion program in her school" (Parent 3).

Mesosystem: Resources

This code captures parents' discussion around resources they were or were not receiving from the preschool that supported their child's language development. Parents 1 and 2 commented that the school and the Dual-language program provided them

with resources and activities to complete at home: "…[Preschool Name] is gathering parents, like discussions, so that helps, that helps like in talking English" (Parent 2). Nevertheless, Parents 3, 4, and 6 said that the school had not shared resources with them for supporting the HL. Parent 4: "There's not much support [...] for Urdu. I think it's just mostly for English."

Exosystem: Accessibility

This code described the access parents had to various services in the community. Parent 4 reported paying for therapy out-of-pocket to facilitate language development and Parent 1 owned a vehicle that they used to mitigate a lack of busing to their child's school. Parents 3 and 6 noted accessibility barriers well represented by the following statement: Parent 3: "We are new to this country, so we don't know most of the programs that they have here so…I think we have limited access, right?"

Exosystem: Community of HL Speakers

This code described the impact of being a part of a community of people who shared their culture and spoke their HL. All participants described this community as a facilitator. Parents spoke of friends, neighbours, community gatherings, and cultural facilities as contributing to the development of the HL with similar experiences, strategies, advice, and information about community supports and resources. Parent 2 reported the following: "I am planning to send her to…the mosque, where she can learn Arabic", and Parent 5 stated: "I have my few friends from India right from here in Edmonton. So, when they come over, obviously they talk in Hindi."

Exosystem: Educational Organizations

This code captured parents' discussion of other schools, educational centres, and organizations. Parents 2 and 3 identified schools as facilitators of their child's language development. As barriers to HL development, Parents 2, 4, 5, and 6 noted that they did not have access to educational organizations where their HL was used: "It would be nice to have some resources and some daycare or some school… where you know they speak the same language as a kid, so learns as at home" (Parent 4).

Exosystem: Government Policies and Funding

Here, parents discussed the consequences of government policies and funding structures as barriers to being able to support their children's language development. Parent 6 identified the lengthy immigration process for helping her mother come to Canada: "We were waiting a long time for them to come." Parent 3 identified the restrictive application process for provincially-funded preschool programs with barriers to getting formal assessments, rigid timelines, and limited spots.

Exosystem: Parents and Other Supports

This code was used to capture any broader community support (e.g., libraries, health care organizations) that was not captured in another theme. Parents 1, 2, 3 and 4 discussed community supports that facilitated HL development, such as community members, centers, and places of worship. Parents 1, 2, and 4 felt there were not enough resources in the broader community to support the HL and bilingual development, including for children with disabilities: Parent 4: "Everything is pretty much in English."

Exosystem: Parents and Work

This code captured parents' discussion of anything related to the existence, time requirements, responsibilities, and flexibility of their employment as it related to their ability to support their children's language development. Parents 2 and 3 who identified their work as a barrier discussed the competing demands between work/studies and their family responsibilities to complete language and educational activities: "Sometimes in our everyday life we forget, because we are busy with work just talking but no. We have to work on it, because it's very important" (Parent 2).

Macrosystem: Majority Language

This code discussed participants identifying one component of the broader society contributing to their children's language development: the majority language is spoken by most people in the community necessary for navigating work, school, and social situations.

All except Parent 1 noted that the widespread use of English in Canada increased their child's exposure and ability to learn this language, with parents feeling less of a burden to teach it: "...the TV's there in English, and every YouTube show she wants to get in there is in English. She plays with the kids, they all speak English. And she goes to school, everything is in English. So I never had any development issue in English language" (Parent 3). Parents 1, 2, 3, and 6 discussed the benefits of visiting their home country where English is spoken less as improving the HL. For Parents 3, 4 and 5, English's status led to them prioritizing English rather than HLs: "...he want to do something in life, right? So he need to get the English come on properly because he's to stay in Canada" (Parent 5). Parents 2 and 4 also believed there was little to no funding or supports for HLs "because the English language is dominant here in Canada" (Parent 2).

SUMMARY

Figure 1 below summarizes the barriers and facilitators that we presented above that were not affected by COVID-19. Each level of the Bioecological model is presented, building from the Child at the bottom of the figure up to the Macrosystem at the top. The interviews with these parents highlighted a complex web of supports and challenges to help them transmit both their HL and English. The following section will explore how the Chronosystem, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, impacted these families.
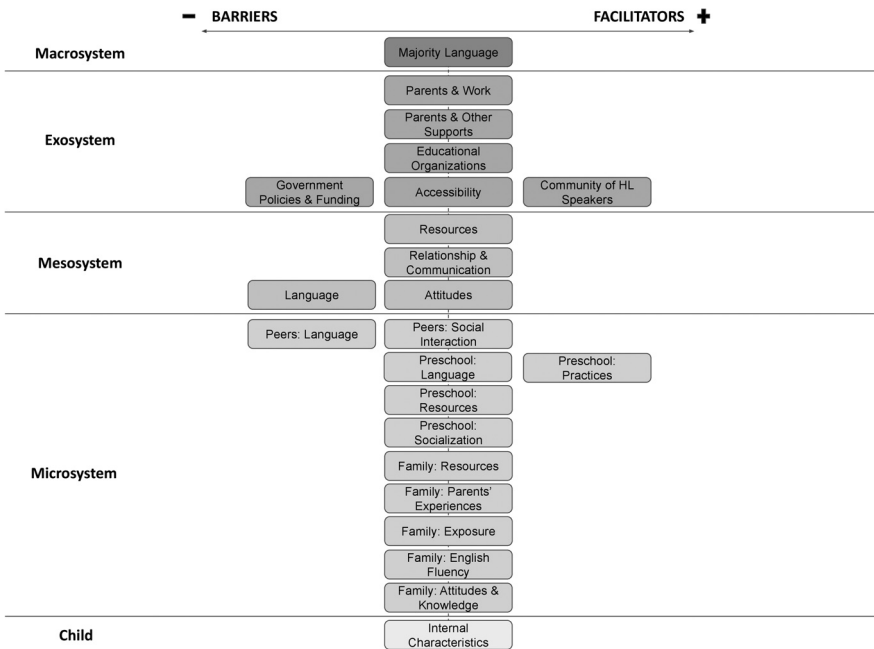
Fig. 1. Representation of the barriers (leftward), facilitators (rightward), and both (middle) for each related to child language development that were not affected by COVID-19

Chronosystem: COVID-19 Pandemic

This code relates to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the different systems of the Bioecological Model (illustrated in Figure 2). The figure captures the themes impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with those negatively impacted presented on the left of the figure, those positively impacted on the right, and both in the middle. Parents 3, 4, 5, and 6 discussed facilitators and Parents 2, 3, 4, and 6 discussed barriers related to the pandemic.

Child

Parents 3 and 4 felt their children's internal characteristics, such as social and behavioural development, were impacted negatively during the COVID-19 pandemic:"I think her social skills are getting affected because of this COVID yeah, because the only kid she's mingling with is sister" (Parent 3). Parent 4 revealed: "But when COVID happened, everything kind of get shut down, and then…he kind of got himself away from that line, maybe from that learning, from others' [developmental] curve."

Microsystem: Family

Regarding attitudes and knowledge, Parents 2 and 4 felt more responsible for supporting all of their children's languages; however, they noted limitations to education and language exposure only coming from home: "We were able to put more effort by ourselves because we were home, most of the time…But, the negative side was that he was not exposed with anybody else. So he was kind of more like learning from two people [us parents] instead of learning from a whole spectrum of things. […] I think that kind of limited his learning" (Parent 4). Parents 5 and 6 identified increased exposure to the HL as facilitating HL development: "…since COVID sometime he has online school and he doesn't go school, so he spend more time with his family, right?" (Parent 5). However, Parents 3 and 5 noted increased HL exposure as a barrier to English. Parents 2 and 3 underscored the importance of having or finding resources online, either expressing gratitude for the ones they found or frustration at what they needed but couldn't find: "There is not online resources to be honest" (Parent 2).

Microsystem: Preschool

Practices of online schooling, however, served as an important stopgap in continuing to support children's language development during the pandemic. Parents 2, 3, and 4 felt the teachers successfully engaged and taught children in an online setting, but that virtual classrooms lacked the same beneficial structure and routine. They compared the online learning experience to when their child or an older sibling had attended school in person: "[…], [her sibling] was able to do all her activities by herself like she was able to put on a jacket… But in [child]'s case she's sitting at home so she doesn't want to do it right? So yeah, in that sense, she is lagging" (Parent 3). Parents 1, 4, 5, and 6 also noted attending school online as a barrier for socialization of their children.

Microsystem: Peers

As discussed in the other systems, Parents 2, 3, and 4 identified their children's isolation from peers, both at school and in the community, as a barrier to their language development.
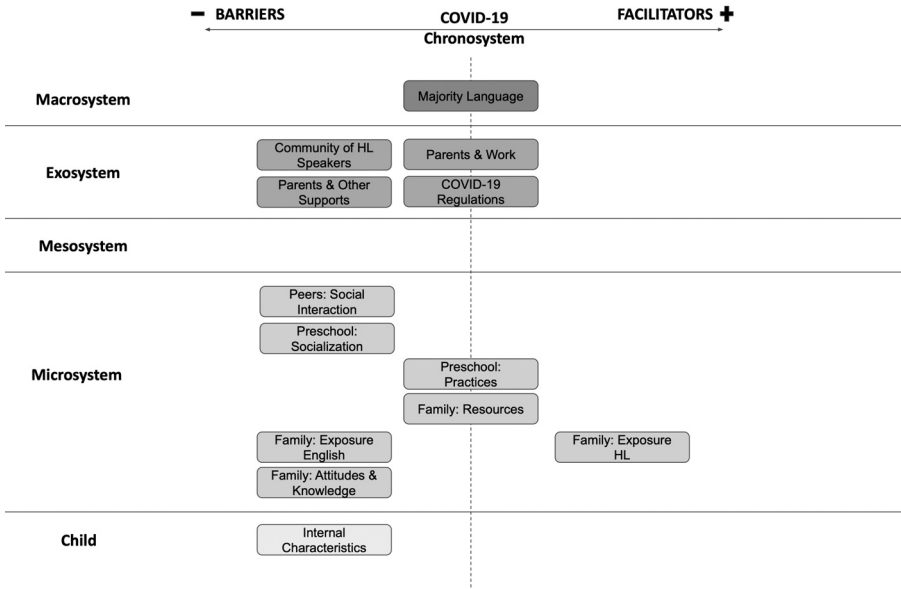
Fig. 2. Representation of the barriers (leftward), facilitators (rightward), and both (middle) for each related to child language development affected by COVID-19

Exosystem

COVID-19 regulations, including isolation and social distancing requirements, online schooling, work-from-home requirements, closure of community and religious centres, and travel restrictions, were discussed as facilitative (Parents 3, 4, 5, and 6) and/or as a barrier (Parents 2, 3, and 4).

As parents felt increasingly responsible for their children's language development, they simultaneously lost access to community supports and resources they previously relied on. Parent 2 stated: "We used to be in the library activities, but right now, no more." Parents 2, 3, and 4 also described being isolated from friends and family in Edmonton who spoke their HL, and because of travel restrictions, family members living outside of Canada were not allowed to visit: "Before COVID-19, it was easy. [...] Because like we visit our relatives. [...] Now…there is no more contact. There is no more *pause* like she didn't see her relatives since a long time" (Parent 2). Parents 5 and 6, however, were able to maintain some connection with their HL-speaking community. Parents 2, 3, and 4 described different experiences with transitioning to work-from-home with increased family time and exposure to the HL, but also the additional challenges that came with it and varying degrees of impact on HL learning.

Macrosystem

When lockdowns and travel restrictions went into effect, Parent 3 and their family were visiting their relatives in India and described the HL majority language as beneficial: "In India yeah. I was here and [...] they stuck over there for almost like four month, they came back in June or July, so. Because all the flights were cancelled. [...] So that time, like she had a great exposure to Malayalam *laughs*."

DISCUSSION

By forefronting parents' voices, this research aimed to discover the barriers and facilitators experienced by multilingual families in supporting their children's HL and English development before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. For these families, we propose that Linguistic Capital plays a pivotal role in developing the Aspirational, Familial, Social, Resistance and Navigational Capitals. Informed by CRT, our application of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model led to identifying where barriers and facilitators to language development exist within the system, which can inform how Linguistic Capital is built.

Child

Parents reported facilitators and barriers related to internal characteristics of children, such as their motivation to speak the HL or not, as seen in Sawyer, Manz, and Martin (2017), and potential language difficulties or disorders, similar to Demers and MacLeod (in preparation). Parents acknowledged how their child's interest in different languages and willingness to learn or speak in each language impacted their overall language development. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected children's Social and Linguistic Capitals as seen by impacts on social and behavioural development, which affected their language development.

Microsystem: Family

Families used both their Familial and Linguistic Capital to share their culture through their HL to build these Capitals for their children. These strengthened Social Capital through connections with extended families, the country of origin, religion, and the construction of their identity. Parents felt responsible for transmitting their HL, and children's exposure to their HL builds Familial Capital through connections with family at home, in the city, and in their country of origin. Similar to Sawyer, Manz, and Martin (2017) and Trujillo (2021), parents demonstrated Linguistic Capital with positive attitudes and knowledge towards supporting the HL, English, and multilingualism, which is related to Aspirational, Resistance, and Navigational Capitals. They drew on their Social Capital to find support for language

transmission from extended families who do not speak English, and from spending time in their country of origin. For Aspirational Capital, in line with Trujillo (2021), families want their children to speak their HL and to have a good life with opportunities to travel or work in other countries. They also support English for integration in broader Canadian society and access to higher education. Families use their Resistance Capital by rejecting pressures to focus on English development. They also use their Navigational Capital to identify and use strategies which support language transmission.

Finally, the COVID-19 restrictions resulted in families spending more time together, increasing children's exposure to their HLs for an increase in their Linguistic and Familial Capitals. However, some families noted that it resulted in the opposite for English with decreasing the Social and Linguistic Capitals for that language. The participants' attitudes changed with COVID-19, increasing responsibility towards the child's language development. They used resources online during COVID-19, making use of their Navigational Capital.

Microsystem: Preschool

When families had support from their preschool, they could better use their CCW and help their children develop their Linguistic and Social Capitals. Parents mentioned that teachers and the school's structure helped develop their children's language, and providing a Dual-Language program helped develop their identity and language skills. By being a part of our Dual-Language program, the families used their Aspirational and Resistance Capitals as a motivation for their children to attend.

During COVID-19, children attended online preschool but parents noted that it was not as beneficial. COVID-19 also decreased children's socialization, thus, the children could not build as much Linguistic and Social Capitals during the pandemic.

Microsystem: Peers

When children interacted with peers, it brought them more exposure to the different languages and helped their language development through social interactions. Families made use of their Familial and Social Capitals to provide their children with more opportunities to interact with their peers, in return helping children develop their Linguistic and Social Capitals. However, with COVID-19, there were limited opportunities for peer interactions, decreasing their Linguistic and Social Capitals.

Mesosystem

The parents were being supported by the positive attitudes of preschool staff in developing the HL, facilitating parents' Aspirational Capital, similar to the preschool staff interviews in our previous study (Demers and MacLeod in preparation).

However, other studies found less positive attitudes towards bilingualism (Sawyer et al. 2017; Vera et al. 2012). In our study, we found that families benefited from good communication with staff, making it easy for families to use their Social Capital, and access to resources made it easier for parents to support their children's Linguistic Capital. However, negative attitudes within the mesosystem toward the HL and a lack of resources in the HL were barriers for developing children's Linguistic Capital, as mentioned in Sawyer, Manz, and Martin (2017). From our perspective, we found it compelling that these families experienced language barriers, despite each family having at least one parent who was highly proficient in English. These experiences speak to how language barriers impact efficient communication between families and preschool staff.

Exosystem

The community of HL speakers builds Familial and Social Capitals, similar to what was found by Trujillo (2021). This community can support children's exposure to the HL and their culture and share resources and information (MacLeod et al. 2022). With the help of their Familial, Social, and Navigational Capitals, families can use other organizations and supports, including online resources, community centres, and professionals. The parents' work schedules can contribute to families' Navigational Capital, influencing their availability and budget to attend services. Government policy and funding can also influence families' Navigational Capital in providing access to and knowledge of services and Familial Capital through immigration policies that affect family members. Government funding was also reported as a barrier by preschool staff (Demers and MacLeod in preparation).

The COVID-19 regulations from the province of Alberta also influenced families' Familial and Social Capitals as they spent more or less time with family and community. COVID-19 impacted parents' interactions with other systems, which influenced children's language development. For example, COVID-19's impact on parents' work was a barrier for some families and a facilitator for others as they had more or less time to spend with their children to support their language development. In addition, parents were limited in their use of Social Capital due to isolation from friends, family members, and many community resources.

Macrosystem

The majority language can act as a facilitator to learning English and a barrier to learning the HL, directly impacting children's language development and thus their Linguistic Capital. While these parents did not directly discuss the experiences of racism as in other studies which connect to the dominant monolingual ideology (e.g., Trujillo 2021), they expressed the feeling that their HL was not valued in the

broader community, which hindered their construction of CCW. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted one family positively regarding children's HL as they were in their country of origin longer than expected due to travel restrictions. This extended immersion in a community with a different majority language fostered Familial and Social Capitals.

Chronosystem

With COVID-19, pre-existing barriers were exacerbated as families could rely on fewer Capitals due to their isolation. In particular, supporting their child's growth in Linguistic and Social Capitals was challenging. In return, some families used their other Capitals, especially their Resistance, Navigational, and Familial Capitals, to compensate for these challenges.

IMPLICATIONS

Using a Bioecological Model, we uncovered systems breaking down that led to barriers for children's HL development. Parents identified their child's preschool as critical to supporting their development both before and during COVID-19. Establishing a meaningful parent-teacher collaboration can foster families' CCW (Larotta and Yamamura 2011). Through this collaboration, actionable social change can occur in the community (Budhai and Lewis-Grant 2022). In addition, institutions in the Exosystem may not value, support, or fund children's HL development or see this as an optional service that was cut during COVID-19. The present research contributes to understanding the intersections of language and racialization, which often means that certain language communities, especially European languages, are valued within Canadian education systems and mainstream Canadian society more broadly, while other language communities remain marginalized and devalued. Thus positive change is not possible without educators and administrators respecting and valuing the Linguistic and Cultural Capitals that all multilingual families have to offer and working with these families to build a better system that includes all students and families (Budhai and Lewis-Grant 2022; Sawyer et al. 2017).

We observed that COVID-19 lifted some of the oppression experienced by families; specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic has facilitated some aspects of families' life resulting in more exposure of children to their HL. Moving forward, we advocate for considering how time spent with family both locally and in the country of origin can increase families' CCW. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed existing inequities for Canada's immigrant and multilingual families. These families faced unique challenges during the pandemic with disproportionately negative impacts. Families were isolated from their linguistic community and typical

supports. They used Aspirational and Navigational Capitals to find resources to support their children's Linguistic Capital in both English and HL development. In this period of change, we can see opportunities to rebuild systems to provide broader support and resources for HL transmission.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper provides a unique contribution in combining Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bioecological Model and Yosso's (2005) CCW. This combination of frameworks has let us observe how interactions between systems and realized power dynamics cause families to build these Capitals with differing levels of success. In addition to forefronting the voices of marginalized families, by situating our research within a CRT framework, we have attempted to address how larger systems have marginalized families within our community while elevating the knowledge and cultural capital these families offer. We have centered our discussion around a group of families who represent the intersection between multiple oppressed groups. The facilitators we identified can impact families' CCW in different ways to support their children's dual-language development. The barriers that we identified and, thus, the changes we argue for could benefit multilingual families more broadly. Specifically, we argue that it is not only parents who are responsible for home-language learning and maintenance, but rather that it is a shared responsibility across micro- to macrosystems. Through actions that value and foster the CCW, including home language learning and transmission, we can further empower marginalized families, and thus support their agency in social change.

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