

Multilingual Families and their Children's Communication Development

TITLE OF RESEARCH: **Communicating Through COVID-19: Experiences of Multilingual Families with Refugee Experience**

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SUMMARY: This study sought to understand newcomer parents' perception of barriers and facilitators to supporting their children's language development before and during COVID-19. The study used a community-partnership research model that would empower families and build service providers' capacity to meet newcomer families' needs.

LINK: Click [here](#) to read the executive summary and [here](#) to read the publication

Key Findings

Parents found that their child's **interest and motivation** to learn and speak in the home language (HL) or English impacted their overall language development

Parents **felt responsible for transmitting their HL** to their children and used many strategies and resources to do so, including extended family members and online resources during COVID-19.

Despite feeling that their HL was not valued in the broader community, **parents rejected pressures to focus solely on English language development**

Preschool can be a significant support for children to develop their language skills and socialization. Families benefitted from good communications with preschool staff that helped them access resources to support their children's linguistic development.

However, even parents who were highly proficient in English encountered barriers communicating with preschool staff and accessing resources.

COVID-19 resulted in families spending more time together, **benefitting children's HL but also impacting children's English**. COVID-19 negatively impacted children's ability to socialize and online preschool was not as beneficial as in-person schooling. Parents also felt that supporting children's schooling in English was a challenge during COVID-19.

Recommendations:

- Service providers and policy makers would benefit from going beyond simple translations to engaging with communities in language and cultural brokering.
- School systems, teachers, and communities need to help establish meaningful parent-teacher collaboration to support children's home language development.
- Schools and service providers must value newcomer families' home language and the strengths and assets they bring.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition.

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