

Research Article

# Language Use Practices of the Indian Migrant Community in Sydney, Australia: A Pilot Study

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## Abstract

Sociolinguistic research on the linguistic skills and repertoire of Indian migrants in Australia is scarce, despite their growing population. Indian migrants are multilingual upon arrival to Australia, but the extent to which they remain bi- or multilingual and the extent to which they transmit those languages to the subsequent generations has not been recorded. This pilot study is part of a PhD study on language maintenance and bilingualism in the Indian migrant community in Sydney, Australia and contributes to addressing the gap in sociolinguistic literature. The study adopted the mixed-methods approach, where the quantitative method using surveys in the form of a written questionnaire was the main method of investigation. This was complemented by the qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews and field observations. This paper presents the results of the quantitative method of investigation, focussing on language use practices of first and second-generation Indian migrants in the home domain. The results show that Indian heritage languages are maintained better by the first than the second generation and with certain interlocutors only. This raises the question of the prospect of the maintenance and transmission of Indian heritage languages to the subsequent generations and would be explored in this paper. The article also focuses on the linguistic and policy implications of the patterns of language use on the Indian migrant community and the linguistic landscape

## Keywords

Indian Migrants, Indian Heritage Languages, Language Use Practice, Home Domain

## 1. Introduction

Migration has become a common phenomenon around the world. In the past, migration was a very slow and gradual process, mostly localised and taking long for the migrants to get established in the host region or country [6]. However, with time, the boundaries, scope and definition of migrants and migration have changed significantly. In the present time, migration is mostly conceived as movement of people from one country to another as it has extended beyond national boundaries and so Baas [5] expresses that the term migration has now come to stand for ‘international migration’, which is

characterised by crossing boundaries, obtaining residency/citizenship in another country and the formation of overseas communities. Recently, with further transformations in the definition and scope, migration is mostly viewed as ‘transnational’, which means once migrants settle in a new country across borders, they still maintain ties to their homeland [34]. This has concomitant impacts on migrants, particularly on their sense of belonging, citizenship, nationality identity [36].

Upon arrival to the host country, migrants are usually

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with new challenges, opportunities and a new culture and language. Sometimes there is a conflict between the two sets of values while at other times there are compromises and/or acceptances. The acceptances could either be in the form of assimilation or integration and whichever choice is presented to and adopted by migrants, it greatly influences their culture and language choice and usage, impacting maintenance or shift in their heritage language. This leads to concomitant effects on their linguistic repertoire and skills. Many migrants are bi- or multilingual upon emigration and their language choices and usage over time would determine whether their and the following generations' bilingual and multilingual skills would be on the trend of being maintained or the migrants would be heading towards monolingualism in the host language.

This paper presents the results of the pilot study undertaken for a PhD dissertation on the linguistic skills and repertoire of Indian migrants from mainland India, residing in Sydney, Australia. The purpose of the study was to explore Indian migrants' patterns of language use in various domains and situations to determine whether they were maintaining their heritage languages and remaining bilingual at least, if not multilingual, or they were heading towards monolingualism in English. This paper focuses on first and second-generation Indian migrants' language use practises in the home domain.

## 2. Indian Migrants in Australia

Although India and Australia share similar colonial histories, the majority of Indian migrants are fairly recent arrivals to Australian shores. This could be because of the restrictions of the movement or migration of people from India and other Asian countries to Australia during colonial years and the decades following that. This was a result of the renowned 'White Australia' policy as well as other racially discriminatory immigration legislations [27]. Some male Indians had arrived in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to work as camel drivers, labourers and hawkers. Those few Indians who had been able to come in the earlier days were mostly British Indians, but a few others had also followed from Punjab, the North Western Frontier and Madras [27]. A small group of Punjabi migrants, who later settled around Woolgoolga in New South Wales, were also able to make their way to Australia in the 1880s [35] but became a target of hostile politics and the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act in 1901 [27, 40]. The latter prevented further movement of Indians to Australia. The Immigration Restriction Act, coupled by the Dictation Test brought in 1905, which tested the potential Indian migrants' race and not their literacy [27], was a further hindrance to Indians' migration process.

It took many decades and struggles for the formulation of policies that were supporting and not discriminating non-European migrants. In particular, it was not until Australia's signing the International Convention on Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in 1966 as well as abol-

ishing the 'White Australia' policy in 1973, that migration of Asians, in particular Indians was possible. With the introduction of the 'Points System' and under the Skilled Migration Scheme, Indian skilled migrants particularly found the scope of migration to Australia. Therefore, in 1996 there were 77,618 Indian migrants in Australia [7], which escalated to 147,106 in 2006 [1] and by 2011, this number had surged to 295,362 [2], making India the top country of migrants in Australia [35]. This further escalated to 468,800 in 2016, Indians making up 1.9% of Australia's population, by witnessing a 10.7% growth rate in migrants in the 2006-2016 period [3]. This exponential growth reached a high of in 2021 [4].

In addition to the Skilled Migration Scheme, Australia also introduced skilled-Independent Overseas Student visa in whereby international students could apply for Permanent Residence, within 6 months of completing their tertiary studies in Australia [38]. This has hence been an attractive mode of Indian migration to Australia [5] and so in 2020, there were 115,137 Indian international students in Australia [13]. This has made Australia's education regime heavily 'reliant on the capital of Indian students' [33]. However, the 2009 and 2010 Melbourne attacks on Indian students had dropped numbers of Indian international students substantially and this had a direct negative impact on overall Indian arrivals to Australia as their numbers also declined from 25,123 in 2008-2009 to 23,342 in 2009-2010 and 21,932 in 2010-2011 [2], before gaining an upsurge to 33,764 between 2011-2012 (DIAC 2013). However, the substantial improvement in these numbers in the following years made India the supreme source of migrants to Australia, overtaking Britain and China for the first time.

Together with these, Indian citizens also move to Australia on temporary visas such as the 457 visa which provides employer sponsorship to workers. This program favours professional, health and trade qualified workers as well as workers in the less qualified occupations and is mostly attractive to citizens of developing countries as it enables them to apply for a Permanent Residence visa after 2 years of employment in Australia [39]. Indian nationals have found this visa category very attractive as well. Hence between 2012 and 2013, 22,080 visas were granted to Indian nationals only: this was 20.3% of total visas granted during the period, making India the top country of 457 visa recipients [15]. These statistics not only confirm the increasing number of Indian migrants to Australia but also confirm that the majority of Indian migrants are quite recent arrivals to Australia.

Another fact about Indian migrants is that most of them are quite young upon arrival. This could mostly be because the younger they are, the more points are awarded, contributing to their eligibility for skilled migration visa. Retrospectively, the majority of the participants for this study were between 31-40 years of age. Similarly, a study conducted by Gunasekara, Rajendran and Grant [21] on the life satisfaction of Sri Lankan and Indian skilled migrants in Australia also

had average age of 30 for the 306 participants and while the majority of their participants had been residing in Australia for 5-10 years, 32% had been living here for less than 5 years.

There are some studies already conducted on Indian migrants, specifically by Bathala [6], Maclean [27], Voigt-Graf [40], Singh and Gatina [35], Velayutham [24], Robertson [33] and Gunsekara, Rajendran and Grant [21] but none of them have a linguistic focus in it. More specifically, Bathala [6] presented a thorough discussion of issues of national and cultural identities of East Indians in the United States. Although he seemed to have been leaning towards the notion that maintaining cultural identity is not the most ideal in a multicultural and secular nation, and identified Indian migrants' use of traditional costumes, their participation in temples and cultural associations, observation of dietary restrictions and their social life and moral values in general as a source of their Indian identity, there is no mention of language and its impacts on their identity. Language is one of the most important determiners of migrants' identity in transnational migration contexts and although Bathala [6] also presented a commentary of numerous research conducted on the aforementioned aspects of Indian cultural identity, there was no mention of any research conducted on the linguistic aspects. This signals that research on the linguistic skills and repertoire of Indian migrants is even scarce in the United States, as it is in Australia. The only exception in Australia is Fernandez and Clyne [19], which studied the linguistic skills of seven Indian and Sri Lankan families in Melbourne. Therefore, this study aimed to fill in this substantial vacuum in sociolinguistic literature by recording the language use practices of Indian migrants in Sydney, Australia. This will not only help identify their linguistic skills and repertoire but also determine if Indian migrants are on the trend of remaining bi- and/or multilingual or if they are heading towards monolingualism in English. As India is a highly multilingual and multicultural country, Indian migrants, upon arrival to Australia, are mostly bi- or multilingual.

### 3. Research Method

This study adopted Ivankova and Greer's [25] mixed methods approach where the quantitative method of investigation complements the qualitative method. Based on this, the primary, quantitative method of data collection was a survey in the form of a written questionnaire. There were 25 questionnaires administered in total: 17 to first generation and 8 to second-generation Indian migrants residing in various Sydney suburbs. The participants were recruited via convenience sampling and snowballing approaches. The quantitative method was supplemented by the qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews and field observations. Ethics approval (2016/148) was obtained from University of Wollongong prior to all fieldwork. This paper presents

some of the results of the quantitative research for the pilot study.

### 4. Demographic Data

The pilot study comprised 25 Indian migrants residing in the greater Sydney suburbs. 68% of the cohort belonged to the first generation and 32% to the second generation. The second generation comprised both India- (50%) and Australia-born (50%) where the latter had migrated to Australia between 1 and 12 years of age. Hence, the first generation were categorised as those Indian migrants 12 years and older in age upon their arrival to Australia and those below the age of 12 or born in Australia, were categorised as the second generation. 47% of the first generation were males and 53% females. An equal 50% of the second generation were males and females.

The first-generation participants were from different states of India: Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar, Bangalore and Haryana. 81% of this cohort had attained tertiary level education in India, prior to migration to Australia while the other 19% had attained tertiary education in Australia. 71% of the respondents who had attained tertiary qualifications in India had studied at English medium universities and the rest at both English and Hindi-medium universities. In regard to high school education, the majority (69%) had studied at English-medium high schools and the rest at heritage language-medium high schools.

50% of the second-generation migrants were born in India in the states of Gujarat, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Kerala. As they had migrated to Australia between 1-12 years of age, they had only attained some primary level education prior to migration. 56% of those who studied at primary level in India, had studied at English-medium primary schools and the rest at an Indian regional language-medium school.

At the time of the investigation, the first generation had been residing in Australia for a range of 4-22 years in the Sydney suburbs of Harris Park, Summer Hill, Macquarie Fields, Liverpool, Beverley Hills, Kogarah, Pennant Hills, Hurstville, Westmead and Campbelltown. Their most common age range was 31-40 years. All of them were in exogamous marriage where 75% were married to individuals from India and 25% to individuals from an Indian diaspora. They were all employed in professional occupations such as a manager, architect, teacher, quality controller, salesperson, chef and machine operator.

The second generation had been residing in Australia for between 2 and 12 years at the time of the investigation. They were living in the Sydney suburbs of Blacktown, Cecil Hills, Miranda, Glenfield, Ingleburn, Liverpool, Castle Hill, Doonside, Hurstville and Minto. Their most common age range during the study was between 14-20 years and 78% of this cohort were studying while 22% were working. 78% were single and 22% were married. Those married were in endogamous marriage.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The participants were presented with two hypothetical situations of language use in the home domain with each interlocutor: the first one was around the discussion of a personal matter and the second one was around the discussion of the contents of an English television program. The participants had to state the most commonly used language with the particular interlocutor in the respective situation. The choices were between Hindi, English and an Indian regional language that they spoke the most. Participants could only choose one language for less complicated analysis and interpretation. For the purpose of this paper, Hindi and Indian regional languages are mostly examined together under the umbrella of Indian heritage languages.

The overall results of the investigation showed that Indian heritage languages were used to a large extent in certain situations, while English prevailed in others and the latter was more common in the second than the first generation. More specifically, 82% of the first generation used Indian heritage languages to converse with their spouse regarding a personal matter and 18% used English (Table 1). However, there was a slight decrease in the use of Indian heritage languages between spouses to discuss an English genre to 76% and so, retrospectively, the propensity of use of English increased to 24%. The high rate of use of Indian heritage languages between married couples in the Indian migrant community could signal a high rate of exposure and transmission of Indian heritage languages to the second generation. Exposure of heritage languages by the first generation to the subsequent generations is vital in migrant contexts as the majority of the migrant families in countries such as Australia are nuclear families and so, the onus of transmission and maintenance of heritage languages mostly falls upon parents. Greater use and exposure of heritage languages also signals positive attitude of migrants towards their heritage languages, and this is vital for their maintenance [12]. Even if the second generation was not actively using the heritage language, a greater exposure of it would lead to improved receptive skills in them [12].

The trend of language use between second generation married couples, on the other hand, was very alarming as absolute use of English was reported (Table 1). Despite a very small number of second-generation married respondents in this study, it could send significant messages to the Indian migrant community as it could signal a high rate of use of English between second-generation married couples, and this would concomitantly impact exposure to the third generation. This practice could be quite common in migrant contexts, as most migrants tend to embrace the host language quite easily as they are immersed into it. If the family, and particularly parents, do not provide exposure of heritage languages then the probability of their maintenance is greatly reduced [29], leading to a low likelihood of its survival to the next generation [10]. Another reason for the concern for the significantly

high rate of use of English between second-generation spouses is because both these respondents were in endogamous marriage, which is normally considered a stronger agent of maintenance of heritage languages [9, 10, 28, 31], compared to exogamous marriage. This is because spouses in exogamous marriage would share the same linguistic code, and this would also be prevalent in the Indian migrant context.

Parents play a significant role in the maintenance of heritage languages, and they need to model its use in the home domain, providing encouragement and motivation for children. The success of this was reflected in Griva, Kiliari and Stamou's [22] study where increased use of heritage language in children was a result of its exposure by parents. As parents are mostly the transmitters of heritage languages in migrant contexts [20, 23, 28], Indian migrants would need to increase its use and exposure to facilitate maintenance of their heritage languages.

The next category of language practice investigated was the use of language between participants and their children. The results showed that English dominated conversations between parents and children: an average of 73% and 87% of the first generation used English with the eldest and the youngest child respectively (Table 1). However, the second generation used English exclusively with their children. Again, this is of concern as all respondents being in endogamous marriage, would speak the same heritage language with their spouse and yet, they chose to communicate in English with their children. Some of the respondents' high rate of use of English with their children could be the result of extensive use of English with their spouse. The high rate of use of English is also of concern because while the first generation had only been residing in Australia for a range of 4-22 years, the second generation had for 2-14 years only. A more recent arrival should normally warrant a high rate of use of heritage languages, but this was not the case reported in the Indian migrant community, at least in the pilot study. The high rate of inter-generational use of English is also of concern because most Indian migrant families are nuclear families where heritage language transmission and maintenance are mostly the parents' responsibility.

A high rate of inter-generational use of English is quite common in a migrant context. One reason for this could be because of the role of the host language, such as English in the education system. Parents mostly feel obliged to immerse their children in the host language only and support its development in them [18], neglecting their heritage language. Similar observations were made in Hunt and Davis' [24] study where the German-speaking family had reverted to English to support their daughter's development of English and her linguistic assimilation in school. They believed that the cause of her behavioural issues in school was her lack of English-speaking skills, and so, not being able to communicate effectively with teachers and peers. This could be a common fear, ingrained in many migrant families, impacting



their use and transmission of heritage languages.

The inter-generational use of heritage languages by approximately one-fifth of the first generation need to be acknowledged. This is because this data shows that not all Indian migrant families are on the trajectory of language shift. These respondents would need to continue modelling their heritage-language use practices in the home domain and if need be, implement some language use policies to increase overall use, as was reflected in Tran et al's [36] study of Vietnamese migrants in Australia, where their use of family language policies facilitated children's higher rate of use of Vietnamese.

The examination of language use patterns between respondents and their children was followed by an investigation of Indian migrants' patterns of language use with their parents. Although the study did not enquire the type of visa that the first generation's parents were on in Australia, for instance, tourist visa or permanent residence visa, the results were significant. 83% of the first generation used their heritage languages with their parents. This is a strong indication of exposure and transmission of heritage languages in the home domain, even if the parents of the first generation were there only temporarily. However, as shown above, if parents were only using heritage languages with grandparents and not modelling the language behaviour amongst themselves and with children, then the language use trajectory could be more towards language attrition than maintenance. Similarly, 17% of the first generation and an average of 70% of the second generation using English at home for conversations with their parents could be of concern as parents are usually expected to be the transmitters of heritage languages in most migrant contexts [20, 28]. These results are also consistent with and reflected in the propensity of the first generation reporting use of the respective languages with their children (Table 1).

Another area of significance in the study of language use practices between family members in the home domain is intra-generational language use with siblings. Approximately 41% of the first generation and all second generation in this study had their siblings residing in Australia at the time of the investigation. Respondents' reported results of language use with both the eldest and the youngest sibling was the same for both generations in the two given situations: while 71% of the first generation used their heritage language to discuss a family matter, 58% used heritage languages to discuss a television program with their siblings. The rest used English. However, the results for the second generation were quite the opposite: where only 14% used Hindi with siblings in both situations and 86% used English (Table 1). A high rate of use of host languages between and amongst siblings in migrant contexts is quite common [30] as particularly the second generation's primary socialisation takes place in the host country. In addition, there is an increase in the use of the host language due to its immersion in the educational setting. This trend of language use is often replicated in the home

domain. The prevalence of this behaviour in the Indian migrant community was also confirmed by some of the first-generation respondents during interviews. They reported that once the eldest sibling commences formal education and gets exposed to a high rate of use of the host language, that is replicated with siblings in the home. This is a common trend in most migrant families [8, 11, 19]. However, with Indians being quite recent migrants to Australia (2-14 years for the second generation), this high rate of use of English would be of concern. The Indian migrant community and policy makers would need to pay heed to this trend and increase the use of heritage languages in the home domain, aiding in their maintenance.

The high rate of intra-generational use of English between siblings could be somewhat expected but probably not in one-third of the first generation. This is because first-generation siblings in the Indian migrant community would be born, raised and educated in India, and if they were not Anglo-Indians, then this propensity (one-third) would be of concern. It would have concomitant impacts on their transmission to the second and subsequent generations. Adult migrants' lack of use of heritage languages and their increased use of English instead, would impact maintenance of heritage languages. The high rate of intra-generational use of English in migrant contexts has also been reported in some studies, showing its expectancy, for instance Rubino [32]. However, the 95% of Rubino's respondents who used English intra-generationally were Australia-born third-generation Italians, unlike this study where all first generation and 50% of the second generation were born in India. Therefore, this raises concern for the Indian migrant community.

On the other hand, almost two-thirds of the first generation and 14% of the second generation's report of intra-generational use of heritage languages shows some light at the end of the dark tunnel in the linguistic skills and repertoire of the Indian migrant community. Although not at a high level, there is some propensity of use of heritage languages in the second generation as well, but this will have to be fostered. Qualitative results show that families that had enforced a family language policy, where use of the heritage language was almost compulsory, were epitomes of maintenance. Such policies could be implemented in other families and encouraged in the community to promote use and maintenance of heritage languages as family language policies have been reported to be highly effective in language maintenance [37]. However, for policies to be effective, parents will need to be great role models of use of heritage languages, only then it will be efficacious. Hence, the effort will need to be greater on parents' part in transmitting heritage languages to children.

Maintenance of heritage languages in the home domain is also determined by interlocutors' use of language with relatives, including grandparents. As relatives would mostly be from homeland India in this instance, it would impact exposure and transmission of heritage languages to the subse-

quent generations, particularly the second and third. The first generation of this pilot study did not have their grandparents residing in Australia, but all second generation did. While 50% of the second generation used their heritage languages with their grandparents, the other 50% used English. Whilst half of the cohort using heritage languages is encouraging and appreciated, the other half's lack of use would be of concern as grandparents are the greatest resource in heritage language transmission and maintenance [26]. The extent of concern increases with the fact that 50% of the second generation were born in India and this cohort had only been residing in Australia for 1-10 years. The results indicate that there is an urgent need to promote use of heritage languages in the home domain, particularly in the second generation, using existing resources such as grandparents, where possible, otherwise language shift may be imminent.

The study also enquired respondents' language use practices with other relatives; those older, of similar age and younger to them. Only 17% of the first generation had older relatives residing in Australia at the time of the investigation and although 67% of this cohort used Hindi to discuss a personal matter, all of them reverted to English to discuss an English genre. 53% of the first generation had relatives of

similar age group and those younger to them residing in Australia and the results showed that while 78% of this cohort used Indian heritage languages with the former, this percentage increased to 89 with the latter (Table 1). Relatives of the first generation, who may have mostly been born in India and their socialisation mostly taking place there, would be playing a significant role in the transmission and maintenance of heritage languages. However, while all second generation had their relatives residing in Australia, approximately 60% of them used heritage languages with older relatives. The propensity of use of heritage languages dipped to approximately 10% with other relatives. As relatives of similar and younger age groups would mostly be cousins of the second generation and with their primary socialisation mostly taking place in Australia, the high rate of use of English was probably somewhat expected. However, the low rate of use of heritage languages raises concerns for its use and exposure to the third and subsequent generations. The first generation would have to embrace opportunities for conversations in their heritage languages, with their relatives, so that the exposure and transmission to the subsequent generations is increased.

**Table 1.** Summary of language use with various interlocutors.

	Gen. 1			Gen. 2		
	Hindi	English	IRL	Hindi	English	IRL
Spouse (n=17)				n = 2		
At home: present	59	18	24		100	
At home: TV program	53	24	24		100	
Children (n=17) (first born/only child)				n= 2		
At home: relative moved home	24	71	6		100	
At home: TV program	18	76	6		100	
(Last born) (n=15)				n=2		
At home: relative moved home	13	87			100	
At home: channel 7 program	13	87			100	
Parents (n=6)				n=8		
At home: not feeling well	50	17	33	25	63	13
At home: channel 7	50	17	33	13	75	13
Siblings (eldest sibling) (n=7)				n=6		
At home: relative got married	43	29	29	14	86	
At home: TV program	29	43	29	14	86	
(youngest sibling) (n=7)				n=6		
At home: relative got married	43	29	29	14	86	
At home: TV program	29	43	29	14	86	

	Gen. 1			Gen. 2		
	Hindi	English	IRL	Hindi	English	IRL
Grandparents						n=8
At home: lunch				25	50	25
At home: channel 7 program				25	50	25
Older relatives (n=3)						n=8
At home: birthday party	67	33		25	38	38
At home: channel 7 program		100		25	38	38
Relatives of similar age (n=9)						n=8
At home: birthday party	56	22	22	12	88	
At home: channel 7 program	56	22	22	12	88	
Younger relatives (n=9)						n=8
At home: birthday party	67	11	22	12	88	
At home: channel 7 program	67	11	22		100	

\* Figures are in percentages and have been rounded off.

IRL: Indian Regional Language

Gen. 1- First generation, Gen. 2- Second generation

## 6. Conclusion

The primary purpose of the pilot study was to validate the research methods and the research tools for data collection. The data entry, analysis and interpretation of results confirmed the effectiveness and usefulness of the research tools and methods and their contribution to the main study. They also identified the omission of a few vital questions in the questionnaire and were added to the questionnaire for the main study. The pilot study also confirmed the value and significance of the overall study and its contribution to the Indian migrant community as well as the linguistic repertoire and landscape of Australia.

In addition, the pilot study generated some very significant results that provided a snippet of language use practices of the Indian migrant community in Sydney, Australia. The results showed that first-generation participants used Indian heritage languages to a large extent with certain interlocutors. According to Pauwels' (2016) classification of domains where L1 domains are those where use of heritage language exceeds 50%, the home domain is not entirely an L1 domain for either the first or second generation. However, results of this study show that certain interlocutors could be more L1 dominant in their conversations than being L2 dominant. For instance, the first generation are dominant L1 speakers in their roles as spouse, parents and siblings and contribute to the maintenance of Indian heritage languages while the other respondents are L2 dominant, as their use of English exceeded 50%. For the

second generation, respondents are only dominant L1 users with parents, grandparents and older relatives and maintenance of heritage languages would mostly be facilitated in this space. The other interlocutors, on the other hand, would be contributing more to language shift. Although a very small sample size, the second-generation married respondents' report of absolute use of English with their spouse and children could be very concerning to the Indian migrant community as quite similar trends could be expected in other Indian migrants. Future series of publications of the main study would be shedding more light on this and contributing more to the sociolinguistic body of knowledge of the language use practices of Indian migrants residing in Sydney, Australia.

Nevertheless, there are a few limitations of this study, that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size was quite small, particularly of the second generation, and so, only cautious generalisations can be made to the wider Indian migrant community in Sydney or Australia. Secondly, random sampling was not possible due to the extensive Indian migrant population in Sydney, Australia. That led to convenient and snowball sampling approaches being adopted.

Despite the limitations, the pilot study has contributed to the overall sociolinguistic body of knowledge and the Indian and other migrant communities in particular. It not only contributes to narrowing the gap in the limitation and almost absence of studies on the linguistic skills and repertoire of Indian migrants in Australia, but also informs the migrant communities and policy makers of the language use practices of the Indian migrant community and its im-

pact on the maintenance and shift of Indian heritage languages. This study would aid in shaping language and cultural policies both in the home front and at state and federal levels in Australia and abroad to embrace heritage languages and promote their use and maintenance. This will also aid in maintaining and enhancing the diverse linguistic landscape of Australia.

## Abbreviations

IRL Indian Regional Languages

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## Author Contributions

Ragni Prasad is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the outcome of this research work has been reported in this manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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## Biography

**Ragni Prasad** is a PhD candidate in Sociolinguistics at University of Wollongong, Australia. She has already submitted her dissertation. She has a Masters in Applied Linguistics from University of Southern Queensland and is an advocate of maintenance of heritage languages and culture in transnational, migrant contexts.

## Research Field

**Ragni Prasad:** Heritage language, language maintenance, bilingualism, multilingualism, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, language policies, language attrition.