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Language shift patterns amongst first-generation migrant communities in Australia: 2011–2021

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ABSTRACT

In this study we provide a comprehensive overview of first-generation migrants' language shift (LS) to English in Australia, as recorded by the 2021 National Census, and supported by a comparison with the 2011 Census data. Our results reveal a previously unreported reduction in the overall rate of LS from 2011 to 2021. However, the apparent finding is also misleading, as most migrant cohorts under investigation still recorded an increased LS rate during the time period in question. Furthermore, close inspection of first-generation migrant cohorts by size, specific sociodemographic, and geographical characteristics (i.e. gender, age, level of education, duration, and place of residence) confirms earlier findings that neither LS, nor much of the factor patterning associated with it, are evenly distributed across or within migrant communities. Of the investigated factors, relative duration of residence in Australia seems to show the most reliable relationship with LS across cohorts. We otherwise argue that the identified LS heterogeneity is a result of complex and varying interactions between different factors, including community-specific language attitudes, practices, exogamy, and (pre-) migration experiences. Importantly, not only is LS not always unidirectional over time in favour of English, the rate of change in LS can also vary greatly between migrant communities.

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Multilingualism; migration; language maintenance; language shift; community languages

1. Introduction

In 2021, over 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and more than 200 non-Indigenous "community languages", were identified in Australia's National Census as being spoken in the country (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a, 2022).[1] "Community language" (CL) is a term used since the 1970s to describe languages other than Aboriginal languages or English, brought to the country by different migrant communities (Clyne, 1991, p. 3). Australia has always been highly multilingual, and this pattern has continued since European settlement began in 1788, with varying degrees of acceptance at different

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[1]We do not consider further here census results for Australia's many Indigenous languages; they are deserving of their own dedicated analysis.

points in the nation's history. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Australia adopted an increasingly narrow Anglophone identity and became "the province of the monolingual English speaker" (Clyne, 1991, p. 12) with an emphasis on rapid Anglocentric assimilation which continued well into the 1970s and beyond (Hajek & Slaughter, 2014). Since that time, successive governments have adopted policies in favour of multiculturalism and cultural and linguistic diversity (Clyne, 1991; Hajek et al., 2022). However, despite those policies and Australia not having an official language, English remains firmly entrenched as the country's "national language" (Kipp et al., 1995).

Given the dominance of English in Australia, it is not surprising that CL-speaking migrants are reported to undergo a shift in favour of it. Language shift (LS) "involves the gradual replacement of one's main language or languages, often labelled L1, by another language, usually referred to as L2, in all spheres of usage" (Pauwels, 2016, p. 18). However, LS also varies, for instance, across language communities and different generations of the same community. The direct counter-side of LS is language maintenance (LM) and understanding LS has strong implications for LM practices as we may gain insights that can help to directly inform practical approaches to support linguistic and cultural diversity and maintenance and the many benefits these are known to bring to society (see e.g. Clyne, 2005).

The results of this study will be of interest to other scholars and policy makers as well as to different migrant communities. It is also intended to extend the existing Australian corpus of census-based LS research, begun in the 1980s, into the future by adding a new decade of data analysis (2011–2021). To allow for comparison of recent trends over time, we follow as much as possible the methodological approach, including choice of sociodemographic factors (e.g. age, gender) for analysis, utilized by Karidakis and Arunachalam (2016), who focussed on understanding LS in Australia through an analysis of the 2011 National Census data, while also making 10-year comparisons with the 2001 Census data. Our study builds on this and other earlier research by providing more comprehensive data as well as an updated analysis, allowing for new observations to be made. This approach also allows us to test the currency of some previously made observations, such as a long-term overall trend of progressively increasing LS with each new Australian census since 1986 (e.g. Clyne, 2005, p. 69; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016; Kipp, 2007, p. 24).

The focus of this study is a detailed analysis of LS to English among first-generation migrants in Australia today. To achieve this, we first contextualize our work by providing an overview of the existing literature referred to and the sociolinguistic framework applied (§2), as well as of past and more recent migration patterns to Australia (§3). This is followed by an explanation of our method and materials and their limitations (§4). Following Clyne (2005), Zhang et al. (2023) and others, to assist the reader in better understanding the census data provided, we present and interpret the data in the results section while also discussing relevant findings at the same time (§5). We begin with an overview of the most widely spoken CLs, before turning our attention to the migrant populations in our dataset, and related LS. We then present and discuss cross-tabulated LS results for 2021 by gender, age, duration of residence, level of education, and location of residency. We also include a comparison with the 2011 Census results, to identify possible trends over time. Finally, we discuss the most significant findings about the potential influence of the individual factors we explore and their

relationship with LS (§6) and point to potential future research as well as policy implications (§7).

2. Literature review and sociolinguistic framework

There is a substantial and established body of research aimed at understanding the sociodemographic characteristics and vitality of CLs through the analysis of available census data. While work in this field has been conducted around the world (cf. Pauwels, 2016), Australian researchers have long been at the forefront (Clyne, 1982, 1991, 2003, 2005; Clyne & Kipp, 1995, 1999, 2006), with a number of studies also specifically analyzing LS (e.g. Clyne & Kipp, 1997a, 1997b; Forrest et al., 2020; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016; Kipp, 2007; Zhang et al., 2023).

However, a comprehensive LS analysis of the 2021 Australian Census data, including a comparison with equivalent 2011 data, has yet to be conducted. We aim to address that gap with this study. The analysis included here will allow us to better understand current LS patterns in Australia across different communities and how they may have developed over recent time.

Some scholars have posited a set of specific factors affecting LM and LS (Kloss, 1966), whose impact has been tested and sometimes challenged by others (see Pauwels, 2016 for a full discussion) pointing to the heterogeneous experience of migrant cohorts. Pauwels (2016, 2019) offers a critical yet valuable assessment of sociolinguistic frameworks commonly used to investigate language shift, such as the "sociology of language" and "linguistic demography". This study draws on both of these frameworks, aligning with previous Australian census research by Clyne and others, to analyze language shift trends. The former approach centres on "domain-specific language use patterns" (Pauwels, 2019, p. 240). Given the nature of our data, this study specifically examines language use within the home domain for the migrant communities under investigation. Complementing this, we also adopt a "linguistic demography" approach, which analyzes LS at a macro level using census data. Specifically, we utilize this framework's established approach of cross-tabulating LS data by gender, age, duration of residence, education, spatial distribution, and urban/rural residence (Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016; see also Clyne, 2005; de Vries & Vallee, 1980). However, many studies have also identified other factors as relevant in this context; for example, a CL's similarity to English, the colonial context of the country of birth, religion (Clyne, 2005), language ideology and identity (e.g. Borland, 2006; Et-Bozkurt & Yağmur, 2022; Romanowski, 2022), gender roles (Pauwels, 2016), endogamy and exogamy (Arunachalam & Karidakis, 2016), intergenerational language transmission (e.g. Borland, 2006), and factors in an individual's lifecycle, such as retirement (Pauwels, 2016). Although we are unable to retrieve data for some of these identified factors using our selected methodology (e.g. language ideology), we also refer to them, as previous scholars have, when interpreting the results of our census data analysis.

3. Migration to Australia – past and present

Until the mid-1970s, non-English-speaking migrants to Australia were overwhelmingly European in origin and typically relocated permanently for reasons of work or family reunion. The demise of the so-called "White Australia Policy" (1901–1973), which was

not only assimilationist, but also aimed to restrict non-British migration as much as possible to those of European descent, led to an increasing shift and expansion in the national origins of migrants, especially from Asia. This was seen first with the large-scale settlement of post-war refugees from Vietnam in the 1970s (Thomas, 2005), and was then followed by increasing migration from many other parts of Asia, including, for instance, China, as that nation opened to the world in the 1980s and 1990s (Gao, 2022).

Migrants or visitors recorded in more recent Australian censuses have arrived from a much broader range of countries, while exhibiting both greater mobility and a wider range of motivations (Clyne, 1991). Australia's most recent migrant streams can be broadly categorized into the following groups: (a) temporary visitors (short-term workers and tourists); (b) international students; and (c) individuals who plan to permanently reside in the country under Australia's permanent migration (e.g. for work or family reunion), and humanitarian programmes.

Between 2011 and 2021, migrant streams changed significantly in terms of relative numbers, internal patterning, as well as country of origin. This was particularly led by increasing numbers of international students and temporary workers arriving in Australia, as well as by changes in the national origins of refugees and other humanitarian settlers (Guan et al., 2024).

4. Method and materials

We used a representative, quantitative methodology to identify LS in favour of English amongst first-generation migrant groups in Australia in 2021 and over the 2011–2021 period, using associated Australian census data. Previous studies have relied on a person's country of birth, as a proxy to calculate LS, as data about a person's first language are not collected by the Australian census instrument. We follow the established methodology of identifying first-generation migrants by their country of birth and calculating LS as the percentage of people who reported using only English at home out of all people from the same country of birth (e.g. Clyne, 2005, p. 67; Clyne & Kipp, 1997b, 1997a, 2006, p. 11; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016; Kipp, 2007, p. 20):

$$\frac{\textit{The population of a country of birth using only English at home}}{\textit{The whole population of a country of birth}} \; x\; 100 = \textit{LS}\ (\%)$$

One small change in the associated census question, which does not affect the results, was that in 2021, "speak" was changed to "use" to accommodate sign languages: "Does the person use a language other than English *at home*?" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021b).

We then cross-tabulated and segmented data by speaker characteristics (gender, age, duration of residence, level of education), and context (place of residence), to explore how sociodemographic factors might correlate with LS patterns (cf. Pauwels, 2005, p. 41). We also included a dynamic measure to assess the extent of relative acceleration or deceleration in the rate of LS over time – which we then consider at various points in the presentation and discussion of results.

As country of birth is used as an indicator for people whose first language is a CL, we excluded countries of birth where more than 85% of the population reported using only English at home in the Australian 2021 Census, given these cohorts' first language is

known to be predominantly English (i.e. Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, the United States of America, and Wales). Following Karidakis and Arunachalam (2016), we also excluded from the 2021 dataset, birth-countries with total populations in Australia below 10,000 (e.g. Timor-Leste, Uruguay, Denmark), those not stating their country of birth (1,358,658 people), or inadequately describing it (14,355) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). This approach resulted in the inclusion of 12 additional migrant cohorts (e.g. Laos, El Salvador, Israel) since 2011 with populations over 10,000, which were not included in Karidakis and Arunachalam's (2016) study. As a result, a total of 69 countries of birth are included in our dataset. The addition of new cohorts in 2021 also resulted in new regional totals which did not allow for a direct comparison between our tables and those of Karidakis and Arunachalam (2016). We therefore re-issued 2011 LS data based on the 2021 cohorts, which enabled us to conduct a new comparative analysis of census data over a 10-year period from 2011 to 2021.

Our methodology has some limitations due to the approach taken by the Australian census to collecting language data. Some linguists have, for instance, questioned the validity of the self-reported nature of census data (de Vries & Vallee, 1980, p. 20). Furthermore, as the census question focuses on language used at home, our methodology is likely to overestimate LS, by failing to measure the use of CLs outside the home domain (cf. Pauwels, 2016, p. 38). However, the "home domain" is known to be "the most crucial in terms of LM", as it is "least subjected to scrutiny and regulatory frameworks or institutional policies operating in society" (Pauwels, 2016, p. 91), which impact on language use outside the home (cf. Fishman, 1965, p. 76). Furthermore, the home environment is where the second generation of migrants are primarily exposed to a CL (Fishman, 2012; Pauwels, 2016). As a result, the lack of language use at home is likely to negatively affect intergenerational language transmission. Accordingly, LS at home serves as a reliable indicator for LM trends.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Community languages in Australia 2011–2021

In 2021, 5,663,703 people, or 22.3% of Australia's entire population (25,422,788), reported using a CL at home. This reflects a substantial 4.1% increase since 2011 (18.2%) and the greatest expansion in the proportion of people using a CL at home in any 10-year period since 1986. Table 1, which lists the 25 most widely used CLs in 2011–2021, reveals how major CL cohorts have shifted, indirectly reflecting changing migration trends and different LS patterns in Australia's ethnolinguistic make-up.

In the first instance, while Australia's overall population increased by 18.2% over the decade (from 21,507,717 in 2011), the size of the largest language communities increased at a much greater rate (+42.9% overall). Specifically, as seen in Table 1, the minimum population for inclusion involved fewer than 38,000 speakers in 2011 (i.e. Dutch), while the threshold increased by 78.7% to more than 66,000 speakers in 2021 (i.e. Thai).

Secondly, by 2021, 19 (76%) of the 25 mostly commonly used CLs at home were non-European in origin, an increase from only 12 (52%) in 2011. All nine newly listed CLs in 2016 and 2021 are from the wider Asia-Pacific region (including Portuguese, mostly

Table 1 The 25 most widely spoken community languages (CLs) in Australian homes in 2011, 2016, and 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a), showing the percentage change in users from 2011 to 2021

Rank	CLs	2011 number of speakers	CLs	2016 number of speakers	CLs	2021 number of users	Change 2011 to 2021 (in %)
1	Mandarin	336,410	Mandarin	596,713	Mandarin	685,274	103.7
2	Italian	299,833	Arabic	321,723	Arabic	367,159	27.9
3	Arabic	287,175	Cantonese	280,947	Vietnamese	320,758	37.4
4	Cantonese	263,674	Vietnamese	277,405	Cantonese	295,281	12.0
5	Greek	252,218	Italian	271,598	Punjabi	239,033	235.6
6	Vietnamese	233,390	Greek	237,586	Greek	229,643	−9.0
7	Spanish	117,498	Hindi	159,653	Italian	228,042	−23.9
8	Hindi	111,351	Spanish	140,818	Hindi	197,132	77.0
9	Tagalog	81,457	**Punjabi***	132,490	Spanish	171,370	45.8
10	German	80,371	Tagalog	111,277	Nepali	133,068	390.1
11	Korean	79,786	Korean	108,999	Tagalog	131,195	61.1
12	Punjabi	71,231	German	79,357	Korean	115,531	44.8
13	Macedonian	68,848	Tamil	73,162	Urdu	111,873	203.7
14	Croatian	61,547	Filipino	71,221	Tamil	95,404	90.2
15	Turkish	59,623	French	70,872	Filipino	90,853	64.0
16	French	57,739	**Urdu***	69,300	Sinhalese	85,869	78.2
17	Indonesian	55,870	Indonesian	67,894	**Gujarati***	81,334	137.7
18	Filipino	55,401	**Macedonian‡**	66,020	**Malayalam***	78,738	213.6
19	**Serbian‡**	55,114	Sinhalese	64,606	Indonesian	73,179	31.0
20	**Polish‡**	50,696	**Nepali***	62,004	Persian[1]	72,498	109.8
21	Tamil	50,152	**Turkish‡**	58,354	French	70,740	22.5
22	Sinhalese	48,192	**Persian[1]***	58,315	German	70,247	−12.6
23	**Russian‡**	44,059	**Croatian‡**	56,888	**Bengali***	70,116	96.7
24	Japanese	43,691	**Japanese‡**	55,969	**Portuguese***	67,327	101.9
25	**Dutch‡**	37,248	**Thai***	55,446	Thai	66,576	81.5

Notes: [1]Persian excluding Dari.
*New entry in the top 25 for that year; ‡ entry no longer in the top 25 in 2021.

from Brazil in Latin America).[2] Six of these are from the Indian sub-continent (e.g. Urdu, Punjabi, Nepali). Chinese (Mandarin), already the most widely spoken CL in 2011, shows by far the largest increase in raw numbers (+348,864), dwarfing increases for all other languages in the table. However, Nepali shows the greatest relative growth over the decade (+390.1%).

In contrast, the size of most large European language communities is seen to have decreased over the decade. While seven of them (e.g. Croatian and Dutch) were still visible in the 2011 data column, they have disappeared in the intervening period. However, two languages traditionally associated with Europe, French and Spanish, show significant growth since 2011 – a reflection of increasing migration from France and French-speaking Africa in the first instance, and from Spanish-speaking Latin America in the second.

5.2 First-generation migrant population changes, and language shift 2011–2021

Table 2 shows absolute first-generation migrant population figures ranked in order of the absolute 2021 Census population size (column 3). It also includes an immediate overview

[2]In the Australian sociopolitical context, all of the Americas (North and South) are considered to be part of the Pacific, and hence the wider Asia-Pacific.

Table 2 Australia's first-generation migrants' countries of birth (COBs) by population size in 2021. The table also includes 2011–2021 population and ranking change, the percentage using English only at home in 2021 (LS), and the English language shift change from 2011 to 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a)

Ranking	Country of birth (COB)	2021 population	Difference in absolute population 2011–2021	Difference in population ranking 2011–2021	2021 percentage of COB using English only at home (LS)	Percentage difference of COB using "English only" at home (LS changes) 2011–2021
1	India	673,352	377,990	+1	13.4%	**−7.9%**
2	China	549,618	230,649	−1	3.4%	*0.1%*
3	Philippines	293,892	122,659	+2	25.0%	*2.4%*
4	Vietnam	257,997	72,958	0	5.2%	*2.0%*
5	South Africa	189,207	43,524	+1	73.6%	−1.2%
6	Malaysia	165,616	49,420	+1	32.8%	*0.2%*
7	Italy	163,326	−22,076	−4	25.8%	***8.0%***
8	Sri Lanka	131,904	45,492	+2	21.8%	**−4.9%**
9	Nepal	122,506	97,871	+30	3.1%	−0.7%
10	Korea, Republic of (South)	102,092	27,554	+4	10.3%	*1.0%*
11	Germany	101,255	−6,747	−3	59.5%	***6.8%***
12	Hong Kong (SAR of China)	100,148	25,193	+1	15.3%	*2.8%*
13	Iraq	92,922	44,753	+7	3.5%	*0.5%*
14	Greece	92,314	−7,624	−5	10.8%	*3.4%*
15	Pakistan	89,633	59,412	+14	7.7%	−2.5%
16	Lebanon	87,340	10,890	−5	10.5%	*3.0%*
17	Indonesia	87,075	23,916	−2	20.7%	***4.4%***
18	Thailand	83,779	38,315	+3	21.0%	*2.7%*
19	Iran	70,899	36,445	+7	8.2%	*0.8%*
20	Fiji	68,947	11,969	−4	25.7%	*2.5%*
21	Netherlands	66,481	−9,565	−9	71.2%	***7.5%***
22	Singapore	61,056	12,409	−3	54.5%	***6.2%***
23	Afghanistan	59,797	31,199	+8	2.8%	*0.8%*
24	Bangladesh	51,491	23,683	+9	6.8%	*1.4%*
25	Taiwan	49,511	20,884	+5	7.5%	*1.9%*
26	Brazil	46,720	32,212	+24	15.1%	−1.0%
27	Poland	45,884	−2,793	−9	28.8%	***4.9%***
28	Japan	45,267	9,890	−3	20.3%	*2.8%*
29	Croatia	43,302	−5,526	−12	23.8%	***6.2%***
30	Egypt	43,213	6,681	−6	21.6%	*1.4%*
31	North Macedonia	41,786	1,564	−8	11.1%	***4.2%***
32	Zimbabwe	39,714	9,463	−4	61.7%	**−5.3%**
33	Myanmar	39,171	17,411	+8	11.6%	**−7.5%**
34	Cambodia	39,043	10,714	−2	8.7%	*2.9%*
35	Turkey	38,568	5,724	−8	12.1%	***4.0%***
36	France	36,019	11,344	+2	34.1%	*3.0%*
37	Malta	35,413	−5,861	−15	49.0%	***8.3%***
38	Colombia	35,033	23,716	+19	10.7%	−0.9%
39	Papua New Guinea	29,984	3,197	−5	76.9%	*0.5%*
40	Chile	29,860	4,924	−3	19.0%	***4.7%***
41	Syria[a]	29,096	20,705	+24	3.2%	−2.3%
42	Samoa	28,107	9,015	+2	15.2%	*2.0%*
43	Bosnia and Herzegovina	26,171	489	−8	11.7%	***5.8%***
44	Mauritius	25,981	2,702	−4	28.5%	***4.1%***
45	Serbia	25,454	5,187	−3	15.6%	***4.6%***
46	Russian Federation	23,864	5,587	0	18.6%	***4.9%***

(*Continued*)

Table 2 Continued.

Ranking	Country of birth (COB)	2021 population	Difference in absolute population 2011–2021	Difference in population ranking 2011–2021	2021 percentage of COB using English only at home (LS)	Percentage difference of COB using "English only" at home (LS changes) 2011–2021
47	Kenya	22,348	8,517	+6	35.5%	**−6.4%**
48	South Eastern Europe, nfd[a]	19,332	−5,739	−12	30.3%	*3.9%*
49	Argentina	17,977	5,992	+6	20.2%	*1.2%*
50	Spain	17,281	4,225	+4	29.0%	*2.4%*
51	Portugal	17,050	1,722	−2	28.1%	***6.2%***
52	Cyprus	16,737	−1,333	−5	20.2%	***5.3%***
53	Hungary	16,655	−2,436	−8	41.8%	***5.9%***
54	Sudan	16,609	−2,761	−11	10.2%	***4.5%***
55	Romania	15,268	1,218	−4	27.1%	***6.8%***
56	Austria	14,403	−2,607	−8	63.9%	***8.1%***
57	Ethiopia[a]	14,092	5,640	+6	12.1%	−1.4%
58	Ukraine	14,055	65	−6	19.2%	***5.6%***
59	United Arab Emirates[a]	13,063	8,165	+8	44.1%	−2.1%
60	Switzerland	13,017	1,075	−4	50.6%	***6.4%***
61	Nigeria[a]	12,883	8,364	+7	41.0%	−0.4%
62	Tonga[a]	12,260	3,051	0	15.4%	*1.6%*
63	Bhutan[a]	12,002	9,547	+6	3.5%	*2.4%*
64	Saudi Arabia	11,684	1,167	−6	16.2%	***6.2%***
65	Peru[a]	11,531	3,091	−1	16.9%	***4.0%***
66	Israel[a]	11,035	1,807	−5	33.1%	*2.2%*
67	Laos[a]	10,948	1,016	−8	13.5%	***4.8%***
68	Sweden[a]	10,847	2,494	−2	44.9%	*3.6%*
69	El Salvador[a]	10,119	468	−9	14.0%	***5.5%***
	Total	**4,891,004**	**1,580,266**		**20.4%**	**−1.5%**

Notes: LS=Percentage of country-of-birth population using English only at home. For the final column (LS changes): values in ***bold italics*** represent a significant increase (≥4%); values in *italics* represent any increase; values in **bold** represent a significant reduction (≥4%). Plain text values represent a smaller reduction. Plain italics represent an increase less than 4%.

[a]Countries that were not included in Karidakis and Arunachalam's paper (2016), as the population increased to over 10,000 in the 2021 Census.

to highlight the great diversity in results across the entire cohort of 69 nations with respect to: (a) change in population numbers over the decade (column 4); (b) any shift in ranking over time (column 5); (c) LS as measured by use of English only at home (column 6); and (d) any percentage difference in the use of English at home 2011–2021 (column 7).

First-generation migrants from CL-speaking countries of birth in 2021 were predominantly from Asia, with eight out of the 10 largest migrant populations being born in a country from that region. Overall, the largest number of first-generation migrants were born in India, having overtaken China since 2011, with the Philippines rising to third position.

The substantial expansion in migration from India is primarily the result of exponential growth in the number of international students arriving in Australia, coupled with increasing skilled migrant arrivals (Newton et al., 2022). When comparing the difference in population size ranking between 2011 and 2021, Nepal recorded the biggest jump, climbing 30 places with the fourth largest absolute population increase (by 97,871) from a relatively low base. The large-scale arrival of Nepalese migrants to Australia is a relatively new trend. While Nepalese emigration has historically targeted India, the Middle East and Malaysia, the increasing number arriving in Australia (and other Western nations) is

primarily due to the presence of better legal protections and access to employment and education (Adhikari et al., 2023).

Other countries that rose significantly in the table ranking from 2011 to 2021 are also located in the wider Asia-Pacific: Brazil (+24 places), Syria (+24), Colombia (+19), and Pakistan (+14), amongst others. Brazil and Columbia have both, in recent years, been amongst the top five source countries (along with China, India and Nepal) for international students in Australia (Kath & Del Río, 2022). Syrian migrants to Australia, on the other hand, have arrived primarily as refugees as a result of conflict in the Middle East. Under Australia's Humanitarian programme, people displaced by conflicts in Syria and Iraq were granted an additional 12,000 places in 2015 and in 2017, leading to a 246.7% increase in the number of Syrian-born people in Australia between 2011 and 2021.

By way of contrast, the greatest population decrease by headcount was recorded by first-generation migrants from Europe, particularly those born in Italy (−22,076), the Netherlands (−9,565), and Greece (−7,624). However, the greatest relative reduction in population ranking from 2011 to 2021 was recorded by Southern and South-Eastern European migrants (e.g. Malta and Croatia, falling 15 and 12 places respectively). The decline reflects these cohorts' ageing demographic profiles, given they mostly arrived in Australia as part of the post-WW2 mass migration from Europe which ended by the early 1970s.

5.2.1 English language shift

The data presented in Table 2 demonstrate great heterogeneity in LS across migrant cohorts at the time of the census, and across the 10-year period in question, confirming earlier findings (e.g. Forrest et al., 2020; Pauwels, 2016, p. 100). In 2021, LS ranged from 2.8% (Afghanistan) to 76.9% (Papua New Guinea) and is reflective of diverse (pre-)migration patterns, and within-group characteristics, some of which we explore below. Generally, those born in Oceania, North-West Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa show higher than average LS rates. Conversely, residents born in the Middle East, North-East Asia, and South and Central America show much lower use of English only. That said, there can also be notable variation within regions that shows the need to pay attention to both regional and country-specific trends.

While India, China, and the Philippines recorded the largest first-generation migrant populations in Australia, speakers from these countries also exhibited very different LS patterns (13.4%, 3.4%, and 25% respectively). This variation highlights the fact that first-generation population size is not in itself a predictor of relative LS. Instead, other, often country-specific, factors are typically at play and need to be identified to account for patterning.

The higher rate of LS amongst migrants born in India (13.4%), for instance, when compared to those born in China (3.4%), is undoubtedly due in part to India's "colonial legacy and linguistic diversity" (Azam et al., 2013, p. 335), which have resulted in a greater presence of English in India with ongoing socioeconomic and political importance. Despite this, there appears to be no simple linear trajectory of LS for those born in India in the Australian context, as will be seen in other evidence discussed below with respect to an observed reduction in LS over time (see column 7) and age-related differences.

LM appears particularly strong amongst China-born migrants. Some scholars have identified the growing importance of Mandarin globally to be one catalyst for the acquisition and maintenance of the language amongst the Chinese diaspora around the world

(Curdt-Christiansen & Hancock, 2014; Wang & Li, 2024). This goes hand-in-hand with ideological beliefs about the language as a symbol of identity, as an important tie in family relations, and as the vehicle of economic betterment (Martin et al., 2023), which are common drivers of LM more generally (Borland, 2006; Et-Bozkurt & Yağmur, 2022; Romanowski, 2022).

For ease of comparison and discussion, Table 3 presents the 10 countries of birth with the highest (left) and lowest (right) rates of LS. The highest use of English at home is evident amongst migrants born in former British colonies where English has long played an important role in complex multilingual settings: Papua New Guinea (76.9%), South Africa (73.6%), followed somewhat further back by Zimbabwe (61.7%), and Singapore (54.5%). In the case of Papua New Guinea, on the one hand, and the two African nations (South Africa and Zimbabwe) on the other, high LS rates reflect sizable migration to Australia in the 1970s and 1980s of L1 English-speakers of Australian and British descent respectively. With respect to Singapore-born migrants, the high LS rate is the result of an ongoing shift in favour of English (and in part to Mandarin Chinese) in Singapore itself, which has been encouraged by longstanding official government policy (Cavallaro & Chin, 2014). The success of such a policy fosters, and is in turn supported by, the central role that English plays in Singapore in official and institutional settings as well as in the working, social, and media life of the country (Tupas & Weninger, 2022, p. 347).

Amongst the high-shifting cohorts, we otherwise see several European countries which in most cases were major sources of post-WW2 migration to Australia. Specifically, we note the Netherlands (71.2%), Austria (63.9%), Germany (59.5%), Switzerland (50.6%), and the former British colony of Malta (49%), where exposure to English is historically well-established. With respect to the first four cited European nations, along with Sweden, there are a number of shared factors at play (see below for more detail), including the close relationship between English and their native Germanic languages (Clyne et al., 2015).

As can be seen on the right side of Table 3, the lowest rates of LS were recorded amongst Asian migrant communities, some of which are well-established in Australia (i.e. China 3.4%, and Vietnam 5.2%), or only more recently arrived, particularly through refugee resettlement (i.e. Afghanistan 2.8%, Syria 3.2%, and Iraq 3.5%). For most of these migrant communities, social capital or "the strong bonds in ethnic groups such as networks, solidarity ties and tight relationships" (Tran, 2021, p. 56) potentially functions as a mechanism for cultural and linguistic preservation (cf. Zhou, 2005). At the same time, rapidly expanding populations for each of these cohorts in Australia (see difference in absolute population), and particularly in the last 10–20 years, have also reduced the rate of LS by supporting CL use and LM in these communities.

5.2.2 2011–2021 comparison

Looking at the last column of Table 2, and considering the dominant role of English in Australia, we note a reduction (−1.5%) in the overall rate of LS trend across cohorts since 2011. This is somewhat unexpected as it counters longstanding reports of accelerating LS over time in Australia (e.g. Clyne, 2005, p. 69; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016; Kipp, 2007, p. 24). This decline can be attributed to the rapid growth of a few specific cohorts, particularly the large Indian-born population, which has influenced the overall trend. However, closer inspection shows the overall result to be somewhat misleading,

Table 3 Australia's top 10 first-generation migrant populations by highest (left) and lowest (right) percentage speaking English only at home (LS) in 2021, including absolute populations, population changes from 2011 to 2021, and population ranking changes from 2011 to 2021 by country of birth (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a)

By highest English language shift					By lowest English language shift				
Country of birth	2021 population	Population change 2011–2021	Rank change 2011–2021	2021% using English only (LS)	Country of birth	2021 population	Population change 2011–2021	Rank change 2011–2021	2021% using English only (LS)
Papua New Guinea	29,984	+3,197	−5	76.9%	Afghanistan	59,797	+31,199	+8	2.8%
South Africa	189,207	+43,524	+1	73.6%	Nepal	122,506	+97,871	+30	3.1%
Netherlands	66,481	−9,565	−9	71.2%	Syria[a]	29,096	+20,705	+24	3.2%
Austria	14,403	−2,607	−8	63.9%	China	549,618	+230,649	−1	3.4%
Zimbabwe	39,714	+9,463	−4	61.7%	Iraq	92,922	+44,753	+7	3.5%
Germany	101,255	−6,747	−3	59.5%	Bhutan[a]	12,002	+9,467	+6	3.5%
Singapore	61,056	+12,409	−3	54.5%	Vietnam	257,997	+72,958	0	5.2%
Switzerland	13,017	+1,075	−4	50.6%	Bangladesh	51,491	+23,683	+9	6.8%
Malta	35,413	−5,861	−15	49.0%	Taiwan	49,511	+20,884	+5	7.5%
Sweden[a]	10,847	+2,494	−2	44.9%	Pakistan	89,633	+59,412	+14	7.7%

Note: LS=Percentage of country-of-birth population using English only at home.
[a]Countries not included in Karidakis and Arunachalam's (2016) paper, as their population in Australia has since grown to over 10,000.

as most communities (56/69) under investigation recorded an increase in the rate of LS over time.

For ease of comparison, Table 4 re-presents some of the data already given in Table 2 by specifically reporting on the 10 highest (left) and lowest (right) proportional changes in LS by country of birth from 2011 to 2021, to capture the most dynamic changes in the direction and relative acceleration or otherwise of LS over time.

On the left side, in column 6 of Table 4, we can see a clear acceleration in the rate of LS over the decade in question, with migrant populations from eight European countries recording the greatest increases over time (e.g. +8.3% in the case of Malta). Most of these cohorts (e.g. Malta, Austria, Italy, Netherlands, Germany, and Croatia) also recorded a decrease in population size, which reflects the previously noted ageing and loss of CL-speakers in these post-WW2 migrant communities. At the same time, we also note significant variation in the overall LS among these European origin cohorts, with Croatia (23.8%) and Italy (25.8%) recording a much lower shift rate in 2021, when compared, for example, to Austria (63.9%), or the Netherlands (71.2%).

The particularly high, and now also accelerating levels of LS for Dutch migrants in Australia, has long been noted (e.g. Clyne & Pauwels, 2014). Among the many explanations for this pattern (see also above) is a desire by Dutch migrants to assimilate and to be seen as "model migrants" (Clyne & Pauwels, 2014, p. 859). According to Smolicz's (1981) core value theory, cited by Clyne (2005) and others in this particular case, cultures which include language as essential to their speakers' identity are better at LM than those in which language is more peripheral. For Dutch migrants, identifying as "being Dutch" does not necessitate the use of the language. Pauwels (1986) found that Dutch parents in Australia placed more emphasis on passing Dutch values rather than language on to their offspring. For Italian migrants, on the other hand, the much lower (25.8%), albeit also accelerating, rate of LS (+8.0%) can be linked in part to the lack of English language proficiency among many older migrants in that community, as well as to the language's perceived social status and refined culture, which give the language broader social standing, and in turn supports LM (Hajek, 2000; Lo Bianco & Aliani, 2013; Macaro, 2010).

The right-hand side of Table 4 displays the 10 migrant populations who recorded the greatest reduction in the rate of LS from 2011 to 2021 (seen in negative figures), pointing to increased CL use at home. These cohorts are all from South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and have also recorded an increase in absolute population numbers in that period. However, the proportional rate of exclusive use of English in the home differs greatly across the 10 countries – ranging from only 3.2% for the Syria-born cohort, to 73.6% for those born in South Africa, reflecting very different migration and linguistic profiles. In the case of India, as already noted, the recent expansion in migration has added large numbers of speakers of a range of Indian languages (see Table 1), resulting in a very substantial fall in the use of English at home (−7.9%) for this cohort. However, in the case of Myanmar, the almost equal fall (−7.5%) is due to the rapid expansion in the community driven by significant refugee resettlement in Australia since 2011.

5.3 By gender

In the Australian census, out of the 25.4 million people surveyed, 50.7% identified as female and 49.3% as male. Gender has been identified as an important variable in LM

Table 4 Australia's top 10 first-generation migrant populations by largest increase (left) and decline (right) in the percentage speaking English only at home (LS) from 2011 to 2021. Also including absolute population, population change from 2011 to 2021, population ranking change from 2011 to 2021, and LS in 2021, by country of birth (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a)

By highest English language shift increase						By largest English language shift decline					
Country of birth	2021 population	Difference in absolute population 2011–2021	Difference in ranking 2011–2021	2021% using English only at home	Difference in % using "English only" 2011–2021	Country of birth	2021 population	Difference in absolute population 2011–2021	Difference in ranking 2011–2021	2021% using English only at home	Difference in % using "English only" 2011–2021
Malta	35,413	−5,861	−15	49.0%	+8.3%	India	673,352	+377,990	+1	13.4%	−7.9%
Austria	14,403	−2,607	−8	63.9%	+8.1%	Myanmar	39,171	+17,411	+8	11.6%	−7.5%
Italy	163,326	−22,076	−4	25.8%	+8.0%	Kenya	22,348	+8,517	+6	35.5%	−6.4%
Netherlands	66,481	−9,565	−9	71.2%	+7.5%	Zimbabwe	39,714	+9,463	−4	61.7%	−5.3%
Romania	15,268	+1,218	−4	27.1%	+6.8%	Sri Lanka	131,904	+45,492	+2	21.8%	−4.9%
Germany	101,255	−6,747	−3	59.5%	+6.8%	Pakistan	89,633	+59,412	+14	7.7%	−2.5%
Switzerland	13,017	+1,075	−4	50.6%	+6.4%	Syria[a]	29,096	+20,705	+24	3.2%	−2.3%
Croatia	43,302	−5,526	−12	23.8%	+6.2%	U.A.E.[a]	13,063	+8,165	+8	44.1%	−2.1%
Saudi Arabia	11,684	+1,167	−6	16.2%	+6.2%	Ethiopia[a]	14,092	+5,640	+6	12.1%	−1.4%
Singapore	61,056	+12,409	−3	54.5%	+6.2%	South Africa	189,207	+43,524	+1	73.6%	−1.2%

Note: LS=English language shift (change in the percentage of a country-of-birth population using English only at home).
[a]Countries not included in Karidakis and Arunachalam's (2016) paper, as their population in Australia has since grown to over 10,000.

and LS studies as it is known to influence language use and transmission (Clyne, 2005; Winter & Pauwels, 2005; Yağmur & Van De Vijver, 2022). Table 5 displays the gender comparison in 2021 and over a 10-year period from 2011 to 2021, organized by geographical region, for all 69 cohorts included in our dataset.

A positive LS difference between males and females (see column 5) indicates that more men in a cohort have shifted to using English only at home (LS) than females. In contrast, a negative difference between males and females indicates the opposite, with males more likely to use a CL at home than females. Overall, when counting migrant groups by country of birth in Table 5, more migrant groups recorded greater male-led LS (57 countries of birth) than greater female-led LS (11), with only the Hong Kong-born population showing no difference. However, when looking at the overall population totals, we find a relatively small difference between male (20.9%) and female (19.9%) populations' overall LS.

As detailed in Table 6, males born in some European countries are much more likely than females to shift to using English only at home, with males from Italy (11.2% difference) and Sweden (10.8%) showing the greatest gender effect.

The gender trend is different elsewhere, as is evident in Table 7. Females from Asian countries are slightly more likely to shift to English compared to their male counterparts, with some variability across countries, e.g. Philippines (−6.3%), Korea (−2.1%), and Indonesia (−1.9%).

When comparing the data in Tables 6 and 7, we see that the relative gender difference is much greater when male-led than when female-led. The differences between Tables 6 and 7 with respect to gendered LS and regional and national origin can generally be accounted for by time of migration (see below) and by relative patterns of exogamy, i.e. marriage outside of one's own community (cf. Clyne, 2005). Among more recently established cohorts, it is known for instance that there is a much higher rate of exogamy amongst Filipino women than men, which could explain a greater shift to English amongst the former (Arunachalam & Karidakis, 2016). There is also a much higher rate of female, compared to male, exogamy amongst those born in Korea and Indonesia, while greater rates of specifically male exogamy are characteristic of most established European communities (Arunachalam & Karidakis, 2016; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016).

However, some caution is also needed with respect to understanding the potential interaction between gender and exogamy. Japanese females, for instance, have a much higher rate of exogamy than both Japanese males and Filipino females (Arunachalam & Karidakis, 2016), yet Japanese females (20.2%) and males (20.4%) show almost identical rates of LS in our data, and a much lower rate than Filipino females (see Table 5). Similarly, there is greater female exogamy among those born in Spain and Poland (Arunachalam & Karidakis, 2016), yet male LS is higher in both instances.

In addition to the impact of specific patterns of exogamy across different communities, the overall pattern of greater male LS is also commonly explained by "the differences that (may) exist between women's and men's (perceived) role and status in the minority and the 'host' community" (Pauwels, 2016, p. 87). Accordingly, women may be seen as primary "homemakers" and caregivers to young children, as well as to elderly family members, while men may be more likely to work outside of the home, which involves using English language skills more frequently. This difference in interactions and contact with

Table 5 Percentage of first-generation migrant cohorts speaking English only at home (LS) by world region, country of birth, and gender in 2021; as well as the difference between male and female LS, and the comparison of the male and female difference to 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). The highest LS value in each row is shown in **bold**

Region and country of birth	Male	Female	All	Difference (male – female)[a]	Percentage point increase or decrease of the male–female difference from 2011 to 2021
Oceania	33.4	**33.9**	33.7	−0.5	0.4
Papua New Guinea	**78.5**	75.6	76.8	3.0	2.5
Fiji	**26.1**	25.3	25.7	0.8	0.9
Samoa	**16.3**	14.1	15.2	2.2	0.9
Tonga	**15.8**	14.9	15.4	0.9	−1.4
North-West Europe	**61.4**	55.0	58.1	6.4	−0.3
Austria	**67.0**	60.7	63.9	6.3	−0.6
France	**35.6**	32.4	34.1	3.2	2.1
Germany	**63.4**	56.2	59.5	7.2	0.5
Netherlands	**74.5**	68.0	71.2	6.5	−1.6
Switzerland	**53.3**	47.8	50.6	5.5	1.4
Sweden	**51.4**	40.6	44.8	10.8	1.3
Southern Europe	**34.6**	24.8	29.7	9.8	1.4
Italy	**31.3**	20.1	25.8	11.2	1.9
Malta	**52.8**	45.2	49.0	7.5	0.4
Portugal	**31.1**	25.1	28.1	6.0	0.8
Spain	**32.5**	25.8	29.0	6.7	0.8
South Eastern Europe	**18.9**	13.6	16.1	5.3	1.1
South Eastern Europe, nfd	**34.3**	26.2	30.3	8.1	0.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	**12.7**	10.8	11.7	1.8	0.7
Croatia	**27.9**	20.0	23.8	7.9	1.7
Cyprus	**24.6**	16.2	20.2	8.5	3.1
North Macedonia	**12.8**	9.4	11.1	3.3	0.9
Greece	**13.7**	8.1	10.8	5.5	1.9
Romania	**28.7**	25.7	27.1	3.0	−1.2
Serbia	**17.3**	14.0	15.6	3.2	0.3
Eastern Europe	**29.3**	25.7	27.2	3.7	−2.6
Hungary	**47.0**	37.1	41.8	9.9	−3.2
Poland	**30.6**	27.5	28.8	3.1	−1.9
Russian Federation	16.9	**19.6**	18.6	−2.7	−1.0
Ukraine	**19.3**	19.1	19.2	0.2	−2.2
North Africa	**21.1**	15.7	18.4	5.3	1.4
Egypt	**24.5**	18.5	21.6	6.0	0.8
Sudan	**11.8**	8.7	10.2	3.1	1.9
The Middle East	**11.4**	8.3	9.9	3.1	0.9
Iran	**10.1**	6.2	8.2	3.8	1.4
Iraq	**4.2**	2.7	3.5	1.4	0.2
Israel	**34.4**	31.4	33.1	3.0	2.2
Lebanon	**12.0**	8.7	10.5	3.3	0.9
Saudi Arabia	**16.4**	16.0	16.2	0.4	1.7
Syria	**3.9**	2.5	3.2	1.4	−0.8
Turkey	**14.8**	9.2	12.1	5.6	2.0
United Arab Emirates	**44.6**	43.4	44.1	1.2	4.8
South-East Asia	19.9	**22.0**	21.2	−2.1	0.1
Myanmar	11.2	**12.0**	11.6	−0.8	0.3
Cambodia	**9.0**	8.5	8.7	0.4	0.2
Laos	**13.5**	13.4	13.5	0.1	0.7
Thailand	**21.4**	20.8	21.0	0.5	1.0
Vietnam	5.0	**5.4**	5.2	−0.5	−0.1
Indonesia	19.6	**21.5**	20.7	−1.9	−0.1
Malaysia	32.0	**33.5**	32.8	−1.5	−1.6
Philippines	21.1	**27.5**	25.0	−6.3	0.6
Singapore	**55.3**	53.7	54.5	1.6	0.5
North-East Asia	5.9	**7.4**	6.8	−1.5	−0.1
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	2.6	**4.0**	3.4	−1.3	−0.3

(*Continued*)

Table 5 Continued.

Region and country of birth	Male	Female	All	Difference (male – female)[a]	Percentage point increase or decrease of the male–female difference from 2011 to 2021
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	**15.3**	**15.3**	**15.3**	−0.1	0.1
Taiwan	6.5	**8.1**	7.5	−1.7	−0.1
Japan	**20.4**	20.2	20.3	0.2	1.2
Korea, Republic of (South)	9.1	**11.2**	10.3	−2.1	0.1
Southern and Central Asia	**11.9**	11.7	11.8	0.2	2.6
Bangladesh	**8.0**	5.4	6.8	2.6	1.0
Bhutan	3.5	**3.6**	3.5	−0.1	0.7
India	**13.4**	13.3	13.4	0.1	3.0
Nepal	**3.6**	2.6	3.1	1.0	−0.3
Pakistan	**8.4**	6.7	7.7	1.6	1.2
Sri Lanka	21.7	**22.0**	21.8	−0.2	1.3
Afghanistan	**3.2**	2.2	2.8	1.0	0.6
South and Central America	**17.0**	14.3	15.5	2.7	0.6
Argentina	**22.3**	18.2	20.2	4.1	−1.3
Brazil	**15.7**	14.6	15.1	1.1	1.6
Chile	**21.5**	16.8	19.0	4.7	1.4
Colombia	**11.3**	10.1	10.7	1.2	0.7
Peru	**18.5**	15.8	16.9	2.7	2.3
El Salvador	**17.2**	11.1	14.0	6.1	3.9
Sub-Saharan Africa	**62.1**	60.3	61.2	1.8	1.5
Nigeria	**42.2**	39.2	41.0	3.0	2.9
Ethiopia	**13.2**	11.1	12.1	2.1	0.7
Kenya	**37.0**	34.1	35.5	3.0	1.7
Mauritius	**30.4**	26.6	28.5	3.7	1.7
South Africa	**73.9**	73.3	73.6	0.7	0.8
Zimbabwe	**63.6**	59.9	61.7	3.7	2.6
Total	**20.9**	19.9	20.4	1.0	−0.4

Note: [a]Please note that calculations were based on source data, which can lead to slight inconsistencies when comparing rounded figures in percentages.

Table 6 Percentage of the top 10 first-generation migrant cohorts speaking English only at home (LS) by greatest male-led gender difference (increased likelihood of male LS) and country of birth in 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a)

Country of birth	Male (LS in %)	Female (LS in %)	All (LS in %)	Difference (male–female) in percent points
Italy	31.3	20.1	25.8	11.2
Sweden	51.4	40.6	44.8	10.8
Hungary	47.0	37.1	41.8	9.9
Cyprus	24.6	16.2	20.2	8.5
South Eastern Europe, nfd	34.3	26.2	30.3	8.1
Croatia	27.9	20.0	23.8	7.9
Malta	52.8	45.2	49.0	7.5
Germany	63.4	56.2	59.5	7.2
Spain	32.5	25.8	29.0	6.7
Netherlands	74.5	68.0	71.2	6.5

English may then be reflected in a person's language use at home. However, research outside of Australia also shows that many women promote shifting to the dominant national language in the home as a means to challenge "restrictive gender roles" or to signify "prestige" (Pauwels, 2016, pp. 87–88). These contradictory observations highlight the complex relationship between gender, community-specific gender attitudes, and roles on the one hand, and CL use as well as LS on the other.

Table 7 Percentage of the top 10 first-generation migrant cohorts speaking English only at home (LS) by greatest female-led gender difference (increased likelihood of female LS) and country of birth in 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a)

Country of birth	Male (LS in %)	Female (LS in %)	All (LS in %)	Difference (male–female) in percent points
Philippines	21.1	27.5	25.0	−6.3
Russian Federation	16.9	19.6	18.6	−2.7
Korea, Republic of (South)	9.1	11.2	10.3	−2.1
Indonesia	19.6	21.5	20.7	−1.9
Taiwan	6.5	8.1	7.5	−1.7
Malaysia	32.0	33.5	32.8	−1.5
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	2.6	4.0	3.4	−1.3
Myanmar	11.2	12.0	11.6	−0.8
Vietnam	5.0	5.4	5.2	−0.5
Sri Lanka	21.7	22.0	21.8	−0.2

The last column of Table 5 shows the increase or decrease of the male–female difference over time, from 2011 to 2021 in percentage points. Subsequently, a positive value in the last column presents an increase in males shifting to using English only, and a negative value an increase in females using English only over 10 years. Over the decade there has been a small overall shift (−0.4%) in favour of increased female LS. However, this result masks internal variability. Some regions have continued a 10-year trend of increased male LS (e.g. Southern Europe, Southeastern Europe, North Africa, The Middle East, Southern and Central Asia, South and Central America, and Sub-Saharan Africa). Other cohorts show a trend of declining male LS and increasing female LS, notably in Eastern Europe, which is in part likely to be due to gender-related changes in patterns of exogamy over time.

5.4 By age

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between age, LS, and CL acquisition (e.g. Clyne, 1982; Kipp et al., 1995, p. 118; Polinsky & Scontras, 2020; Verdon et al., 2014). In Table 8, we present LS data by age (excluding under five-year-olds), region, and country of birth in 2021.

Overall, first-generation migrants aged 15–34 in 2021, appeared to be least likely to use English only at home (15.1%), while migrants who are 65+ (28.8%) were most likely to shift. However, on closer inspection, individual age cohorts also show a diverse pattern of LS across different regions and countries. As Karidakis and Arunachalam (2016) found in their analysis of 2011 Census data, there appears to be no simple linear relationship between age and LS in 2021.

Amongst European cohorts, we see a clear divide between North-West Europe and Southern Europe, in which LS rates are consistently greater for the 65+ cohorts from the former (71.9%), while LS for migrants from the latter is always greatest for the 35–64 group (40.7%). Given both regions share similar migration histories, the reasons for this age-related difference can be ascribed instead to other factors, some of which are pointed to elsewhere in this study, e.g. relative proximity to English as a Germanic language, country-specific language attitudes, and religious structures. Large numbers of Italian migrants in the 35–64 cohort arrived as small children and were raised and

Table 8 Percentage of first-generation migrant cohorts speaking English only at home (LS) by world region, country of birth, and age group in 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). The highest LS value across the age groups for each national cohort is shown in **bold**

	Age				
Region and country of birth	**5–14**	**15–34**	**35–64**	**65+**	**Total[a]**
Oceania	43.4	31.8	34.4	31.1	33.6
Papua New Guinea	72.2	62.5	**82.1**	72.4	76.9
Fiji	**42.9**	29.1	24.0	26.0	25.6
Samoa	**23.6**	17.4	14.3	11.7	15.1
Tonga	**26.9**	16.3	15.1	14.4	15.4
North-West Europe	33.6	37.6	49.5	71.9	58.2
Austria	36.5	39.0	56.9	**70.1**	64.0
France	25.3	30.4	33.3	**47.0**	34.1
Germany	31.3	40.0	51.4	**70.3**	59.6
Netherlands	41.3	44.0	61.3	**79.2**	71.3
Switzerland	50.1	48.0	48.6	**55.5**	50.7
Sweden	26.8	37.7	45.3	**62.9**	45.0
Southern Europe	20.7	20.4	40.7	26.5	29.8
Italy	17.0	18.0	**38.0**	22.6	25.8
Malta	61.7	44.0	**62.2**	45.4	49.0
Portugal	20.9	29.6	**37.4**	14.6	28.2
Spain	23.0	21.2	**36.5**	24.2	29.0
South Eastern Europe	13.0	18.5	22.7	11.1	16.1
South Eastern Europe, nfd	0.0	20.8	**34.1**	27.6	30.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5.6	**20.3**	11.8	6.0	11.8
Croatia	18.1	18.9	**32.2**	18.7	23.8
Cyprus	24.3	**36.6**	28.7	12.9	20.1
North Macedonia	9.2	13.8	**16.4**	5.0	11.1
Greece	10.3	12.2	**23.2**	6.9	10.8
Romania	25.1	**35.4**	26.6	24.1	27.1
Serbia	8.4	14.7	**19.0**	11.3	15.6
Eastern Europe	10.9	25.8	24.9	31.6	27.2
Hungary	8.4	23.5	32.3	**51.0**	41.9
Poland	15.5	28.5	**29.7**	28.2	28.8
Russian Federation	8.7	**25.6**	17.4	15.3	18.6
Ukraine	14.0	**23.3**	17.0	18.7	18.6
North Africa	15.1	14.7	13.9	29.0	18.5
Egypt	15.3	15.5	17.2	**30.3**	21.6
Sudan	**14.3**	14.0	6.4	10.9	10.2
The Middle East	14.8	9.5	9.6	8.6	9.8
Iran	4.7	7.3	8.8	**9.7**	8.3
Iraq	**4.6**	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.5
Israel	19.2	26.3	31.3	**51.1**	33.3
Lebanon	**13.4**	8.4	12.0	7.7	10.4
Saudi Arabia	15.9	15.9	16.8	**52.9**	16.2
Syria	3.4	1.9	3.6	**4.3**	3.2
Turkey	13.0	**14.9**	13.4	6.3	12.1
United Arab Emirates	49.4	44.1	31.7	**60.0**	43.7
South-East Asia	37.9	20.1	20.0	21.4	21.1
Myanmar	4.9	4.5	11.0	**32.1**	11.5
Cambodia	**27.5**	10.7	9.0	1.9	8.6
Laos	**28.7**	10.4	17.0	3.1	13.4
Thailand	**33.3**	17.2	21.2	24.7	20.9
Vietnam	**9.8**	5.3	5.9	1.6	5.2
Indonesia	**34.5**	18.2	19.6	27.6	20.7
Malaysia	35.2	25.4	35.7	**36.8**	32.8
Philippines	**47.4**	25.0	22.6	23.9	24.9
Singapore	**62.1**	53.6	52.5	56.6	54.4
North-East Asia	14.0	7.3	6.1	5.6	6.7
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	**7.7**	3.4	3.0	3.8	3.4
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	**32.0**	17.1	13.8	10.5	15.2
Taiwan	**22.0**	7.0	7.6	2.1	7.4

(*Continued*)

Table 8 Continued.

	Age				
Region and country of birth	**5–14**	**15–34**	**35–64**	**65+**	**Total[a]**
Japan	18.2	27.5	16.3	**29.5**	20.4
Korea, Republic of (South)	12.8	**14.4**	8.8	3.0	10.3
Southern and Central Asia	15.7	7.9	11.0	40.2	11.8
Bangladesh	**12.7**	8.1	5.0	8.7	6.7
Bhutan	**18.7**	3.1	1.5	0.0	3.4
India	18.1	9.2	11.8	**45.9**	13.3
Nepal	**11.0**	2.9	2.7	2.6	3.1
Pakistan	**9.9**	6.4	6.7	26.1	7.6
Sri Lanka	20.3	16.5	19.0	**41.0**	21.9
Afghanistan	2.1	**3.0**	2.8	1.6	2.8
South and Central America	10.3	12.4	18.7	13.1	15.5
Argentina	9.5	11.2	**27.0**	17.8	20.2
Brazil	8.4	13.8	16.4	**27.3**	15.2
Chile	14.6	14.0	**25.2**	10.8	19.1
Colombia	8.9	9.8	**11.7**	11.5	10.6
Peru	16.0	15.3	**17.5**	17.3	16.9
El Salvador	14.0	**21.2**	16.3	3.3	14.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	56.6	56.2	60.5	74.9	61.2
Nigeria	**62.0**	44.1	34.3	55.2	40.6
Ethiopia	**30.6**	18.1	6.1	14.4	12.0
Kenya	24.8	21.2	41.0	**76.2**	35.7
Mauritius	**40.7**	19.4	33.5	24.7	28.4
South Africa	66.3	73.0	71.5	**85.5**	73.7
Zimbabwe	41.7	49.9	62.0	**92.5**	61.7
Total	24.1	15.1	19.8	28.8	20.4

Note: [a]Following Karidakis and Arunachalam's approach (2016), the total in this table excludes under five-year-olds.

educated in Australia, facilitating interaction with the broader community, and therefore also LS. Their parents (65+) have always been more likely to remain in their language community, impacting on their general proficiency in and use of English.

Also, for reasons that are not yet understood, the elevated LS amongst those 65+ and born in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates is quite unlike patterns noted elsewhere for Middle Eastern countries.

Further, the data show that young children aged 5–14 across all European regions and South and Central America are more likely to use a CL and less likely than older age groups from the same regions to show LS. In contrast, the reverse is true overall for the same age group born in Oceania (albeit not Papua New Guinea), as well as Northeast and Southeast Asia, where 5–14-year-olds are more likely than older cohorts from the same regions to show LS, pointing to potential difficulties in intergenerational CL transmission.

As children under 14 are likely to be within the English-dominant Australian education system, such cohort-specific differences are perhaps surprising, pointing to the fact that some communities are more successful at intergenerational LM and intergenerational language transmission. Such transmission may be achieved through more consistent CL use with children (potentially associated with a broader lack of English proficiency in many communities), and greater value assigned to LM, as well as through informal learning or formal teaching efforts (Borland, 2006).

The three national cohorts with the largest migrant population in Australia, i.e. China, India, and the Philippines, all recorded a slightly higher LS rate amongst young children, compared to teenagers and young adults. However, Indian-born migrants recorded the highest LS amongst those aged 65+ (45.9%), with a similar pattern also noted for those

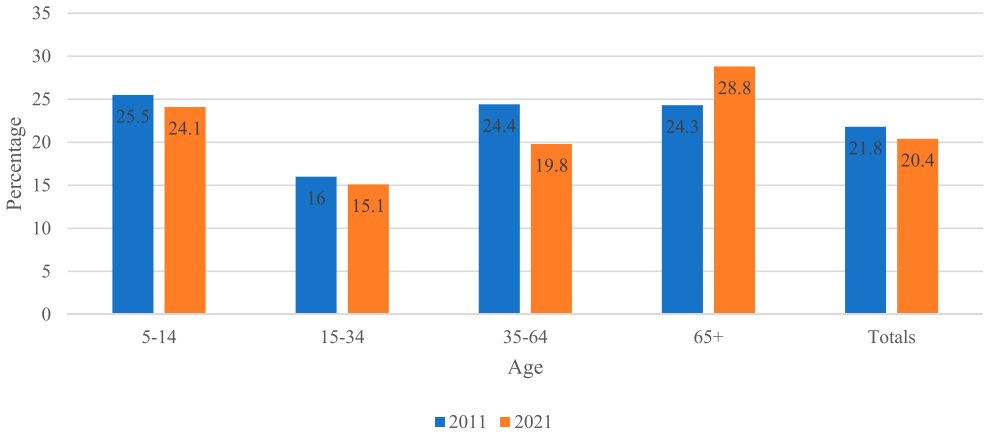

Figure 1 Age groups by percentage of first-generation migrants speaking English only at home (LS) in 2011 and 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a)

born in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This can be explained by the large component of L1 English-speaking Anglo-Indians (identified as Burghers in Sri Lanka) who arrived in Australia decades ago (Azam et al., 2013; Hawthorne, 1997).

Most of the cohorts recording the highest use of English (i.e. Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, South Africa, Zimbabwe) do so amongst the oldest population with younger generations more likely to speak a CL. This reflects some renewed younger CL-speaking migration to Australia from the mentioned European countries. In the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe, both of which are former British colonies, we see a changing linguistic profile of arrivals, whereby speakers of Bantu languages now increasingly predominate. Only a few high-shifting cohorts record the greatest effect amongst slightly younger, 35–64-year-olds (e.g. Papua New Guinea 82.1%, Malta 62.2%), or under 14-year-olds (e.g. Singapore 62.1%).

Figure 1 shows that while most age cohorts recorded a decline in LS (e.g. −4.6% among 35–64-year-olds), the +65 cohort (+4.5%) recorded a sizable increase.

However, closer inspection of country-specific data, not presented here, also shows variation. For Indian migrants we identified a significant LS reversal for the 65+ cohort (−22%), and the 35–64 cohort (−18%), between 2011 and 2021, as older migrants (including retirees) arrive for reasons of work and/or family reunion. Those born in Kenya and Zimbabwe showed the largest decrease in LS amongst 35–64-year-olds (−20.2% and −14.7% respectively). This overall LS reversal can be attributed to the previously noted recent and ongoing expansion in the arrival of CL-speaking populations from former British colonies in Africa. However, for unknown reasons, an opposite trend was displayed by migrants born in Myanmar, who recorded an increase in LS for the 35–64 (+12%) and 65+ (+15.5%) cohorts.

In some European migrant groups, which overall recorded increased LS from 2011 to 2021, a reversal was nevertheless recorded for the 35–64 cohort. This was, for example, the case for the Netherlands (−10.1%), Germany (−9.4%), and Austria (−6.6%) and is probably due to more recent arrivals, who are more educated (see Table 10), and have stronger positive feelings towards LM than previous generations. In the same cohorts, older generations of 65+ instead recorded an increased rate of LS from 2011 to 2021, an indirect

reflection of their longer period of residence in Australia resulting in greater linguistic assimilation over time (see next section).

5.5 By duration of residence in Australia

It is commonly expected, and in-line with previous findings (Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016) that the longer migrants have resided in Australia, the more likely they will use only English at home due to greater cumulative exposure to English – a general trend that is evident for most cohorts in Table 9 (cf. pre-1980 arrival: 42.4% LS v. 2011–2020 arrival: 11.1% LS).

This seemingly "linear pattern" of length of stay in Australia correlating with LS, can be observed across almost all cohorts (65/69). There are very few exceptions, such as the Cyprus-born cohort, for which the reasons remain unclear. Indeed, of all the socio-temporal factors we have examined, length of duration of stay appears to have the most reliable and consistent effect on LS across cohorts.

The lowest LS in 2021, for those who migrated to Australia before 1980, was recorded for people born in Greece (10.9%), Vietnam (12.1%), and North Macedonia (12.3%), pointing to more effective LM and much greater resistance to speaking the dominant language. This is particularly the case when compared to other communities (e.g. born in the Netherlands 83.4%) over the same time period. Greater levels of LM in these low-shifting communities can be explained by such things as relatively low levels of exogamy and more limited proficiency in English (Clyne, 2005). Moreover, in the case of Greece and North Macedonian cohorts, LM is also supported by the existence of ethnically-based churches that support long-term cultural and linguistic maintenance (Clyne, 2005; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016).

However, the relatively high overall LS of those who migrated before 1980 can also be attributed to the previously mentioned "White Australia Policy", which pushed for assimilation, including LS in all domains (Kipp et al., 1995). Given the rise since the mid-1970s of official multiculturalism in Australia and the increased educational profile of migrants from many different countries, more recent arrivals have felt less pressure than the "oldest" migrant cohort captured in the 2021 Census, to shift to English across domains, including in the home. The impact of changing policy settings and attitudes over time can be seen in the much greater LS gap (+15%) between the overall pre-1980 (42.4%) and following 1981–1990 (27.4%) interval, than for any other consecutive time periods, such as the much lower difference (+6%) between 1981–1990 (27.4%) and 1991–2000 (21.4%), and even lower differences in comparisons between more recent consecutive decades.

The lowest LS amongst arrivals in the last decade was recorded amongst migrants from Syria (1.1%), Afghanistan (1.4%), and Iraq (1.6%), a reflection, as noted above, of refugee resettlement, coupled with low English proficiency on arrival (Collins et al., 2023, p. 5).

Comparing 2021–2011 data regarding the decade of arrival, which is not included in detail here, we identified the following trends over time. Migrants from Ethiopia (−3.8%), Nepal (−1.7%), and Samoa (−0.2%) who arrived prior to 1980 have recorded a slight reversal in LS over the decade. Such a pattern appears consistent with Pauwels (2016) suggestion that first-generation speakers may shift to the dominant language during their employment years, before reverting to their L1 after retirement. However, in our view, the pattern presented by Pauwels is more likely to affect areas beyond the

Table 9 Percentage of first-generation migrant cohorts speaking English only at home (LS) by world region, country of birth, and period of arrival in Australia, 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). The highest LS value across the arrival periods for each cohort is shown in **bold**

Region and country of birth	Pre-1980	Arrived 1981–1990	Arrived 1991– 2000	Arrived 2001–2010	Arrived 2011–2020	Arrived 1 Jan 2021–10 Aug 2021a	Total
Oceania	77.0	34.7	24.5	23.4	20.1	12.8	33.6
Papua New Guinea	**90.5**	83.3	71.1	57.3	50.9	46.8	77.0
Fiji	**61.9**	28.4	22.2	18.4	18.5	11.3	25.5
Samoa	**42.9**	19.9	15.1	16.1	11.5	11.1	15.1
Tonga	**26.2**	16.8	16.5	15.4	10.8	8.2	15.8
North-West Europe	**77.5**	54.1	45.2	34.1	29.2	21.8	58.2
Austria	**73.9**	55.9	44.2	34.0	26.6	30.8	64.4
France	**59.1**	45.5	37.8	25.5	24.2	18.8	34.1
Germany	**76.5**	52.3	44.3	35.1	33.0	25.4	59.8
Netherlands	**83.4**	60.6	54.8	40.6	32.1	23.0	71.6
Switzerland	**67.3**	54.1	44.4	40.5	34.4	18.9	50.6
Sweden	**75.1**	57.9	46.0	33.9	29.8	19.1	44.9
Southern Europe	**32.6**	29.9	28.3	23.5	15.6	11.9	29.9
Italy	**27.9**	26.9	24.3	19.9	14.4	10.5	25.9
Malta	50.4	40.6	46.3	42.6	37.9	**54.5**	49.4
Portugal	**31.8**	27.0	28.2	28.2	19.6	0.0	28.2
Spain	**39.2**	33.7	37.9	27.7	16.4	13.2	29.2
South Eastern Europe	18.0	**18.3**	12.3	12.3	10.2	10.8	16.2
South Eastern Europe, nfd	**40.6**	25.1	12.1	8.7	15.7	0.0	30.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	**20.3**	14.8	10.8	7.9	8.7	0.0	11.7
Croatia	**28.7**	23.1	12.2	8.7	13.0	18.8	24.0
Cyprus	18.8	16.5	34.1	**51.7**	24.9	0.0	20.2
North Macedonia	**12.3**	11.4	9.5	7.5	5.9	0.0	11.0
Greece	10.9	13.2	**16.3**	15.5	6.0	10.3	10.9
Romania	**47.5**	27.6	25.6	21.8	21.0	27.0	27.0
Serbia	**22.9**	18.2	9.6	9.4	8.4	17.6	15.7
Eastern Europe	**49.1**	25.2	20.3	19.3	16.5	16.5	27.2
Hungary	**58.0**	36.4	31.3	20.3	16.4	0.0	42.2
Poland	**45.8**	24.3	21.5	23.2	20.9	14.9	28.9
Russian Federation	**40.2**	21.6	20.9	17.9	14.1	15.4	18.6
Ukraine	**38.4**	15.4	14.9	15.3	15.3	26.5	19.1
North Africa	**41.1**	18.2	12.0	11.1	7.0	3.7	18.5
Egypt	**41.1**	18.0	13.0	13.0	7.3	3.0	21.6
Sudan	**40.1**	20.5	10.2	9.6	6.1	7.9	10.2
The Middle East	**18.2**	14.2	9.7	8.9	6.0	10.8	9.9
Iran	**30.7**	18.7	12.8	7.3	4.8	2.2	8.2
Iraq	**24.3**	14.1	5.4	2.9	1.6	1.3	3.4
Israel	**63.4**	41.2	35.5	21.6	14.0	9.1	33.0
Lebanon	**15.4**	9.7	6.8	6.2	5.5	4.6	10.4
Saudi Arabia	**84.0**	57.6	35.7	23.3	9.7	25.0	16.3
Syria	**13.7**	8.3	7.1	4.9	1.1	0.0	3.1
Turkey	14.4	10.1	10.2	10.8	**12.4**	7.6	12.1
United Arab Emirates	**84.0**	66.1	58.6	50.2	38.8	45.7	44.0
South-East Asia	**41.9**	23.9	21.9	19.9	15.1	18.9	21.1
Myanmar	**71.6**	26.9	13.1	3.6	2.5	8.5	11.5
Cambodia	**15.2**	9.2	7.2	7.4	8.3	8.1	8.6
Laos	**17.2**	13.1	8.8	11.0	10.4	0.0	13.6
Thailand	**53.4**	32.7	28.4	19.0	16.0	19.9	20.8
Vietnam	**12.1**	4.8	3.1	4.2	4.4	4.3	5.2
Indonesia	**52.9**	25.6	20.5	18.2	14.8	18.1	20.6
Malaysia	**65.2**	40.9	35.7	29.5	18.2	26.4	32.9
Philippines	**45.3**	38.4	33.2	21.6	17.2	18.1	24.8
Singapore	**80.1**	58.9	56.9	48.1	45.4	50.3	54.3

(*Continued*)

Table 9 Continued.

Region and country of birth	Pre-1980	Arrived 1981–1990	Arrived 1991– 2000	Arrived 2001–2010	Arrived 2011–2020	Arrived 1 Jan 2021–10 Aug 2021a	Total
North-East Asia	**28.9**	9.5	8.0	5.6	4.6	7.7	6.7
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	**22.5**	4.3	4.8	3.0	2.2	2.4	3.4
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	**32.7**	12.3	10.8	16.5	13.6	17.4	15.3
Taiwan	**31.0**	9.7	5.9	8.1	6.7	6.5	7.4
Japan	**52.8**	24.0	20.8	17.7	17.3	7.6	20.3
Korea, Republic of (South)	**22.8**	20.7	11.4	7.8	8.0	9.4	10.2
Southern and Central Asia	**83.6**	42.4	20.4	8.5	6.6	6.5	11.7
Bangladesh	**55.8**	16.8	7.9	5.1	6.1	3.4	6.7
Bhutan	0.0	0.0	**38.9**	1.4	3.7	0.0	3.4
India	**83.6**	51.1	27.5	9.5	8.0	8.5	13.2
Nepal	**69.5**	30.7	12.1	3.1	2.7	3.4	3.0
Pakistan	**63.1**	24.9	10.7	6.5	5.6	2.6	7.6
Sri Lanka	**89.2**	41.8	19.5	12.2	9.2	10.3	21.7
Afghanistan	**19.7**	11.2	6.5	2.6	1.4	1.2	2.7
South and Central America	**31.0**	19.5	18.0	14.2	10.5	10.2	15.4
Argentina	**33.6**	25.5	20.6	14.2	9.0	4.8	20.1
Brazil	**50.1**	38.6	29.2	16.9	12.1	11.9	15.0
Chile	**27.2**	17.8	16.5	14.9	10.4	9.2	18.9
Colombia	**28.1**	26.3	18.8	11.1	8.6	15.6	10.5
Peru	**37.7**	20.3	15.6	12.6	11.7	10.8	16.8
El Salvador	**30.6**	15.3	12.2	11.9	8.3	0.0	14.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	**82.4**	81.1	76.8	56.8	46.7	47.8	61.3
Nigeria	**90.5**	69.6	44.7	37.0	38.5	42.2	41.1
Ethiopia	**41.5**	13.0	14.9	13.8	7.7	12.3	12.0
Kenya	**92.7**	72.1	43.2	27.4	19.0	16.8	35.5
Mauritius	**46.4**	30.8	30.0	17.3	13.7	0.0	28.4
South Africa	**95.2**	92.9	86.2	67.9	61.1	55.5	73.7
Zimbabwe	96.6	**96.9**	89.9	56.3	40.1	32.0	61.8
Total	**42.4**	27.4	21.4	16.4	11.1	14.0	20.4

Note: [a] Please note that we will not interpret data in the second last column, which only captures seven months in 2021.

home and is not confirmed by our data for other countries, which overall points to a significant acceleration of LS linked to early arrival and settlement instead. Amongst the generation who migrated before 1980, arrivals from Saudi Arabia recorded the largest increase in LS from 2011 to 2021 (+20.9%), followed by the Ukraine (+13.7%), Germany (+12.9%), and the United Arab Emirates (+12.6%).

Migrant groups, who recorded an overall reduction in LS from 2011 to 2021 (see Tables 2 and 4), such as India, Myanmar, and Kenya (except for Ethiopia, as mentioned before), recorded the trend of LS reversal only amongst their most recent, post-2011 arrivals. Interestingly, even amongst some overall high-shifting Southern, Eastern, and South-Eastern European migrant groups, such as Cyprus, Malta, Croatia, and Poland, recent, post 2011-arrivals, have recorded a reduction in LS over the last 10 years.

5.6 By level of education

The relationship between education and LS is known to vary: (a) a migrant's high educational attainment and qualifications may correlate with increased LS; or (b) conversely

it may be related to increased LM (Kloss, 1966). Table 10 provides data on LS by three educational categories in 2021.

Similarly to Karidakis and Arunachalam (2016), we found the overall LS rate to differ in a relatively moderate fashion across educational attainment, with those educated to a diploma/certificate level recording the highest LS overall (25.7%), in contrast to 18.7% for education to bachelor level or above and 19.2% for secondary school or less. However, we also see variable effects of education according to region and country. For example, older post-WW2 migrants from Northwest Europe, who arrived primarily as unskilled workers, have had more time to shift to English-only use at home compared to their more educated, and likely younger, compatriots who arrived more recently. This difference can be attributed to the increase in educational attainment over time, leading to a shift in the demographics of migrants from this region.

Ambivalence about the impact of education on LS is confirmed by the data presented in our study. On the one hand, there appears to be a relationship between higher education with reduced LS amongst North-West European migrant cohorts, which supports the explanation initially outlined by Kloss (1966) and others (e.g. O'Bryan et al., 1975), of higher education creating a type of "high culture" around a CL. As a result, the CL gains an important "symbolic function" especially when LS starts to affect the group's self-identification. Such a phenomenon is predominantly observed amongst those most educated, as they may be more in touch with and determined to maintain their community's cultural and linguistic heritage (Clyne & Kipp, 1995, p. 119). In contrast, we identified an opposing trend of increased LS amongst more educated South Eastern European migrants, confirming Clyne and Kipp's observation that greater levels of education may "bring immigrants closer to the cultural life of the dominant group, promoting language shift" (1995, p. 120).

Comparing 2021 with 2011 Census data, there has been an overall reversal in LS for all educational attainment groups (Bachelor or above: −2.5%; diploma/certificate: −2.6%; secondary schools or less: −0.4%). However, we also find strong variability across cohorts. For example, amongst those educated to the highest educational attainment (Bachelor or above), residents from Laos (+10.8%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (+9.3%), and Romania (+8.1%) have recorded the greatest increases in LS. In contrast, cohorts with the same level of education from Zimbabwe (−13.9%), Kenya (−10.9%), and Spain (−4.8%), recorded the greatest LS reversal, or LM increase, for the same period. Reasons for these country-specific results remain unclear.

5.7 By city and by state or territory of residence

Following Karidakis and Arunachalam (2016), we also include data related to spatial settlement. In Table 11, we see that in 2021, Chinese (Mandarin) was the most widely spoken CL across almost all major cities in Australia's eight states and territories, overtaking Arabic (in Greater Sydney), Italian (in Greater Perth), and Greek and Italian (in Greater Melbourne and Greater Adelaide) since 2011. Greater Darwin (in the Northern Territory) is the only exception, with Greek continuing to be the most used CL at home.

Variation in the size and location of language communities across different states and territories reflects varying migration flows to different parts of Australia. While Mandarin Chinese appears well-established across most of Australia, several Indian languages, such as Hindi and Punjabi, are also becoming more established, reflecting the increasing

Table 10 Percentage of first-generation migrant cohorts speaking English only at home (LS) by world region, country of birth, and highest educational attainment in 2021, as well as the percentage change in LS from 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). The highest LS value across the educational attainment levels for each cohort is shown in **bold**

Region and country of birth	Bachelor or above	% change from 2011	Diploma/ certificate	% change from 2011	Secondary school or less[a]	% change from 2011	Total[b]
Oceania	42.6	−0.4	34.3	−0.7	29.5	−0.8	33.9
Papua New Guinea	**82.3**	−1.1	78.4	−2.1	72.0	1.1	77.2
Fiji	26.7	3.8	23.0	1.9	**27.2**	2.5	25.6
Samoa	**22.8**	−4.7	15.8	0.3	14.6	2.2	15.3
Tonga	**26.3**	4.5	18.2	2.2	13.3	0.6	15.5
North-West Europe	46.5	0.6	60.6	5.9	67.1	8.0	58.4
Austria	55.6	1.8	65.0	9.6	**69.7**	8.9	64.6
France	28.7	1.3	**39.4**	6.0	**39.4**	4.7	34.2
Germany	50.1	2.6	59.9	7.2	**69.2**	9.5	59.9
Netherlands	59.4	2.6	74.4	7.5	**77.0**	10.3	71.9
Switzerland	47.7	4.0	50.3	7.5	**56.8**	6.6	50.9
Sweden	41.1	1.6	**51.0**	5.0	44.0	3.8	44.7
Southern Europe	36.9	−3.6	40.2	6.0	24.7	7.0	29.9
Italy	**36.6**	−1.4	35.9	6.3	20.5	7.0	26.0
Malta	**71.6**	1.9	65.9	7.3	42.7	7.2	49.3
Portugal	37.8	0.7	**38.8**	8.4	21.3	4.1	28.3
Spain	25.3	−4.8	**37.4**	5.6	27.7	3.7	29.3
South Eastern Europe	**26.4**	5.2	21.3	4.5	11.6	2.8	16.2
South Eastern Europe, nfd	30.6	5.4	**32.3**	3.2	28.8	3.4	30.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	**18.4**	9.3	11.2	5.5	8.7	3.4	11.8
Croatia	**33.4**	4.7	27.6	6.6	19.5	5.0	23.9
Cyprus	**39.9**	6.6	29.1	6.1	13.0	3.0	20.2
North Macedonia	**19.0**	4.5	15.7	5.2	8.1	3.0	11.1
Greece	**30.2**	4.2	19.4	4.2	7.2	2.1	10.8
Romania	**28.7**	8.1	26.5	7.2	26.0	4.3	27.2
Serbia	**19.8**	4.7	16.4	3.7	13.5	4.4	15.9
Eastern Europe	25.9	4.3	26.9	4.8	30.5	5.8	27.4
Hungary	42.7	0.0	40.0	5.7	**43.8**	8.1	42.1
Poland	30.9	4.7	25.2	4.3	**31.3**	6.1	29.1
Russian Federation	18.4	6.5	**20.9**	7.1	18.1	2.1	18.8
Ukraine	17.0	6.8	19.1	6.0	**24.7**	8.3	19.4
North Africa	15.4	0.5	21.9	1.5	19.6	6.0	18.4
Egypt	16.2	0.2	**30.0**	2.2	24.2	3.9	21.5
Sudan	**11.3**	3.7	9.8	4.7	10.3	4.7	10.4
The Middle East	**13.4**	0.8	11.6	0.7	7.8	1.1	9.9
Iran	9.1	0.0	**9.4**	−0.3	6.3	1.1	8.2
Iraq	**5.8**	1.3	4.5	−0.2	2.6	0.2	3.5
Israel	**36.1**	0.7	34.6	3.4	28.6	0.7	33.0
Lebanon	**16.5**	3.0	14.6	3.6	7.7	2.1	10.5
Saudi Arabia	15.1	6.8	**22.3**	11.7	16.3	5.2	16.3
Syria	**6.9**	−1.8	4.6	−3.0	2.2	−1.9	3.2
Turkey	**18.7**	3.7	15.5	3.9	8.3	2.5	12.0
United Arab Emirates	34.0	−2.5	48.2	6.3	**49.3**	−1.1	44.2
South-East Asia	**23.9**	2.4	22.1	−0.2	18.3	1.8	21.2
Myanmar	16.4	−2.9	**16.7**	−12.7	8.0	−6.8	11.3
Cambodia	**17.5**	4.5	12.8	3.9	6.1	1.8	8.7
Laos	**30.2**	10.8	18.4	6.1	8.4	2.6	13.6
Thailand	19.6	3.7	20.1	−0.5	**22.7**	3.6	21.1
Vietnam	**10.7**	2.9	5.8	1.5	2.9	1.1	5.2
Indonesia	18.4	5.7	22.0	0.8	**23.3**	5.5	20.7
Malaysia	**37.3**	4.0	31.7	−4.3	26.3	−3.7	33.0
Philippines	18.2	1.9	24.9	1.8	**34.7**	6.4	24.9

(*Continued*)

Table 10 Continued.

Region and country of birth	Bachelor or above	% change from 2011	Diploma/ certificate	% change from 2011	Secondary school or less[a]	% change from 2011	Total[b]
Singapore	52.0	5.4	55.6	7.4	**57.6**	7.3	54.5
North-East Asia	6.8	0.5	7.3	0.0	6.5	0.1	6.8
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	**3.6**	0.5	3.4	−0.4	3.2	−0.1	3.4
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	14.8	2.8	14.6	1.5	**16.5**	3.7	15.3
Taiwan	7.6	1.9	6.8	1.0	**8.3**	2.7	7.6
Japan	20.6	2.8	19.1	2.2	**20.9**	3.1	20.3
Korea, Republic of (South)	10.3	1.5	**10.5**	0.1	10.2	0.7	10.3
Southern and Central Asia	10.0	−4.2	12.8	−8.5	14.7	−7.2	11.7
Bangladesh	5.5	1.4	8.3	0.8	**9.4**	2.7	6.7
Bhutan	2.5	−0.2	2.8	0.7	**4.7**	3.7	3.5
India	10.8	−4.4	14.7	−10.1	**19.0**	−9.1	13.2
Nepal	2.5	−1.1	3.0	−0.7	**4.5**	0.4	3.1
Pakistan	6.4	−2.4	**10.5**	−5.8	8.7	−0.9	7.6
Sri Lanka	18.5	−2.7	20.5	−3.7	**27.9**	−5.5	21.6
Afghanistan	**6.2**	2.5	3.9	0.6	1.9	0.2	2.8
South and Central America	15.0	−0.1	17.8	3.3	14.5	1.0	15.6
Argentina	18.4	−2.9	**24.4**	4.9	18.9	0.5	20.3
Chile	**20.8**	−0.6	20.6	−2.5	16.4	−1.1	19.3
Colombia	10.5	2.5	**11.8**	6.4	10.1	3.0	10.7
Peru	**18.6**	0.1	16.4	−0.7	14.7	−3.2	17.0
El Salvador	**18.1**	4.2	14.5	3.6	10.7	3.0	14.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	62.3	−5.2	61.6	−2.3	59.4	−1.7	61.3
Nigeria	36.6	0.9	39.3	−0.9	**58.4**	3.7	41.4
Ethiopia	14.0	−0.4	8.4	1.4	**14.2**	−3.0	12.1
Kenya	35.7	−10.9	**38.4**	−15.2	32.4	1.1	35.3
Mauritius	28.0	1.4	26.7	3.6	**30.6**	5.6	28.5
South Africa	**74.7**	−1.1	72.9	−1.3	72.8	−1.5	73.6
Zimbabwe	54.8	−13.9	**68.3**	0.9	64.7	−0.1	61.5
Total	18.7	−2.5	25.7	−2.6	19.2	−0.4	20.4

Notes: [a]We used the field "not applicable" from the census field "QALLP Non-School Qualification: Level of Education" (which only includes over 15-year-olds) to determine up to secondary education levels.
[b]The total value excludes "level of education inadequately described", and "level of education not stated".

number of Indian-born residents. European languages, which once dominated Australia's CL landscape, have now largely disappeared from the top 10 list, with only Greek and Italian remaining.

5.8 By relative remoteness

Again following Karidakis and Arunachalam (2016), we summarized cohorts by "region of birth" as a pragmatic methodology to understand top-level regional patterns in Table 12. We are, however, cautioning of differences that would be likely in a granular cohort-specific analysis.

Table 12 shows LS by "remoteness", which maps different areas of Australia by their "relative geographic access to services" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). In Australia, the place of residence is well-known to influence LS (Clyne, 2005). Overall, as evident in Table 12, CLs appear to be maintained much more in major cities (with relatively low LS: 18.9%) than in more remote geographical settings – albeit with some variation by the regional origins of different national cohorts (see below).

Table 11 The top 10 community languages (CLs) used at home in Australian state or territory major cities[a] by percentage of speakers compared to the total of CL speakers in Australia (5,663,741)[b], 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a)

Greater Sydney (NSW)	%	Greater Melbourne (VIC)	%	Greater Brisbane (QLD)	%	Greater Adelaide (SA)	%	Greater Perth (WA)	%	Greater Hobart (TAS)	%	Greater Darwin (NT)	%	Australian Capital Territory / Canberra (ACT)	%
Mandarin	4.6	Mandarin	3.8	Mandarin	1.1	Mandarin	0.5	Mandarin	0.9	Mandarin	0.11	Greek	0.06	Mandarin	0.25
Arabic	3.9	Vietnamese	2.0	Vietnamese	0.5	Italian	0.4	Italian	0.4	Nepali	0.08	Nepali	0.05	Nepali	0.10
Cantonese	2.6	Greek	1.8	Punjabi	0.4	Vietnamese	0.4	Vietnamese	0.4	Punjabi	0.03	Tagalog	0.05	Vietnamese	0.09
Vietnamese	2.0	Punjabi	1.7	Cantonese	0.4	Greek	0.4	Punjabi	0.4	Cantonese	0.02	Mandarin	0.04	Punjabi	0.09
Hindi	1.3	Arabic	1.5	Spanish	0.3	Punjabi	0.3	Cantonese	0.3	Vietnamese	0.02	Filipino	0.03	Hindi	0.08
Greek	1.3	Italian	1.5	Hindi	0.3	Arabic	0.2	Arabic	0.3	Spanish	0.02	Vietnamese	0.02	Cantonese	0.07
Spanish	1.1	Cantonese	1.4	Korean	0.3	Cantonese	0.2	Tagalog	0.3	Greek	0.02	Indonesian	0.02	Spanish	0.07
Nepali	1.1	Hindi	1.1	Samoan	0.3	Hindi	0.2	Afrikaans	0.2	Hindi	0.02	Punjabi	0.02	Arabic	0.07
Korean	1.1	Sinhalese	0.8	Arabic	0.2	Nepali	0.2	Spanish	0.2	Urdu	0.02	Malayalam	0.02	Urdu	0.06
Italian	0.9	Spanish	0.7	Tagalog	0.2	Gujarati	0.1	Indonesian	0.2	German	0.01	Thai	0.02	Italian	0.05

Notes: [a]The geographical areas dataset "MB by Greater Capital City Statistical Areas (UR)", or in short GCCSA (UR) was used.
[b]"Not stated" was excluded from the analysis.

Table 12 Percentage of first-generation migrant cohorts speaking English only at home (LS) by world region of birth and place of residence (remoteness) in Australia, 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). The highest rate of LS across the different places of residence for each region is shown in **bold**

	Place of residence				
World region	Major cities of Australia	Inner-regional Australia	Outer-regional Australia	Remote and very remote Australia	Total
Sub-Saharan Africa	61.4	**63.2**	56.2	49.2	61.1
North-West Europe	55.2	**67.7**	63.7	55.9	58.1
Oceania	30.3	**56.9**	50.3	38.5	33.7
Southern Europe	28.0	**46.7**	37.8	35.9	29.8
Eastern Europe	25.6	**42.2**	41.3	37.5	27.2
South-East Asia	20.3	**30.3**	25.3	25.2	21.1
North Africa	17.8	**28.8**	27.8	12.0	18.5
South Eastern Europe	15.0	**36.4**	29.5	34.2	16.1
South and Central America	15.1	**22.4**	17.9	13.4	15.5
Southern and Central Asia	**11.9**	11.3	10.5	11.2	11.8
The Middle East	9.6	15.0	**24.6**	24.0	9.9
North-East Asia	6.3	14.5	13.6	**15.0**	6.8
Grand Total	18.9	**35.4**	31.7	30.0	20.4

The phenomenon of increased LM in urban settings can be explained by cities' increased speaker density, coupled with greater access to community networks and infrastructure, and more positive attitudes to diversity and LM. Migration to Australia is overwhelmingly urban in nature – as migrants cluster in large cities for work, study, and other opportunities (Kipp, 2007). Residency in major cities increases opportunities for the use of CLs, not just in the home, but in accessing, for example, local media, shops, CL schools, clubs, and religious centres – all of which are likely to slow LS and support LM instead (Kipp et al., 1995, p. 123). As a result, individuals may feel less pressure to assimilate and shift to English.

However, our data also show that there is no linear pattern of urban proximity relating to a reduced LS, which indicates that there may be specific LS accelerators at play outside of major city fringes (inner regional LS 35.4%), where remote and very remote areas appear to support greater LM (LS of 30%). The latter phenomena could be explained by a rural settlement facilitating the establishment of a "linguistic enclave, which is a positive factor in language maintenance, while urban settlement may dilute the linguistic minority and increase the pressures from the majority language group" (Kipp et al., 1995, p. 123). This appears to specifically be the case for migrants from African, South and Central American, and Southern and Central Asian regions, who show less LS in remote Australia than they do in major cities.

6. General findings and observations

Our analysis of recent Australian census data with respect to migrant communities with over 10,000 people, and their language use, allows us to make some important observations about CL and LS at the present time in Australia. In the first instance, Australia's sociolinguistic demography has changed significantly in the 10 years since 2011, as part of a longer-term trend towards diversification of migration, communities, and

languages (Clyne, 2005; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016), and seems likely to continue to do so in the future – pointing to the ongoing need for census-based LS research. As a result of wider migration and demographic changes, overall patterning for the entire dataset can easily mask significant variation amongst cohorts. Indeed, our findings confirm earlier reports (e.g. Clyne, 2005 and many others) that the rate of LS differs significantly across migrant communities at any one point in time. As we have already indicated, such variability in question is reflective of very different (pre-)migration patterns, social characteristics, as well as experiences once in Australia. The interaction between LS and specific sociodemographic factors is complex, with varying degrees of predictable patterning. We can account for some differences in outcomes, for instance, by differences in migration histories, such as earlier as opposed to more recent arrival in Australia. However, on closer inspection even among cohorts with a similar duration of residency, large disparities in LS can emerge. For example, the difference between the Netherlands (71.2%) and Greece (10.8%), points, as we have already noted, to the influence of community-specific factors. These can include such things as a CL's linguistic similarity to English, religious structures, and different symbolic weight given to LM with respect to community identity (Clyne, 2005).

Based on our analysis of five specific factors commonly explored in research on LS using census data, the most consistent patterning involves duration of residence and the relative degree of LS within the same cohort. Specifically, in almost all cases (64/69 cohorts), LS was greatest amongst those who arrived before 1980. Gender shows a strong but nevertheless weaker predictive effect, with greater male LS much more frequent across birth-countries (57/69 cohorts), which has been linked by scholars, such as Clyne (2005), to higher levels of male rather than female exogamy. However, even here, several different counterexamples can be found. With respect to age and education, mixed relationships with patterns of LS were found, pointing to cohort or regional idiosyncrasies and interrelations. We also found spatial settlement to be a reasonable predictor only in part. Migrants in major cities show much lower LS, indicative of the benefits of spatial concentration for LM. However, the impact of relative urban distance is also seen on closer inspection to be more complex and the stronger effect of lower LS in major cities does not particularly apply to some cohorts.

Using a measure to capture changes in the rate and direction of LS (calculating the LS change from 2011 to 2021 in Table 2 for example), we also see that change in LS can be very dynamic across and within migrant communities, with rapid acceleration, for instance, linked to increasing age in some cases. On the other hand, a novel finding of our analysis is a reduction in the overall rate of LS from 2011 to 2021 (−1.5% to 20.4%, see Table 2). This outcome is counter to the previously reported long-term trend, of progressively increasing LS occurring with each new census since 1986 (e.g. Clyne, 2005, p. 69; Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016; Kipp, 2007, p. 24). As already noted, this new result can be explained to a large degree by the rapid expansion of migration, especially from India, now Australia's largest first-generation migrant cohort, and from several other countries, such as Nepal, Brazil, and Colombia. For all four countries, the expansion in recent migration from 2011 to 2021 was so great that the rate of LS in each cohort fell over time. The overall result indicates that given the right demographic conditions, such as ongoing migration, increasing LS is not inevitable and the rate of LS can even reduce over time (Karidakis & Arunachalam, 2016). However, as we have also indicated, the observed overall effect is also misleading,

given that increasing LS, remains, as in the past, a consistent pattern for the overwhelming majority of individual diasporic communities (56/69) in our dataset (cf. Clyne & Kipp, 2006; Piller & Gerber, 2021; Wang et al., 2023).

7. Addressing language shift, fostering language maintenance, and Australia's multilingual diversity

As the multilingual nature and diversity of Australia continues to increase over time, new opportunities to foster LM over the longer term arise, at least for some communities. The advantages of multiculturalism and multilingualism for individuals and Australia as a whole, have long been identified (Escudero et al., 2023; Lo Bianco, 1987). Accordingly, multicultural and multilingual policies in Australia must concern themselves with adapting to changed multilingual patterns, as in part presented in this study, and establish more effective strategies that foster LM across an individual's public (such as schooling) and private (such as family) domains, and lifespan, to prevent language loss across all Australian migrant communities. Because English, Australia's "de facto national language", plays such a dominant and inevitable role in the society, multilingual policy should be concerned with balancing some of this power in favour of the many different languages relevant to the wider community (cf. Annamalai, 2003). Finally, it is important to extend the focus beyond migrant communities and their languages to encompass the wider, predominantly monolingual English-speaking community. Promoting multiculturalism and multilingualism within this broader context can foster more receptive attitudes towards language maintenance and diversity. This includes supporting the use of Indigenous languages by Australia's First Nations people, contributing to a more inclusive and multilingual society.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under license for this study. Data are available at https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder with the permission of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

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