

Multilingual Education

Mila Schwartz *Editor*

Preschool Bilingual Education

Agency in
Interactions Between Children,
Teachers, and Parents

 Springer

Multilingual Education

Volume 25

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Editor

Preschool Bilingual Education

Agency in Interactions Between Children,
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ISSN 2213-3208

ISSN 2213-3216 (electronic)

Multilingual Education

ISBN 978-3-319-77227-1

ISBN 978-3-319-77228-8 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77228-8>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018940452

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

This book is dedicated to the blessed memory of my beloved father, Mark Schwartz (1930–2016), and mother, Irena Rivka Schwartz (1937–2017), who were my hope and support and whom I will forever miss.

Preface

This volume provides an up-to-date collection of key aspects related to current preschool bilingual education¹ research from a sociolinguistic perspective. Bilingual education is a term used to describe an education system where instructions are given in two languages, one of which is the home language of some or all of the children. Our focus is on preschool bilingual education in multilingual Europe, which is characterized by diverse language models and children's linguistic backgrounds. An examination of the European experience will be particularly valuable in light of the growing need to consider the early learning of additional languages in Europe and to study the main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners (Edelenbos et al. 2006). Thus, this volume presents strategic approaches to promoting target language use (minority, heritage, second language, or foreign language) by children and, thereby, encourages the formation of *a strong professional community of practice among preschool language teachers*.

The book explores the contemporary perspectives on early bilingual education in light of *the threefold theoretical framework of child's, teachers', and parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education*. The volume examines preschool bilingual education as embedded in specific sociocultural contexts on the one hand and highlights its universal features on the other.

Each chapter includes a description of the sociolinguistic and historical background of the target bilingual preschool/s, namely a description of state and community language policy; the preschool's language model; and characteristics of the pedagogical staff, the children, and their families. (This information is summarized in Table 1.) The ways in which each study contributes to research on promoting language-conducive strategies and contexts in the preschool bilingual classroom are presented comprehensively by the authors. This book is a fundamental read for scholars and students of second language teaching, preschool education, and bilin-

¹In this volume, "bilingual preschool" means any kind of setting (nursery, kindergarten, early childhood education center, etc.) in which language learning takes place before elementary school.

Table 1 Research settings

Chapter number	Author/s	Title	Preschool setting/s	State language policy	Language model and its aim	Children's linguistic background
2	Danijela Prošić-Santovac and Danijela Radović	Separating the languages in a bilingual preschool: To do or not to do?	Serbian–English-speaking bilingual kindergarten	Serbian is one the official languages	One person–one language model	Mostly monolingual (L1) Serbian-speaking children
				English is a modern foreign and socially prestigious language	Language separation by teacher	
3	Charles L. Mifsud and Lara Ann Vella	To Mix Languages or Not? Preschool Bilingual Education in Malta	Two English–Maltese-speaking kindergartens	Maltese and English as the official languages	Bilingual continuum of use between Maltese and English	Diverse linguistic backgrounds
				Maintenance of a balanced societal Maltese–English bilingualism	One-person-two-languages model	
				Both are taught as target language and language of instruction from the First Grade	Language separation by type of activity	
4	Réka Lugossy	Whose challenge is it? Learners and teachers of English in Hungarian preschool contexts	One private nursery and two private English immersion kindergartens Elite bilingual education	Hungarian is an official language	One-person-one language model (OPOL)	Nursery: diverse linguistic backgrounds Kindergartens: mostly monolingual (L1) Hungarian-speaking children
				English is a modern foreign and socially prestigious language	Language separation by teacher	
5	Ekaterina Protassova	Longing for quality: Experiences of Finnish–Russian bilingual kindergarten in Finland	Finnish–Russian-speaking bilingual day care center	Finnish and Swedish are the official languages	Language separation by teacher while applying a language model based on a bilingual education formula (one teacher as a Finnish model, one teacher as a Russian model, and one teacher as a bilingual model)	Diverse linguistic backgrounds: (L1) Finnish-speaking, (L1) Russian-speaking, bilingual or multilingual children
				Russian is the language of the largest immigrant community		

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Chapter number	Author/s	Title	Preschool setting/s	State language policy	Language model and its aim	Children's linguistic background
6	Karita Mård-Miettinen, Åsa Palviainen and Anu Palojärvi	Dynamics in interaction in bilingual team teaching: Examples from a Finnish preschool classroom	Finnish–Swedish-speaking bilingual preschool classroom	Finnish and Swedish as the official languages	Bilingual pedagogy, aimed to familiarize monolingual (L1) Finnish-speaking children with Swedish—the other national language	Monolingual (L1) Finnish-speaking children
7	Renée DePalma and María-Helena Zapico-Barbeito	The role of early childhood education in revitalizing a minoritized language in an unsupportive policy context: The Galician case	Five early childhood education centers aimed at promoting and supporting the use of Galician	Spanish as an official language, and Basque, Catalan, and Galician as co-official languages in the corresponding region Focus on the Galician language as a minoritized language in the northwestern region of Spain	Intergenerational transmission of Galician through different degrees of Galician immersion	Diverse linguistic backgrounds
8	Ana Andúgar and Beatriz Cortina-Pérez	EFL teachers' reflections on their teaching practice in Spanish preschools: A focus on motivation	Monolingual preschools with English taught as a second/foreign language	Spanish as the official language, and Basque, Catalan, and Galician as co-official languages in the corresponding regions	Diversity of models	-
9	Gunhild Tomter Alstad and Elena Tkachenko	Teachers' beliefs and practices in creating multilingual spaces: The case of English teaching in Norwegian early childhood education	Monolingual kindergartens with English taught as a second/foreign language	Norwegian and Sami are the official languages English is a modern foreign and socially prestigious language	Language awareness is a model aimed to introduce foreign languages to children during short sessions and to raise their awareness of other languages	Diverse linguistic backgrounds

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Chapter number	Author/s	Title	Preschool setting/s	State language policy	Language model and its aim	Children’s linguistic background
10	M. Teresa Fleta Guillén	Successful teachers’ strategies to provide bilingual development in the preschool period	Bilingual preschool with English as a foreign language	Spanish as the official language, and Basque, Catalan, and Galician as co-official languages in the corresponding regions	English partial immersion	Monolingual (L1) Spanish-speaking children
11	Sandie Mourão	Play and peer interaction in a low-exposure foreign language-learning program	Monolingual pre-primary institution with English as foreign language teaching	Portuguese as an official language	Language exposure is a model designed to prepare children to learn a new language in the future	Mostly monolingual (L1) Portuguese-speaking children
					Exposure to English during 30 minutes per week	
12	Mila Schwartz and Naomi Gorbatt	The role of language experts in novices’ language acquisition and socialization: Insights from an Arabic–Hebrew-speaking preschool in Israel	Bilingual Hebrew–Arabic-speaking preschool	Hebrew and Arabic as official languages	Two-way immersion model in which two ethnolinguistic groups of children learn each other’s language and culture	Diverse linguistic backgrounds

gual education in multilingual and multicultural societies. It might also be of special interest to education professionals, policymakers, and ethnolinguistic community leaders facing the complexities and challenges of elaboration and implementation of a language model, curriculum planning, team teaching, and practice in the bilingual preschool classroom. We hope that this shared contribution will be a source of inspiration for researchers of preschool bilingual education as well as for educators.

Tivon, Israel

Mila Schwartz

Reference

Edelenbos, P., Johnstone, R., & Kubanek, A. (2006). *The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners. Languages for the Children of Europe: Published Research, Good Practice and Main Principles*. Final Report of the EAC 89/04, Lot 1 study. European Commission: Education and Culture, Culture and Communication, Multilingualism Policy.

Acknowledgments

This book was supported by Oranim, the Academic College of Education in Israel.

I sincerely thank the people who have assisted in the preparation of this volume.

First, I thank the contributors, who responded so enthusiastically to my invitation to contribute to this volume. It has been a fascinating experience to work with a group of people as a professional community who are leading experts in the field of early bilingual education and whose research inspires my work. I have greatly appreciated the energy and thoughtfulness with which each has written and rewritten their respective chapters, as well as their assistance with peer reviewing of chapters in this volume.

Second, I thank the general editor of the Multilingual Education Series, Professor Andy Kirkpatrick, and Professor Bob Adamson, for giving me the opportunity to create this volume of research on preschool bilingual education and Jolanda Voogd, Senior Publishing Editor, and Helen van der Stelt, Assistant Editor, from Springer for their support and guidance that I have received.

Third, I am very grateful to Professor Åsa Palviainen for her constructive feedback and advice on Chapter 1. In addition, I need to thank Sarah Veeder for her highly professional assistance with editing the volume and for her long-term cooperation.

Finally, I thank my husband, Viktor Kuschits, for his support and patience as I dedicated hours and hours to this project, and my children, Daniel Kuschits and Michael Kuschits, whose early bilingual development in Russian and Hebrew was a constant source of curiosity and delight.

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Preschool Bilingual Education: Agency in Interactions between Children, Teachers, and Parents



Mila Schwartz

Abstract In this chapter, I have chosen to write a conceptual introduction to this volume. The chapter starts with what I consider the general motivation for this volume followed by reasons for conceptualizing preschool bilingual education as a distinct research area. The chapter then provides the theoretical framework which underpins many of the studies presented in the volume. Continuing with the theoretical elaboration of the overlapping spheres of child's, teachers', and parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education, the chapter underlines the commonalities among the contributions. The contributions' presentation is organized by addressing four interrelated topics: (1) Child's, teacher's, and parents' agencies in interactions; (2) Child's agency; (3) Teacher's and child's agencies in interaction, and (4) Parents', child's and teacher's agencies in interaction. The chapter is ended by summing up and outlining the structure of the volume.

1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

The role of bilingual education in early childhood in promoting a child's life-long love of language and bilingual proficiency seems to be unquestionable. In this volume, "bilingual education" is used as an umbrella term to define an education system in which instructions are given in two languages, one of which is the home language of some or all of the children. The European Commission has argued that early language learning has enormous potential for the development of children's

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M. Schwartz (ed.), *Preschool Bilingual Education*, Multilingual Education 25,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77228-8_1

identity, values, empathy, and respect, all in addition to learning a second language (hereafter L2):

Opening children's minds to multilingualism and different cultures is a valuable exercise in itself that enhances individual and social development and increases their capacity to empathize with others. [...] As young children also become aware of their own identity and cultural values, ELL [Early Language Learning] can shape the way they develop their attitudes towards other languages and cultures by raising awareness of diversity and of cultural variety, hence fostering understanding and respect. (European Commission 2011, p. 7)

The aim of various Commission initiatives in Europe is to promote and support implementation of language learning in the early childhood education sector. This process inevitably faces a variety of challenging questions for the contemporary successful development of preschool bilingual education. Thus, the motivation for this volume is derived from five phenomena: (1) the growing interest of policy-makers, ethno-linguistic community leaders, practitioners, and researchers in early bilingual development and education; (2) the increasing understanding that early bilingual education is a unique event in children's development and that preschool plays a critical role in their socialization; (3) the growing awareness of the necessity to examine early bilingual education within specific socio-cultural contexts on the one hand, and to search for universal features on the other; (4) the need to consider the early learning of additional languages as well as maintenance of minority, heritage, and immigrants' languages; (5) the necessity to examine strategies underlying efficient language teaching for very young learners (Edelenbos et al. 2006), and (6) the widespread modern trend of teaching English in certain Central and Eastern European countries as a foreign language (EFL) in preschools due to parental pressure to introduce the EFL as early as possible because they believe in 'the younger the better' slogan, meaning that younger children could make quicker and easier progress in EFL, than older children (Nikolov 2016).

1.2 Why Do We Need to Focus on Preschool Bilingual Education As a Distinct Research Domain?

Early childhood is a critical period in a child's intensive social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development. Preschool serves as the first transitional step from children's first and most intimate home environment and offers the first trust-building experience of the wider social environment and socialization. Children do not voluntarily choose either monolingual or bilingual preschool but are subject to their parents' preferences. Their first encounter with the novel language¹ as a novel learner overlaps with separation from home and meeting new actors in their

¹In this volume, "novel language" refers to the second/foreign language that the child encounters in the bilingual preschool.

lives—teachers and peers. A successful encounter with a novel language is inevitably connected to such ecological conditions as creating a low-anxiety and secure atmosphere that will be conducive to target language perception and production (Schwartz et al. 2016). As has been recently shown, the bilingual preschool teachers' starting point is the children's essential need to be understood, and regardless of the language they use, this should be their main concern:

It is very hard for a kid to know that if he needs something he won't be understood. Basic things that kids need – a drink, going to bathroom. He needs to know that if he needs something, he will get it. Even if he can't yet say it in Hebrew (the child's L2) ... The demand to speak only Hebrew might discourage him and turn him away from the language (the L2 Hebrew teacher, Dina, in the Russian–Hebrew-speaking bilingual preschool, in Schwartz et al. 2016, p.159).

In the above citation, the teacher emphasized that the most important task is to create a sense of security for young children that their basic needs would be met regardless of the language used. A distinctive characteristic of preschool education is to have the child's development needs constantly in mind. Drawing on this feature, in this volume, I highlight the need to focus on preschool bilingual education as a *distinct research domain*. Based on an ecological perspective on bilingual development and education during the early years, this volume calls for a closer look at the bilingual preschool classroom as an “ecosystem” (van Lier 2010), with its diverse aspects and dynamic interactions among them, which require more *theorizing*. This includes a research focus on interactions among such central aspects as child's, teacher's and parents' agency, children's socio-linguistic backgrounds, language models, and teachers' language strategies and classroom contexts creating a language-conducive environment.

The second reason for emphasizing preschool bilingual education as a distinct research area is the growing evidence that an early start *per se* in bilingual education is an insufficient prerequisite for children's better or faster progress in L2 than their older peers (e.g., Cameron 2001; Edelenbos et al. 2006). Young children have a biological predisposition for language learning (e.g., Kim et al. 1997). However, as has been recently shown, even in cases of intensive exposure to their L2 in the bilingual classroom through the natural environment of peer interaction and/or structured teacher-led activities, the children's L2 production skills considerably lagged behind their listening comprehension skills (e.g., Spanish and English, in DePalma 2010; Irish in Hickey 2001; English in Kersten 2015; Swedish in Södergård 2008; Arabic in Schwartz and Gorbatt 2017). This phenomenon was frequently evident in situations in which young children encountered the target language mostly within the classroom context. In this case, the novel language, such as the EFL in certain Central and Eastern European countries, was not supported by the children's home and close environment. Even a factor such as the status and prestige of the English language, does not play a motivating role from the perspective of young EFL learners (Nikolov 1999).

2 Theoretical Perspectives

Parents play a significant role in lobbying for preschool bilingual education as a part of their family language policy (King et al. 2008; Schwartz 2010). This pro-active family language management might interact with and be influenced by the surrounding ethno-linguistic community and preschool (policy-makers, teachers, and peers). These elements are often separated as pieces of a complex puzzle, which are then examined systematically. However, these human spheres in their relationships create an environment or ecosystem that, in multiple ways, become conducive to a child's bilingual development and education (van Lier 2004, 2011). Thus, five major theoretical concepts have inspired this volume: a notion of agency, Leo van Lier's concept of "ecology of language learning," Lev Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the "human mediator," Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological perspectives, and Joyce L. Epstein's (2011) concept of "educational partnership."

2.1 Agency

Agency is a concept in modern educational theory and practice (Biesta and Tedder 2006). A key question in contemporary social theory concerns empirical conditions of agency; namely, how agency is possible or what enables individuals to engage with the situation at hand in an agentic way (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Within the field of social theory, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) defined agency as "the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations" (p. 971).

Additionally, human agency as a social engagement takes place within environments or contexts (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). More specifically, Biesta and Tedder (2006) argue that the people's agentic orientations need to be linked to a particular situation. In analyzing this situation, we need to address the question of economic, cultural, and social capital resources. Furthermore, the researchers highlight "an ecological understanding of agency, i.e., an understanding which always encompasses actors-in-transaction-with-context, actors acting by-means-of-an-environment rather than simply in an environment"(p. 19). Finally, Biesta and Tedder (2006) suggest that our knowledge about these orientations could be gained by analyzing the actors' reflections on their actions.

In the preschool bilingual education field, recent research shows a growing interest in exploring bilingual children's agency in interaction with adults and peers (Almér 2017; Schwartz and Palviainen 2016; Bergroth and Palviainen 2017). Almér (2017) focused on bilingual children's voices and beliefs about languages as aspects of their agentic behavior. Drawing on the notion of interactive agency (Van Nijnatten 2013), Almér suggests viewing bilingual children's voice about their languages and language choice not as a separated agentic behavior but as an interactive agency resulting from a dialogue with an adult who can hear this voice.

Bergroth and Palviainen (2017) added to this discussion by exploring how children's communicative actions with peers and teachers might reflect preschool language policy. It is interesting that, in some cases, the children's agency was expressed in clear resistance to the minority language policy of using the Swedish language by communicating in Finnish. Thus, this limited research draws attention to the child not as "something that needs to be molded and guided by society in order to become a fully-fledged member" (Lanza 2007, p. 47), but someone who should be viewed as an active agent in the language learning process. The current volume deepens our understanding of children's agency in language learning by "focus on the ecology in which this agency is achieved" (Biesta and Tedder 2006, p. 20) in the bilingual preschool classroom.

2.2 *Ecology of Language Learning*

The notion of *ecology of language learning* promotes the elimination of boundaries between the linguistic and the non-linguistic domains. It means the interrelationships between language learning in the classroom environment as the micro-context and the out-classroom socio-linguistic and socio-cultural environment as the macro-context. Van Lier (2010) defined the aim of an *ecological perspective on language learning* in terms of "to look at the learning process, the actions and activities of teachers and learners, the multilayered nature of interaction and language use, in all their complexity and as a network of interdependencies among all the elements in the setting..."(p. 3). Van Lier's concept of *ecology of language learning* is applicable to a language classroom and includes key aspects such as a learner's language perception; teaching quality (language teaching principles, strategies, and actions), and contexts conducive to language learning and learner agency.

From an ecological perspective, children's L2 perception does not occur merely because of the target language input in the classroom and structured grammar and vocabulary instruction. This process is mediated by diverse teachers' strategies (e.g., elicitation, verbal and non-verbal encouragement) and contexts (e.g., language learning areas). Children's language perception is scaffolded, in particular "during novel, unpredictable moments in activities" (van Lier 2004, p. 92).

Within current theories on second language acquisition, this ecological perspective is connected to *the interaction approach* proposed by Gass (2003), Gass and Mackey (2007). This approach "takes as its starting point the assumption that language learning is stimulated by communicative pressure and examines the relationship between communication and the mechanisms (e.g., noticing, attention) that mediate between them" (Gass 2003, p. 224). It was suggested as a critical element within the *Input, Interaction, Output Hypothesis*, which "describes the process involved when learners encounter input, are involved in interaction, receive feedback and produce output" (Gass and Mackey 2007, p. 181). Putting together the interaction approach and the ecological perspective means an environmental contribution to L2 acquisition.

The classroom as an ecosystem might provide *language-conducive contexts*. I suggest defining the language-conducive classroom contexts as contexts rich in multisensory activities with a wide array of semiotic resources and diverse teacher-child and peer interactions, encouraging the child's engagement in the novel language learning. The creation of these classroom contexts aims to support comprehensibility of linguistic information and to enhance the children's L2 production (van Lier 2004). In addition, van Lier (2010) asserts that the language-conducive environment affects the learners' openness to L2 and is essential for the expression of their agency. In this case, our focus should be on exploring the relation between children's agency, language-learning contexts (e.g., type of activity; activity place, multisensory information within a context of activity) and L2 perception (van Lier 2004, p. 88). That is because, as far as early bilingual education is concerned, the ecology of language learning is influenced by the types of activities and relationships that can be developed between actors (teacher-child, peer-child, parent-teacher, parent-child), which determine the quality in the bilingual preschool. An ecological approach states that "the perceptual and social activity of the learner, and particularly the verbal and nonverbal interaction in which the learner engages, are central to an understanding of learning. In other words, they do not just facilitate learning, they *are* learning in a fundamental way" (van Lier 2010; p. 246).

Drawing on van Lier's ecological perspective on language learning, in the current volume, we examine how teachers, children, and parents as agents interact to create favorable contexts for novel language learning in bilingual preschool settings.

2.3 Sociocultural Theory and Teachers', Peers' and Parents' Mediation

Van Lier (2004) suggested that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory "illustrates an ecological approach to cognition, learning, and language" (p. 246). His ecological perspective on language learning is related to sociocultural theory by stressing the teachers' role in providing artifacts, activities, and resources mediating children's language learning.

Vygotsky (1978) saw the child as first doing things in a social context, helped in many ways by other people and language, and gradually shifting away from reliance on others to independent thinking and action. This approach to children's mental development highlights the critical role of teachers in shaping the most favorable conditions for enhancing and regulating their development. Vygotsky's theory of learning and development has been transformed and adapted to different educational frameworks, including the L2 classroom (Lantolf and Beckett 2009; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Such adaptations perceive the institutional context, such as a school, as a formative setting for the child's developmental process. In the particular

setting of the bilingual classroom, children acquire their L2 abilities through interaction with teachers and peers.

The ability to learn through interaction and mediation is characteristic of human intelligence. Vygotsky (1978) proposed the notion of the human mediator and emphasized that “what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow” (p. 211). In an entire range of ways, knowledgeable teachers and peers mediate and make the world accessible to children. With the help of adults and peers, children can do and understand much more than on their own.

In this volume, we explore how major theoretical principles and concepts included in Vygotsky’s mediation strategies—scaffolding, identification of the child’s zone of proximal development, and modeling—are realized in the teachers as well as peers’ mediation aimed at encouraging L2 acquisition in the bilingual classroom at preschool age. A substantial number of studies have focused on mediation strategies provided by teachers in L2 classrooms. The focus was on strategies such as corrective feedback and its relation to L2 acquisition (e.g., Lyster et al. 2013), modeling (e.g., Cameron 2001; Schwartz and Gorbatt 2017), and the zone of proximal development (e.g., Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Ohta 2001). Most of these studies drew on observations of students in secondary L2 classrooms. For that reason, this volume will expand our limited knowledge of how teachers and peers realize main principles and concepts of mediation among preschool children.

2.4 Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-Ecological Perspectives

Vygotsky’s theory of learning and development and van Lier’s concept of ecology of language learning are closely connected to the Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 2005) bio-ecological perspectives on the world of children and their development. I believe that this perspective is essential for our theorizing of an interaction between child’s, teachers’, and parents’ agencies in preschool bilingual education. Bronfenbrenner views the world of the child as consisting of five ecological systems of interaction: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem. Each system depends on the contextual nature of the child’s life and offers an increasing diversity of options and sources of development. In the context of bilingual preschool development and education, three systems of the child’s life are particularly relevant: the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem. The microsystem includes the child’s initial set of interrelations in terms of developing trust and mutuality with family and other caregivers (e.g., preschool teachers). The mesosystem helps to connect two or more systems in which child, parent, and family live (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2005). The linkage between home, community, and preschool is an example of such system enactment in developing and educating the bilingual child. The mesosystem moves the child beyond the dyadic relations towards a link with the wider community by creating more expansive relations.

The macrosystem as a system of cultural, educational beliefs, societal values, and community events and projects is a powerful ecological system for building educational partnerships among the preschool, the family, and the surrounding community.

2.5 Educational Partnership

Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) bio-ecological perspective on the world of children and their development is associated with Epstein's model of the overlapping spheres of influence of home, school, and community. Within the framework of the sociology of education, Epstein (2001) called for a replacement of the old ways of thinking about parental involvement with innovative ways of organizing effective programs of school, family, and surrounding community partnerships. The researcher claimed that children's academic progress is a result of overlapping spheres of influence of home, school, and community, which share the responsibility for their success. This theoretical model views the educational partnership as manifest in the school, families, and the community sharing goals. This partnership might occur on an institutional level (e.g., shared events of school, families, and community members) and an individual level (e.g., teacher–parent discussion of the child's work). The parental engagement includes such involvement as communicating, volunteering, learning with the child at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community both at school and at home (Epstein 2001; Epstein et al. 2002).

Naturally, the partnership of school, family, and the surrounding community can be particularly influential during early childhood. Recently, Bergroth and Palviainen (2016) suggested applying Epstein's concept of educational partnership for bilingualism. The successful partnership develops social ties, which, in turn, generate social capital that is beneficial for all partners (Simon and Epstein 2001). Within the idea of partnership in a preschool bilingual education framework, teachers, parents, and community members, including researchers, can exchange information, ideas, and language teaching resources that are helpful for children's bilingual development. The current volume explores how this partnership could enhance children's openness to a novel language and their willingness to acquire it.

3 The Current Volume: New Theoretical and Empirical Issues

This sub-section strives to highlight the unique theoretical and empirical contributions of this volume as well as of each chapter to the field of preschool bilingual education, therefore, I find it appropriate to underline the commonalities among our chapters and to organize the presentation by topic and not by chapter. This structure

has been chosen also because most of our contributors addressed more than one novel issue in their examination of preschool bilingual education. Thus, through the analysis, the following four interrelated topics emerged: (1) Child's, teacher's, and parents' agencies in interactions; (2) Child's agency; (3) Teacher's and child's agencies in interaction, and (4) Parents', child's and teacher's agencies in interaction.

3.1 Child's, teacher's, and Parents' Agencies in Interaction

Schwartz and Palviainen (2016) have recently proposed the theoretical perspective of interaction between preschool, family, and community in conceptualizing advantages and challenges of preschool bilingual education. They claimed that to educate a truly happy bilingual child, we need to examine the child's, the teacher's, and the parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education. Drawing on the ecological perspective on language learning, the current volume broadens this perspective. Its theoretical framework is presented as a model in Fig. 1. The model highlights that the child's ecosystems in the preschool bilingual education system are constructed through the child's, the teacher's, and the parents' acting *not as separate actors but as partners in interaction*. The eleven original contributions in this book show how these agents' acting is *strongly interrelated* and *aims to meet the child's essential developmental needs*. In addition, as can be seen in Fig. 1, the model includes aspects of the child's, teacher's, and parents' agentic behavior as overlapping spheres of acting, which will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

3.2 Child's Agency

As far as preschool bilingual education is concerned, successful bilingual development seems to be impossible without the child's willingness and positive attitude towards this process (van Lier 2010). "The fuel for learning in an ecological perspective is not 'input' or 'exercises,' but *engagement*" (van Lier 2010, p. 98). Furthermore, van Lier claims that child's agency in the process of language learning depends not only on his or her individual characteristics (e.g., a degree of identification with the cultural community of the target language) but also on the learning contexts conducive to the expression of this agency. The ways to create an inspiring context for language learning are addressed in this volume.

Child's agency in early bilingual development and education is a novel research direction that has been recently suggested by Schwartz and Palviainen (2016). Drawing on Ahearn's (2001, p. 112) definition of agency as "a socio-culturally mediated capacity to act," Bergroth and Palviainen (2017) recently defined the notion of the child's bilingual agency "...as the socio-culturally mediated capacity of the child to act, as it is reflected in the child's communicative acts" (p. 4).

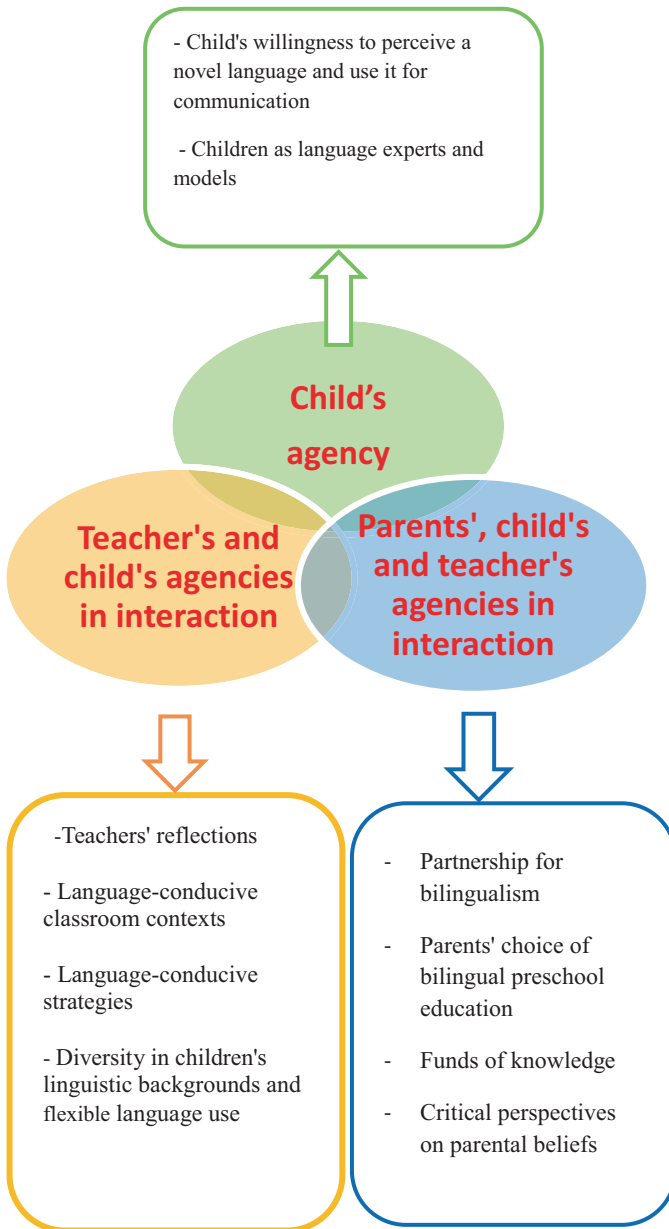


Fig. 1 Theoretical framework of overlapping spheres of child's, teachers', and parents' agencies in interaction in preschool bilingual education.

This volume complements and extends our understanding of the child's agency by exploring its main aspects such as: the child's willingness to perceive a novel language and to communicate in it and the child's agency in classroom peer interaction and learning.

3.2.1 Child's Willingness to Perceive a Novel Language and Use It for Communication

The ecological perspective on language learning views the *child's openness* to a novel language as a key factor in the learning process (van Lier 2010). Children as young as 3–4 years old are already developing ideas about language. Almér (2017) showed that 4–6-year-old bilingual children consider their linguistic repertoire as useful for talking to people who speak other languages. In addition, the young bilinguals can create beliefs about languages in their environment and can describe them as “right,” or “funny” (Crump 2014). These beliefs can mediate their attitudes towards novel languages as well as influencing their language practices (Crump 2014).

Moreover, when first exposed to a novel language, children might feel “uncertain, helpless, and afraid of the unknown” (see Lugossy in this volume, chapter “[Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts](#)”, p. 122). In this volume, the EFL teacher in Réka Lugossy's study (chapter “[Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts](#)”) vividly describes the children's reluctance to be engaged in structured English lessons. This observation raised a reasonable question about the appropriateness of an unnatural learning context in the preschool classroom. The teacher's reflections stimulated a modification of her approach towards offering a natural and enjoyable context for language learning. She reported: “...when I did not emphasize the fact that we started the English lesson, and just invited them to sing a song or a rhyme, they felt more comfortable,” so “I gave up giving lesson-like lessons” and “I gave them more freedom to do what they like” (p. 122). This phenomenon of reluctance in the perception of a novel language and its active usage appears to be prevalent in preschool classroom settings, which differ from naturalistic contexts as in the case of the EFL in Europe. This is mainly because “unlike first language children, foreign language learners are not immersed in a continual stream of spoken discourse...” (Cameron 2001, p.60).

Furthermore, young children can express their negative feelings not only regarding the unnatural means of exposure to the unknown language but also regarding how the target language is used by teachers in the classroom. For example, in this book, Danijela Prošić-Santovac and Danijela Radović (chapter “[Separating the Languages in a Bilingual Preschool: To Do or Not to Do?](#)”) examine 6-year-old children's attitudes towards strict language separation by teacher (the one-person one-language model) in the Serbian–English-speaking bilingual kindergarten. The interview with the children, which took the entertaining form of a puppet play,

revealed that most of them felt uncomfortable with the EFL teacher who used only English in communication with them, and preferred the combined use of English and Serbian by the L2 teacher.

3.2.2 Children As Language Experts and Models

Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) suggested that children's talk with their peers provides an opportunity for a "more equal participant structure" than asymmetric adult-child interaction and as a result, might facilitate discourse skill development (p. 298). Few recent studies to date have focused on direct observations of children's talk with their peers and L2 acquisition (e.g., Cekaite and Aronsson 2005; Schwartz and Gorbatt 2016). The existing limited data suggest that this talk is a means of promoting L2 development and acquisition. During their interaction, children have abundant opportunities to learn pragmatic skills, e.g., discourse management such as encouraging talk in L2, and linguistic skills, e.g., talking about different languages and giving collaborative attention to language form in L2. In addition, through active involvement in talk with peers, the L2 learners endorse their language socialization (Blum- Kulka and Gorbatt 2014).

Two contributions in this volume (chapters "Play and Peer Interaction in a Low-Exposure Foreign Language-Learning Program" and "The Role of Language Experts in Novices' Language Acquisition and Socialization: Insights from an Arabic-Hebrew Speaking Preschool in Israel") extend our knowledge on the role of young children's peer talk and interaction in novel language learning and mediation. First, Sandie Mourão (chapter "Play and Peer Interaction in a Low-Exposure Foreign Language-Learning Program") presents novel data on how child's agency is expressed in child-initiated play in a low-exposure EFL context. The study is based on Vygotsky's (1978) perception of child's play as a leading activity, which supports the development of intentional behaviors, imagination, imitation of adults' socio-cultural activities, and as a result, creates a zone of proximal development for the child. In this chapter, Mourão explores the role of child-initiated language play as children's agentic behavior in the context of a resourced English learning area in the classroom. She shows that even in the context of low exposure to foreign language learning, children imitate the teaching strategies of their English language teacher. The author vividly illustrates how, through child-initiated play, children became actively engaged in the novel language learning process, hence becoming agents. The child's agency was empowered by the fact that, alongside promoting the use of English during free play in the English learning area, the use of the children's first and dominant language, Portuguese, was entirely legitimate. Thus, during play, both children's languages were used and created their linguistic repertoire that permitted peer language mediation and learning. The child's agency was expressed in peer scaffolding of novel words in English, and in using Portuguese to negotiate meanings, to navigate games, and to support the relationship between the peers.

Furthermore, Schwartz and Gorbatt (chapter "The Role of Language Experts in Novices' Language Acquisition and Socialization: Insights from an Arabic-Hebrew

[Speaking Preschool in Israel](#)”) draw our attention to peer language mediation within an interesting context of bilingual Arabic–Hebrew-speaking preschool. The authors’ focus is on an under-researched phenomenon of young language experts, seven bilingual (L1) Arabic- and (L2) Hebrew-speaking children, who were at an advanced stage of competence in L2 and played the role of L2 “teachers.” Drawing on Vygotsky’s perspective on mediation, the authors show how children as young as 5 use mediation strategies such as meaning negotiation, paraphrasing, gesturing, modeling, and imitating the language of teachers’ behavioral patterns to encourage their peers’ L2 learning. This research is innovative in its exploration of how children can play an agentic role as active classroom language managers and social leaders in initiations of inter-group communications between the Arab and Jewish children.

3.3 Teacher’s and child’s Agencies in Interaction

3.3.1 Teacher’s Reflections

Recent sociolinguistic research on bilingualism in different learning spaces has shifted its analytical lens from the focus on languages as discrete and bounded units to the study of language as social practice and teachers as social agents. This shift of focus has foregrounded the connection between language ideologies and practices with the purpose of illuminating how teachers understand and interpret their own language-teaching activity (e.g., García 2009; Heller 2007). In this context, Priestley et al. (2012) called for more theorizing of various aspects related to the teacher’s agency phenomenon. When theorizing the teacher’s agency process, one needs to relate to multifarious factors that influence this agency, such as contexts within which teachers act. These include educational policy, teachers’ beliefs, professional and personal experience, and identity (Priestley et al. 2012). Priestley et al. (2012) identified three fundamental principles concerning teacher agency: teacher agency promotes changes in their practices; teacher agency is achieved under ecological conditions such as social structure, cultural forms, and the material environment, and teacher agency should be investigated with reference to past and present experiences of agents. Moreover, Biesta and Tedder (2006) suggest that our knowledge about teachers’ agency could be gained by analyzing their reflections on their actions. The use of reflections permits teachers to construct and reconstruct their professional experiences, identify problems and obstacles in their practice, find solutions, and critically examine their pedagogical ideology and practice (Luttenberg and Bergen 2008).

How are teachers’ reflections related to their agentic behavior in the bilingual preschool classroom? Réka Lugossy (this volume chapter “[Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts](#)”) shows how the EFL teacher in Hungary, through her self-observation and critical reflections, analyses her interactional and teaching problems and modifies her teaching strategies

during the nine months of self-observation. Furthermore, Ana Andúgar and Beatriz Cortina-Pérez (chapter “[EFL teachers’ reflections on their teaching practice in Spanish preschools: A focus on motivation](#)”) reveal how, in a situation of a lack of clear EFL legislative guidelines in Spain and specific professional preparation for early language introduction, teachers as agents implement their own instructional methods and strategies. Based on the 32 EFL teachers’ reflections, the researchers identify which strategies are effective for creating an agency-rich environment. Concerning the interaction between the child’s and the teacher’s agency, the teachers highlight that “showing empathy to children” and addressing their emotional and developmental needs should be at the forefront of the EFL teachers’ minds in preschool education (p. 230). Furthermore, the teachers believe that the uniqueness of the early childhood context compels them not only to act as high-level professionals, but also to be “... very natural and spontaneous” to create an agency-rich context and to conquer children’s hearts (p. 230). The teachers also reflect on the necessity to respect the child’s agency during the silent receptive period of bilingual development (“It is more important to promote participation than to press them to express orally”) (p. 232).

In addition, in chapter “[The Role of Early Childhood Education in Revitalizing a Minoritized Language in an Unsupportive Policy Context: The Galician Case](#)”, Renée DePalma and María Helena Zapico Barbeito examine future preschool teachers’ reflections on their potential agentic role. The contributors focus on a question that has not been researched to date: how future preschool teachers evaluate their own capacity for promoting a minoritized language (Galician) in early childhood education in Spain. The teachers’ capacity to act was investigated in an intriguing context of the lack of a clear-cut language education policy aimed at intergenerational transmission of the Galician language. This situation has the potential for agency of teachers who can “critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations” (Feryok 2012, p. 97). In addition, the researchers found that the immediate educational environment and its language-use norms, such as the tendency to use Galician in less formal language-conducive contexts (lunch and free play time), influence the teacher’s agency. Furthermore, this chapter promotes a broader concept than teacher’s agency—teachers’ collective agency, which is realized in the professional community’s commitment to supporting the minoritized language even in the context of the weak language education policy in Galicia. DePalma and Zapico Barbeito assert that the collective agency is an act of policy making by improving the social status of the minoritized language and reducing stereotypes concerning its use in society.

3.3.2 Language-Conducive Contexts in the Classroom

Van Lier (2010) invites us to imagine a “metaphorical room” in a language learning classroom “for a variety of expressions of [child’s] agency to flourish” (p. 5). The present volume complements and extends our understanding of how bilingual

classroom contexts, the “metaphorical rooms,” are supportive of child’s agency. We assert that the creation of the agency-rich environment is a major task of bilingual preschool pedagogy, which becomes a joint project for teachers and children.

Many authors in this volume examine language-conducive classroom contexts. Réka Lugossy (chapter “[Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts](#)”) shows how, through critical reflections, the EFL teacher realized that the children’s reluctance to be engaged in the structured English lessons gave rise to a reasonable question about the appropriateness of an unnatural learning context in the preschool classroom. Drawing on her painful experience, the teacher admitted that the building of natural contexts was more fruitful than structured teaching for breaking the ice in relationships with children and their willingness to perceive a novel language. Interestingly, the children’s generally infrequent L2 production was evident mainly during mealtime as a natural context that enables rapid memorization of basic formulaic language and initiation of labeling activities.

Furthermore, Gunhild Tomter Alstad and Elena Tkachenko (chapter “[Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices in Creating Multilingual Spaces: The Case of English Teaching in Norwegian Early Childhood Education](#)”) draw our attention to the potential of outdoor activities for creating a meaningful context for children’s novel language learning. The researchers show that providing a natural physical environment for the EFL input related to plants, animals, water, and rocks in Norwegian kindergartens attracts children’s attention to English as a novel language and prepares them to learn English in the future. In line with Lugossy’s findings, Alstad and Tkachenko found that building merely on structured and teacher-led activities promoted neither perceptual diversity nor child’s active engagement in the EFL learning process. At the same time, a more holistic approach towards EFL teaching and learning encouraged the children to initiate activities in informal language-learning settings such as free play and mealtimes.

Sandie Mourão (chapter “[Play and Peer Interaction in a Low-Exposure Foreign Language-Learning Program](#)”) also explores the role of the resource area for learning English in the preschool classroom in Portugal as a context that induces child-initiated language play. The language-learning area is defined as “...physical space, in the classroom” designed “to stimulate and facilitate children’s use of the target language they have previously been introduced to and practised with the teacher” (Robinson et al. 2015, p. 7). While playing in this area, the children are provided with diverse resources during the teacher-led language-learning sessions, which stimulate interactive learning. These include puppets, flashcards, picture books, and board games, as well as clothes for dressing up and role play.

Another feature of the classroom context is patterns of teacher–child communication and interaction, which are central to language learning. As mentioned above, Gass and Mackey (2007) claim that the centrality of interaction is an essential link between input and output in L2 development. In chapter “[Scaffolding Discourse Skills in Pre-Primary L2 Classrooms](#)”, Teresa Fleta claims that the young children’s encounter with the second or foreign language, to which they are not exposed in

their close environment outside of the classroom, highlights the importance of the role of teacher–child conversational interaction as well as of the teacher’s role as the only linguistic model of a novel language. The contribution illustrates how the context-embedded interactions provide opportunities for input and output in the English immersion classroom in Spain. Fleta also shows how the young children’s engagement in L2 production is supported by the teachers’ avoidance of explicit correction and the provision of positive feedback by elicitation, expansion, clarification request, and recast strategies. In this way, the teachers created language-conducive environment that is sensitive to young children’s emotional and development needs.

3.3.3 Language-Conducive Strategies

In a study of the causes of motivation in the EFL classroom among 6–14-year-old learners of English, Nikolov (1999) concluded that the causes fluctuate among the children according to age and that for younger learners, and for the young children (6–8-year-old) the following was fulfilled, “[...] classes must be fun and the teacher is in focus” (p.53). I assume that these principles are relevant for the current volume’s focus on preschool children. Accordingly, it is important to know how the teachers motivate the students and how they should act to apply language elicitation and encouragement which I classify in this volume as *language-conducive strategies*. The aim of this type of strategy is to enhance children’s willingness to communicate in a novel language. It is important to emphasize that the elicitation and encouragement strategies are cardinal in a case where the L2 learners are children who “...obviously do not feel the need to use the target language, since they can achieve everything by using their L1” (in this volume Lugossy, chapter “[Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts](#)”, p. 111).

Many of the contributions in this book demonstrate the teacher’s agentic role in providing scaffolding strategies such as asking questions, pausing to allow children to complete the teacher’s utterance, using verbal and non-verbal encouragement to stimulate the child’s agency. To illustrate this, Ekaterina Protassova (chapter “[Longing for Quality: Experiences of Finnish–Russian Bilingual Kindergartens in Finland](#)”) describes how teachers applied the *Happylingual approach* in Russian–Finnish-speaking bilingual day care in Finland, which was defined as “... stressing the bilingual phenomenon as an *asset* and not as a *flaw* by intermingling the child’s two languages in joyful play” (Schwartz and Verschik 2013). Drawing on this approach, teachers tried to create a low-anxiety atmosphere by eliciting L2 production and engaging children in diverse games and socio-dramatic play as a way “... to create unexpected and therefore memorable scenarios” to enhance the learning of new words (p. 150).

3.3.4 Diversity in children's Linguistic Background and Flexible Language Use

Current research on preschool bilingual education shows that teachers face daily dilemmas when negotiating between two or more languages in classroom teaching and identifying the optimal language instruction ratio for children of diverse linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Gort and Pontier 2013; Hickey et al. 2014; Palviainen et al. 2016; Schwartz et al. 2016). The traditional approaches towards language learning and teaching build, to a great extent, on the idea that children come from monolingual backgrounds, whereas the reality today is much more heterogeneous than that (e.g., Lotherington 2004; Schwartz and Palviainen 2016). Due to global migration processes and the increasing number of multilingual multi-ethnic families, many children in the twenty-first century are already bilingual or multilingual when they enter bilingual preschool and encounter a novel language. Additionally, children in the same classroom might differ considerably in initial competence in either language because they came from homes with diverse degrees of exposure to these languages.

How should teachers address children with diverse levels of proficiency in either language? The question was asked in many studies covered in this anthology. For example, Ekaterina Protassova (chapter “[Longing for Quality: Experiences of Finnish–Russian Bilingual Kindergartens in Finland](#)”) identifies three types of linguistic background among children in Russian–Finnish-speaking bilingual day care in Finland: children from Russian-dominant, Finnish-dominant, and bilingual homes. Protassova illustrates how teachers approached this challenge by addressing each individual child's linguistic needs. Thus, sometimes the teachers implemented small group activities separately for Russian-dominant and Finnish-dominant children containing more linguistically challenging content in the children's L1. This approach is designed to prevent native speakers' slower progress in. In addition, the teachers provided scaffolding in children's L1 as ground on which to teach new L2 content later on.

In addressing diversity in children's linguistic backgrounds, many contributions in this book analyze a growing tendency towards flexible language use as one core classroom strategy. This strategy is shown as *responsible code-switching*, namely teacher's monitoring of “both the quantity and the quality of their code-switching” (García 2009, p. 299). Similar to Protassova, Charles L. Mifsud and Lara Ann Vella (chapter “[Pre-School Bilingual Education in Malta: The Realities and the Challenges](#)”) show how, in the context of the societal Maltese–English bilingualism in Malta, a teacher, who applied some degree of flexibility in language use, addressed children's low levels of proficiency in English. Sometimes, the teacher negotiated understanding of new concepts in English by switching to the child's dominant language, Maltese. It is interesting that, in her reflections, the teacher explained the flexible language use via her own experiences as a bilingual adult who had grown up in a bilingual community where both languages were used habitually, and code-switching was a common linguistic behavior. This flexible language use among multilingual individuals has been recently conceptualized as “a translanguaging

approach to bilingualism” which “extends the repertoire of semiotic practices of individuals and transforms them into dynamic mobile resources...” (García and Wei 2014, p. 18).

Flexible language use and teachers’ sensitivity to children’s linguistic diversity is examined also by Gunhild Tomter Alstad and Elena Tkachenko (chapter “[Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices in Creating Multilingual Spaces: The Case of English Teaching in Norwegian Early Childhood Education](#)”) in light of the growing number of immigrant children in Europe. In focusing on the Norwegian context, the authors show how teachers as agents empower the immigrant children’s engagement in the learning processes by creating contexts that are conducive not only to teaching the socially prestigious language of English, but also the immigrant children’s languages. Regardless of the teachers’ competence in the children’s L1, they utilized multilingualism as a resource in teaching in the following way: “by suggesting to write down the words in Petro’s language (Albanian) she (the teacher) acknowledged that Petro’s linguistic resources were valuable for the group. Probably this choice contributed to the Albanian children’s socialization in the group, making them more attractive play partners” (p. 272). Moreover, as reported by the teachers, this multilingual environment was beneficial for the Norwegian-speaking monolingual children as well, by developing their linguistic and meta-linguistic awareness. García (2009) asserts that “[s]chools that adopt multiple bilingual teaching have a clear language policy that includes not only the development of bilingual proficiency, but also ... *plurilingual values of today* – multilingual awareness and linguistic tolerance” (p. 309). Thus, the teachers’ agentic behavior could be viewed as a realization of truly bilingual pedagogy.

Last but not least, the book examines flexible language use not only as a teacher’s strategy aimed at addressing diversity in children’s linguistic background but also in the context of team teaching. Karita Mård-Miettinen, Åsa Palviainen and Anu Palojärvi (chapter “[Dynamics in Interaction in Bilingual Team Teaching: Examples from a Finnish Preschool Classroom](#)”) focus on team teaching in the Finnish–Swedish-speaking bilingual preschool classroom. The researchers show how two collaborators, one teacher with the predefined bilingual Finnish–Swedish-speaking role, and the other teacher with the predefined monolingual Finnish-speaking role, orchestrate their language behaviors and support each other. The researchers ask the intriguing question of how the teachers with a predefined language role, use languages in a flexible way. Interestingly, the observations show that both teachers deviated from their predefined language roles: the model bilingual teacher used mostly Swedish as a minority language whereas the model monolingual teacher used Swedish in addition to Finnish. The authors attributed the increasing amount of Swedish use by the model bilingual teacher to her tendency to counterbalance the dominance of Finnish during circle time. In addition, although the model monolingual teacher communicated mainly in Finnish, in some cases, he demonstrated his bilingual knowledge by switching to Swedish. This flexible language use illustrated *the teachers’ agentic modelling of bilingual adults* living in the bilingual society and communicating in both official languages. By illustrating that both teachers used

Swedish—the minority language—the teachers drew the young emergent bilinguals' attention to the role of this language as social capital and as a resource not only in the microsystem of the target classroom but also in the macrosystem of social and cultural values in light of the state bilingualism in Finland.

In addition, in the study by Danijela Prošić-Santovac and Danijela Radović (chapter “[Separating the Languages in a Bilingual Preschool: To Do or Not To Do?](#)”), the teachers' attitudes towards flexible language use were explored in the context of strict language separation within a one person–one language (OPOL) model in Serbia. The contributors ask the reasonable question of whether teachers' rigid adherence to the OPOL model contributes to children's L2 progress, and finally results in bilingual development. Drawing on classroom observations and the teachers', children's, and parents' reports, the researchers critically discuss some shortcomings of strict language separation, such as minimal use of bilingual resources and metalinguistic strategies. Regardless of large amounts of English input in the classroom and reported parental support of English at home, the children's progress was relatively slow, limited to formulaic repetitions of songs and rhymes, and therefore raised the question of the efficiency of the target language model. At the same time, the L2 (English) teacher believed that flexible language use “... would make things easier and more comfortable for the children,” especially in terms of building a rapport with them. They would “ask questions more freely... and communicate more, and the children who [were] reserved [at the time] would be able to approach [her]” (p. 45).

3.4 Parents', Child's and teacher's Agencies in Interaction

Parents' choice of preschool bilingual education serves as a key step in the practical realization of their family language ideology aimed at the maintenance and intergenerational transmission of the heritage and social minority language (Fishman 1991; Schwartz 2010; Spolsky 2007). The partnership between school, family, and surrounding community for bilingualism is aimed at empowering children's willingness and positive attitude towards language learning. Working with teachers for these mutually agreed outcomes, parents as partners have the *funds of knowledge* of language minority homes stored in the wisdom of their histories, traditions, and educational values (Moll et al. 1992, p. 133). In this anthology, the partnership among the school, the family, and the surrounding community for bilingualism as a novel research domain was addressed in several studies. First, Ekaterina Protassova (chapter “[Longing for Quality: Experiences of Finnish–Russian Bilingual Kindergartens in Finland](#)”) focuses on the connections between quality of education in the early years in Russian–Finnish-speaking bilingual day care in Finland and the child's agency, parents' agreement, and teachers' efforts. This partnership takes the form of long-term experience in activity planning with parents, the Russian–Finnish-speaking school, the University of Helsinki, and with Russian-speaking societal

organizations including the media. As reported in the teachers' reflections, "... a parental committee helps financially by organizing parties and events, baking cakes, and running lotteries. Parents offer their recommendations (e.g., visiting exhibitions, inviting visiting performers, learning more Russian songs) during regular consultations or through email. The staff does not teach literacy, but if a child learns to read, the parents can ask for pedagogical support. Parents bring materials, toys, and educational board games" (pp. 154–155, chapter "[Longing for Quality: Experiences of Finnish–Russian Bilingual Kindergartens in Finland](#)"). In addition, Protassova shows how the teachers relate to the Russian-speaking parents' funds of knowledge with understanding and attempt to negotiate some discrepancies in the communicative cultural practices of this community and the local socio-cultural traditions.

Furthermore, Renée DePalma and María Helena Zapico Barbeito (chapter "[The Role of Early Childhood Education in Revitalizing a Minoritized Language in an Unsupportive Policy Context: The Galician Case](#)") explore the educational partnership in light of the minoritized language revitalization. The Spanish-speaking parents' agency was realized in the choice of Galician-medium early childhood settings as part of their family language management. The parents' partnership received expression in their active involvement in the preschools' language planning policy of Galician language revitalization projects such as a community-based creation of the "Sociolinguistic Map" aimed "to keep track of the language practices of families that attend the school, so that school language practices can respond more effectively to their needs" (p. 214). To raise the status of the minoritized language, the teachers and the parents celebrated the Galician festivals together with the community members, and organized visits by musical and theater groups who perform in Galician. Remarkably, this partnership influenced the Spanish-speaking families' language practice toward an increase in the use of Galician at home.

Finally, the contributions by Danijela Prošić-Santovac and Danijela Radović (chapter "[Separating the Languages in a Bilingual Preschool: To Do or Not To Do?](#)") and Réka Lugossy (chapter "[Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts](#)") explore the multifaceted relationship between the partnership for bilingualism and parents' agentic role in forming the child's linguistic environment. Both studies were conducted in the close geographic contexts of Serbia and Hungary, which have similar state language policies and a social preference for early English learning as a prestigious language. The researchers critically discuss widespread parental beliefs in the magical influence of an early start in English ("*the younger the better*") as the optimal condition for children's future academic success (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011). The studies show that putting children in the elite and expensive preschool with EFL instruction is far from being sufficient to ensure their agency and active engagement in the language learning process. Thus, in both studies, the classroom observation and the interviews with the teachers were evidence that, even after a number of years of instruction, the children showed mainly receptive bilingual skills and almost never initiated interaction in English.

4 Summary

Some specific characteristics of preschool education, such as flexible curriculum, more options for teachers to provide timely feedback, more time for authentic teacher–child and peer interaction, and higher level of parental and community engagement, create its distinctiveness in the child’s microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 2005). The contributions in this volume vividly demonstrate how these distinctive ecosystems interact with the development of a novel language and education to create significant social capital.

In line with the current policy of early language learning in Europe (European Commission 2011), the volume promotes our understanding of the unique nature of preschool bilingual education and adds to its theorizing as a distinctive research domain. Drawing on van Lier’s (2010) ecological perspective on language learning, we claim that early L2 exposure and L2 input *per se* are an insufficient prerequisite for a child’s active engagement in learning within a classroom context. The eleven original contributions demonstrate the interaction of all the actors—teachers, children and parents. These interactions’ main task is to build “metaphorical rooms” (language-conducive contexts) supportive of children’s language learning. In addition, the contributions explore the teacher’s critical reflection on their language strategies by discussing options for flexible language use. As illustrated, this strategy is not applied systematically but rather as a contextually and situationally related strategy to support the child’s essential needs.

The present anthology raises further questions about teachers’ training and professional development. The volume draws attention to such issues as an urgent need in the training of heritage, minority, and foreign language teachers who will combine their expertise in early childhood development and learning with awareness of an ecological perspective on language learning and a high level of competence in the target language.

To assess the extent to which the findings presented here may be true of preschool children’s bilingual development and education in other settings, this anthology presents research projects that employ similar research methods but were conducted in different environments. Shenton (2004) asserts that such an accumulation of comparable findings from studies staged in diverse socio-linguistic and socio-cultural contexts might enable the attainment of a more inclusive overall picture, and therefore adds to their transferability.

The contributions to the current volume are grouped into three parts:

- I. Teachers’ challenges in navigating bilingual spaces in their classrooms and practical decisions;
- II. Creating language-conducive contexts to engage children in language learning;
- III. Children as language experts and models.

This manner of organization is suggested more as a functional and structural grouping rather than as a topic-based grouping.

I wish to conclude and hope that the contributions to this volume will theoretically consolidate the field of preschool bilingual education in multilingual and multicultural societies by bringing together such diverse areas as educational linguistics, educational ethnography, language education policy, child development, early childrearing and parenting from a socio-linguistic perspective.

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Part I
Teachers' Challenges in Navigating
Bilingual Spaces in Their Classrooms
and Practical Decisions

Separating the Languages in a Bilingual Preschool: To Do or Not to Do?



Danijela Prošić-Santovac and Danijela Radović

Abstract The study focuses on a paired bilingual model used in a Serbian-English kindergarten in Serbia, where Serbian is the official language and, for the most part, the language of the immediate environment, while English has the status of a foreign language, albeit a socially prestigious one. The bilingual pedagogy of the model is based on complete language separation, i.e. ‘one person – one language’ approach, with L2/L1 ratio ranging from 1:8 to 1:10, depending on daily organization. The aim of the research was to investigate the teachers’ concerns in connection with the applied model, as well as the challenges they come across in their daily work. Also, their language teaching strategies and their correlation across languages were examined, alongside the role of the teachers and parents in encouraging child motivation and attitude toward second language acquisition. Finally, the attitudes of children themselves towards ‘one person – one language approach’ were recorded. With this aim in mind, a linguistic ethnographic approach was adopted, and the data were obtained through class observations and child observation sheets, semi-structured interviews with L1 and L2 teachers, a questionnaire for parents and a structured interview with children. The interview with children was conducted using the *Berkeley Puppet Interview* method in order to reduce acquiescence bias by employing the use of two puppets which take over the role of the interviewer and produce two opposite statements for each interview item, prompting the child to agree to one. Observation focused on children’s spoken interaction with the teacher, with the aim of revealing the ratio of FL/L1 use, alongside focusing on the teachers’ language teaching and motivational strategies, in order to uncover the most frequently used ones. The results show that the target bilingual model had mostly positive effects on children’s passive knowledge and attitude towards the English language, but also that more stakeholders favoured a balanced approach to the language learning process, regarding the applied ‘one person – one language’ model inappropriate. Both the children and the parents expressed a wish for introducing L1 into their L2 teacher’s repertoire, alongside the teacher herself. The practical value of such changes in the applied approach would be providing young learners with a

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positive model of a bilingual person. The children would benefit from exposure to comfortable and successful communication with one person in two languages, leading to fewer blockages and restrictions concerning their own use of both languages, as they would become more acceptant towards bilingualism in themselves.

1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on a paired bilingual model used in a Serbian-English kindergarten in Serbia, where Serbian is one of the official languages and, for the most part, the language of the immediate environment, while English has the status of a foreign language, albeit a socially prestigious one. The bilingual pedagogy of the model is based on complete language separation, i.e. ‘one person – one language’ approach. The aim of the research was to investigate the teachers’ concerns in connection with the applied model, as well as the challenges they come across in their daily work. Also, their language teaching strategies and their correlation across languages were examined, alongside the role of the teachers and parents in encouraging child motivation and attitude toward second language acquisition. Finally, the attitudes of children themselves towards ‘one person – one language approach’ were recorded. With this aim in mind, a linguistic ethnographic approach was adopted, and the data were obtained through a variety of research instruments.

The chapter first discusses the ‘one person – one language approach’ from a theoretical point of view, alongside code-switching, translanguaging and translating, and other teaching strategies used by teachers in the context explored, as well as the strategies used for influencing learners’ motivation and attitudes, both by teachers and parents. Next, a brief introduction to the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic contexts of the bilingual setting under examination and its language model and curriculum is given, followed by the information on methodology, in terms of research design, data generation and analysis, participants in the study and the instruments used. The results section is organized thematically, first presenting the participants’ views on the application of ‘one person – one language’ approach in their setting, as well as on code-switching, translanguaging and translating, with the results enriched by the data on the teaching strategies obtained through observation. Finally, the teachers’ and the parents’ strategies for influencing the children’s motivation and attitudes are presented because of the further influence these might have on the participants’ attitudes towards the approach. The discussion provides an overview of the results through the lens of the set research questions, and the chapter concludes with the limitations of the research presented, and the practical implications of the research.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 *The ‘One Person – One Language’ Approach*

The ‘one person – one language’ (OPOL) approach has a long history, originating in early research by parent-linguists, such as Grammont (1902), Ronjat (1913), Pavlovich (1920) and Leopold (1939–49). Grammont was the first to define the idea of ‘une personne – une langue’, theorising that by “strictly separating the two languages. .. [and] by associating each language with a specific person the chances of mixing languages are significantly reduced” (Barron-Hauwaert 2004, p. 1). The purpose is to produce balanced bilingual speakers through avoiding code-mixing and code-switching, “forc[ing] children to use the words in both languages” (Park 2008, p. 636), usually those present within the family context. Because of the frequency of this context, and because many studies did refer to the application of this approach by parents (Ronjat 1913; Leopold (1939–49); Ziener 1977; Saunders 1982; Taeschner 1983), the 1980s saw the introduction of a new term to stand for the OPOL practice – ‘one parent – one language’ (Bruce and Yu 1980). On the other hand, second and foreign language learning institutional environments appropriated the approach to suit their own purpose. By assigning the teacher the role of the person responsible for language separation through the option of exclusive use of only one language in the classroom, it was transformed into ‘one teacher – one language’ strategy (Schwartz and Asli 2014), popularized within the framework of the communicative language teaching (Savignon 2002). Therefore, in the hope of “acquiring communicative skills in [L2] in a manner similar to the natural way of language acquisition, [t]he mother tongue is not used during activities in [L2]” (Stanojević 2009, p. 171). Also, the rationale for L1 exclusion is stimulating learners to develop strategies for negotiating meaning on their own and separating the contexts in which different languages are used.

Barron-Hauwaert (2004) gives a chronological overview of the terms used by researchers throughout the twentieth century to refer to this approach to achieving bilingualism, noting that “the terms that have been added on along the way are very strong, such as Principle, System, Strategy, Procedure, Rule or Policy and imply strict adherence” (p. 4). The importance of this change of perspective is best reflected in an academic’s encyclopaedic conclusion that “the consistency and the strict separation of two languages are the key points for success” (Park 2008, p. 636). This attitude perseveres, regardless of the existing theory and research on bilingualism, which claims that “when a person owns two or more languages, there is one integrated source of thought” (Baker 2001, p. 165), as described in Cummins’ (2001) Common Underlying Proficiency model of bilingualism, for example. Therefore, in both home and classroom contexts, the exclusion of L1 from the experience of acquiring L2 can result in multiple problematic issues, such as the feeling of guilt on the part of the person unable to live up to the expectation of complete language separation (Swain et al. 2011) or unable to successfully develop rapport with the learner due to a lack of linguistic resources (Macaro 1997). Also, the main stronghold

of the approach, the fact that “in OPOL, the bilingual child uses the person as a reference point in choosing his or her language behaviour” (Park 2008, p. 636), can simultaneously act as a weak spot, as it can condition children to comfortably use a particular language with one person only, functioning as a barrier to successful communication in a wider social context because of the potentially existing “belief that L2 is somehow intended only for “internal” use, and reserved for communication with the designated person” (Prošić-Santovac 2017, p. 580).

2.2 *Language Teaching Strategies in the Bilingual Classroom*

Cummins (2007) challenges the three dominant assumptions taken for granted in both bilingual/immersion and foreign/second language classrooms: (1) the exclusion of L1 from the L2 instruction, (2) the “two solitudes” assumption, i.e. keeping L1 and L2 strictly separate, and (3) the “no translation” assumption, i.e. the stereotypical identification of potential classroom uses of translation with the out-dated grammar-translation method. As these are grounded in insufficient research evidence and “inconsistent with the instructional implications of current theory in the areas of cognitive psychology and applied linguistics” (Cummins 2007, p. 221), he advocates exchanging the monolingual instructional strategies for the alternative bilingual ones, such as allowing translation and students’ L1 in the classrooms, even in cases when the teacher is unfamiliar with it. In addition, he suggests nurturing students’ making cross-linguistic connections as a learning strategy by “creating a shared or interdependent space for the promotion of language awareness and cross-language cognitive processing” (Cummins 2007, p. 229), which can be achieved through paying attention to cognates, or using dual-language multimedia books and projects, for example. Schwartz and Asli (2014) further divide bilingual instructional strategies into four groups: (1) bilingual resource strategies, (2) metalinguistic strategies, (3) non-linguistic strategies, and (4) translanguaging (see Table 1).

Table 1 Language-teaching strategies (Schwartz and Asli 2014)

Strategies	Examples
Bilingual resource	Using translation Presenting key language structures and vocabulary bilingually Using parallel versions of poems and storybooks in L1 and L2 Creating dual language multimedia books and projects
Metalinguistic	Discussing differences between language structures in L1 and L2 Raising awareness of cognates and association between words
Non-linguistic	Using pointing gestures Using conventional gestures Using iconic gestures
Translanguaging	Code-switching intra-sentence Code-switching inter-sentence

Empirical evidence supports the use of bilingual resources such as creating dual language books (Cummins and Early 2011; Roessingh 2011; Bernhard et al. 2006) and reading them in an early language learning context (Naqvi et al. 2012). Kenner and her colleagues (2008) suggested providing help with these and other activities by presenting key vocabulary and language structures bilingually through explicit modelling and collaboration of L1 and L2 teachers. In addition, they found that explicit discussion of differences between language structures in L1 and L2, such as the use of the definite article or prepositions, is a useful metalinguistic strategy. Also, metalinguistic awareness can be enhanced through a reactivation of prior linguistic knowledge and a focus on studying the similarities between the existing language systems and the system of the language being acquired (Jessner 1999). This can be done by raising awareness of association between words and the existence of cognates, or words that share the same root and historical origin, and thus stimulating “vocabulary knowledge transfer across languages” (Freeman and Freeman 2008, p. 148). Language comprehension can additionally be facilitated by using non-linguistic strategies, such as gesturing, to create zones of proximal development (McCafferty 2002). In this chapter, the gestures considered are those hand and arm movements that represent communicative foreground (Roth 2001) and “point out referents of speech or exploit imagery to elaborate the contents of speech” (Goldin-Meadow 2004, p. 314) with the aim of fostering L1 and L2 understanding. They are further categorized as: (1) pointing, i.e. deictic gestures, which in most cultures consist of using the index finger to point to a referent (Nicoladis 2002), (2) conventional gestures, which “have a firmly established and agreed-upon meaning” (Schwartz and Asli 2014, p. 24), and (3) iconic gestures, which “depict a referent, such as moving the index finger and middle fingers backward and forward to indicate walking” (Nicoladis 2002, p. 244).

2.2.1 Translanguaging and Translating

The two strategies are discussed separately, because of the highly controversial academic attitude towards each of them. Both imply a readmission of L1 into the L2 learning process, and both go against the grain of the monolingual principle, recognising “a deliberate and well-calculated use of the mother tongue as. . . teaching from strength, not from weakness,” because L1, “along with the concepts acquired through and in it, is the greatest resource a child brings to school” (Butzkamm 2000, p. 418). According to this view, although teachers may choose to provide monolingual instruction, their students’ learning can never be monolingual itself, because L1 is ‘silently’ present in learners’ minds, even if they are not allowed to use it outwardly (Butzkamm 2003). Regardless of this, traditionally, classroom code-switching, both in terms of code-mixing, i.e. intra-sentential alternation of linguistic codes, and code-switching, i.e. alternation at the inter-sentential level (Lin 2008), has been viewed as an unwelcome nuisance. More recently, however, the term ‘translanguaging’ has been adopted to refer to a practice similar to code-switching, but incorporating a key distinctive feature:

The notion of code-switching assumes that the two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes that could be used without reference to each other. Instead, translanguaging posits that bilinguals have *one linguistic repertoire* from which they select features *strategically* to communicate effectively. That is, translanguaging takes as its starting point the *language practices of bilingual people as the norm*, and not the language of monolinguals, as described by traditional usage books and grammars. (García 2011, p. 1)

Likewise, translation is “a natural phenomenon and an inevitable part of second language acquisition. ... , regardless of whether or not the teacher offers or ‘permits’ translation” (Harbord 1992, p. 351). Through his research, Manyak (2004) concluded that translation facilitates children’s language and literacy development, especially in case of low proficiency L2 learners, and enables discussion of works of children’s literature, “positioning bilingualism as a special emblem of academic competence” (p. 17). Translation in this context serves a communicative purpose, fostering learner autonomy (Laviosa 2014). Its “success is measured in terms of achieving a communicative goal, rather than formal accuracy for its own sake” (Cook 2010, p. 149), which distances it from the notorious grammar-translation approach. With this aim in mind, Swain et al. (2011) suggest teachers to engage in translation for the purpose of clarifying both complex grammatical constructions and lexical items in order to save instructional time for more purposeful pedagogical activities. Students should also be allowed to require quick translations at ‘the moment of need’ as an optimal alternative to consulting bilingual dictionaries at a later moment (Swain et al. 2011), while certain activities can serve the purpose of raising young learners’ cross-cultural and cross-linguistic awareness, alongside expanding vocabulary (Bratož and Kocbek 2013). Macaro (2009) even claims that “some items of vocabulary might be better learnt through a teacher providing first-language equivalents because this triggers deeper semantic processing than might occur by providing second-language definitions or paraphrases” (p. 49).

2.3 Motivational Strategies Aimed at Enhancing Language Learning

In addition to teachers employing language teaching strategies in the course of their language instruction, they also apply, consciously or subconsciously, a variety of strategies that influence motivation and attitude of young learners towards the acquisition of a language. Motivation and attitudes are two constructs frequently investigated together as factors influencing language learning, due to their being closely inter-connected. Thus, while language attitudes “refer to positive or negative feelings about a language and what the learner may connect it with” (Mihaljević Djigunović 2012, p. 57), motivation in language acquisition can be defined as an amalgamation of “effort”, “desire to achieve the goal of learning the language” and “favourable attitudes toward learning the language” (Gardner 1985, p. 9). Because, alongside parents, teachers function as significant adults in children’s lives (Rishel et al. 2005), they play an important role, both passive and active, in the process of

the formation of children's attitudes, which are in turn "influential in motivating [them] to acquire the second language" (Gardner 1968, p. 141).

According to Gardner (1985), the passive role, one which adults may not be aware of, refers to their social attitude, towards the community of the speakers of the language being learned, and their educational attitude, towards the language itself and learning the language, and it can function independently of the active role the adults can perform (e.g. encouraging children, monitoring their performance, or reinforcing the identified successes). Martin (2003) further elaborates on the potential ways of influencing young learners' motivation and attitudes, listing strategies such as:

- sharing with them one's belief in the value of what is being learned,
- creating optimal conditions in the learning environment,
- controlling the amount and type of pressure placed on the learners to succeed, as well as the content of the messages given to them about success and how it is achieved,
- choosing whether to focus on their shortcomings or strengths and whether or not to compare learners with each other, and
- paying attention to the goals and expectations adults hold for the children.

Both motivation and attitudes towards language learning in general are significant in contexts where the 'one person – one language' approach is applied, as they directly influence how this language learning model is perceived, and whether its characteristic lack of flexibility is seen as beneficial or detrimental to one's learning progression. Thus, although rarely researched in this context, attitudes and motivation need to be included in the discussion on language separation in bilingual educational settings, as they form the ground upon which further interventions in the form of language teaching strategies and models are sown.

3 Background of the Present Study

3.1 A Brief Description of the Socio-Cultural and Socio-Linguistic Context

The research was performed in a city in Vojvodina, the province of Serbia which is both multilingual and multicultural. Although the Serbian language is an official language and widely spoken throughout the country, there are five more official languages within the territory of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina: Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, Croatian, and Ruthenian. Starting from preschool, which is an integral part of Serbian education system, with children starting the obligatory part at the age of 6, education is offered in all official languages, of which each functions as the sole medium of instruction, resulting in several parallel systems of monolingual education. However, bilingual education exists, as well, both

combining children's own language (Hall and Cook 2013) and community foreign language, which can be any official language, depending on the municipality, and combining children's own language with a modern foreign language with no official status in Serbia. This is true only for the preschool level, unfortunately, while from primary school upwards only modern foreign languages remain in combination. The reason for this lies in the fact that modern foreign languages are considered high-status languages in the society, while community languages are assigned a status lower than one's own language, regardless of the number of speakers (Prošić-Santovac and Radović 2015). Among modern foreign languages, the status of English is the highest (Popov and Radović 2015), and it is considered prestigious in comparison with the community languages. Due to this popularity, own language/English bilingual preschools are present both in the state-funded and the private sector, and the present study was performed within a partially state-funded private bilingual kindergarten, attended mostly by children belonging to higher social strata, due to significantly higher fees.

3.2 A Brief Description of the Language Model and Curriculum of the Target Kindergarten

To date, there have been no policies that would regulate Serbian bilingual education on the preschool level, while it was only recently that rules and regulations on primary and secondary bilingual education have been defined (Ministry of Education, Science and Professional Development 2015). Therefore, individual kindergartens are left to their own devices, led either by the aims of pilot projects, or individual managers' and teachers' ideas. In this particular kindergarten, the teaching is performed in Serbian as L1 and English as L2, with L1/L2 ratio ranging from 1:8 to 1:10, depending on daily organization. Early L2 instruction, from the age of 3 to the age of 5, was done within the framework of communicative language teaching and the *Teddies and Bunnies* programme (Mikeš 2005), which excludes the use of L1 by the L2 teacher, and consequently, the use of translation, based on the premise that "if the children expect translation, they will not pay attention to the messages in English" (Stanojević 2009, p. 171).

At the age of 6, in their final year in the kindergarten, the children were taught in a true bilingual fashion, simultaneously employing both the L1 and L2 teachers who worked towards the same goal and on the same thematic project, with its overarching theme being the city which the kindergarten was situated in. This co-teaching project culminated in the production of a thematic play, which included all the children as actors and marked the end of their kindergarten attendance before starting school. The initial idea which the co-teaching project was based on was the OPOL approach, with going to such extremes as to present the L2 teacher as a non-speaker of Serbian. This was done regardless of the fact that she had a typically Serbian

name, and she was required to speak English at all times when in or around kindergarten, in order to sustain the illusion in front of the children.

4 Research Questions

In order to examine the effects of such strict separation of languages during instruction, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the participants' (teachers' and children's) attitudes towards the 'one person – one language' approach, i.e. separating L1 and L2 during instruction?
2. What is their attitude towards teaching strategies, such as translanguaging and translating, which join both languages in the process?
3. What language teaching strategies do teachers employ in order to enhance language learning?
4. What motivational strategies do teachers and parents employ in order to enhance language learning?
5. How do the parents' personal attitudes, both educational and social, influence those of the children towards learning and using the language?

5 Methodology

A linguistic ethnographic approach (Creese 2008) was applied with the aim of investigating the stakeholder's experience of the applied model, taking into account their attitudes as well as the observed and self-reported practices within the context under scrutiny. Linguistic ethnography was considered a suitable choice because it "holds that language and social life are mutually shaping, and that close analysis of situated language use can provide both fundamental and distinctive insights into the mechanisms and dynamics of social and cultural production in everyday activity" (Rampton et al. 2004, p. 2). The ethnographic viewpoint of the study bears special significance, as ethnography "typically looks for the meaning and rationality in practices that seem strange from afar or at first" (Rampton et al. 2014, p. 2) and recognizes the unavoidability of the researcher's partiality, compensating for it as much as possible including it in the final interpretation (Hymes 1996).

5.1 Research Design

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed for data collection in order to enable triangulation. A variety of instruments were used, with the data obtained through video recorded class observations, using field notes and

observation sheets, semi-structured interviews with L1 and L2 teachers and structured interviews with children, questionnaires for parents, as well as language knowledge tests for children and teachers. Triangulation was applied with the aim of verifying the data obtained from the interviews, as well as to explain the data obtained from the observation. The interviews with children were incorporated into the research design regardless of the fact that this is not a common practice among researchers who frequently resort to vicarious sources of information. This was done because, although “pre-schoolers do have limited communicative abilities relative to school-aged children, .. they are also surprisingly competent in ways not usually appreciated by the researchers” (Greig et al. 2007, pp. 90–91) and great care was taken to maximise the validity of their responses, and check it through observations, as well.

5.2 *Data Generation and Analysis*

5.2.1 **Participants**

The study used non-probability purposive sample, which was chosen by the researchers “in the full knowledge that it does not represent the wider population” (Cohen et al. 2005, p. 102). The participants included 18 parents and 20 children attending the kindergarten in question, as well as two teachers employed in the institution.

The Parents Only one parent per child was asked to fill in the questionnaire, and among those who did, there were 76.00% of female and 23.00% of male participants. According to their self-reported evaluation, all spoke English to a greater or lesser degree (35.30% *well*, 35.30% *very well* and 29.40% *excellent*). The background data were obtained, however, for all the parents of all the children in the study from the kindergarten’s administrative data base, with the parents’ permission and regardless of their active participation. According to this, the parent’s mean age was 42.40 at the time ($M = 42.40$, $Mdn = 42.00$, $SD = 5.14$), and 20.00% of children had parents who were divorced, living with the female parent only. All parents, apart from three married mothers, were employed at the time the research took place. Based on the data on education, occupation, gender, and marital status, the estimated social status of the families was calculated ($M = 56.40$, $Mdn = 55.00$, $SD = 6.99$) and they were positioned within the five social strata as defined by Hollingshead (2011) (Fig. 1). As can be observed in Fig. 1, the sample is not representative of the wider society, but only of its upper social strata, as was expected taking into account that bilingual preschool education is not widely available within the country and that, “in educational contexts where the private sector offers a range of early programs, socio-economically advantaged children’s parents are more able to afford early English or other languages” (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011, p. 19).

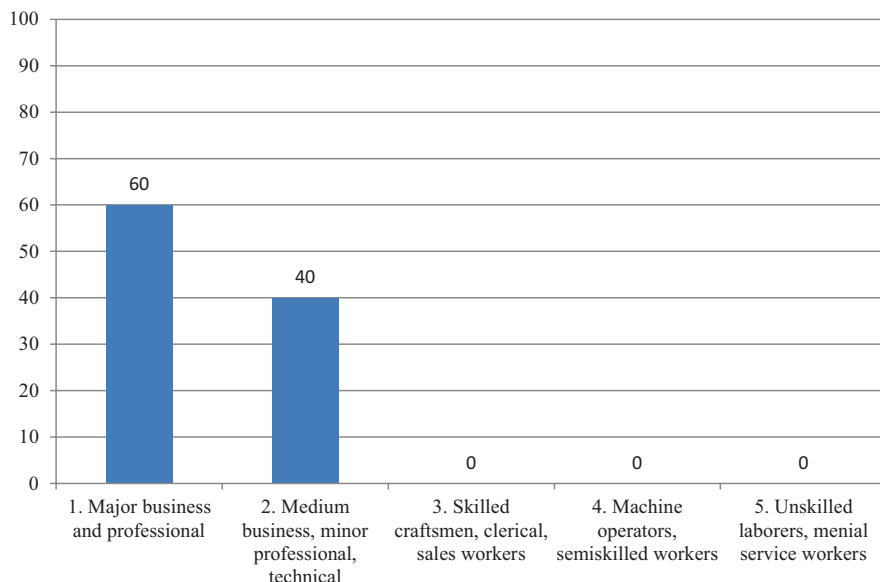


Fig. 1 Parental status within social strata

The Children This part of the sample consisted of 60.00% of boys and 40.00% of girls, of the mean age 6.48 ($M = 6.48$, $Mdn = 6.45$, $SD = 0.31$). They started attending the kindergarten at the mean age of 4 ($M = 4.00$, $Mdn = 3.50$, $SD = 1.17$) and learning English at the mean age of 3.85 ($M = 3.85$, $Mdn = 3.50$, $SD = 0.93$). The L1 of all the children was Serbian, with only one girl being bilingual in Polish, as well. All the children had someone in their immediate linguistic environment who could speak English. Thus, as many as 94.10% of mothers and 88.20% of fathers were speakers of English, alongside 35.30% of siblings, 11.80% of grandmothers and 5.90% of grandfathers. However, based on the parents' reports, only 22.20% of children were exposed to and included in conversations in L2 at home. In addition, 22.20% of children were observed by their parents in spontaneous and/or solitary play with their toys at home, and 38.90% in using L2 in spontaneous communication outside preschool, although they were exposed to L2 in a variety of alternative ways (see Table 2).

Most of the children attended preschool relatively regularly during the academic year when the research was performed, with 20% attending all classes, 70% attending more than half of the lessons and only 10% attending less than a half ($M = 71.50\%$, $Mdn = 70.00\%$, $SD = 24.34\%$). The group's mean score for the receptive L2 vocabulary knowledge was rather high ($M = 80.40\%$, $Mdn = 84.00\%$, $SD = 13.04$), as well as that for the productive L2 vocabulary knowledge ($M = 55.00\%$, $Mdn = 56.00\%$, $SD = 25.46$), taking into account the expectation that the receptive vocabulary size will be larger than that of the productive vocabulary (Laufer 1998; Laufer and Goldstein 2004; Webb 2008; Zhong and Hirsh 2009; Zhong 2011), due to the more advanced nature of the productive knowledge (Melka 1997).

Table 2 The children's exposure to L2 outside kindergarten

Exposure to L2 outside kindergarten	Percentage
Additional attendance of private ELT schools	22.20
Private ELT tutors at home	27.80
Both private ELT tutors and schools	5.60
Watching television and cartoons in L2 at home	88.90
Reading books in L2 at home	44.40

The Teachers Both teachers were female and both were native speakers of the Serbian language. The L1 teacher's level of L2 knowledge was A2 (pre-intermediate), while the L2 teacher showed knowledge at B1 (intermediate) level of *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. The length of their experience in work with preschoolers differed to a great extent, as Diana, the L1 teacher, had only three years of work experience, all in the kindergarten discussed, while Gordana, the L2 teacher, had 11, and nine in this particular kindergarten, simultaneously working part-time in other environments as well. Within Hollinshead's *Four factor index of social status* (2011), Diana's score of 33 positioned her towards the lower end of the middle social stratum, while Gordana, with the score of 42, was placed in the 'Medium business' category, alongside 40% of the parents and students. Prior to starting work, Diana finished Preschool Teacher Training College, in the duration of three years, while Gordana graduated from the Drama Department of the Academy of Arts, with the programme lasting four years. Neither of them had pre- and in-service instruction on either teaching in a bilingual setting or co-teaching. Therefore, they applied improvisation in their teaching practice, which resulted in an amalgamation of two co-teaching models: (1) 'Lead and support', where L1 teacher is responsible for "advanced planning in isolation" and L2 teacher is "fully involved in daily planning, implementation, and assessment," and (2) 'Speak and add', where L1 teacher leads and L2 teacher "adds visually or verbally" (Benninghof 2012, p. 63).

5.2.2 Instrumentation and Procedure

Observations The focus of observations were the teachers' instructional and motivational strategies, both verbal and non-verbal, as well as the children's verbal interactions in L1 and L2 with the teachers, with the aim of revealing the ratio of L1/L2 use. Observation was undertaken prior to developing other instruments, in order to obtain sufficient data to base them on. The observation period lasted from April 2015 to June 2015, and field notes were taken during each visit to the kindergarten, while teaching sessions were video recorded ten times, each video observation lasting approximately one hour. The video recorded class observations were examined by the authors using three checklists: (1) *Language teaching strategies checklist*, based on Schwartz and Asli's (2014) categorisation of bilingual instructional strategies, and devised with the aim of revealing the kind and frequency of the language

teaching strategies employed by both teachers, and their correlation; (2) *Encouraging child motivation and attitude toward L2 acquisition checklist*, based on field-note observation data, which aimed to record the teachers' motivational strategies, both non-verbal (using the affectionate touch, hugs, kissing, smiling, gesturing and vocal variations) and verbal (using praise, humour, personal names and hypocoristics, talking to students before and after class and accepting children's contributions enthusiastically); and (3) *Children-teacher interaction checklist*, based on observation data, as well, which was devised to record the children's spoken interaction with the teachers, and the ratio of their L1/L2 use, by counting the frequency of occurrence of units, such as initiating communication or answering the teachers' questions using single words or sentences, and reproducing poems or rhymes. The data analysis was done through content analysis of the field notes and the transcriptions of video recorded observations. The data were coded and assigned adequate unit categories relevant to the research focus, and checklists were created accordingly. Upon analysing the transcripts, frequencies of unit occurrence were noted within individual categories for each checklist devised, counting all unit occurrences, regardless of potential repetition, in order to be able to calculate the percentage of use of individual units relative to the total sum of all frequencies within categories included in a checklist.

Interviews with Children and Teachers The statements in the *structured interview with children* were formulated in L1, in order to ensure understanding. Partially based on Prošić-Santovac (2015), they were organized so as to record: (1) the very young learners' attitude towards and their experience of the OPOL approach; (2) their attitude towards translating and translanguaging; (3) the relevant ELT classroom practice, in terms of interpersonal linguistic interaction and the reasons for such practice; and (4) the socio-affective aspect of the application of the OPOL approach. The pairs of statements in each category were formulated in accordance with the observed practices in the classroom, in order to ensure that they examined the children's lived experience and not constructs outside their schemata (see Appendix). The individual interviews with the children, of approximate duration of 15 min each, were video-recorded with both parents' and children's informed consent (Greig et al. 2007). The interviews were conducted over the span of two weeks, using the *Berkeley Puppet Interview* method (Ablow and Measelle 1993) in order to reduce acquiescence bias by employing the use of two puppets which take over the role of the interviewer and produce two opposite statements for each interview item, prompting the child to agree to one. The original interview method employs the use of identical puppets with name tags, which was not feasible in case of this study. Instead, "due to the very young age of the participant[s] and the low literacy level, two puppets of equal size and production quality were used, in order to avoid bias, but they represented two different kinds of animals, thus enabling easier visual differentiation" (Prošić-Santovac 2017, p. 576). The children were eager to be interviewed, at times even impatient in waiting for their turn, because the interview resembled a small-scale play, having been performed using puppets and an improvised stage, with the interviewer invisible to the children.

The *semi-structured interviews with the teachers* were also conducted in L1 and aimed at capturing: (1) the teachers' concerns in connection with the applied model, (2) the challenges they come across in their daily work through the use of the OPOL approach, and (3) their attitude towards strategies such as translanguaging and translation. The interviews with teachers were also performed individually and were audio recorded with the teachers' consent. They were divided according to Seidman's (2006) recommendation into three parts, each lasting 90 min and organized around one of the previously stated topics, which resulted in approximately 9 h of total teacher interview time. Both teachers were interviewed in their L1 and off the kindergarten venue, which was especially important in case of L2 teacher, due to her kindergarten-imposed restrictions on L1 use.

Due to the different nature of the teachers' and children's interviews, the employed mode of analysis of the former was chosen with the aim of accommodating for the qualitative type of data obtained, using content analysis of the transcribed interviews, while the children's interviews, which yielded mostly quantitative or more specifically, nominal type of data, additionally required using the SPSS computer package.

Parents' Questionnaires The *questionnaire for parents* aimed at collecting data about (1) their attitudes towards L1 and L2 and the relevant native speaker communities and (2) the motivational strategies they used in order to influence children's language learning. It featured both closed- and open-ended items in L1, with one of its parts paralleling some statements in the children's interviews, for the purpose of comparison and collecting the background data. The aim of examining the role of parents in encouraging child motivation and attitude toward L2 acquisition was addressed through scales, each containing eleven items, grouped according to Gardner's (1968, 1985) passive and active roles. The parents' social attitudes towards the L2 communities (British and American) were examined on the basis of the Thurstone scales developed by Mihaljević Djigunović (1998),¹ while the scale on educational attitude towards L2 and L2 learning was developed by the researchers in accordance with the Thurstone scale development methodology (Streiner et al. 2014), as well as the scales on the attitudes towards the L1 and the L1 community, with the statements in the latter based on Marić (1998). The scale on the active role of parents in encouraging children's motivation was examined through eleven statements based on Martin's (2003) motivational strategies ($\alpha = 0.693$). The distribution and collection of the parent questionnaires was organized electronically with the help of the kindergarten staff, and SPSS computer package was also applied in case of processing the data obtained.

Language Tests for Teachers and Children The teachers were tested for their English language knowledge within the levels of *Common European Framework of*

¹As these scales were developed for the Croatian people in 1998, only 7 years after Serbia and Croatia stopped belonging to the same country, the scales were taken verbatim, because not enough time had passed for the Croatian and Serbian people to develop a different mentality during that time period.

Reference for Languages using the *Quick Placement Test* (UCLES 2001), with the aim of obtaining background data. In case of the children, and for the same purpose, a productive and a receptive vocabulary test was used in order to determine the vocabulary knowledge retained from the beginning of exposure to L2 to the research period, based on all the flashcards used for vocabulary introduction and recycling since year one of their L2 learning in this particular kindergarten. The format of the tests was based on *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (Dunn and Dunn 1997) and *Expressive Vocabulary Test* (Williams 1997), but with a significantly smaller number of target items in each. The productive vocabulary test ($\alpha = 0.906$) contained 25 target items, while the receptive vocabulary test ($\alpha = 0.726$) had additional 75 distractors, grouped according to semantic fields defined by subject matter (Brinton and Brinton 2010).

6 Results

The research yielded results on the participants' views on the application of 'one person – one language' approach in their setting, as well as on language teaching strategies, enriched by the data obtained through observation. In addition, the teachers' and the parents' strategies for influencing the children's motivation and attitudes are presented. The first research question is addressed in Sect. 6.1, the second and third research questions are dealt with in Sect. 6.2, and the fourth and fifth research questions are referred to in Sect. 6.3.

6.1 *The Teachers' and Children's Attitudes Towards the 'One Person – One Language' Approach*

To assess the participants' attitudes on the applied model of teaching in the preschool, i.e. the OPOL approach, both the teachers and the children were interviewed. In addition, observation records supplied the data on the frequencies of children's interaction in both languages with their L1 and L2 teachers throughout the observation period, differentiating between the situations when children themselves initiated communication, when they responded to a prompt from the teachers, and when they reproduced the songs or rhymes learned by heart at the teachers' request. Table 3 summarizes the data obtained using the *Children-teacher interaction checklists*. In general, L1 was used to address both the L1 and L2 teacher in 75.50% of the cases, while L2 was used only to address the L2 teacher (24.50%). In case of utterances used to address L2 teacher only, 40.07% were produced in L1 and 59.93% produced in L2. However, it is important to note that a majority of utterances in L2 were reproductions of short songs and rhymes, with most of the communication reduced to single words used in response to the teacher's question. This was so

Table 3 Children-teacher interaction checklist results

	L1 to address L1 teacher (%)	L1 to address L2 teacher (%)	L2 to address L2 teacher (%)
<i>Initiates communication using</i>			
Single words	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sentences	21.08	6.36	0.07
<i>Answers questions using</i>			
Single words	7.97	2.81	3.27
Sentences	26.33	7.22	0.71
<i>Reproduces short songs/ rhymes</i>	3.74	0.00	20.44
<i>Total</i>	59.12	16.38	24.50

regardless of the large amount of exposure to L2 at the children's homes, in the preschool and even after preschool within the after preschool educational settings.

The interview with the children revealed their awareness of such classroom practice, with 60% of children agreeing with the statement 'When my L2 teacher asks me something in L2, I respond in L1', 25% with 'I respond in L2' and 15% adding their own interpretation of the interpersonal linguistic interaction by stating that they "sometimes answer in L1 and sometimes in L2." The reasons stated for such practice were the following: self-perceived insufficient knowledge of L2 in general (50%), inadequate knowledge of L2 vocabulary (45%), and fear of talking in L2 in front of the peers (5%). One child, with perceived high self-esteem in terms of L2 use, expressed his awareness of that, and therefore had no reasons to disclose, as he was the one who actually used L2 the most of all the children, playing the role of 'the language expert' who was placed in a superior social position among the peers (Schwartz and Gorbatt 2017). To screen for conformity, the children were asked to agree with either the statement 'I talk to my L2 teacher in L1 because all my friends do it', which 40% of the participants did, while doing so of their own accord, i.e. 'because they themselves wanted to', was reported by 35%. The rest stated that they used both languages, and therefore did not agree with either of the statements. However, when the subjects were asked whether they would like to be required to speak only in L2 to the L2 teacher, as many as 65% of children agreed, while 35% did not, although only a half reported complete understanding of their L2 teacher's speech.

When asked about their preferences for the strict separation of languages in teaching, 18.20% of children favoured the approach as opposed to 62.50% of those who wished for a combined use of English and Serbian by the L2 teacher, with 27.30% of those who stated they liked both. The teachers, on the other hand, had a completely different opinion, with L1 teacher stating that, "if the L2 teacher combined languages, the children would extensively rely on L1 use, which would prevent them from starting to speak L2." Nevertheless, the L2 teacher herself softened her stance on this issue over time, stating that she was "not so sure about that anymore," having noticed that children used little English, except in the case of songs

and rhymes (compare Lugossy, in this volume, Chap. 10). The efficiency of the applied model was characterised as high by the L1 teacher, “provided both teachers are present in the room, . . . because of the different levels of the children’s L2 knowledge.” The L2 teacher’s view was that the model can be efficient “provided a lot of acting and situational examples were involved,” but she added that “a large number of children, e.g. 25, makes it a problem to apply this.” Another concern that both teachers mentioned was the monolingual model that the OPOL approach offered to learners, especially the fact that the rest of the staff in the kindergarten used Serbian to talk to the L2 teacher, while she constantly responded in English. The L1 teacher explained to the children that the L2 teacher “understood Serbian, but did not speak it,” which may have influenced them to think that “they too can understand English, but not speak it,” just like their L2 teacher did with Serbian.

However, telling the children that the L2 teacher did not understand Serbian in order to force the children to use English, was not an option for either of the teachers, because they felt it would cause stress for the children in the absence of the L1 teacher, and cause distrust towards the L2 teacher and “result in a child’s frustration” (Schwartz and Gorbatt 2017, p. 26). Thus, the issue of trust came up as a major factor. As already noted, in order to keep the illusion of the L2 teacher’s monolingualism, with the aim of complete language separating and stimulating the children to use L2, the teacher was required to speak L2 in and around the kindergarten. However, and regardless of the teachers’ conviction of complete success in this, only half of the children actually reported believing that the L2 teacher cannot speak their L1. Both teachers were very worried about the possibility of their seeing through the deception, especially the L2 teacher who felt that, if children found out that she actually spoke Serbian, she would “betray them, and that would be terrible.” The L1 teacher additionally said that “it is OK for [the L2 teacher] to be required to speak English at all times, even outside the class, because if [they] say that she can’t speak Serbian, then [they] are cheating the children if she spoke in Serbian, while, this way, at least they don’t know [they]’re cheating them.” Therefore, the implication is that, once teachers get caught up in the OPOL system, especially an extremely defined one as in this context, there seems to be no way out without losing the children’s trust.

6.2 *Language Teaching Strategies*

The teachers’ and the children’s interviews, as well as the observation records, yielded data on the language teaching strategies used by both teachers included in the study. The *Language teaching strategies checklist* revealed that some strategies listed in Table 1 (Schwartz and Asli 2014) were not used at all by either of the teachers, so they have not been included in the report on the results (see Table 4).

These results stand in stark contrast with the findings of Schwartz and Asli (2014), whose research context featured a flexible approach to bilingualism and consequently an entirely different strategy distribution. In our context, the observed

Table 4 The Language teaching strategies checklist results

Strategies		L1 teacher (%)	L2 teacher (%)	Total (%)
Bilingual resource	Using translation	4.29	2.89	7.19
	Presenting key vocabulary bilingually	0.53	0.00	0.54
	Using parallel versions of poems in L1 and L2	0.09	0.09	0.17
	Creating dual language projects	0.09	0.09	0.17
Metalinguistic	Discussing differences between language structures in L1 and L2	0.17	0.09	0.26
	Raising awareness of cognates and association between words	0.00	0.09	0.09
Non-linguistic	Using pointing gestures	24.28	34.44	58.72
	Using conventional gestures	2.98	6.66	9.64
	Using iconic gestures	8.24	13.67	21.91
Translanguaging	Code-switching intra-sentence	0.96	0.00	0.96
	Code-switching inter-sentence	0.26	0.09	0.35
Total		41.89	58.11	100.00

use of strategies, with the minimal exploitation of bilingual resources and metalinguistic strategies on the whole, emphasises the parallel monolingualism that characterises the OPOL approach, rather than real bilingual education. In addition, the teaching strategies of L1 and L2 teachers did not correlate completely, with some not being used by the L1 teacher, such as raising awareness of cognates and association between words, and some not being used by the L2 teacher, such as presenting key vocabulary bilingually and code-switching intra-sentence. On the whole, non-verbal strategies prevailed, with the score of 90.27% of all strategies used. Of these, pointing gestures were the most frequent (58.72%), followed by iconic gestures (21.91%) and conventional gestures (9.64%). Of the verbal strategies used, only the use of translation was prominent enough with 7.19%, with one of the translanguaging strategies next in line with only 0.96%. This is also the order of the four most frequently used strategies in case of the L2 teacher, while the L1 teacher used translation more than she did conventional gestures.

However, when asked about it during the interview, the L1 teacher was largely unaware of her practice, stating that she avoided the use of translation due to her methodological education. She considered it “not useful,” since “it would imply that what the L2 teacher says is not important if the children will hear it anyway in the language in which it is easier for them to hear it.” The only situations in which she consciously approved of translation was when the children did not understand what was being said, e.g. when the content within the required curriculum appeared to be too complex for dealing in L2, or when translation was asked from children themselves, “as they will memorize things better that way.” The L2 teacher agreed with her, and there were many instances during the observation period when both teachers either asked the children to translate, or when the children did so of their own accord. Accordingly, the children’s attitude towards the translating practice exer-

Table 5 The children's attitude towards translating

Pair no.	Statement 1	%	Statement 2	%
1	I like it when our L1 teacher translates our L2 teacher's words.	80.00	I don't like that.	10.00
2	I like it when my peer translates our L2 teacher's words.	70.00	I don't like that.	15.00
3	I prefer when our L2 teacher uses gestures or pictures when she explains something in L2.	65.00	I prefer to have it translated into L1.	25.00
4	I would like our L2 teacher to translate what she says.	55.00	I don't like it when translating into L1 is done in class.	35.00
5	When I don't understand what our L2 teacher is saying, I ask for repetition in L2.	45.00	And I ask for translation.	40.00

Table 6 The children's attitude towards translanguaging

Pair no.	Statement 1	%	Statement 2	%
1	I like it when our L1 teacher says something in L2.	80.00	I don't like it.	15.00
2	I would like our L2 teacher to use both L2 and L1.	61.70	I prefer her to use L2 only.	31.70
3	If our L2 teacher used both languages, it would help me understand better.	66.70	For me, it would be confusing.	20.00
4	If our L2 teacher used L1 sometimes, I would use L2 more.	50.0	If she did that, I would only use L1 then.	45.00
5	If our L2 teacher used L1 sometimes, I would ask questions more often when I don't understand something.	50.0	I ask her anyway if I don't understand something.	40.00

cised in their class was mostly positive, with the preference for the L1 teacher, then a peer, and finally, the L2 teacher to act as translator (Table 5).²

What teachers feared most in case of conscious introduction of translanguaging as a teaching strategy was that the children would use predominantly L1 for genuine communication. However, in the existing model, this was already the case, and half the children reported a different stance concerning the matter (Table 6). Again, and in disagreement with the children, the L1 teacher thought that translanguaging would be confusing for the children, providing an unstable environment. The L2 teacher, on the other hand, thought it would improve the teaching and learning situation, as "it would make things easier and more comfortable for the children," especially in terms of building rapport with them. They would "ask questions more freely, ... and communicate more, and the children who [were] reserved [at the time] would be able to approach [her]." This discrepancy in the teachers' opinion may

²Where the percentage score does not add up to 100, it is due to missing or indiscernible answers.

have been present due to the different levels of their professional ‘maturity’, as the L1 teacher was both younger and had fewer years of work experience, all in the same kindergarten, and may not have been as ready to question the kindergarten managers’ decisions and instructions as the L2 teacher was, who had been exposed to a variety of working environments prior to the research period.

It is apparent from Table 6 that the children have a similar attitude towards the practice of translanguaging as in the case of translating (Table 5), although they encountered it much less frequently. Here, the same pattern emerges: they are more tolerant towards the use of both languages by their L1 teacher, probably because the immediate environment did not emphasise her monolinguality as in the case of L2 teacher. The fact that it was implicitly understood that L1 teacher was allowed to use both languages could have been used in practice to promote a model of a bilingual adult and an L2 mediator.

6.3 *The Teachers’ and Parents’ Motivational Strategies*

Observation data analysis using the *Encouraging child motivation and attitude toward L2 acquisition checklist* is presented in Table 7, which is revealing in several ways. First, what calls for attention is the fact that verbal strategies accounted for a total of 62.48% of all observed strategies used as a motivational tool, as opposed to the observed language teaching strategies, where non-verbal ones were dominant, with 90.27% (see Table 4). However, after using personal names, gesturing is still in the second place, followed by using hypocoristics (nicknames and terms of endearment), smiling, accepting children’s contributions, using praise, affectionate touch,

Table 7 The Encouraging child motivation and attitude toward L2 acquisition checklist results

Observed strategy	L1 teacher (%)	L2 teacher (%)	Total (%)
<i>Non-verbal communication</i>			
Gesturing	14.95	4.04	18.99
Smiling	4.68	5.95	10.64
Using affectionate touch	1.56	1.65	3.21
Using hugs	0.55	1.65	2.20
Using vocal variations	0.18	1.56	1.74
Kissing	0.28	0.46	0.74
<i>Total</i>	22.20	15.32	37.52
<i>Verbal communication</i>			
Using personal names	25.69	1.65	27.34
Using hypocoristics	11.19	6.05	17.24
Accepting children’s contributions enthusiastically	7.25	2.94	10.19
Using praise	5.23	0.46	5.69
Talking to students before and after class	0.82	0.82	1.65
Using humour	0.37	0.00	0.37
<i>Total</i>	50.55	11.93	62.48
<i>Sum total</i>	72.75	27.25	100.00

Table 8 Factors influencing children's motivation and attitudes towards L2 acquisition, based on Martin (2003, pp. 6, 8)

Statement	YES (%)
I teach my child not to compare him/herself with anyone, but rather to focus on her/his own knowledge of L2.	94.40
I talk to my child about the value of learning L2.	88.90
I draw my child's attention to what he/she knows well in order to feel good about her/himself.	88.90
I draw my child's attention to small successes and progress in his/her learning.	83.30
I focus my child's attention to what she/he does not know in order for him/her to learn better.	72.20
I point out to my child that it is important for her/him to be successful in learning L2.	72.20
I talk to my child about the importance of his/her successfully mastering L2.	55.60
I ensure that there are always interesting children's books in L2 in our house.	44.40
I tell my child that I expect her/him to be successful in L2.	44.40
I draw my child's attention to some peers' good L2 knowledge in order to motivate him/her to better learn the language.	16.70
I stimulate my child to be the best in L2 within the peer group.	11.10

hugs, vocal variations, talking to students out of class, kissing and, finally, using humour. Second, the ratio of motivational strategy use by the L1 teacher to that of the L2 teacher was 2.67 to 1, with variations in the individual strategy use. The L1 teacher's preferred strategies were the use of personal names, gesturing and hypocoristics, while the L2 teacher resorted to using hypocoristics, smiling and gesturing in the first place.

In addition to the observed strategies of the teachers, the parents were asked about the self-reported activities they actively undertake with the aim of encouraging children's motivation and attitudes towards L2 acquisition, i.e. their active role (Table 8).

The strategy that proved to be the most prominent was teaching children not to compare themselves with anyone in terms of their L2 knowledge. Parents also frequently opted for transmitting their thoughts on the value of learning L2 to their children, and stimulating their self-confidence in terms of language use. The least prominent strategies were those promoting peer competition, luckily, and also interestingly, if we note that the most prominent one concerned direct discouragement of peer competition, too. Thus, they encouraged a focus on learning rather than on performance or competition (Martin 2003).

Examining the parents' passive role, in terms of their social attitude, towards the community of the speakers of the language being learned and their educational attitude, towards the language itself and learning the language, resulted in an overall expression of a more positive attitude towards the British speakers of English, with the statements on the negative side of the Thurstone scales scoring 51.58% of positive answers, and those on the positive side scoring 83.16%. The attitude towards the Americans was more negative in nature, as for the negatively oriented statements agreement was recorded with 60.02% of the participants, while the positive ones were agreed with by only 53.70%. The statements on the negative side of the

scale for the speakers of the Serbian language scored an average of 37.78%, as the attitude towards the community was largely positive, with the statements on the positive side scoring 80.02%. The examination of the educational attitude towards the languages themselves and learning them revealed a somewhat more positive attitude towards L2, English (86.30% – positive, and 17.04% – negative) than towards L1, Serbian (72.22% – positive, and 51.10% – negative).³ Therefore, for the most part, the set of parents in question was likely to function as a positive influential force in the formation of the children's attitudes towards learning both L2 and L1, and this was evident in the children's attitudes, as well, since 75% of children expressed enjoyment in using and learning L2 in the kindergarten, 50% were intrinsically motivated to use L2 in peer communication without the L2 teacher present, and as many as 60% reported playing with their toys in L2 in home environment of their own accord.

7 Discussion

The research aim was to investigate the teachers' and the children's attitudes towards the 'one person – one language' approach applied in the target kindergarten. Also, the attitude towards the use of a number of language teaching strategies and their correlation across languages was in focus, alongside the role of the teachers and parents in encouraging child motivation and attitude toward second language acquisition. Therefore, returning to the first research question, posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the teachers' and the children's attitudes towards the OPOL approach, i.e. separating L1 and L2 during instruction, differed to a great extent. While the teachers were largely supportive of the applied model, the children showed preference for the inclusion of L1 into the L2 teaching process, both through their self-reported attitudes and through their own behaviour, by predominantly using L1 to communicate with the L2 teacher, thus "present[ing] their agency role in shaping linguistic environment and language policy inside and outside of their bilingual classroom" (Schwartz and Gorbatt 2016, p. 18).

Secondly, and in accordance with this, the participants' attitude towards teaching strategies that were perceived as going against the grain of the very essence of the OPOL approach, such as translanguaging and translating, which join the two languages in the process, differed, as well, with many children sharing a positive attitude towards both, and the teachers being disapproving for the most part, regardless of their subconscious use of both. In addition, it is important to note that the teachers were in slight disagreement over the translanguaging and translation strategies, which, although understandable due to a lack of pre- and in-service training, can be considered a weakness of the co-teaching process in this case. However, this aspect

³A greater level of positivity towards the language itself than towards either of the most dominant native speaker groups can be explained by the concept of English as an international or global language (Crystal 2003), while the attitude towards the Americans could be related to the controversial role of the USA in Serbian more recent history.

of the bilingual model was not under the scope of the current study. Thirdly, among the language teaching strategies employed by the teachers in order to enhance language learning, the instances of the translation as well as translanguaging were very rare, so it is very important to stress that the bilingual strategies were not a common practice of either of the teachers. The predominant strategies were non-linguistic ones, i.e. the use of gestures to foster L1 and L2 understanding, and among bilingual resource strategies, with the greatest frequency of translation use, both into L1 and L2. Peer translation, both in the form of ‘language brokering’ or informal translation (Bayley et al. 2005), and as a strategy used by both teachers, was considered the only useful one and ‘allowed’ to be employed consciously in the classroom, “confirm[ing] that children, even at a very young age, can serve as powerful sources of input about the language system for peer learners” (Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004, p. 298), especially when their parents actively discourage peer competition, and thus promote solidarity. Translanguaging was rare, due to the nature of the model, but present, regardless of the strict separation policy, although its occurrence went unnoticed by the teachers themselves who were surprised by the observation results. The lowest frequency of strategy use was recorded for metalinguistic strategies, thus wasting precious opportunities for making connections between the languages.

The fourth research question concerned motivational strategies used to enhance language learning, and in case of the teachers, it is important to note that the observed strategies which were the most dominant were the verbal ones, as opposed to the previous case of language teaching strategies, where the use of non-verbal ones prevailed. This suggests that the teachers worked more consciously on developing the children’s motivation, than on their language skills, which was also what they implied in the interview, saying that it is more important to “get the children to like the language, than to speak it at this age” (L1 teacher). However, the reason for the uneven distribution of strategy use between the teachers, with a much lower frequency in case of the L2 teacher, could be the very choice of the OPOL model, which restricted her language use, resulting in fewer verbal motivational strategies. In addition, many parents made conscious efforts to positively influence their children’s motivation for language learning. Finally, the influence of the parents’ personal attitudes, both educational and social, on those of their children towards learning and using the language was the subject of the fifth research question, and it was found to be largely positive. Attitudes are an important factor in connection with the OPOL approach, because if the passive attitudes transmitted onto children by their parents are negative towards a language or its speakers, they would also be expected to have a more negative attitude towards the predominant use of that language. This in turn could have biased them against the OPOL approach at the onset of the study. However, as the attitudes transmitted were largely positive, the fact that the OPOL approach was not very highly regarded gains even greater prominence.

On the whole, the children in this study had a variety of beneficial preconditions for successful language learning, belonging to higher social strata and having well-educated parents who both actively and passively contributed to forming their positive educational attitudes. However, “as is known from motivation research,

favourable attitudes and motivations at the language level function only as necessary preconditions; classroom processes may shape learners' motivations differently and influence outcomes more profoundly" (Nikolov 2009, p. 104). Thus, the teachers' strategies employed within the classroom, although not influencing the motivation and attitudes in a detrimental way, resulted in the children's progress in L2 which was not very prominent in terms of their productive skills, especially at the sentence level. In addition, the organization of teaching, with a ratio of L1/L2 use of 1:8 to 1:10 did not prove to be nearly enough to achieve the desired effects of learning both languages to an equal extent. Therefore, in order to achieve that aim, the distribution of language use within the kindergarten would have to be equal as well, in order to mirror the original set up of the OPOL approach, which originated in family settings, with caregivers present throughout the day and providing a large amount of linguistic input. The approach, as transferred from the family to institutions and heavily exploiting "an ideology of bilingualism as parallel monolingualisms" (Heller 2006, p. 34), is no longer suitable in the new setting if its form cannot be applied in the same manner. Thus, when conditions do not allow an equal amount of time devoted to both languages daily, the use of the OPOL approach should be reconsidered, since cognitively demanding context-reduced communication (Cummins 1991), which is thought to be a positive aspect of the OPOL approach, turned out to be overly demanding on many participants in this study.

8 Conclusions

Taken together, these results suggest that the target bilingual model, together with the teachers' and parents' agency, had a largely positive influence on children's passive knowledge, motivation and attitude towards language learning, but not towards the OPOL approach. The effects of the strict separation of languages during instruction were found to be positive mostly in case of the children's receptive and, to a smaller degree, productive vocabulary knowledge, while their productive communication skills lagged far behind, with the exception of simple reproductive language use in the form of songs and nursery rhymes. However, it also affected classroom relationships in a negative way, reducing the possibility of a relaxed rapport building on the part of the L2 teacher, and raising the issue of ethics and the concern about a lack of truthfulness with children about the L2 teacher's monolinguality. Within this model, the teachers did not use the full potential of available bilingual teaching strategies, therefore not promoting bilingual development and resulting in rather minor progress in children's overall language use. Thus, although at the beginning of the research period one of the researchers strongly supported judicious use of L1 in L2 classrooms, while the other strongly favoured the OPOL approach, an agreed-upon practical implication of the present study is adopting a more balanced and flexible and a less restrictive approach to the language learning process, including strategies such as translanguaging and translating (Garcia and Wei 2014), because making "connections between the languages provide[s] enormous

possibilities for linguistic enrichment, but not if the program is set up to ensure that the two languages never meet” (Cummins 2000, p. 21).

Given that “the most successful teaching programs are those which take into account the affective as well as the cognitive aspects of language learning and seek to involve learners psychologically as well as intellectually” (Savignon 2002, p. 12), teacher-parent cooperation is recommended, as well as both teachers’ and parents’ education on the ways of influencing young learners’ attitudes and motivation towards language learning. In addition, greater exploitation of metalinguistic strategies and focusing on connections between two languages, alongside a more relaxed attitude towards combining languages judiciously and purposefully, could work towards improving both affective and cognitive aspects of language learning. The practical value of such changes in the applied approach would be providing young learners with a positive model of a bilingual person and ‘an adult L2 learner’ (Schwartz and Gorbatt 2017, p. 26). Whereas the OPOL approach presents a model of monolingual identity building, the translanguaging practice would embrace bilingual identity formation. The children would benefit from exposure to comfortable and successful communication with one person in two languages, leading to fewer blockages and restrictions concerning their own use of both languages, as they would become more acceptant towards bilingualism in themselves. Without this, the question arises: Why would it be all right for the L1 teacher to use L1 only, for the L2 teacher to use L2 only, and for children to be expected to use both L1 and L2?

Appendix

Children’s Interview Statements

1. I like speaking L2 in the kindergarten./I don’t like speaking L2 in the kindergarten.
2. I am ashamed of speaking L2 in the kindergarten./I am not ashamed of speaking L2 in the kindergarten.
3. I am afraid I will make a mistake while speaking L2 in the kindergarten. / I am not afraid.
4. I speak L2 with my L2 teacher./I speak L1 with my L2 teacher.
5. When my L2 teacher asks me something in L2, I answer in L1./I answer in L2.
6. Sometimes, I speak L2 with my peers in the kindergarten even when our L2 teacher is not present./I never speak L2 with my peers in the kindergarten when our L2 teacher is not present.
7. I speak L1 with my L2 teacher, because I can’t speak L2./I can speak L2, but I don’t want to speak it in front of my peers.
8. I speak L1 with my L2 teacher, because all my peers do so./I speak L1 with my L2 teacher because I myself want to do so.
9. I would like our L2 teacher to sing L2 songs in L1, too./I like the fact that our L2 teacher sings only in L2.

10. I would like our L2 teacher to retell L2 stories in L1./It is better for me to hear stories in L2 only.
11. I would like our L2 teacher to translate what s/he says./I don't like it when translating into L1 is done in class.
12. I like it when our L1 teacher translates our L2 teacher's words./I don't like that.
13. I like it when one of my peers translates our L2 teacher's words./I don't like that.
14. I understand everything that my L2 teacher is saying./I don't understand everything.
15. I prefer when my L2 teacher uses gestures or pictures when s/he explains something in L2./I prefer to have it translated into L1.
16. When I don't understand what my L2 teacher is saying, I ask for repetition in L2./And I ask for translation.
17. When I don't understand what my L2 teacher is saying, I stay silent./I look around at what my peers are doing and I do the same.
18. If our L2 teacher used both L1 and L2, it would help me understand better./For me, it would be confusing. (Alternative: When my L2 teacher uses both L1 and L2, it helps me understand better./For me, it is confusing.)
19. I prefer it when our L2 teacher speaks both L1 and L2./I prefer our L2 teacher to speak L2 only.
20. Sometimes, I speak L2 with my L2 teacher./I speak L1 only.
21. If our L2 teacher used L1 sometimes, I would use L2 more./If s/he did that, I would only use L1 then.
22. If our L2 teacher used L1 sometimes, I would ask questions more often when I don't understand something./I ask her/him anyway if I don't understand something.
23. I would like our L2 teacher to use both L2 and L1./I prefer her to use L2 only.
24. I would like all the children to speak L2 only with our L2 teacher, just as s/he does with us./I would not like us to be required to speak L2 only with our L2 teacher.
25. I like it when our L1 teacher says something in L2./I don't like it.
26. If our L1 teacher spoke L2 only, I would always speak L2 with her/him./I would always speak L1 with her/him, too.
27. I think that our L2 teacher can speak our L1./I think that our L2 teacher cannot speak our L1. (Not applicable if both teachers are declared bilinguals.)
28. I would like our L2 teacher to discipline us in L1./For me, it is better in L2.
29. It would be easier for me to do a task if our L2 teacher gave us additional explanations in L1./An explanation in L2 is enough for me.
30. I wish we watched cartoons in L2 in the kindergarten./I do not.
31. I would like us to read books in L2 in the kindergarten./I prefer reading books in L1.
32. Sometimes, at home, I play with my toys speaking L2./I speak only L1 when I play at home.
33. I sometimes speak L2 at home./I don't speak L2 at home.

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To Mix Languages or Not? Preschool Bilingual Education in Malta



Charles L. Mifsud and Lara Ann Vella

Abstract Malta has a long-standing, successful bilingualism. There is a strong political and societal desire in Malta to maintain balanced Maltese-English bilingualism, as well as an understanding that this is an ideological as well as a purely linguistic question (Language Education Policy Profile for Malta, Language policy unit. Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2015). In addition, Malta has in practice adopted the immersion pedagogical method (National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo, Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta, 2014). The socio-linguistic situation is one of plurilingual repertoires with languages at different points on the bilingual continuum. In a recent study, about 400 early childhood educators from the state sector have reported that they make use of both Maltese and English in a fairly ‘balanced’ way throughout the day. Both languages are introduced simultaneously early on in the kindergarten classes. The majority of the educators switch readily from one language to the other in order to accommodate language diversity in the classroom and to facilitate learning. This was confirmed through classroom observations which focussed on the educators’ bilingual strategies. The data from these observations reveal the degree of the educators’ flexibility in switching from one language to another and the contexts of switching. Such a policy of systematic bilingual education takes advantage of pupils’ initial linguistic repertoires, and focuses greater attention on aspects of the plurilingual construction of knowledge in school subjects. These elements still need to be made more explicit in key policy documentation so that they may be put into practice more consistently in Maltese preschool contexts. It is a consolidation of this kind that will ensure that the Maltese bilingual education system continues to guarantee the right to high-quality education and academic success for all pupils. From a pedagogical point of view, a clearly agreed learning contract could be established between teachers and pupils relating to a more systematic alternation of languages in the classroom. The main thing would be to ensure that language barriers of any kind should not be an obstacle to the potential for pupils to learn or to express themselves. The ultimate

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aim of bilingual education is to develop bilingual people who are able to function as such, in other words to use either Maltese or English appropriately in a monolingual context but also to operate using both languages in alternation, depending on the context and the linguistic repertoire of interlocutors.

1 Introduction

It is important for children to receive a quality language education from an early age (Baker and Prys-Jones 1998). It increases their chances for long-term educational success (Reynolds et al. 2004). Studies on the way languages are taught and practised in preschool settings are limited (Enever 2015). They often fall between two more established areas of research; that of early bilingual language acquisition and of bilingual education in primary and secondary schools (Palviainen and Mård-Mietten 2015).

In order to understand better how early years teachers promoted the use of Maltese and English in Malta, we conducted a study in two kindergarten classes. The focus of our study was on teacher mediation strategies that supported children's language development in classroom interaction. Bilingual teaching strategies were framed within teachers' beliefs and the wider sociolinguistic processes. A comparison was made between the two teachers. We hope that the findings will increase knowledge about what happens in preschool classes in bilingual societies, like Malta.

2 Literature Review

In this section we provide a general review of the main theoretical constructs that guided our study. We first describe the concept of language ideology in relation to bilingualism in society and in schools. Then we move on to a discussion of teacher mediation strategies which are used to promote language learning in young children. We contrast the two models of bilingual education adopted by the teachers in our study, the language separation and flexible bilingualism models. We conclude by presenting an overview of the literature on teachers' beliefs in relation to bilingual education.

2.1 *The Impact of Language Ideologies on Teachers' Beliefs*

The language beliefs and practices of teachers are to be interpreted in the light of the language ideologies that are present in Maltese society, as "we have to consider individuals as acting within layers and scales of action and history" (Cameron 2015, p. 204). Language is a fundamentally social phenomenon, and language practices are not separate from the beliefs and attitudes relating to languages in societies (Heller

2007). The language policies of the Maltese kindergarten classes in our study were implemented in the context of the prevailing ideologies present in Maltese society. These included a prevailing uncodified policy which promoted language separation methods as being the most effective means of implementing bilingualism in schools, and attitudes towards Maltese and English, where Maltese is valued for its solidarity purposes and English as a language of wider communication.

2.2 *Language Mediation Strategies*

Teachers play an important role in helping children to learn, bringing objects and ideas to their attention and mediating the world for children to make it accessible to them. In this study we refer to language mediation strategies as used by teachers to facilitate and encourage language learning in children. Language use is a socially mediated activity through which a learner develops the ability to deploy the psychological function of “deliberate semantics-deliberate structuring of the web of meaning” (Vygotsky 1986, p. 182). The learning routines and activities of the early years’ curriculum should offer valuable language learning opportunities when suitably adapted. Adaptation can take place when appropriate input is supported by hands-on experience for children, and when teachers use gesture, mime and props, as well as simplification and repetition in order to facilitate comprehension (Edelenbos et al. 2006). Contextual and non-linguistic supports have been shown to be essential to enhancing understating in bilingual pedagogy (García 2009). These scaffolding strategies echo the work of Bruner (1986), and of Vygotsky (1987). Wood et al. (1976) identified the following strategies to be used to scaffold tasks for young children. Initially this involves arousing the child’s interest in the task and simplifying the task. The child is to be kept on track by pointing out what are the objectives of the task and what is important to be done. An idealised version of the task is to be demonstrated and the child’s frustration needs to be managed.

Teachers adopted language mediation strategies to encourage children to produce the second language (Södergård 2008; Schwartz and Asli 2014; Hickey et al. 2014; Palviainen et al. 2016). Södergård (2008) in an investigation of a Swedish immersion context for Finnish-speaking children illustrated ways in which the teacher adhered to a language separation model. Second language production was encouraged by the application of diverse strategies such as elicitation (e.g., questioning, suggesting an answer), nonverbal support and gestures. The teacher created an authentic learning environment where the children were exposed to the second language and expected to use it. Schwartz and Asli (2014) discussed how the teachers in an Arabic-Hebrew classroom adopted the following strategies: bilingual resource strategies, metalinguistic strategies, nonlinguistic strategies and translanguaging to facilitate the children’s language. Teachers adopted mediation strategies to facilitate young children’s language learning. In the following sections, we shall analyse the linguistic and non-linguistic mediation strategies adopted by teachers in bilingual kindergarten classrooms in Malta.

2.3 *Models of Bilingual Education*

Models of bilingual education (Baker and Prys-Jones 1998) may be grouped into two main categories; those built on a strict separation between languages and those based on the flexible use of languages (García 2009).

2.3.1 *Language Separation*

Languages may be separated by time, by person (using the one-person, one-language approach) or by subject/activity, or a combination of these options (Baker and Prys-Jones 1998). Language separation methodologies are often characterised by a degree of immersion in the target language/s and “periods of instruction during which only one language is used (that is, there is no translation or language mixing)” (Lindholm-Leary 2006, p. 89). Language immersion programmes are based on the assumption that the most effective language learning occurs through meaningful interactions by using the target language. The two languages are kept rigidly separate as they constitute “two solitudes” (Cummins 2005, p. 588).

The provision of sufficient, comprehensible, yet challenging language input is considered to be one of the basic principles of immersion education in general. Baker and Prys-Jones (1998) discussed how in these programmes teachers used the target language with children and a combination of language mediation strategies to facilitate language learning. The setting of appropriately challenging language tasks is crucial if learners are to enter into Vygotsky’s concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD “refers to the extent to which a child can take advantage of collaboration to realize performance beyond what is specified by independent performance and relative to age norms” (Chaiklin 2003, p. 53). Mercer (2000) pointed out that the ZPD can only be created through negotiation between the learner and the more advanced other. Moll and Whitmore (1993) insisted on collaborative forms of mediated meaning-making and suggested that the ZPD constitutes a reciprocal shared space between the learner, teacher, and peers, constructed through social interaction in the classroom.

Bilingual education models based on strict language separation have been challenged (for instance by García 2009; Weber 2014). Language separation policies are justified in terms of maximising learners’ exposure to the language and their learning opportunities. The underlying assumption is that the more language the pupils hear, the more they will learn. However, Cameron (2015, p. 200) contested this assumption on the basis that “to assume a simple linear relationship between exposure to language and learning – that more of the one always results in more of the other – irons out much of the complexity of teaching and learning,” especially in bilingual contexts, where teachers and children are negotiating meaning in the classroom, in two languages.

2.3.2 Flexible Bilingualism

Creese and Blackledge (2011) recognised that language separation in educational contexts is rarely achieved in practice. They argued for a more ‘flexible bilingualism’ where pupils and teachers drew on both languages to tackle classroom tasks. Such flexibility for teachers, to use all the linguistic resources at their disposal, allowed individual agency. This approach has also been referred to as translanguageing (García 2009), where flexible transfer between languages is necessary for effective learning. García and Wei (2014) showed how translanguageing contributes to our growing understanding of language use in the classroom and the education of minoritized communities around the world.

Even strict language separation advocates (e.g., Cloud et al. 2000) acknowledged the role of code-switching as a normal, and socially meaningful linguistic phenomenon (Blom and Gumperz 1972). Palviainen and Mård-Mietten (2015) described the way in which the teacher in their study interpreted language policies which promoted language separation by allowing a degree of flexibility, and switching from Finnish to Swedish in her classroom, as a means to ‘protect’ and ‘support’ the minority language (Swedish) in a majority language (Finnish) setting. Some studies have called for a more flexible transfer between languages (Creese and Blackledge 2010) and for an interactional approach to the teaching of two languages (Arthur and Martin 2006).

Weber (2014) warned against accepting flexible bilingual practices without any responsible reflection, as it was crucial to “set up an ethical and responsible theory of flexible multilingual education” (Weber 2014, p. 7). Schwartz et al. (2016, p. 145) pointed out that “the tension appears to be especially significant with regard to identifying the optimal ratio of L1–L2 instruction in the bilingual classroom”. Hickey et al. (2014) discussed how teachers in Welsh immersion preschools voiced their concerns and dilemmas when working with young children from English-dominant families. Despite the school’s policy of language separation, the teachers translated from Welsh into English in order to facilitate communication and reduce distress. They remained uncertain about how much flexibility, if any, was appropriate in a full immersion programme.

The way in which bilingual education is implemented in classrooms has to be interpreted in the light of teachers’ beliefs. They are agents who interpret, evaluate and develop language policies and practices. The following section will deal with teachers’ beliefs about bilingual education.

2.4 Teachers’ Beliefs

Teachers’ beliefs about language have been defined as theories based on “intuitive, subjective knowledge about the nature of language, language use and language learning, taking into account both cognitive and social dimensions, as well as cultural assumptions” (Hüttner et al. 2013, p. 269). In order to understand better

classroom realities, we need to explore teachers' beliefs, the formation of beliefs, and the influence of beliefs on teaching practices (Bustos Flores 2010). Bilingual teachers have specific beliefs about how bilingual children learn and if and when the mother tongue needs to be used in the classroom, together with the target language. For instance, Turnbull and Arnett's (2002) review of studies of teachers' beliefs in bilingual education showed that teachers were guided by their professional experience and by their personal beliefs in the choice of language to be used in their classrooms. This showed that teachers' prior experiences influence bilingual teachers' beliefs, especially professional teaching. Stritikus (2003) argued that when examining bilingual policy implementation by teachers, a variety of factors have to be taken into consideration. These include the nature of the local school context, the beliefs and experience of the teacher, and ways in which the teacher might learn from the new policy context. The individual qualities of a teacher played a significant role in the enactment of literacy practices. Beliefs are rarely static, but dynamic and relative (Busto Flores 2010). Once beliefs are formed, they are also changed with increased knowledge and professional experience.

The relationship between beliefs and action is not always straightforward as contradictions are sometimes traced in teacher behaviour (e.g. Borg 2006; Farrell and Kun 2008; Li and Walsh 2011). For instance, Hickey et al. (2014) showed how educators tried to negotiate the tensions between the policy of immersion education in Welsh preschools and the need to use the children's first language to make them feel at ease. Palviainen and Mård-Mietten (2015) illustrated how several factors affected the work of a bilingual preschool teacher and how the teacher's beliefs changed as she renegotiated previously held personal and professional beliefs and current practices.

In the following section we present a description of the sociolinguistic context of our study. We provide also an overview of the research methods that we adopted to investigate the kindergarten teachers' beliefs on bilingual education and their mediation strategies for facilitating language learning in their classrooms.

3 The Maltese Context

3.1 The Sociolinguistic Situation

Malta has a long-standing history of successful bilingualism in Maltese and English. Both languages have been recognised as the official languages of Malta by the Constitution since 1934. The presence of the English language in Malta is rooted in its history of nineteenth and twentieth century British colonialism which lasted for about 160 years. Maltese is the home language of the majority of the population. This is reflected in the educational contexts. For example, most Maltese schools have more than 90% of students who consider Maltese to be their home language (Ministry for Education and Employment 2013). Maltese and English are spoken widely. Both languages are used in most domains. There is a strong political and societal desire to maintain a balanced Maltese-English bilingualism, as well as an

understanding that this is an ideological as well as a purely linguistic question (Council of Europe 2015).

The relationship between language use and socio-economic status has long been an issue in Malta, from the time of the Knights of St. John, who ruled the Islands in the sixteenth century and when Maltese was spoken only by the people who worked in the fields. Italian was the official language at that time. English replaced Italian in 1934 as the language of administration and education (Mazzon 1993). Boissevain (1965) pointed out that at the time of the British rule in Malta in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the use of Maltese and English marked social class differences, with English being the language of prestige. These differences in language use according to socio-economic status persist in the present times (Bagley 2001; Caruana 2007; Bonnici 2010).

Malta has adopted the immersion pedagogical method for the teaching and learning of languages, the characteristics of which are defined in the National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo (2014). The sociolinguistic situation is one of plurilingual repertoires with languages at different points on the bilingual continuum (Council of Europe 2015). The notion of a continuum of use illustrates the complex linguistic behaviour of Maltese speakers who are bilingual in Maltese and English to different degrees. Italian is considered to be a third language for a large number of the Maltese population. This is because of the geographical proximity between the Maltese Islands and Italy, and the influence of the Italian language, media and culture (Caruana 2013). The Eurobarometer Survey (European Commission 2006) showed knowledge of other languages, besides Maltese, as follows: English (88%), Italian (66%) and French (17%).

In countries like Malta, it is the whole school population that receives some form of bilingual education (García 2009). The languages of schooling are available in the wider out-of-school environment and learners are in contact with both Maltese and English. In such cases of ‘societal bilingualism’ (Sebba 2010), language use is also determined by the prevailing ideologies in the community. Current educational policy in Malta promotes bilingual education in all schools (National Curriculum Framework 2012; A National Literacy Strategy for All in Malta and Gozo 2014; and A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo 2016a). Malta’s two official languages, Maltese and English, are taught formally in schools as from the first grade (age 5–6 years). They are also used as languages of instruction. For instance, in state-run schools at primary level, Social and Religious Studies are taught through Maltese, as these subjects are closely tied to the local culture, and textbooks in Maltese are available (Farrugia 2013). However, for Mathematics and General Science in the Primary school, the textbooks are in English. Farrugia (2013) in her case-study of a Primary school, with English as the language of schooling, observed that teachers often resorted to switching from English to Maltese during their lessons to cater for all learners. With regard to language use in kindergarten classrooms, the teacher is mainly responsible for the language used in the classroom, in line with the school’s language policy. In most kindergarten classrooms, teachers adopt a one-person two-languages model, where they use Maltese or English for different activities. Teachers are encouraged to adopt language mediation from

Maltese to English and vice versa to facilitate young children's language learning (Ministry for Education and Employment 2016a).

There is an ongoing national discussion in Malta about how to strengthen bilingual education in schools. This is spearheaded by the representative National Language Policy in Education Committee. One of the issues which keeps cropping up is that of code-switching in classrooms. Language separation seems to be the prevailing, uncodified policy followed by educators. However, there is evidence from primary and secondary school contexts, that teachers switched between Maltese and English (Camilleri Grima 2013). Farrugia (2009) observed that the implementation of an 'English only policy' in one primary school that she studied, was not practical and beneficial for the learners' well-being. It caused discomfort for some pupils who "held back from asking questions because they were afraid that they would make mistakes or because they were not sure how to ask the question in English" (Farrugia 2009, p. 21). This shows that, on one hand, teachers believe firmly in language separation, but on the one hand they resort to code-switching as one of the strategies to facilitate children's language learning.

3.2 Language Use in Early Childhood Education in Malta

Early childhood education in Malta is offered by the state (71%), the Catholic Church (11%) and the independent sector (18%). Preschool education is not obligatory, however nearly all the children, 97% of 3-year-olds and 100% of 4-year-olds, participated in early childhood education (European Commission 2015).

The National Curriculum Framework (2012, p. 49) stated that the overall objectives of language learning should be to help children to increase their awareness of the functions and purposes of language skills which make them a versatile tool for any member of society. The general targets for children attending kindergarten education are outlined in the Learning Outcomes Framework (Ministry for Education and Employment 2016b) and are guided by the overarching philosophy that children are to be given the opportunity to develop their skills to become better communicators. Teacher education for teachers in early childhood education is offered at certificate, diploma and degree levels.

In a survey (Ministry for Education 2017) of 440 early years teachers from state and church schools, the majority (97%) reported that they introduced Maltese and English speaking and listening skills simultaneously early on in their kindergarten classes. The majority of them (69.8%) were also willing to switch readily from one language to the other in order to accommodate language diversity in the classroom and to facilitate learning of the second language. The factors that determined which literacy, Maltese or English, was introduced first to young children, were attributed largely to the home language (whether the children spoke mainly Maltese and/or English at home) and the school sector (namely Maltese in state and English in church schools). Baker (2011, p. 208) argued that when describing bilingual models,

“one of the intrinsic limitations of typologies is that not all real-life examples will fit easily into the classification.” This is applicable to the Maltese situation, which is a complex one as children come from different language backgrounds with varying degrees of language proficiency in Maltese and/or English, and in some cases also other languages because of immigration. The situation is even more complex as individual schools adopt their own model of bilingual education and the language of instruction for each school subject. There is a dearth of case-studies which describe the different language realities in the classrooms and how schools and teachers meet the language needs of their learners in consideration of the respective school sector, the school characteristics, the learners’ home languages and their socioeconomic background. Our study sought to address this lacuna to some extent.

We looked closely at two early years’ classes, one in a state school and another in a church school. Traditionally the use of Maltese and code-switching between Maltese and English have been linked to state schools. Most church schools, especially those for girls, have been linked until recently to the use of English (Camilleri Grima 2013). Church schools, some of which were set up by British religious congregations, used to adhere to a strict English only policy (Bonnici 2010). However, there has been a relaxation of this policy in recent years, because of changed admission procedures which have allowed for increased diversity in their students’ language backgrounds. Entry to secondary Church schools used to be through a competitive examination. Now this is carried out through an open ballot.

4 Methodology

Our study is situated within the tradition of ethnographic research of language practices in schools and bilingual language practices in teacher-student interactions. We carried out teacher interviews to study the teachers’ beliefs, and classroom observations to investigate the use of language mediation strategies in kindergarten classrooms. We conducted a thematic analysis of the interview data. The observed strategies were discussed in the light of the themes emanating from the interview data and with reference to the wider sociolinguistic implications of the Maltese context.

4.1 The Research Questions

We sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How do the two early years teachers’ beliefs about early bilingual education in our study relate to their practice?
2. How do the two early years’ teachers in our study mediate their children’s use of language?

4.2 Participants

The schools involved in our study were chosen purposefully as they represented two diverse school sectors, State schools and Church schools, which have been traditionally associated with different kinds of language use. The teachers were recommended by the school principals from the pool of experienced early years' teachers in their school. They willingly agreed to participate in the study and to be video-recorded during their lessons. Written parental consent was obtained for the children to participate in the study and to feature in the video-recordings. All the names of schools, teachers and children were changed to protect their privacy.

4.2.1 Ms Carla

Ms Carla had been teaching at this girls only church school, for 17 years. She was a former student of the school herself. She spoke mainly English at home, but felt comfortable with using both Maltese and English. She had a diploma in Montessori Education and a diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care from the University of Malta.

She believed strongly that the kindergarten experience should be an enjoyable one. The children in her class spent a considerable amount of time engaging in free play activities. She had certain expectations related to the children's language and literacy development by the end of kindergarten education. Her expectation was that the children acquired a basic proficiency in English to be able to follow lessons in the following years, which were held in English. She made frequent reference to the different learning needs of her students and how she tried to cater for them. She promoted primarily the English language, in observance of the school's implicit policy. However, she was aware that she needed to use Maltese, especially with learners whose first language was Maltese and who were struggling with English.

4.2.2 Ms Martha

Ms Martha came from a Maltese-speaking background and used Maltese with her family and friends. However, she spoke in English to her granddaughter in order to give the girl, according to her, the best possible opportunities in life. She had over 20 years of experience as an early years teacher in a state school. She made use of technology in her classroom and designed technology resources for her activities.

Ms Martha followed a clear language separation methodology. She used one language for each classroom activity. She believed that the children needed to be continually exposed to the target language and the teacher was to reinforce the basic vocabulary through repetition, games and other activities. She believed that her role was to prepare the children for formal schooling, and for them to get used to basic routines and to be able to follow instructions in both Maltese and English.

Table 1 Characteristics of the two classrooms

School	Age Range	Language/s spoken by the children at home	Aims of bilingual education	Teacher's use of language
Church school	4–5	Ten children spoke Maltese; Five children spoke English and two children spoke Maltese and English.	To promote the use of English to children from different backgrounds. To prepare children for formal schooling in English.	Mostly English. Teacher used flexible bilingualism and switched from English to Maltese to cater for the needs of the Maltese-speaking children. Maltese was introduced in the final term of the school year.
State School	3–4	All children, except one, spoke Maltese at home.	To promote bilingual development in children by fostering their first language, Maltese, and exposing them to the second language, English. To prepare them for formal schooling where both Maltese and English are the languages of schooling.	Started off the school year by adopting more flexible use of languages. As the school year progressed the teacher sought to maintain a strict separation of languages.

4.3 The Research Settings

Table 1 presents the main characteristics of the two classrooms in the study.

4.3.1 Ms Carla's Class

There were seventeen children in this class, ten of them spoke mainly Maltese at home, five spoke English, and the other two spoke both Maltese and English. All the children had some exposure to English, in view of its presence in the Maltese language environment. They had varying degrees of proficiency in the English language. The teacher and the children used mainly English in the class, although switching to Maltese was allowed. The teacher switched to Maltese, especially when dealing with two girls, Chloe and Laura, who required more support with the English language.

Table 2 presents a typical day in Ms Carla's class.

Ms Carla believed in play and discovery learning and strove to prepare the children for more formal schooling in the following year. The main aim of the teacher in terms of language development was for all the children to attain a basic grasp of English so that they could in the next school year be able to follow lessons in English. She wanted also the children, who spoke English at home, to acquire more vocabulary in Maltese by the end of the school year. She differentiated her methodology in order to provide support for those learners who were struggling with the language.

Table 2 A typical day in Ms Carla's class

Activity	Language use by the teacher
Free play: The children played with the toys in the play area and read books.	Maltese and English freely.
Circle time: Oral work related to the topic of the week.	Mainly English, but at times switched to Maltese when addressing the Maltese-speaking children.
Lunch time in the classroom Free conversation.	Maltese and English freely.
Break time in the school yard.	Maltese and English freely.
Literacy activities related to the topic of the week.	Mainly English, but at times switched to Maltese when addressing the Maltese-speaking children.

Table 3 A typical day in Ms Martha's class

Activity	Language use by the teacher
Circle Time: Oral work related to the topic of the week	Maltese and English separately
Numeracy activity, involving number games	Maltese and English separately
Lunch time	Maltese
Literacy activities: The teacher read a story, preceded by a pre-reading activity	Maltese and English separately
Vocabulary development	Maltese and English separately
Break time	Maltese
Free play	Maltese

4.3.2 Ms Martha's Class

The languages of schooling in this class were Maltese and English. As noted already, Ms Martha believed in keeping the two languages separate during all the activities to allow for maximum exposure in the target language. She spoke the target language during classroom activities and expected the children to do the same. She taught basic vocabulary such as numbers and colours, in Maltese and English separately. The separation took place mainly by the type of activity.

Table 3 presents a typical, daily routine in Ms Martha's classroom.

Ms Martha recognised that most of the parents of the children in her class could not support their children's use of English. She linked the low socio-economic status of most of the families of the children with low educational attainment and proficiency in English. She believed that her primary role was to support the children to communicate, to speak and to understand simple instructions in both Maltese and English. This was reflected in her classroom practice.

4.4 Data Collection

Permission to carry out the study was obtained from the Ministry for Education in Malta and from the school principals. The teachers were briefed about the objectives of the study. They were made aware of the researchers' interest in language teaching and learning. We conducted classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with the teachers.

4.4.1 The Classroom Observations

The teachers were asked to identify teacher-led activities such as circle time and those involving small groups, which could be easily recorded. We recorded also mealtime and free-play sessions as the teachers interacted with their learners during these activities.

The data collection process took place in January and February 2016. A total number of 13 sessions, involving 30 h, were observed in both kindergartens. The observations were carried out by one of the authors and a researcher from the Centre for Literacy at the University of Malta. Of these, 6 h and 40 min were videotaped. The following activities were observed: circle time, lunch time, teacher-led numeracy activities, story-telling sessions, free play sessions, singing sessions, and literacy activities.

We relied on both video recordings and field notes, to capture faithfully the complex situations that took place in these classrooms. The field notes helped us to contextualise the video recordings. We carried out familiarisation sessions in the classrooms, at the start of the data collection process in each school, in order to put the teachers and their children at ease. The video-recorded data was transcribed and the field notes were incorporated for each activity. Each transcript included information about the teacher strategies and classroom interaction.

4.4.2 The Interviews with the Teachers

Semi-structured interviews were held with the teachers. The beliefs of the teachers about bilingualism and early bilingual education, the role of parents in promoting bilingualism and literacy development in young children and parental expectations were explored. Following the classroom observations, the teachers were asked about their own and their learners' language use in the classrooms, their language mediation strategies and the model of bilingual education that was adopted in their class. They were also asked to describe what they considered to be effective language teaching and to comment on why they had used a particular strategy.

Table 4 Codes used to analyse the video recordings

Theme	Code
1 Gestures	GEST
1a Deictic gestures	GEST-DEIC
1b Iconic gestures	GEST-ICON
1c Demonstrative gestures	GEST-DEMO
2 Use of visuals	VIS
3 Use of prosody	PROS
4 Switching from one language to another	SWITCH
4a Translation of a word	SWITCH-TRANSWRD
4b Translation of a phrase	SWITCH-TRANSPHRASE
4c Reformulation in the other language	SWITCH-REFORM
4d Intersentential switching (no translation involved)	SWITCH-INTER
4e Intrasentential switching (no translation involved)	SWITCH-INTRA

4.5 Data Analysis

We looked at the mediation strategies used by each teacher to support language learning in their preschool classroom. The data was examined qualitatively by means of an inductive analysis of the language strategies with reference to relevant excerpts. The following protocol was adopted:

1. The researchers watched several rounds of the video recordings for each classroom and compared them with the field notes.
2. The video recordings were coded for information about the type of activity being carried out and the language/s used by the teacher and the learners (see Table 4).

Table 4 presents the codes that were used to analyse the video recordings.

3. Further iterations of data coding generated subtheme codes which included information about the strategies adopted by the teachers. We looked for examples in the data set where teachers mediated the children's language learning and provided scaffolding for this process (see Table 5).

Table 5 presents an example of how the relevant extracts from the video recordings were codified.

4. The interview transcripts were also read several times and initially coded for broad themes that emerged from the data. Patterns of themes that addressed the research questions were identified (see Table 6).

Table 6 presents the themes that emerged from the interview data according to the two research questions in the study.

5. The data from the interviews and from the observation sessions were compared and merged. The most illustrative examples from the interview data and from the classroom observation data were extracted.

Each stage was carried out separately by two researchers to improve the validity and reliability of the findings. The themes which emerged were then agreed upon.

Table 5 An example of how the video recordings were codified

Extract	Date	Time	School/ Class	Interaction	Activity	Strategy used by teacher	Further comments
5	9/01	11.20– 11.36	Church school	T-Ss	Whole class. Teacher is reading a story about a hamburger.	Use of gestures (GEST- ICONIC) to illustrate meaning of the word 'heavy'.	All girls are on task. Some girls ask questions in Maltese about the story. Teacher replies in English and provides support through the use of body language. When teacher asks Chloe a question (to elicit the word 'heavy'), Chloe replies in English.

Table 6 Themes that emerged from the interview data

Theme	Code	Research question
1. Personal beliefs about kindergarten education	KGEDUCATION	1
2. Personal use of language	USELANG	1
3. Beliefs about bilingualism and child language development	BILINGCHILD	1
4. Bilingualism in society	BILINGSOCIETY	1
5. Social background and language use	SOCIALBACK	1
6. Objectives for the school year	OBJECTIVES	1
7. The role of parents in promoting language development	PARENTS	1
8. Group membership and use of language in class	GROUPMEM	1
9. Strategies to mediate language learning:	STRAT	2
9a. Switching from one language to another	SWITCH	
9b. Use of visuals	VIS	
9c. Use of gestures	GEST	
9d. Use of prosody	PROS	
9e. Repetition of activities and routines	REPET	
10. Reasons for switching from one language to another in the classroom	SWITCHREASON	2

5 Results

In this section we compare and discuss the teachers' beliefs about bilingual education and how these beliefs were reflected in their classroom practices. Both teachers made a strong connection between language use and the socio-economic status of families. The data showed that Ms Carla engaged in flexible bilingualism (Creese and Blackledge 2011), whereas Ms Martha followed a language separation model. Then we discuss the strategies adopted by the teachers to facilitate language learning. It was observed that despite the apparent differences between the teachers' views on bilingual education, they adopted some similar language mediation strategies.

5.1 *Teachers' Beliefs on Bilingualism in Society and in Schools*

The classrooms functioned within a wider socio-political context that was characterised by societal bilingualism, where language use is linked to solidarity, group membership, and social mobility (El-Dash and Busnardo 2001). These factors were considered when interpreting the data. Both teachers attributed children's low levels of proficiency in English to the low levels of education of their parents. This echoed ideologies related to language use and social class, as has been discussed previously in the literature review. The teachers believed that English was the language which promoted social mobility and educational attainment.

Ms Carla was aware that a limited knowledge of English restricted her pupils. She identified two children in her class whose parents could not support their learning of English. She referred to them as being 'disadvantaged'.

Interview

Ms Carla (463–469): In one particular girl's case I know that the mother is illiterate, so she wouldn't be able to help daughter when she gets older and things become more difficult. In the other one's case the mother cannot read English. School notes are sent home in English. The communication between the school and the parents is in English. Which to be honest I don't agree with, I think it should be in both (*Maltese and English*), because not all parents are comfortable reading notes in English.

A recurring theme during Ms Carla's interview was the issue of language use and social group membership. She observed that the children who spoke English and those who spoke Maltese in her classroom did not mix during free play. She interpreted this in the light of the social groups that the parents (mostly mothers)

belonged to. She believed that the mothers created what she called ‘cliques’ and they tended to interact with the other mothers they felt most comfortable with.

Interview

Ms Carla (472–474): But they already have cliques, because sometimes the parents know each other, so sometimes the Maltese-speaking mothers are more comfortable with the Maltese-speaking ones, whereas the English-speaking mothers are more comfortable with the English speaking ones.

In this case, Ms Carla was referring not only to whether the mothers could speak a language or not, but also to the whole package that ‘speaking English’ entails in Malta, which can also be interpreted as a matter of cultural and symbolic capital. These mothers stuck to each other, as explained by Ms Carla, because of the social circles they participated in. Speakers of English are often associated with a certain background and culture; traditionally nurtured by having attended Church schools (which until recently admitted their pupils through competitive academic examinations), or independent, fee-paying schools. Such speakers may be deemed also to be of a higher socioeconomic status (Caruana 2007), which may signify also a particular lifestyle and social connections.

Ms Martha spoke about the children’s social backgrounds and how these might influence their prospects in developing proficiency in the English language. She mentioned that most of the children in her classroom came from disadvantaged backgrounds where the parents could not support their children’s English language development.

The importance attributed to the English language, as having more prestige than Maltese, was also revealed in the interviews with the teachers. Ms Martha used both Maltese and English in her class, but she did admit that although the school promoted officially both languages, in fact more emphasis was put on English. She spoke English to her granddaughter, as she was aware that English was important for her future prospects.

Interview

Ms Martha (110): Il-prijorità tal-iskola hija naħseb iktar li tara iktar ‘improvement’ fil-qari u l-kitba fl-Ingliż. [I think that the school’s priority is to see more improvement in reading and writing in English.]

Ms Carla used Maltese with some of her learners. However, she did not do this to promote the Maltese language, but to facilitate the children’s understanding of the concepts that were discussed in English. She recognised that English was a very important language, and that it would increase in importance as the children were

promoted to the older grades, especially since all subjects were taught in English in this school.

Interview

Ms Carla (430–432): And like it or not, children who are weak in the English language might have a problem later on in other subjects as well, since all subjects are taught in English.

Traditionally, curriculum guidelines in Malta have focussed on the importance of language separation by teachers (c.f. Ministry for Education and Employment 1998). The guiding policy was that school subject areas pertaining to English Studies, Mathematics and Science were to be taught in English, whereas the other areas were to be taught in Maltese. Code-switching was officially discouraged. Currently there has been a move to encourage language mediation by teachers in Early Years settings (Ministry for Education and Employment 2016a). However, most teachers still seem to believe in the uncodified policy of parallel monolingualism. Shohamy (2006) argued that language policy falls between ideology and practice and includes both overt and covert mechanisms which create and maintain both official policies and de facto ones, referring to practices. The comments made by the teachers illustrated how they interpreted ideologies and how these affected their practice.

Ms Martha maintained her belief that teachers should not switch between languages in the classroom. However, she acknowledged that switching could be used to facilitate understanding on a practical level. This is an example of the dilemma that exists between ideologies of language separation and the teacher wishing to subvert such ideologies to cater for her children's needs. However, she did not readily switch between languages. She insisted that other strategies, such as the use of gestures and nonverbal support, were more effective than code-switching.

In Ms Carla's case, she believed that the flexible use of language was a means to an end. For her in an ideal situation there should be no mixing of languages, as according to her the children should be immersed in the language. However, in practice she adopted a more child-centred approach where she switched from English to Maltese to cater for those children who needed this type of language mediation. This showed that Ms Carla was aware of and perhaps influenced by the prevailing ideologies in Maltese society where code-switching is perceived negatively. Nevertheless, Ms Carla seemed to adopt an agentive role in her classroom practice and adopted strategies which she felt catered best for her learners.

When asked to define bilingualism, the teachers' discourse resonated with the traditional concept of parallel monolingualism (Heller 2007). They sustained their belief in the importance of language separation and immersion in the classroom, for the children to achieve the desired level of language proficiency. The teachers defined a bilingual child, as a child who is able to use Maltese and English well,

without mixing the two languages. This belief was held also by Ms Carla, despite her practice in class where she switched from English to Maltese to accommodate some of the children in her class. The teachers held a negative attitude towards code-switching in society and by parents. They stated clearly that it should not take place as children could get mixed up. These beliefs could have had an influence on the strategies adopted in the classroom and this is discussed in the following sections.

5.2 *Language Mediation Strategies: Similarities Between the Two Teachers*

There were some similarities between the language strategies of the two teachers. Both of them made flexible use of the children's first language at the start of the school year and used non-verbal mediation strategies to support language learning.

5.2.1 Flexible Use of Children's L1 at the Beginning of the School Year

Both teachers explained how they were more flexible and used more of the children's first language at the beginning of the school year. Then they gradually decreased its use to introduce the target language. They were aware that at the beginning of the school year, insistence on the sole use of the target language would add to the children's discomfort as they were settling into a new routine in a new place and with new people. The use of the children's home language was one way of easing them into classroom life. In the following interview extract, Ms Carla explained how at first she used Maltese in tandem with English. Then, as the school year progressed, she decreased the use of translation from Maltese to English as the children became more proficient in English.

Interview

Ms Carla (293–297): We started the year by speaking a lot of Maltese. The children had started a new school, and came from smaller schools perhaps. They were with the older children so obviously I wanted to have them settled down. So we started off by speaking a lot in Maltese. But as time goes by I start repeating in English what I say in Maltese. Eventually, once I realise that they are understanding the English version, then I decrease the Maltese.

Ms Martha switched between Maltese and English in the first two weeks of school. At the time of our observations, in the middle of the school year, she did not

feel the need to switch anymore. She felt the children had acquired the necessary proficiency to be able to follow instructions in both languages separately.

Interview

Ms Martha (141–142): Din is-sena bdejt bil-Malti ħafna l-ewwel ‘two weeks’. Kwazi mbaġġad mal-Malti daħħalt l-Ingliż ftit ftit imma mill-ewwel biex huma jibdew jidraw.

[This year I started using Maltese during the first two weeks. I also introduced English a little bit at a time, so that they get used to it].

5.2.2 Language Mediation Strategies: The Use of Nonverbal Support

Both teachers relied on the use of body language, pictures and interactive white-board activities and demonstrations to teach children basic instructions and vocabulary, especially when English was used in the class.

The teachers made frequent use of gestures for language mediation. These involved mainly:

1. Pointing to direct the child’s attention to a deictic object. Deictic gestures refer to gestures that pick out an object, a person, or a location in the environment or indicate a stable location (Nicoladis 2007). The teacher used her arm and her finger to point to the object that was being mentioned as shown in Extract 1.

Ms Carla used body language with Kate who spoke Maltese at home. She said that as she used mainly English in her activities, she accompanied her use of English with gestures for some of the children in her class in order to ensure that they had understood the vocabulary being practised in the class.

Extract 1

Context: Ms Carla was teaching parts of the body in English. When she mentioned a body part she touched it, to make sure that the children understood what she was referring to. She explained the word ‘arms’ to Kate by pointing to her arms. Kate responded by touching her own arm. Ms Carla did the same for ‘tummy’.

Ms Carla: (to Kate and pointing to the body part) This is my tummy.

Kate: Tummy (She touches her tummy)

2. Using iconic gestures (Nicoladis 2007). This refers to the use of motion with hands and arms to represent a referent by using conventional gestures. For example, in Extract 2, Ms Carla provided support for the phrase ‘I like’:

Extract 2

Context: Ms Carla showed the children a video clip about food. Her main focus was to introduce the concept of liking and disliking food items. She used gestures to illustrate the meaning of “I like ...” by giving a thumbs up and touching her tummy.

Ms Carla: I like cake (touches tummy and gives the thumbs up to show that she likes it)

Children: I like cake (repeats gesture)

Ms Carla: Chloe do you like apples? (touches tummy and gives the thumbs up)

Chloe: (Nods and smiles)

3. Demonstrating instructions and procedures before activities. Since Ms Martha used only one language during an activity, she relied also on gestures and non-verbal communication to demonstrate instructions and procedures, especially when she used English. At the beginning of each activity, she requested the children to sit on the carpet and demanded their undivided attention. These explanations were characterised by repeated gestures and language in context. She did this more than once to make sure that all the children understood what they had to do. Extract 3 presents an example of this strategy.

Extract 3

Context: Building a tower using blocks activity. Ms Martha showed Cristina how to build a tower using blue and yellow blocks and then asked the girl to repeat the activity. At one point the girl chose the wrong block. Ms Martha repeated the instructions in English and demonstrated the procedure. The girl rectified her mistake in choosing the right blocks to build her tower. Ms Martha used only English throughout the activity.

Ms Martha demonstrates the rules of the game to a girl. She creates a tower with blocks.

Ms Martha: What comes next (shows her the sequence).

Girl chooses a yellow block.

Ms Martha: Well done. Clap hands for Cristina.

5.3 *Differences in Teaching Strategies*

The language education models adopted by the two teachers were characterised by the degree, or lack of flexibility in the use of the two languages in the classrooms.

5.3.1 **Language Separation in Ms Martha's Classroom**

Ms Martha used one language for each activity. She believed, as has already been discussed, that there was no need to switch from one language to the other during her activities. Ms Martha wanted her children to acquire basic vocabulary and to practise classroom discourse through recycling and reinforcement of language throughout the school year. During her activities she recycled a limited set of vocabulary items and language structures. She was aware that when she used only English to introduce new vocabulary or a new activity, there would be children who would not immediately grasp the necessary language. However, she was convinced that by reinforcing the same vocabulary items, the children would acquire the basic language required to come to participate fully in these activities.

Interview

Ms Martha (line 224–225) Ninforza l-Ingliż l-ewwel. Nuża 'flash cards', l-'interactive whiteboard' u niprova ma naqlibx. Tkun il-'last resort'.

[I reinforce the use of English first. I use flash cards, the interactive whiteboard and I try to avoid code-switching. It would be my last resort.]

Ms Martha relied heavily on the establishment of classroom routines and on asking the children to carry out instructions by physically performing the activities. Her use of direct teaching echoed the principles of Total Physical Response methodology (Asher 1996), which is linked to physical actions which are designed to reinforce the comprehension of basic, language structures. Her strategy reflected her main expectations for her young learners; that they are able to understand instructions in Maltese and in English by the end of the school year. This included a limited set of instructions in Maltese or English, depending on the language being used for the activity. Examples of such instructions, which required a physical response, included:

Maltese	English
Poġġu fuq it-tapit	Sit down on the carpet
Gholli jdejk	Put up your hand
Noqogħdu f'linja	Line up

Ms Martha also made use of songs and rhymes that allowed the children to produce formulaic phrases in an enjoyable manner. She believed that switching between Maltese and English should be used only as a last resort:

Interview

Ms Carla (184–185): I switch to Maltese for the Maltese speaking ones because they are so young, and because for me I want them to feel comfortable and they are understanding at the end of the day.

We observed only three instances when the children switched from English to Maltese. The teacher accepted the children's responses in Maltese and introduced the English equivalent of the word as shown in Extract 4:

Extract 4

Context: Healthy eating activity. Ms Martha projected pictures of different kinds of food and discussed with the children whether they were healthy or not.

Ms Martha: What is this called?

Children: *Kaboċċa* [*cabbage*] (in a chorus).

Ms Martha: Cabbage.

Ms Martha: And what are these called? (pointing to a picture of peas).

Children: *Piżelli* [*peas*] (in a chorus).

Ms Martha: Peas. Do you like peas?

Ms Martha was pleased that the parents of the children in her class had remarked favourably about their children's progress in both languages. She perceived this as a validation of her teaching methods.

5.3.2 Flexible Language Use in Ms Carla's Classroom

Ms Carla believed that switching from English to Maltese was a means of facilitating the learning of English for the Maltese-speaking children in her classroom. This was despite an institutional discourse which advocated the use of English in the school. In her opinion this flexibility ensured the children's well-being.

Interview

Ms Martha (94–95): Meta din l-attività tkun ripetuta, imbagħad tara li t-tfal ikunu ftakru u fehmu xi jridu jagħmlu.

[When the activity is repeated, the children remember and understand what they have to do].

The majority of teacher switches were intra-sentential ones from English to Maltese. They were intended to aid the children's comprehension. Extract 5 provides an example of this type of switching.

Extract 5

Context: Ms Carla is discussing healthy foods. She is trying to explain the concept of healthy food and asks the children to give her examples of healthy food. The teacher uses non-verbal support to illustrate the meaning of 'healthy food' and then she translates the concept to Maltese.

Ms Carla: Chloe, can you tell me healthy foods? (makes a gesture in the air to show strong muscles on arms) *Aħseb f'xi haġa li hu tajjeb għalina li jagħmilna* [Think of something that is good for us that makes us] 'strong' (makes a gesture in the air to show strong muscles on arms).

Chloe: (mumbles) strawberries.

Ms C: Strawberries are very healthy.

In this case, Ms Carla switched to Maltese in order to facilitate understanding of the question in English and to help Chloe to grasp the concept of 'healthy food'. She did not translate the word 'strong' but used gestures to explain its meaning. The teacher's mediation resulted in Chloe providing the appropriate word in English: strawberries.

Ms Carla also translated instructions when addressing the Maltese-speaking children, particularly those who were struggling with English. She said the instructions in English to the whole class, repeated them in Maltese to a Maltese-speaking child and then again in English, as shown in Extract 6:

Extract 6

Context: Ms Carla is explaining to the children that they have to find a picture of a cat in their workbook. She goes next to Chloe and translates the instructions into Maltese to ensure that she has understood what they had to do.

Ms Carla: Chloe do you know what picture we are looking for? What picture are we looking at? (to class) *X'qed infittxu?* (to Chloe) [What are we looking for?] What picture are we looking at?

Chloe: Cat.

Ms Carla: Cat, very good.

Ms Carla differentiated her language use according to the needs of the children.

Interview

Ms Carla (385–388): It depends on who I am talking to, whether the child is Maltese-speaking or English-speaking. If she is English-speaking I will speak in English when I am giving instructions. If she is Maltese-speaking, I will give the instructions in Maltese and repeat them in English and then say them in Maltese again, just to check.

This language differentiation is illustrated in Extract 7.

Extract 7

Context: The children look for pictures of food in magazines and are cutting them out and putting them in different boxes, labelled healthy and unhealthy food. Ms Carla gives instructions to Yara and Anna, alternating between Maltese and English. She uses only English with Ira.

Yara and Anna pick up a magazine.

Ms Carla (to Yara and Anna): Inti għadek m'intix qed taqta? '[Are you not cutting out anything?]' Put them there. And you put them here. Aghmilhom hemm [Put them there] Int aghmilhom hawn [You put them here]. Put them there.

Ms Carla: (to Ira): So first you find the pictures you want to cut out and then you pick up the scissors.

Ms Carla recognised that some children might not feel comfortable with speaking English, although they may have understood what she had said. She waited for them until they were able to speak the language, allowing them enough time to assimilate what she was telling them and to respond.

Interview

Ms Carla (350–351) I wait until they are comfortable with understanding. I don't work on them speaking before they are understanding.

Ms Carla described Laura and Chloe as struggling learners who needed additional support. She was afraid that they might not be participating in the activities because of a language barrier.

Interview

Ms Carla (458): Because they are very smart in other things and very confident in other things, but the language barrier might hold them back a bit.

At times Ms Carla acted as the voice for the child who could not express herself in English. In this episode (Extract 8), the teacher acknowledged what Laura said and associated herself with the child in order to validate what she said.

Extract 8

Context: Ms Carla is reading a story about a boy who is making a special burger. Laura, a Maltese-speaking girl, makes a comment about the burger toppings in Maltese.

Ms Carla: I like everything in my burgers.

Laura: Jien inħobb mayonnaise. [I like mayonnaise]

Ms Carla: Inti [you], you like mayonnaise in your burgers?

Laura: (nods)

Ms Carla: Qed tara Laura bħali [You see Laura is like me]. She is like me.

Ms Carla continues the story in English.

The following two extracts show how Ms Carla used two different strategies with two of the Maltese-speaking children. According to Ms Carla, Chloe had “a mental block for English” and she struggled with comprehending and producing the language. She therefore required more support than Janice, “who is very Maltese-speaking and is now starting to string sentences together, not just words (in English)”. In Extract 9, Ms Carla felt the need to translate for Chloe to provide her with the necessary support to understand the language and the concept being discussed. In Extract 10, Ms Carla spoke in English to Janice. She scaffolded the child’s use of language by using simplified language, modelling and questioning techniques.

Extract 9

Context: Ms Carla is explaining to the class why we need to eat healthy food. She refers to Chloe who plays football and therefore needs to eat healthy food.

Ms Carla: Chloe has lots of energy because Chloe plays football so she can run really fast when she eats good food. Did you know that Chloe, that when you eat good food, meta tiekol xi ħaġa tajba tkun tista’ tigri ħafna u tilgħab ħafna ħafna futbol [when you eat good food you can run a lot and play a lot of football]?

Chloe: (nods) Yes.

Extract 10

Context: During a free-play session, Janice is holding a dress in her hands. She would like Ms Carla to help her to put on the dress. Ms Carla mimes the action and puts the dress on her own head. She encourages Janice to repeat the request for assistance by providing the necessary support through modelling and questions.

Ms Carla: Yes Janice, what shall I do with it?

Janice: On me (mimes action).

Ms Carla: Put it on you? (puts it on Janice's head). You look really pretty.

Janice: I can't see.

Ms Carla: (removes the dress from her eyes) You can see like this.

Janice: It's a dress.

Ms Carla: Yes I know it's a dress. What shall I do with it? You have to ask me. Ask me.

Janice: Put it on me.

Ms Carla: Listen carefully. Ms Carla can you help me put the dress on please?

Janice: (mumbles the question) Ms Carla help me put the dress on?

Ms Carla: Please (smiling). Of course I can. Here you go.

(Ms Carla helps her to put on the dress. She explains the whole procedure of how to put the dress on, to teach Janice vocabulary items related to clothes and putting on clothes).

Ms Carla did not dismiss the children's use of Maltese. She allowed them to use Maltese and at times switched to Maltese herself. She sought to ensure that the Maltese-speaking children were well-integrated in the sessions and in the class. Her classroom was a dynamic bilingual environment where switching between Maltese and English was a legitimate practice. In Extract 11 some of the children spoke to Ms Carla in Maltese and she responded in English. They all understood one another. The children narrated a humorous episode and Ms Carla teased Laura about it. The conversation flowed spontaneously and fluidly without any restrictions related to the choice of code. This was an example of translanguaging, where meaning was co-constructed and the children and teacher integrated bilingual speech seamlessly into their narrative.

5.4 Summary of Main Points

Table 7 summarises the strategies emerging from the observation data and the teacher interviews, based on the framework of teacher strategies presented in Palviainen et al. (2016).

Extract 11

Context: During lunch time, Ms Carla is sitting at the table with the Maltese-speaking children. They are narrating an episode about when Laura wanted to go to Amber's home, without telling her mother. Ms Carla is amused by this story and teases the children.

Ms Carla: So what about your brothers?

Laura: Jorqdu għand in-nanna [They sleep at grandmother's].

Ms Carla: And what happened to mummy and daddy?

Laura: Imorru [They go].

Ms Carla: I know, when mummy picks you up, I'll ask her. Shall I ask mummy when she picks you up?

Laura: No. Le [No].

Ms Carla: No.

Ms Carla: Laura is funny. I tell her? Laura is not coming home with you. She's going with Anna to her home? Shall I ask her? And mummy is going to say?

Laura: No.

Ms Carla: What is mummy going to say? She's going to say no?

Laura: U jien mhux se ngħidilha. Se mmur naħrab ġol-karaozza tagħhom. [I am not going to tell her. I am going to escape in their car].

Ms Carla: Laura! Anna is that a good idea? If she runs away and comes to live at your house, what are you going to do? Will you send her back home? You don't know?

Kate: Anna u veru mhux se toqgħod miegħek id-dar? [Anna isn't she going to stay at your house?]

Amber: Le.

Ella: Jekk joqtolha? hit or killed by il-karozzi? X'se naqgħmlu? [What are we going to do if she is hit or killed by a car?]

Ms Carla: Laura you are a little monkey. You are.

6 Discussion

In this study we opened a window on the bilingual pedagogy of two early years teachers in Malta. We interpreted the language mediation strategies of the teachers in the light of their beliefs and the Maltese sociolinguistic context. The presence of societal bilingualism in Malta means that Maltese and English form an integral part of the language practices in society. All children are exposed to both languages to varying degrees. English, together with Maltese, is an official language and a language of schooling in Malta, besides being the language of wider communication. The teachers' comments revealed that they believed that the use of English is linked to specific social groupings and that the lack of proficiency in English by the parents might prevent their children from readily developing their own English language

Table 7 Description of and reasons for the bilingual practices emerging from the teacher interviews and observation data (based on the classification of Palviainen et al. 2016)

Description of strategies	How do the teachers do it?	Reasons for strategies
<i>Contextual and non-verbal support</i>	Both teachers: Body language, verbalised actions, repetition and reinforcement of key words and instructions, pictures, and demonstrations of instructions.	To scaffold the child's language learning; To contextualise the use of the child's language learning; To make learning fun; To help children link the use of language to other cues; To support understanding.
<i>Less reliance on the use of the first language as the school year progressed</i>	Teachers decreased the use of Maltese as the school year progressed.	Teachers relied on the use of Maltese: To improve communication; To make the children feel at ease at the start of the school year; To help children get used to the school routines; To help children to become familiar with basic instructions and classroom language. Teachers decreased the use of Maltese as the school year progressed to prevent passive reliance on Maltese by the children and to maximise their learning of English.
<i>The teacher as a bilingual speaker</i>	Both teachers used Maltese and English in class. Although Ms Martha adhered to a language separation methodology, she is more flexible during unstructured activities such as free play and lunch time.	To promote bilingual practices; To use Maltese for affective purposes and to make the Maltese-speaking children feel at ease.
<i>Bilingual education</i>	Ms Carla used the two languages concurrently and flexibly.	To accommodate the Maltese-speaking children, especially those who were struggling with comprehension in English; To ensure understanding on the part of the Maltese-speaking children and to make them feel comfortable and included in the interactions; To validate the Maltese speaking children's contributions when they speak Maltese; To prepare the child for formal schooling.
	Ms Martha relied on the separation of the two languages in each activity	To ensure that all children received input in both languages; To prepare the child for formal schooling. To ensure that both languages are given importance.

(continued)

Table 7 (continued)

Description of strategies	How do the teachers do it?	Reasons for strategies
<i>Adjustments to individual needs</i>	Ms Carla adopted flexible bilingualism and non-linguistic scaffolds according to each child's needs and adjusted expectations for each child.	Both teachers showed sensitivity to what children were able to do with language: To meet the individual cognitive and language needs of each child; To prepare children for formal schooling in the following year.
	Ms Martha believed that she was providing a rich input in the children's first language (Maltese) and provided appropriate visual and non-linguistic scaffolds for their use of English. She adjusted the expectations for each child.	

skills. Socioeconomic status (SES), and home language and literacy practices play an important part in the development of English language proficiency of children (Howard et al. 2014). One needs to look closely at the texture of children's lives in coming to an understanding of second-language proficiency development.

We were interested in how early years teachers mediated the language use of their young learners. The interviews with the two teachers and the observation of their classroom practices allowed us to gain insights into their beliefs about the strategies to promote bilingualism and language mediation strategies. Their beliefs were influenced by ideologies within Maltese society related to cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991). English language use did not only bring about advantages related to education and employment, but provided also access to certain social groups, referred to as 'cliques' by one of the teachers. This did not only involve access to material wealth, but also access to a lifestyle and social connections. We shall now discuss further these gained insights.

Ms Martha drew on normative ideologies associated with languages as separate entities. On the other hand Ms Carla challenged these hegemonic ideologies by adopting a more flexible approach in her classroom. She tried to resolve the tension between the promotion of English as a language of schooling and the use of Maltese to facilitate her children's learning of English. Prevailing ideologies about the value of English and the stigma associated with code-switching in society (Bonnici 2010) could be traced in the teachers' beliefs.

Despite the differences in the models of bilingual education adopted by the two teachers, similar strategies could be traced across the two contexts. In the following section, these similarities are discussed, followed by a discussion of the differences in the models of bilingual education and the implications for language policy and teacher education.

6.1 Similarities Between the Two Teachers

The models of bilingual education represented by the two teachers; the language separation model and that of flexible bilingualism have been positioned on contrasting points (García 2009). We observed, however, that some of the language mediation strategies adopted by both teachers were common. They acted out the roles of three language users: a monolingual speaker of English, a monolingual speaker of Maltese and a bilingual speaker of Maltese and English. In this way the same teacher acted as a model speaker of Maltese and of English separately, and of a bilingual speaker of both languages. Baker (2009) acknowledged the importance of teachers as role models for children in bilingual education.

Cameron (2015) argued that most of the language items that children came across could be understood through pictures, video, actions or gestures. Children in this study learnt the target language by engaging in play and other activities. The teachers used the target language/s with simplified, repetitive speech, and made use of gestures, mime, intonation and visual supports. They reinforced new vocabulary and language structures in different contexts.

Both teachers allowed for a settling in period, at the beginning of the school year, when they adopted a flexible use of language to varying degrees. The teachers were sensitive to the diversity in the children's linguistic background and adjusted their strategies accordingly. The pupil groups were not homogenous and both teachers were responsive to this heterogeneity. Baker and Prys-Jones (1998) made reference to this settling in period, where the teacher made use of some of the students' first language during the early school months, and generally in conjunction with translation into the target language. A settling-in period was reported on also in other contexts. Hickey et al. (2014) described the use of the children's first language, English, to help them settle into new early childhood Welsh immersion settings. The teachers used more of the children's first language during informal conversation. Use of the child's first language has been frequently noted as occurring when teachers talked informally with the children in their class at the end of a lesson or 'off the record' (Cameron 2015).

6.2 Differences Between the Two Teachers

6.2.1 Ms Martha's Classroom: Towards a Model of Language Separation

Our classroom observations were held in the middle of the school year. By now Ms Martha had come to adhere to the prevailing, uncodified policy of parallel monolingualism in Maltese and English. This strategy provided an interesting contrast to what happens in other bilingual contexts, such as the one recorded by Palviainen and Mård-Miettinen (2015), where the teacher became more flexible in language use throughout the school year. Ms Martha was aware of the benefits of switching

from one language to the other, but seemed to resist doing this. She kept the languages separate by using each one of them at different times of the school day for different activities.

The planning of classroom activities showed that careful consideration was given to the balanced use of the two languages throughout the day. Her belief in language separation was built on the assumption that she was maximising the learners' exposure to each language separately. Ebsworth (2002) pointed out that while it was indeed important to recognise code-switching as a valuable skill, its use in dual language classrooms by teachers was problematic, as it removed the need to attend to the new language vocabulary. She cautioned that if bilingual teachers code-switch constantly, particularly if their switches echo in one language what was just said in another, this could interfere with the intake and processing of second-language data. On the other hand, Gort and Pontier (2013) illustrated clearly ways in which bilingual interaction is a useful communicative and academic resource in a dual language programme. They argued that teachers used code-switching to create "safe spaces" (p. 240) for learners to develop their bilingual repertoire for learning purposes and to encourage collaboration between learners. For them the adoption of a strict language separation policy might be "at odds with the natural social interactions of bilinguals" (p. 240).

Ms Martha organised highly formulaic language activities. One important component of successful language learning is the mastery of formulaic sequences which include idioms, collocations, and sentence frames (Wray 2000). DePalma (2010) recognised that these formulaic aspects of language learning gave children the confidence to practise the target language/s. Ms Martha relied also on the use of classroom routines which echoed Bruner's (1986) notion of formats and routines. These were features of events that allowed scaffolding to take place and to combine the security of the familiar with the excitement of the new daily, classroom routines which may provide opportunities for language development. The context and the familiarity of the event provided an opportunity for pupils to predict meaning and intention. The routine offered also a way of adding variation and novelty that could involve more complex language. Cameron (2015, p. 11) pointed out that "routines can provide opportunities for meaningful language development; they allow the child to actively make sense of new language from familiar experience and provide a space for language growth." Despite the benefits of such routines, Palviainen and Mård-Miettinen (2015, p. 393) warned that relying solely on these strategies will end up in language use becoming "too mechanical".

Ms Martha provided instructions and directions which required a physical response from her children. This echoed the teaching methods of the Total Physical Response (TPR) methodology. Asher (1996) believed that as children learnt a lot of their first language from commands, they could also learn their second language in this way. Ms Martha integrated the TPR approach into routines to help her learners build their confidence as they acquired new vocabulary. Sühendan (2013) claimed that TPR was a powerful technique when teaching languages to young children, especially if it involved games, songs, stories and demonstrations. Ms Martha used songs and rhymes to ensure that her young learners learnt new vocabulary in a meaningful context.

In Ms Martha's classroom, the learners seemed to be somewhat reluctant to respond to the teacher-initiated exchanges. Despite her intentions to reinforce vocabulary items and language throughout the school year, our observations highlighted the fact that the rigid structure of the classroom activities did not seem to allow much room for spontaneous contributions by the children. Ms Martha demanded that the children used English all the time during the English activities, and very often the children seemed reluctant to participate. Similarly, DePalma (2010) showed how a strategy of language separation in an English-Spanish dual language programme, which did not allow the use of English, led to many breakdowns in communication and limited the children's responses. The teacher's rigorousness and inflexibility in daily language practices led to the lowering of the English-dominant children's motivation to acquire Spanish as L2. However, in the context of the current study, it was difficult to assess whether the lack of participation in classroom interaction on the part of the children was due to the teacher strategy of language separation or because of other factors; such as the children's level of proficiency in the first and second languages, and other variables that were not in the remit of the study.

Moreover, Ballinger (2012) noted that with changes in classroom composition there have been changes to the classic model of immersion pedagogy in order to meet more effectively the language learning needs of pupils. Such changes should involve adapting the language teaching and learning immersion methodology to the pupils' needs.

6.2.2 Ms Carla's Classroom: A Model of Continuing Flexible Bilingualism

Ms Carla adopted flexible bilingualism in the classroom, as advocated by Creese and Blackledge (2011). This seemed to have been facilitated by Ms Carla's own experiences as expressed in the interview, when she recounted how she had grown up in a bilingual household and community, where Maltese and English were used regularly, and code-switching was a common occurrence.

The most frequent strategy adopted by Ms Carla was that of translation. She translated instructions, questions and key vocabulary from English to Maltese. Cameron (2015) noted that translation was an important strategy to facilitate young children's second language learning: particularly when explaining new language, giving instructions, checking for understanding, giving feedback and engaging in informal conversation. However, the use of translation, or as García (2009, p. 302) referred to it as 'co-linguaging', has been criticised. This is because it might lead the learners to passively wait for the translation instead of being involved in the learning of the target language (Palviainen et al. 2016). This has implications for teacher education, where teachers may be asked to reflect on and learn strategies other than direct translation to facilitate their learners' understanding and language development. Ebsworth (2002) cautioned against the use of permissive code-switching by teachers and insisted that the use of the first language during time

allocated to the second language should be carefully thought through. The motivation for the use of the first language should be clear.

In Ms Carla's classroom, the Maltese-speaking children were aware that their contributions in Maltese were appreciated. Garrity et al. (2015) illustrated ways in which flexible bilingualism, which they referred to as translanguaging, was used in their dual language infant classroom. The teachers ensured that all languages were valued and that all the children were learning. Our analysis of the observation data showed ways in which Ms Carla was dynamic and responsive to diverse language practices that reflected a holistic view of bilinguals as individuals with a wide repertoire of language practices. An analysis of the teacher's switching between English and Maltese revealed an intentional approach to fostering a language learning environment that was purposefully structured to support the development of the second language, English.

Ms Carla made use of flexible bilingualism to meet the individual needs of her learners. The heterogeneous nature of her classroom, in terms of the children's home language and social background, required varied types of adjustments to cater for individual needs. This resonated with Vygotsky's (1986) Zone of Proximal Development, as the teacher was in a position to assess each child's needs and seek to meet them. She used simplified language in English with Janice, and translated from English to Maltese for Chloe who was a struggling learner of English (Extracts 10 and 11).

6.3 Implications for Bilingual Education

Early childhood education presents many challenges and demands as teachers seek to ensure their children's well-being. It requires a high level of commitment to the holistic development of young children, including the promotion of languages. Our study has highlighted the need to raise awareness about the planning and provision of differentiated learning for L1 and L2 children in the same group.

Early years settings are environments where children develop their social and cognitive competences through language. It is here where children should make a strong start to learn the languages of schooling. Teachers are to be empowered to make the decisions regarding the quality and quantity of the switching as "ultimately the teacher, unavoidably, has ultimate responsibility for the movement between languages that happens in a lesson" (Cameron 2015, p. 209).

In recent times, language separation models have received harsh criticism. However, one needs to question also if very young children, who have just begun to learn another language, can acquire the kind of linguistic resources required for flexible bilingualism if they have limited exposure to language (McPake and Stephen 2016). Baker and Pry-Jones (1998, p. 495) recognised the importance of extensive exposure to the second language: "children learning a second language in nursery school will develop varying degrees of competence in that language, according to the quantity and quality of the provision."

We make a case for a child-centred approach, where the teacher adopts bilingual strategies depending on the children's needs, rather than on rigid adherence to a model. Schwartz and Palviainen (2016) argued for 'hybrids' of language models based on the diversity of learners in twenty-first century classrooms. More complex and speaker-centred models of bilingualism in practice need to be developed, researched and understood. Language policy makers need to take into account the specific sociopolitical context in which the speakers of the languages operate and various factors related to the learners' needs and the teachers' beliefs. Other factors which need to be considered include the different school sectors, parental expectations, and the children's home languages. For instance, there were clear differences in the languages of schooling in the two schools where our study was conducted. In the Church school, English was used for teaching all the subjects; whereas in the State school, both Maltese and English were used. Also, in the State school most children came from Maltese-speaking families with little exposure to English; whereas in the Church school, the children had more exposure to English in their homes. Parental expectations have also to be taken into consideration as "parents hold certain perceptions and expectations concerning their child's bilingual development" (Schwartz and Palviainen 2016, p. 6). Oftentimes the reality is a complex one as observed by Curdt-Christiansen and Sun (2016) in Singapore which is characterised by a mélange of bilingual programmes and realities in schools.

More research into the quality and quantity of flexibility in language use is necessary to establish whether this provides the required input for young children in their early stages of language learning. Hickey et al. (2014) called for an assessment of the impact of mixing on the quantity and quality of language input. Teachers are to be aware that mixing is just one strategy out of a myriad others to support language learning. Creese and Blackledge (2010, p. 113) called for "further research to explore what 'teachable' pedagogic resources are available in flexible, concurrent approaches to learning and teaching languages bilingually". García (2009, p. 299) acknowledged that even when teachers used planned code-switching to "clarify or reinforce lesson material", they need to monitor both the quantity and quality of their switching. Bilingual classrooms in the twenty-first century are moving towards situations in which languages are used fluidly as happens in society at large. Malta is no exception in this regard. In recent years the demographic landscape of Maltese classrooms has changed dramatically.

Teachers' beliefs and concerns are to be addressed directly (Hüttner et al. 2013). Both teachers echoed the negative attitudes related to code-switching present in Maltese society, despite the fact that it is a common occurrence in everyday communication. Such public attitudes must have had an impact on the teachers' views on the use of code-switching in their classrooms. Similarly, Shin (2005) described attitudes toward code-switching as negative, noting that bilingual children themselves "may feel embarrassed about their code-switching and attribute it to careless language habits" (p. 18). The teachers who participated in our study admitted to not feeling proud about the fact that they code-switched in their personal lives. Martin

(2005) remarked that: “the use of a local language alongside the ‘official’ language of the lesson is a well-known phenomenon and yet, for a variety of reasons, it is often lambasted as ‘bad practice’, blamed on teachers’ lack of English language competence ... or put to one side and/or swept under the carpet” (p. 88).

Further research is required on classroom language ecologies to show how and why pedagogic bilingual practices come to be legitimated and accepted by participants (Creese and Blackledge 2010). Teachers’ beliefs and practices need not be static, but they can change to meet the needs of learners. Palviainen and Mård-Miettinen (2015) described how the early years teacher in their study in Finland believed initially in keeping languages separate and started using more flexible approaches as the school year progressed. She felt that her decisions could be justified because she had the green light from an expert on bilingualism. Experienced practitioners may have an impact on issues related to the learning of languages in the kindergarten by sharing strategies which do not require solely immediate translation. Other methods of exposition to help children extract meaning may be explored. Such provision requires adequate staffing, high-quality training and ongoing support for teachers.

6.4 Implications for Teacher Education

Teacher education needs to address concerns related to the use of the first language in the bilingual classroom and meaning-making strategies. García (2008) called for teacher preparation that encourages and empowers teachers to develop multilingual awareness. It needs to encompass the following four understandings: knowledge about language, subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical practice and understandings of the social, political and economic struggles surrounding the use of two or more languages. Such a preparation provides different perspectives on creating an environment that is supportive and responsive to diversity which can be made a resource for both individual children and for the preschool. She recommended that a teacher’s knowledge base should refer also to sociocultural theories and focus on language as a social and cultural practice. Insights from different theoretical perspectives will enable early childhood teachers to reflect upon the exclusionary character of current linguistic practices. Teachers should take into consideration not only different modalities and skills, but also the societal language practices and ideologies in which children are embedded. From a research perspective, there is a lack of large-scale systematic studies on early second language learning. Due to the explorative nature of current studies, it is difficult to make any generalisations with regard to the effectiveness of teaching methods in early learning when transferred to other contexts. More research in these areas would provide an insight into how widespread such teaching approaches are.

6.5 *Limitations of this Study*

This study is of course not representative of Maltese kindergarten classes. A more comprehensive and longitudinal perspective would provide us with further insights into how teachers develop their strategies as the school year progresses. The two classrooms in this study presented two contexts with their specific characteristics; of learners' circumstances and home languages and the teachers' bilingual education strategies. Nonetheless we hope that this study will contribute to the limited knowledge about bilingual teaching strategies in the early years, especially in contexts that are marked by the presence of two or more languages in society.

7 **Conclusions**

This chapter has sought to raise awareness of the language beliefs and practices of two early years' teachers in Malta. It has highlighted the ideologies and beliefs which can frame language practices in classrooms. Teachers may follow the institutional, hegemonic ideologies or act as agents of change. Contradictions between their beliefs and the prevailing ideologies on language were evident in the teachers' discourse.

Our study points to a need for a re-examination of the model of bilingual education, traditionally based on language separation. It calls for a reconsideration of the effectiveness of sole adherence to the target language with such young learners and invites teachers to adopt more flexible approaches, depending on the learners' needs. This has implications also for how language education policy is planned and implemented in view of the demographic changes in Maltese classrooms brought about by the increased number of immigrant children, some of whom do not know either Maltese or English.

To conclude we recommend that a clearly agreed learning contract could be established between teachers and pupils, and their parents, relating to a more systematic alternation of languages in the classroom. The ultimate aim of bilingual education is to develop bilingual individuals who, in the case of Malta, are able to use either Maltese or English appropriately in a monolingual context, but are able also to use both languages in alternation, depending on the context and the linguistic repertoire of interlocutors (Council of Europe 2015). A policy of bilingual education should take into consideration the pupils' initial linguistic repertoires. Our study showed that teachers need to reflect on policy and how this can be translated into practice, to ensure that they cater for their learners' diverse needs. Such considerations still need to be made more explicit in key policy documentation so that they may be put into practice more consistently by teachers. It is a consolidation of this kind that will ensure that the Maltese bilingual education system continues to guarantee the right to high-quality education to young children.

Teachers cannot apply a ‘one size fits all’ approach to bilingual education. They must be flexible in planning work which is adapted to different child language proficiency levels and different general abilities. Teachers are to be supported to show “a sensitivity to contextual factors” (Palviainen and Mård-Miettinen 2015, p. 397) when considering which language strategies to adopt. This study presented a snapshot of what happens in two classrooms and clear differences were traced. It has shown that the complexities present in the Maltese context could make it difficult to generalise between different classrooms and realities. In some cases, teachers might feel that by adhering to the language separation model with the support of language mediation strategies, they are maximising the young children’s exposure to both languages in the early stages of language acquisition. In other contexts, teachers may feel that children might benefit from the use of flexible bilingualism. What is important is that teachers adopt a “a child-centred, rather than a model-centred approach” (Schwartz et al. 2016, p. 163) in the best interest of each child.

Acknowledgement We would like to thank the two teachers and their classes in Malta who generously participated in our study. We thank also Ms Rositsa Petrova of the Centre for Literacy, University of Malta who supported the data collection.

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Whose Challenge Is It? Learners and Teachers of English in Hungarian Preschool Contexts



Réka Lugossy

Abstract The chapter explores Hungarian preschool children's and their teachers' language use and meaning-making patterns in a context where English is a foreign language. It also seeks to provide a critical analysis of the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices in the examined contexts. Data collected through ethnographic processes reveal a mismatch between young learners' needs and teacher preparation. In most cases, teachers struggle to match the target language input to children's language level, and rely on translation as a systematic strategy for clarifying meaning. Data also show how a teacher's self-exploration and reflection shape her cognition and practice in the preschool EFL setting. The study has implications for teacher education programmes in the observed context: it calls for a re-examination of professional training in order to address preschool foreign language teachers' professional needs.

1 Introduction

While there is a growing amount of empirical research focusing on early language learning in school contexts, relatively little is known about the use of English in preschool settings, mostly when it comes to English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts (Nikolov 2015). This study draws on data gained in a bilingual nursery and two bilingual kindergartens in a predominantly monolingual country (Hungary), where English is a foreign language with a high prestige. Most parents are eager to start their children's English language education as early as possible, to pave their way to success. Those who can afford it, choose expensive kindergartens which advertise bilingual programmes even though these programmes do not tend to take into consideration children's social, emotional and cognitive needs. The teachers at these institutions are rarely qualified to teach English to young learners, and

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although they themselves may be aware of the shortcomings of their programmes, they choose to adopt a face-saving attitude to keep their jobs.

The increased interest of parents, teachers and researchers in early bilingual education (Rixon 2013) highlights the need for obtaining data on what actually happens in pre-primary institutions when it comes to teaching and learning English. This chapter addresses this gap by describing and analysing preschool children's and their teachers' language use and social practices in their situated contexts, with special focus on the nature of the support provided by teachers when exposing young learners to English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Therefore, this study seeks to provide answers to the following questions: What characterises children's language use in the observed preschool contexts? What characterises teachers' language use? How do teachers scaffold children's cognitive, affective, social and linguistic development? How do teachers' beliefs about early bilingual education relate to their practice?

In order to answer these questions, the present study relies on raw data collected by two MA students of English who were involved in a project focusing on young learners' language development in the framework of a methodology seminar at the University of Pécs. While in their final MA theses, the two students presented and analysed what they found important in their dataset (Bátri 2015; Samu 2014), the present study draws on the data collected by Bátri (2015) and Samu (2014) in their integrity. Thus, it allows for a more holistic perspective and a comparison of the processes observed in two different institutions.

Another focus of this chapter is a critical approach to the researches carried out by Bátri (2015) and Samu (2014), as despite the rich data they collected, both authors approach their data in a descriptive, rather than in an analytical way. Besides, the present study seeks to complement the emic perspectives that emerge from the two ethnographic studies, as well as their data analysis with a more critical perspective. In doing so, it proposes to explore how Bátri's and Samu's cognition develops by engagement in reflection on teaching and research.

By using linguistic ethnography as a methodological framework, the study aims to provide links between language, culture, society and cognition in complex ways (Creese 2008, p. 232). It also gives insights into the interplay of the local and wider contextual factors that shape preschool bilingual education by involving emic perspectives.

In what follows, I present the underlying theoretical framework and review relevant research on the topic. This is followed by the description of the broader sociolinguistic context of the study and the methodology used, and by the discussion of the data about participants' practice and beliefs in bilingual preschool settings in Hungary. Finally, implications for preschool bilingual education and teacher education are discussed.

2 Literature Review

2.1 *Constructing Meaning in Interaction*

Central to this study, is the Vygotskyan (1978) view of learning as a socially situated process. The epistemological stance of the sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) is that humans develop as participants in cultural communities, and therefore, their learning emerges from their experiences in social contexts (Johnson 2009). In the present study, this theory of mind provides an explanatory framework for understanding how the participant children's and teachers' knowledge is shaped in a complex, dialogic process.

As pointed out, Vygotsky (1978) argues that children's development cannot be separated from the social context and that their development actually depends on culturally situated forms of interaction (Mercer and Howe 2012). Donaldson (1987) draws on Vygotsky's idea of situated cognition, and she attributes children's understanding of the language to their ability to make sense of "certain types of situations involving direct and immediate interaction" (Donaldson 1987, p. 36). This implies that children understand language in specific situations. It also suggests that the context in which language is embedded plays a major role in the meaning-making process.

Since this study depicts children and adults interacting in a foreign language, the idea of creating a context that supports meaning-making is crucial for our discussion. So is Bruner's (1983) conceptual framework, in which adults are meant take on a key role in setting up an appropriate social and interactional context which scaffolds children's meaning-making, and thus, their cognitive, affective and language development.

Studies which underlie the centrality of interaction for learning (Jarvis and Robinson 1997; Lugossy 2012; Walsh 2012) also reveal that in classrooms not only learners, but teachers also demonstrate differing abilities to create discourse which is conducive to learning and that teachers have a crucial role in "promoting interactions which are specific to a particular micro-context and to specific pedagogic goals" (Walsh 2012, p. 6). As it appears in this study, teachers' classroom interactional competence, i.e. "their ability to use interaction as a tool for mediating and assisting learning" (Walsh 2011, p. 158) becomes particularly important when teaching very young language learners.

2.2 *Research on Young Language Learners and Their Teachers*

This study also draws on theories and research that focus on early bilingual education, pointing out that views on the benefits of these programmes are far from unanimous (Enever 2011; Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011; Rixon 2013). As

shown by the accumulating body of empirical research, despite the common underlying pedagogical principles, the practices and outcomes of early English programmes vary greatly due to contextual factors (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011; Pinter 2006, 2011). Studies also confirm the importance of teacher-related and classroom-related reasons in the success of early language learning programmes. Teacher's personality, the methodology used by teachers, their understanding of teaching and learning and beliefs about early bilingual development and education, as well as the way children and teachers interact to make meaning, emerge as key variables in the success of early bilingual programmes (Curtain and Dahlberg 2010; Enever 2011; Nikolov 2002; Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović, 2011; Schwartz et al. 2016).

As suggested above, preschool bilingual education in contexts where English is a foreign language is a rather under-researched area (Nikolov 2015; Rixon 2013; Robinson et al. 2015). As shown by Rixon (2013), kindergartens that provide bilingual education have started to proliferate only recently in certain Central and Eastern European countries like Poland, Hungary, Romania and Russia, where English is a foreign language. Therefore, such programmes are rather experimental in terms of curriculum and methodology, and there seems to be a lack of comprehensive studies that explore the processes and outcomes of such institutions.

2.3 *Teachers' Language Use*

What counts as good practice in preschool bilingual programmes? One of the relevant areas of research in this sense concerns teachers' language use. Schwartz and Asli (2014) provide an overview of the dominant models that have shaped early immersion programmes, and highlight the need to rethink traditional instructional practices which keep languages separate, in favour of more flexible approaches. Empirical data analysed by Schwartz and Asli (2014) supports the use of translanguaging (Creese and Blackledge 2010) as a bilingual strategy that allows for alternating language modes and thus, encourages children's interactive involvement in the kindergarten.

Other studies focus on the quantity and quality of the target language used in class. This is particularly the case in EFL contexts, where classrooms have an important role in providing exposure to the target language. It appears that although teachers tend to rely on the L1, it is not so much the amount of L1 versus L2 use that is decisive, as the inconsistent use of L1 and L2. (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011; Nikolov 1999; Lugossy 2003).

Research suggests that teachers' beliefs about their learners, themselves and about the teaching-learning process also seem to influence teachers' language choice. Teachers of young EFL learners in Hungary claimed that they used the L1 (Hungarian) due to children's aptitude and proficiency in English as well as their own lack of language proficiency, in particular classroom language (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011). It is important to remember that teachers' proficiency

also has implications for their confidence, as low self-esteem may also induce over-reliance on L1, as a compensation strategy in the EFL class. This is a point to consider in EFL contexts, where the classroom is more or less the only source of input in the target language.

Studies also explore how teachers' practice, including language use relates to their beliefs. Teachers of young learners expressed their preference for using form-focused tasks, drilling and translation in order to prepare the children for examinations and in order to please the parents (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011; Lugossy 2006). This finding is a good example of how teachers' thinking and decisions are shaped by the interplay of contextual and socio-cultural factors (Cabaroglu and Roberts 2000; Flores and Day 2006). I will come back to the socio-cultural embeddedness of beliefs and practices when discussing empirical data later in this chapter.

3 The Context of the Study

As pointed out in the introduction, the study was carried out in Hungary which, despite more recent socio-demographic changes, is still predominantly monolingual. Csizér (2012) provides a detailed social-historical and socio-linguistic background with regard to foreign language learning in Hungary, pointing out that the population's lack of foreign language competence is partly explained by the fact that Russian, imposed by the Communist regime in the 1950s, was the compulsory language to be learned in schools until 1989. The negative attitudes towards learning Russian, combined with poor curricular content (Csizér 2012) and a methodology which predominantly focused on form and on rote learning lead to unsuccessful learners of Russian, who eventually perceived themselves to be unsuccessful at language learning in general (Nikolov 2001).

Children are now expected to have begun learning a foreign language by Year 4 (9–10 years) at the latest, with English and German being the most popular languages chosen at school. As conditions for successful foreign language acquisition are rarely met at schools, parents choose expensive bilingual nurseries and kindergartens for their children in the hope to support their language learning. However, nursery and kindergarten teachers rarely know foreign languages themselves, and even if they do, preschool education colleges do not offer training in teaching foreign languages to young children. Therefore, bilingual kindergartens employ native or non-native foreign language speakers, with or without a qualification to teach the language. Rixon draws attention to similar Central and Eastern European contexts where parents are “prepared to take extra measures of to pay extra in order to provide English to their pre-school children” (Rixon 2013, p. 13). She also points out that due to the fact that some children have the opportunity to attend primary foreign language education, while others do not, continuity becomes an issue in primary schools.

Data for this study come from teachers and children at two private kindergartens in a university town in Hungary. The kindergartens aimed to attract children by offering bilingual education through the immersion model (Johnstone 2009). They advertised their programmes as using up-to-date and holistic methodology in order to support the development of children's personality. They also claimed that the children are exposed to English all during the day, while some activities were offered primarily in the first language (L1), which was Hungarian. In both kindergartens the children had daily English sessions with their non-native English language teachers in the morning. In addition to these, English was used occasionally during the day.

The children attending these kindergartens were between the ages 1–7 and came from families with a high socio-economic status, as they were the ones who could afford to pay the high fees required by these private institutions. As opposed to state-financed kindergartens in Hungary, private kindergartens claim to offer a more homelike environment and more individual attention to children due to the higher number of kindergarten teachers and the low number of children in groups. The observed institutions were homely and well-resourced in terms of toys, board-games, flash cards and English picture books.

4 Method

4.1 Participants

On the first level, data were collected from 36 children attending a private nursery and kindergarten (N and K1) and a private kindergarten (K2), a university town in Hungary. The children were aged 1–7 and most of them came from privileged backgrounds, where parents were willing to invest in what they believed would serve their children's future academic development.

The parents of the children involved were keen on providing bilingual education for their children from the earliest possible age, and according to observers, some of them were also keen on watching English lessons. While some of the observed children came from bilingual families, only few parents were proficient in English, thus for most children the kindergarten was the only source of exposure to English.

The children's unusual first names (which have been changed in this study) sounded exotic in the Hungarian context: they were fashionable foreign (English, French and Russian) or equally fashionable ancient Hungarian names, which also reflected parents' wish to choose something special for their children, as well as their beliefs about their own and their children's place in the world. This is particularly the case in K2, which was rather elite and had very high tuition fees compared to other Hungarian kindergartens, which are in fact free.

Table 1 presents the institutions where data were collected, the number and age of the observed children and their first language, as well as the number and qualifications of the teachers involved in the study.

Table 1 Participants and their teaching and learning contexts 1

Institution	Number of children	Children's L1	Teachers	Teachers' qualification
Nursery (N)	9	5 Hungarian 1 Chinese 2 Hungarian-Italian 1 Hungarian-Norwegian	T1	MA student of English
Kindergarten1 (K1)	7	6 Hungarian 1 Korean	T1	MA student of English
Kindergarten2 (K2)	20	19 Hungarian 1 Hungarian-English	T2 T3 T4	BA in English studies Qualified kindergarten teacher Kindergarten caretaker

4.1.1 The First Institution

Sixteen children were observed in the first kindergarten, which included a nursery group (N) and a kindergarten group (K1). The nine nursery children were between the ages 1 and 3 and included three bilinguals (two Hungarian-Italian children and one Hungarian-Norwegian child), a Chinese monolingual child and five Hungarian children. The seven kindergarten children were between the ages 4 and 7 and included one Korean bilingual child and six Hungarians.

The teacher (T1) in K1 was on her way to receiving her MA in English studies. She was employed as an English teacher and English speaking caretaker who had daily English sessions with the nursery children and who was available for them all morning, alongside the Hungarian caretaker. In the afternoon she would take over both the nursery and the kindergarten children as their English speaking caretaker. In the meanwhile, she also carried out participant observation in the kindergarten, as she was collecting data for a project in which she was involved at the university where she studied. During the 9 months of her observation, T1 also had three qualified English teacher colleagues (one of them being a native speaker) who were the English teachers of the kindergarten children, but who were not involved in this study.

4.1.2 The Second Institution

In the second kindergarten (K2) 20 children between 4 and 7 were observed. One of the children was a Hungarian-English bilingual, whereas the others had Hungarian as their first language (L1). The three teachers observed in K2 included the English teacher (T2: with a BA in English studies and no teaching qualification), a qualified kindergarten teacher (T3) and an unqualified kindergarten caretaker (T4), all proficient in English. The staff also included an art teacher, who, unlike the other three teachers in K2, had no knowledge of English. The English teacher had daily

sessions with all the 20 children in the kindergarten, and was available for them during the day.

As shown above, the participant teachers who used English with the children varied in age, professional background and qualification. They all had some degree of English proficiency, but, as it appears, none of those who were observed and were in charge of using English with the children in these kindergartens had qualifications for teaching English to very young learners.

As pointed out already, the two university students who collected data in the above-mentioned preschool settings also became participants in the research. Both of them were young MA students of English at a Hungarian university. While working for an MA degree in English Studies, Bátri was also a part-time English teacher in K1. Since Samu aimed to become a kindergarten teacher of English, at the time of her English studies she was also a correspondence student in a kindergarten teacher training college.

4.2 Procedure and Data Collection

As pointed out already, this study partly draws on primary data collected by Bátri (2015) and Samu (2014) in preschool contexts, using the methods of linguistic ethnography. In both cases, data were collected longitudinally and triangulation was ensured by multiple data collection processes. First, I describe the data collection methods used by Bátri (2015), who was T1 in K1. Then, I turn to Samu's (2014) data collection carried out in K2.

In K1 the observer was the language teacher (T1). She carried out participant observation and took detailed field notes (Emerson et al. 1995) between September 2013 and May 2014, for a period of 9 months. During this period, she also conducted a teaching journal (Salzman 2001) where she included descriptive information and reflective information. T1 noted down whatever she found relevant in connection with children's behaviour and unfolding language use, as well as reflections on the methodology she applied, and on her own professional development. In her teaching diary she also wrote down information gained through informal feedback from colleagues and from children's parents. Although T1's teaching and self-observation was not initially conceptualised as an action research, it turned into one on the way, as soon as she found herself facing problems that called for immediate solutions in her daily practice. This is apparent in her final MA thesis, which accurately renders the challenges she encountered in her work with very young children in particular (aged 1–3), and the solutions she implemented (Bátri 2015).

Samu (2014) observed preschool children and their teachers as part of a project carried out within a seminar on children's language development. She carried out observations in K2 for altogether 36 h, in February and March 2014. During her observation period, Samu took field notes (Emerson et al. 1995) focusing on children's and teachers' daily activities and language use. She also conducted

semi-structured interviews with T2, T3 and T4, as she aimed to elicit data about participant teachers’:

- educational background,
- views about early bilingual education,
- perceptions of children’s favourite teaching techniques and materials,
- perceptions of the children’s and their own language use
- understanding of their own professional development.

The interviews were carried out in Hungarian (which was the participants’ mother tongue). As the participant teachers expressed their concerns and anxiety about being recorded, the observer and interviewer decided to rely on note-taking only.

This study also relies on data collected through professional discussions carried out with the two observers and thesis writers, who also became participants in this study. On this level, data were elicited (1) during a methodology seminar focusing on children’s foreign language development, in the framework of which they were both involved in collecting data on young EFL learners; (2) during thesis-writing seminars and (3) one-on-one consultations they attended while writing their final theses. After the discussions, I noted down what I considered to be important in connection with both observers’ and thesis writers’ experiences and emerging ideas about their own research process.

4.3 Data Analysis

The analysis relies on the one hand on primary data (field notes and interview transcripts) collected in K1 and K2 and partly analysed by Bátri (2015) and Samu (2014). On another level, I analysed Bátri’s (2015) and Samu’s (2014) discourses as they appear in their final theses, as well as my own observations about their development. The combination of ethnographic methodology and linguistic analysis allow me to address contradictions that remained unexplained or open to critical reflection in Bátri’s (2015) and Samu’s (2014) interpretation of things. This is particularly the case when comparing data gained from semi-structured interviews to observational data in K2. Also, the fact that the two authors observed two different institutions, and that there was a difference in the length of observation and in the researchers’ involvement may render a more complex picture of the examined processes.

I analysed data through an inductive, exploratory approach, which Chapelle and Duff (2003) claim to allow for a simultaneous, spiralling exploration of empirical data against theoretical frameworks. After reading the observational data, the interview transcripts, the two final theses (Bátri 2015; Samu 2014), and the notes I took during and after the discussions carried out with Bátri and Samu, I tried to identify emerging patterns in the data set. Particular attention was paid to narratives that revealed participants’ emic perspectives. Bruner suggests that narratives explore phenomena on dual landscapes: the “landscape of action,” revealing what

participants do or don't do, and the "landscape of consciousness," which reveals what participants "know, think or feel, or do not know, think or feel" (Bruner 1987, p. 14). In this sense, participants' unfolding stories may become provide data on teachers' practices, as well as their views and attitudes.

5 Results and Discussion

This section attempts to provide answers to the research questions by discussing the main themes that emerged from the observational and interview data, as well as from a critical analysis of two authors' researches (Bátri 2015; Samu 2014), and the notes taken during professional discussions I had with the two authors.

Thus, the following discussion focuses on: (1) K1 and K2 children's language use, and (2) K1 and K2 teachers' beliefs and practices. When discussing K1 and K2 teachers' practices and beliefs, special attention is paid to teachers' languages use, their attempts to scaffold children's socio-affective, cognitive, and language development, and to the ways in which teachers' beliefs compare to their practice (K2 teachers). Finally, this section involves a discussion of (3) EFL professionals' development and emerging identities.

5.1 *Children's Language Use*

The analysis of the collected data revealed that in both kindergartens children mostly used Hungarian with each other and with their teachers, although some children said hardly anything. This is understandable, as some of them were very young (between the ages 1–3), and being new to the kindergarten they were in their silent period (Krashen 1985). Besides, as shown in the discussion below, neither the very young children, nor the slightly older ones (4–7) had genuine reasons for using the English language. There was no real communicative need involved, since all their teachers and most of the children spoke Hungarian as their L1.

English was used and elicited from children in a formal manner mostly during their English sessions in a context which hardly made sense to children. According to findings from both kindergartens, children benefited more from uses of English in particular natural contexts, such as mealtimes, which made sense to them and allowed for ritual actions and language use. Their few attempts to initiate interactions in English were also recorded mostly during mealtimes.

In what follows, I discuss examples of children using English in order to (1) respond to the teachers' initiation, (2) achieve their aims (i.e., asking for food, drinks or help), and (3) entertain themselves (i.e., playing with language). The examples that follow show children's language addressed to their teachers, each other and themselves in various situations: during the English sessions, during mealtime and playtime.

5.1.1 Children Respond to (Users of) the English Language

In the first institution, T1 (Bátri 2015), observed the children she was teaching for 9 months, and her reflections on children's language use depict children's non-verbal and verbal responses to the foreign language, as well as the socio-affective context which shaped and allowed for their responses to English. T1 embarked on the project of teaching young learners with great enthusiasm in a full-time job. Her aim was to involve very young learners of English into singing rhymes and songs, and she hoped to elicit physical responses to her instructions and short answers in a short time. To her disappointment, she soon had to realise that when she started working with them, the children aged 1–3 were reluctant to even listen to her using English:

“They accepted the food and the toys I gave to them, but looked very disturbed when I tried to talk to them. ...when they happened to stay with me as the only adult, they often showed panic, and sometimes they even started to cry when they saw me, moreover, when I tried to speak to him, one of the little boys hit me a couple of times and kicked another English teacher shouting *Nem jó! Nem jó! Nem jó!* (Not good! Not good! Not good!)” (Bátri 2015, p. 43).

English teachers were evidently unpopular with the youngest children: they „were always the last ones who were allowed by the children to change their nappies or brush their teeth,” continues Bátri, adding that her colleagues who had been working in the kindergarten for a longer period assured her that this was children's typical reaction and “normally it would be better in a couple of weeks” (Bátri 2015, p. 43).

Indeed, it became better: in a few weeks the newcomers stopped crying when she was approaching them. However, a few weeks' time is a long period spent crying. It is worth thinking about what these radical responses to the person using English indicate. They certainly suggest that children were not yet ready to receive new language input in such conditions, since they hardly felt secure in their new environment and web of social relations. It seems that the way the framing of the English sessions was conceptualised was also problematic: nursery children were separated from their older peers and taken to another room by their English teacher, whom they did not know yet, and who spoke an unfamiliar language. Although the youngest children came to accept English gradually, it remains a question whether exposing them to unhappy experiences makes early exposure in such a way worthwhile. As opposed to this highly unnatural context and methodology, Alstad and Tkachenko (chapter “[Scaffolding Discourse Skills in Pre-primary L2 Classrooms](#)” in this volume) draw attention to the potential of outdoor activities for creating meaning and children's language development. They show that the outdoor environment offers opportunities for providing here-and-now input that children can relate to, such as plants, animals, water, and rocks.

On the other hand, slightly older children (4–7) showed signs of language development: within a month, they could respond to yes-no questions, could name animals and objects from their surroundings and, as discussed and shown in examples later, would sing songs to themselves.

As for the other kindergarten (K2), we have no data referring to children's early responses to the English language and its users, since in February, when Samu (2014) started her observation, the children in K2 were no longer newcomers, and even the youngest ones (aged 4) had been there for at least half a year. However, the collected data show that children in K2 frequently ignored their teachers' English questions and requests, or responded either non-verbally or in their L1, as shown in the examples below, where it is hard to tell whether Zazi understood the language directed at her or whether she made sense of the situation:

Extract 1 (during lunch)

1. T2: Who wants some more pasta? [holding pasta bowl]
2. [nobody responds]
3. T2: Drink a glass of water! [holding a jug of water]
4. Zazi: [shakes her head]

Extract 2 (at breakfast)

1. T2: What would you like? Vegetables? [indicating a choice of vegetables or sandwiches]
2. Zazi: Nem szeretem a zöldséget! Szendvicset! (I don't like vegetables! Sandwich!)
3. T2: Here you are.

However, there were instances when the children responded in English:

Extract 3 (during breakfast)

1. T2: Alex, what would you like to drink?
2. Alex: Water.

Extract 4 (during breakfast)

1. Nina: I would like a lot, please. [i.e. scrambled eggs]
2. T2: Would you like some vegetables?
3. Nina: No, no, no.

Extract 5 (during breakfast)

1. T2: Would you like tea?
2. Nina: No!
3. T2: No, thank you!

These examples also depict children's telegraphic responses to the teacher's questions (e.g., *water*; *no*), as well as more complex utterances (*I would like a lot, please*) which incorporate unanalysed chunks, for example, on the part of Nina, who had been attending the kindergarten for 2 years when Samu (2014) observed her.

5.1.2 Children Initiate Interaction in English

The examples that follow discuss those rare occasions when children initiated interaction with their teachers or peers in order to achieve their aims.

Children at Mealtime

According to data gained from observation as well as from interviews with the teachers, children almost never initiate interaction in English during the day, not even in cases when they had been instructed for 2–3 years, as the children attending K2. They obviously do not feel the need to use the target language, since they can achieve everything by using their L1. However, children were found to initiate interaction in English during mealtimes.

Both Bátri (2015) and Samu (2014) found that kindergarten children who had been exposed to English for at least 1 year frequently used English during meals. They provide examples of children's telegraphic stage language, e.g., "More bread, please," and: "Tomato please."

Code-mixing was also frequent in children's language used during meals: "More *husi* please" (More meat please), "A lot *kérek*" (I'd like a lot) and "*Víz* please" (Water please). The latter seemed to be a favourite, often repeated utterance in K2, most probably because the Hungarian and English words rhyme (i.e. [vi:z] and [pli:z]) and children enjoyed the way it sounded. Later in this study I bring more examples that illustrate the importance of language play (Cook 2000) for enhancing children's motivation and language development.

It is also interesting to notice how morphemes fluctuate across languages in these utterances. While children occasionally add the morpheme *-t* to English words to indicate the direct object in Hungarian, such as in "*Kérek water-t*" (I'd like some water), in other utterances, such as the previously quoted "More *husi* please" (More meat please), "A lot *kérek*" (I'd like a lot) and "*Víz* please" (Water please) the *-t* wanes, which makes these utterances grammatically incorrect in Hungarian. The waxing and waning of morphemes, as well as ungrammatical utterances were also observed in K1, where choosing the colour of plates and bibs was an important ceremony before meals, and children naturally mixed codes to express their wishes: "A pink-*et kérem*" (I want the pink one, please), "No *sárga*" (No yellow).

The reason why children were more willing to use English during meals can be manifold. First, mealtimes were important events for children: they broke the kindergarten routine with the prospect of eating and drinking, and children had a good time. Bátri (2015) also shows how language emerged naturally on these occasions by telling the story of how children started playing with language during mealtime, as described later. Also, meals provided opportunities for here-and-now input that children could make sense of, while they also created the need for using food and drink related words. Samu (2014) noted that the children she observed (and who had been exposed to English in K2 for at least 1 year) knew the English terms for most types of food and drink that they encountered at the kindergarten, and they inserted

these English words in their utterances when needed, as in the examples given above: “Kérek water-t” (I’d like some water), “More husi please” (More meat please),

Finally, meals offered contexts for repeated language use which tend to be unanalysed chunks: teachers used the same basic vocabulary and structures (e.g., Would you like some...? Who wants more?), and they aimed to elicit expressions containing formulaic language (Tabors 1997) from the children (e.g., Extract 4: I would like a lot, please.) whenever it came to sharing meals. Repeated exposure to the same unanalysed chunks enables children to spontaneously use these formulae in new, but similar contexts, as observed by Samu (2014).

Children in Need

As I mentioned already, most children did not really have to use English in order to get the message through, and they were mostly aware of this fact. There are, however, two exceptions to this observed rule. One such exception was constituted by the newcomers to K1 (aged 1–3), who initially believed that T1, the English teacher with whom they were left in the room for the time of their “English lesson” did not understand them in Hungarian.

The other exception was a monolingual Chinese girl in the nursery section in K1. Bátri (2015) tells the story of a child “who was very smart and had a curious and vivid nature” (p. 47), and for whom learning to use English was the only way to socialize in the kindergarten world. This monolingual child could only rely on her Chinese (which nobody spoke around her), on extralinguistic cues, and on the little English she gradually acquired. Bátri refers to her as “the little Chinese girl who would not stop crying,” as she cried almost ceaselessly for the first three weeks that she spent at the kindergarten, “sometimes she cried so hard that she even threw up” (Bátri 2015, p. 47). Then, out of all the newcomers she was the first one to start using non-verbal clues, as she realised quite early that she had no other way. She was also the first to use English words among the nursery children: her first word was *meat*, as she did not like vegetables, but soon she added other nouns: *rice*, *pasta*, *soup*, *banana*, *water* to her repertoire. Besides food-related vocabulary, she also started using nouns related to other activities she liked, such as *paper* and *scissors*.

The role of a bilingual peer also played a great role in her kindergarten life. She made friends with a little Korean girl who was more expert both in English (i.e., responding to and using short instructions) and in terms of kindergarten behaviour. Since the two girls played a lot together, they both improved their English. The reason why the little Chinese girl developed English earlier than Hungarian despite the all-Hungarian surroundings was partly because her parents explicitly asked the kindergarten teachers to speak English to her most of the time, and partly because the other children did not understand her and therefore refused to play with her. This is in line with Tabors’ (1997) finding, which showed that in the case of a prolonged

silent period in L2 within a monolingual context, the monolingual L2 speaking children lost interest in the newcoming child and gradually ignored him.

The little girl was never observed using Hungarian, although it often appeared that she understood children's Hungarian directed to her. She never used Chinese either up until her mother arrived every day, "but when she arrived, her daughter started to chatter like she never wanted to stop" (Bátri 2015, p. 48). She was usually very quiet during the day, and spoke only if it was necessary, directing her English both to her teachers and her peers: "I go home," "Come here," "You no play," "Where's my cup?" "You do it." (examples noted down within the first eight months she spent at the nursery). Her utterances, which also included verbs, were a lot more complex syntactically than her peers' utterances. She must have faced a lot of untold difficulties until reaching this point. Even later, she remained sensitive for months: she cried easily, she preferred playing on her own or with her Korean friend, and she "strictly insisted on the order of events and objects" (Bátri 2015, p. 48), as if trying to create a safety net around her.

Utterances Addressed to Peers

While the Chinese and Korean children discussed above often used the little English they knew in interaction with each other, and also showed signs of language development, Hungarian children hardly ever addressed each other in English. Among the rare exceptions were the cases when children in K2 occasionally instructed each other in English, using formulaic language they heard from their teachers and internalised. The following situationally-bound formulae were produced by children who had been exposed to English for at least 1 year: "Push your chair!" (after meals) "Line up, please!" (before going to the bathroom to wash their hands). As it appears, these utterances, which were longer and more complex than single nouns, were used by the children in contexts where their teachers also used these instructions on a daily basis, and they were used both in order to convey a real message, both for play, as if taking up an adult role. However, whenever the Hungarian-English speaking boy Keve (K2) spontaneously used English with his peers, the children look genuinely surprised. Even when they understood him, they replied in Hungarian, as this was more natural for them; besides, they were also aware of the fact that Keve understood them in Hungarian.

Data collected by both observers (Bátri 2015; Samu 2014) suggest that in the observed settings, monolingual Hungarian children seldom directed English to their peers, as there was no genuine need for this during their interaction.

Language Play

Children from both kindergartens were observed using the English language for playing, in particular during mealtimes. Cook (2000) identifies language play, which permeates language use, as central for human life and thought. He argues that

language play has social, cognitive and educational benefits, and as such, cannot be dismissed as a peripheral activity.

Both Bátri (2015) and Samu (2014) observed that mealtimes provided opportunities for ritual English language use. As discussed above (Sect. 5.1.2), the repeated actions and language used on these occasions were soon memorized by the children. Bátri described a ritual in which girls from the kindergarten group (ages 4 to 7) initiated a labelling activity while setting the table: they shouted out the colours of plates in English while choosing their favourites. After a while, very young children (ages 1 to 3) were also happy to join in this ceremony and learned from their more expert peers how to apply language in new contexts. However, nursery children only played this game when they heard their older peers play it and never initiated this chanting when they were on their own.

Children were also observed to use language in order to entertain themselves. Right after their English sessions, Bátri would often hear nursery and kindergarten children sing rhythmical lines from songs to themselves: “Ding, dang, dong,” “Hop, hop, hop,” “Ashes, ashes,” “Icker-bicker,” “Quickly, quickly,” “Round and round” were all parts of the songs and rhymes they liked and would frequently sing together. Samu’s observations also depict a little girl who was “jumping up and down before breakfast and calling out: *“jump, jump”* continuously. During breakfast she was singing an English song that they had learned on the previous circle time. At another time, she started to count the dogs in English on a puzzle game. She usually repeated the names of animals, colours, or other phrases in English that she had memorized during the English sessions, like *“what big, big snow, nose big, big”* (Samu 2014). These examples show that children like to use language playfully by relying on what they heard and enjoyed and that language play presents dimensions for communication and learning, as suggested by Cook (2000).

The examples discussed may also offer encouragement for teachers to provide memorable input through songs, rhymes and picture books. This is supported by Vandergrift and Groh (2012), who stress that words and expressions are more easily remembered and stored in long-term memory if they are learned with music and actions. Besides, these forms of input also present formulaic sequences, which are handled by the brain as units (rather than being analysed and re-built) and therefore, have a key role in comprehension and production (Wray 2002). Finally, using songs, rhymes and picture books allows learners to engage with a broad repertoire of language forms and styles, which may then inspire further uses of ludic language.

The appearance of ludic language with the observed children also supports Vygotsky’s ideas on private speech. Vygotsky (1987) suggests that children spontaneously use self-talk to accompany their activities, and claims that the language children address to themselves is used to facilitate cognitive processes, such as overcoming task obstacles, regulating behaviour, and enhancing imagination (Winsler et al. 2009). In some of the above-mentioned examples children repeat the names of animals and colours, and count items in English; apparently, they rely on private speech as a strategy to memorise and organise information in the foreign language. In addition to being a tool for self-regulation, speaking aloud to themselves is also

a natural way for children to immerse themselves in speech, as suggested by Feigenbaum (2009). This observation becomes important in the context of second and foreign language learning, where learners may create conditions and means to practice the language by relying on private speech.

5.2 *K2 Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*

In what follows, I analyse K2 teachers' language use in various contexts. Teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, as well as their views about professional development will also be explored, hoping that this will also allow for a more complex and situated understanding of children's language use. A later Sect. (5.3) will focus on K1 teacher's social and linguistic practices.

5.2.1 *K2 Teachers' Language Use and Scaffolding*

As indicated on the kindergarten's website, K2's policy is to provide conditions for acquisition by all-day-long exposure to English. The interviews conducted with the teachers also indicate their conscious attempts to use English with the children. However, when it came to implementing this principle into practice, the picture was different. According to the semi-structured interviews carried out with K2 teachers, out of the four teachers three claimed they could speak English, however, only two were actually observed to use English with the children: the English teacher (T2) and the unqualified caretaker (T4).

Observational data reveal that during English sessions T2 used English for singing songs which involved Total Physical Response activities, for playing games (e.g., Bingo with colours or children's nursery signs), and occasionally for routine conversations (the weather, names of the day, etc.). However, the data also indicate that on these occasions English was used inconsistently, and that the teacher tended to rely extensively on the L1, as suggested by the following quote from Samu's thesis: "While preparing the room for the [English] session, the teachers occasionally use English expressions, such as *"Please stand up everybody,"* but this is not common. They usually talk to the children in Hungarian before the sessions" (Samu 2014, p. 47). Samu later adds: "there are some situations when teachers use only English when talking to children at the sessions, mostly when talking to those children who know English better than others. However, this is not typical" (p. 49). It seemed that in most situations teachers tended to rely on their first language rather than English. This is also revealed in Extracts 6 and 7, where the L1 was used as a translation strategy even when the context provided cues for meaning making. The following interaction samples were recorded during the English session and are good examples of the way the teacher nominates topics in the L1, translates her own English utterances and responds to children's questions in Hungarian:

Extract 6 (talking about the weekend)

1. T2: Daniella, meséld el, hol voltál egy hétig! Hol voltál? (Daniella, tell us where you were last week. Where were you?) Were you skiing?
2. Csaba: Mi az a skiing? (What is skiing?)
3. T2: Síelt. (She was skiing.) She was skiing. Ő síelt. (She was skiing.)

Extract 7 (talking about Valentine's Day)

1. T2: Mit gondoltok (What do you think) ... what do you think... why do we have a heart here? Miért van itt szívecske? (Why do we have a heart here?) [waits] It's Valentine's Day. [waits] Valentin-napon mit szoktunk csinálni? (What do we do on Valentine's Day?)
2. Zazi: Ajándékot adni. (We give presents.)
3. T2: Igen, és mit adhatsz még? (Yes, and what else can you give?) What else can you give? [waits] A kiss. Puszit. (A kiss.) Vagy egy jó nagy ölelést. (Or a big hug.) Give a big, big hug.

Both extracts depict conversations on topics that make sense to children. The teacher nominates topics in the L1, then switches to English, but switches back again to the L1 as soon as she believes that what she says is beyond children's comprehension level. The teacher also answers children's questions and offers clarification in the L1 even in instances when she could rely on non-linguistic cues rather than linguistic ones, such as in turn 3 Extract 6 and turn 3 Extract 7. In these instances, the teacher could have used body language. By this, she would have implicitly encouraged the children to make sense of the new language by relying primarily on the situation (Donaldson 1987), instead of focusing on what they don't know. By using body language to indicate the meaning of the English words (e.g., skiing, kiss) the teacher would have also modelled a useful compensation strategy that children themselves can rely on if they do not know a word in the target language.

Data gained through interviews with K2 teachers reveal that both the English teacher and the kindergarten teacher claimed to consciously apply what they call the "sandwich technique:" i.e. the teacher says something in English, then translates it into Hungarian, and again repeats it in English. The teachers claimed that they found "sandwiching" a very useful technique to make themselves understood, but did not reflect on the implications of translation for children's language learning. However, research focusing on Hebrew and Arab kindergarten teachers' bilingual strategies revealed that while translanguaging had obvious benefits, translation had a negative impact on children's motivation to understand L2 (Schwartz and Asli 2014).

It is interesting to point out that although both teachers in K2 sounded very firm in their belief in the "sandwich" technique, the English teacher also sounded apologetic when talking about this issue with the interviewer. She acknowledged their helplessness in this sense, and the phrases she used, e.g., "We try..." "I know it would be better..." "We are working on it," suggest that they were aware of the fact that they should be using more English and also that they lacked teaching techniques

in this area. This is in line with research findings that highlight pre-service teachers' sense of guilt and anxiety when using the L1 in the language class. It also shows that teachers' interiorised models of practice and their deep-rooted beliefs influence their classroom practice more than a particular methodology they have learned during their teacher education programmes (Williams and Burden 1997).

The following sample (Extract 8) also illustrates T2's frequent reliance on the L1 even in cases when providing the Hungarian equivalent is redundant, since children clearly indicate that they understand her questions and even respond to them in the L1 (turn 2) or in English (turn 7). Instead of translating her own English statements into Hungarian, the teacher could have offered non-verbal cues (e.g., by pointing at some of the children) or could have extended her statements (e.g., Whose sign is it? Is it Georgina's sign? Is it Ádám's sign?) in order to support meaning making and provide more comprehensible input in English. The following extract depicts children and their teacher playing a game where the children pick cards which have their kindergarten signs on them; then they try to guess whose sign they picked:

Extract 8

1. T2: Whose sign is it? Pont a sajátodat húztad? [Did you pick your own?] Then you say: it is mine. A sajátom. [It is mine.] Are you a boy or a girl?
2. Georgina: Lány vagyok. [I am a girl.]
3. T2: Kislány. (Little girl.) I am a girl. Say it, Georgina: I am a girl.
4. T2: Whose sign is it? Kié ez a jel? [Whose sign is this?]
5. Csaba: Ádámé. [It's Ádám's.]
6. T2: And is he a boy or a girl? Ő kisfiú vagy kislány? [Is he a boy or a girl?]
7. Ádám: Boy.
8. T2: Yes, he is a boy. Kisfiú. (Little boy.)

Both T2 and T3 claimed that the aim of their programme was to socialise children in natural language use and make them able to participate in everyday conversations in English. The samples above sound anything but natural, for example in turn 3, when the teacher insists that the child should repeat the utterance: "Say it, Georgina: I am a girl." Another similar example was recorded when Otto, a boy, was asking for water in Hungarian, and the English teacher responded: "Yes. Say it: can I get some water, please?" As shown by interview data, T2 believed in the power of repetition as a teaching and learning strategy. While this principle seemed to be consistent with her practice, as shown above, it was inconsistent with the key belief and policy of the kindergarten, that English should be used in a natural way.

Another example for the overuse of the L1 was recorded while the English teacher and a little girl were looking at a picture book that the children were familiar with from previous sessions:

Extract 9

1. T2: And what are these?
2. Georgina: Pig.
3. T2: No, these are mice. Egerek. (Mice.) This is a flower.

4. Georgina: Flower, big, big flower.
5. T2: This is the moon. Ez a hold. (This is the moon.) What is this?
6. Georgina: A triangle.
7. T2: No, this is a boat.

This short labelling task is embedded in a context that is truly relevant and meaningful for children. Yet, instead of the advantage offered by the context, and the girl's clear initiations of other items in the picture book, the teacher again relies on the L1 in order to clarify meaning. For example, following turn 3 the teacher provides the appropriate answers and instantly adds the Hungarian translation, whereas she could have pointed at the picture to make sure Georgina gets the right meaning of the word "mice." On the other hand, maybe Georgina did know the English words for mice, and she said "pig" (turn 2) because she misinterpreted the image. It would have been interesting to hear the teacher elicit interpretive language from Georgina, to see what made her believe it was a pig.

Had the teacher extended opportunities for negotiating meaning following turn 6, it may have turned out that it was actually the sail of the boat that Georgina took for a triangle. In that case her answer was correct. She applied a concept referring to a shape and the corresponding difficult word for it, but she received no positive reinforcement, and her response was turned down instantly (turn 7). As in previous examples, the teacher missed out on opportunities for providing more comprehensible input and for eliciting language. In order to do this, she could have, for example, extended or rephrased the wrong guesses by saying: "Do you really think it's a pig? Does it look like a pig?" Or: "Maybe it's a triangle. Maybe it's a boat." Georgina's initiation in turn 4 also offered opportunities for extending talk that remained unexploited by the teacher. It is worth noting that strategies for eliciting children's talk about the pictures, as well as involving them in constructing meaning about picture books were not applied in Hungarian either.

In K2, the mother tongue was also used to discipline children, as suggested by the following examples: "Csönd! Mindenki figyeljen a táblára!" (Quiet! Everybody look at the board!) "Üljetek rendesen!" (Sit up straight!) "Tedd el azt a babát!" (Put that doll away!). As the observer points out, "in most cases when teachers disciplined the children they did not listen to the teacher despite the fact that she used Hungarian" (Samu 2014, p. 50).

It is interesting to note that Hungarian primary school English teachers were also found to use the L1 as a tool to discipline (Lugossy 2003; Nikolov 1999). Teachers apparently believed that disciplining in Hungarian saved time and was more efficient; partly because children were sure to understand these utterances in Hungarian, and partly because teachers themselves were not familiar with classroom management language appropriate in such situations. The instances related to disciplining observed in K2 suggest that young children ignored T2's attempts to discipline although they understood her. They were distracted not because they did not understand the teacher, but because they were involved in something they found more interesting than what the teacher had to offer.

Observational data suggest that although K2 teachers' expressed aim was to use English in diverse and natural contexts (as discussed later), the use of English outside the English sessions was not typical: there were plenty of opportunities when the teachers could have used the target language, but they did not. Another issue relates to the inconsistent use of English: the teacher relied extensively on the L1, as she either translated or tried to explain her utterances in the L1, even when she could have provided more contextual scaffolding.

5.2.2 How K2 Teachers' Beliefs Compare to Their Practice

Data gained through semi-structured interviews carried out with teachers from K2 allow insights into teachers' beliefs about the aims of early bilingual education, about the methodology they apply, and about the sources of their professional development. Thus, interview data help us get a better understanding of teachers' observed practice.

In the interviews, teachers from K2 claimed that their aim was to shape positive attitudes towards English and help the children gain confidence to communicate in everyday situations because "these children travel abroad quite a lot." This pragmatic reason was mentioned by all three interviewees from K2 and it revealed a lot about children's background and about the kindergarten's understandable wish to please the parents.

In addition, K2 teachers believed that another aim of early bilingual education was to make sure that "by the time they [children] go to school, they ... know the basics of the English language" (T2), and thus, help the children achieve fluent communication in English before they go to school. Teachers claimed that children "don't dare to communicate at school if they don't have the sufficient vocabulary or practical experience with the foreign language" (T3). It is interesting to note that the beliefs expressed by the teachers imply a focus on the product of learning ("to know," "to have the sufficient vocabulary") and much less their concern with the process of learning and with providing adequate scaffolding for learners.

Based on the interviews, the teachers from K2 did not present theoretically grounded arguments as to why early bilingual education could make a difference. When it came to the main aims, principles and conditions of early bilingual education, they also appeared to be lacking the appropriate metalanguage when expressing their beliefs and reflecting on their daily practice. Their discourse reflected expressions used on the kindergarten's website, such as: "language sticks to them at this age," and "children absorb new information like a sponge."

There is a clear mismatch between interviewed teachers' expressed beliefs and practice with regard to their language use and the methodology they apply. When it comes to characterising their own practice, K2 teachers claim that children are exposed to English all during the day in order to help them achieve fluency in everyday situations. However, observational data does not support this claim: despite her claims, T3, the only qualified kindergarten teacher in K2, was never observed to use

English during the one-month-long observation period, while T2 and T4 used English only during the English sessions and occasionally during mealtimes. For the remaining time the children were addressed in Hungarian, even during activities which would have provided opportunities for using English, such as craft activities or playing in the yard.

Besides the quantity, the quality of input the children received was also questionable, as teachers' use of the target language was inconsistent (see Sect. 5.2.1). Even during the English sessions, T2 frequently applied code-switching and code-mixing as compensations strategies either to make sure she would be understood, or when children indicated that they did not understand something (see Extracts 6, 7, 8 and 9). As discussed above, teachers in K2 consciously applied what they called the "sandwich technique," or "sandwiching" ("szendvicselés"), that is translation from English to Hungarian and back to English in order to support children's comprehension. The principled use of the L1 as a technique to support meaning-making is in obvious contradiction with K2 teachers' explicit aims to create conditions for authentic communication. Besides, it shows that teachers' understanding of how young children learn foreign languages is highly problematic.

Teachers in K2 were interviewed about their perceived sources of development. In answer to the interviewer's question, both T2 and T3 identified few sources of professional development. They said they checked English websites which dealt with nursery issues in general and teaching English in kindergarten, but they could not recall concrete examples of anything they had read about and applied in their own context. The kindergarten teacher claimed she mostly read articles focusing on nursery education in general and also mentioned keeping up with the legal background for running a private kindergarten as part of her professional requirements. The English teacher said she did things "by instinct" ("érzésre") and by relying on her previous experiences in teaching young learners at a language school. She also recalled a book she was once recommended by one of her former university teachers and which she read and found useful: "The title was *Making the Match*. It was a methodology book about what works with children of different ages." It appears that T2 was interested in the topic of teaching young learners, since she borrowed and claimed to have read Curtain and Dahlberg's (2010) *Languages and Children: Making the Match*. However, while characterising the book ("a methodology book about what works with children") she did not refer to its core idea about the importance of integrating language and content in teaching young learners. She did not remember the authors either.

A note of warning is in order at this point. While reading the teacher interviews carried out in K2, it should be remembered that the participants provided data from similar positions, all being employed by the observed kindergartens, which made it more difficult for them to express what they really thought for fear of losing their jobs. The discourse of T2 and T3 in K2 is heavily marked by their expressed belonging to an institution. Their claims expressed not only personal or culturally acquired beliefs (e.g., "language sticks to them at this age"), but were also meant to reflect the public image they aimed to create of the kindergarten they work for. Thus, their discourse lacked features of critical reflection. The interviewed teachers tended to

identify with their institution and they echoed safe but cliché-like statements meant to advertise the kindergarten, such as: “Providing preschool education in English is a specific feature which makes our kindergarten unique in town.”

5.3 Perspectives on Professional Development

This final part of the discussion explores how the two young professionals involved in data collection developed their understanding of research and teaching in multiple contexts. A considerable part of this analysis is devoted to Bátri’s development, who was T1 in this study, as data about her reveal the stages of her evolving teacher cognition. I will start with Bátri’s case, then discuss Samu’s development from a different perspective.

5.3.1 K1 Teacher’s Changing Beliefs and Practice: A Story of Teacher Learning

Besides providing data on children’s socio-emotional, cognitive and language development (Sect. 5.1), Bátri (2015) also presents the trajectory of her own changing views and practice during the 9 months of self-observation. The stages of her development show her passage from initial hesitation and helplessness (as also shown in Sect. 5.1) to reflection-on-action, and reflection-in-action, as suggested by Schön (1991), and depicted below.

They “Cried, Screamed, Wanted to Leave the Room and Kicked the Teacher”

Bátri (2015) worked with children from 1 to 7. She was expected to spend most of her day with the nursery school children (between 1 and 3), as their English speaking caretaker. Besides, she also had focused English sessions, so-called “English lessons” (Bátri 2015) with both nursery and kindergarten children. As a routine, the beginning of the English sessions was announced by the kindergarten teachers, and the children were taken aside to another room. This scenario created great difficulties in the nursery group, where very young children, most of whom were new to the institution, were still trying to adapt to the kindergarten schedule. Data collected in K1 reveal that nursery children were confused and even distressed whenever the beginning of the English session was announced and they were left alone with T1, who was supposed to use only English with them. The following passages, quoted from Bátri’s final thesis reveals both the children’s and the teacher’s confusion and helplessness: “All they could see was that they were sent in the room with me, the kindergarten teachers closed the door (a thing they never liked) and I took great efforts to collect them together for an unknown purpose” (p. 5). Bátri concludes that

“the English language, embodied in teachers who spoke English, was associated with uncertainty and unfamiliarity in children’s minds” (p. 49).

Bátri believed that at the beginning of their exposure English children must have felt “uncertain, helpless, and afraid of the unknown” (Bátri, personal communication). Based on what Bátri related, the kindergarten teachers in K1 applied their own frames about teaching to structure children’s lives: they announced the beginning of English activities (which they called “English lessons”), sent the children away from the part of the world where they knew they could make themselves understood in their L1, and closed the door. They certainly did not mean to distress the children, they only failed to decenter (Donaldson 1987) from their own understanding of teaching and learning, which ignored children’s emotional and cognitive development at these ages. As a result, young children “cried, screamed, wanted to leave the room and kicked the teacher” (Bátri 2015, p. 49), most probably because they did not make sense of the new situation and because the “English lessons” were far from their feelings of a secure and desirable environment.

T1’s initial experiences gained in K1 were very different from what she had anticipated before she became employed as a kindergarten teacher of English. In one of the professional discussions we had, Bátri admitted that she had initially been full of enthusiasm at what she expected to accomplish with the children in terms of their English language development. She had also expected to be positively received by the children: she believed they would gather around her, she would tell them stories and sing songs in English. However, as her data reveal, it took the children time to accept her as an English-speaking caretaker, and for a long time she felt exhausted and hopeless in dealing with this situation.

“I Gave Up Giving Lesson-Like Lessons”

As children were initially reluctant to hear her use English, T1 lost confidence and found herself to be using very little English. During our one-on-one discussions she expressed her fear of using English and even spending time with the children because of the negative feedback she received. She also voiced her belief that “going back to what children liked to do was more important than what she was expected to do as an employee” (Bátri, personal communication). Her teaching diary also documents the understanding that if she wanted to establish a positive rapport with the children she had to relate new experiences to their already established schemata.

The following excerpts from her thesis point out that the first time she felt successful as a teacher of very young learners, was when she tried to provide a natural context for learning: “When I did not emphasise the fact that we started the English lesson, and just invited them to sing a song or a rhyme, they felt more comfortable,” so “I gave up giving lesson-like lessons” and “I gave them more freedom to do what they like” (Bátri 2015, p. 55).

From that time on, Bátri (2015) engaged in everyday activities with the children and allowed for natural interaction to emerge. Both in personal communication, and

in her thesis, she recalled how she had once allowed two little girls to do her hair, and how this natural activity helped the children establish a more personal rapport with her. She identified this as a threshold experience in her teacher development.

T1 also came to realise that very young learners did not mind her using English as long as they felt safe. Her data reveal that she would sing songs in English while children were playing and she commented children's actions naturally. She would also look at picture books with one or two children sitting in her lap and comment on pictures in English herself, or respond to children's Hungarian comments in English. While reading picture books together and commenting whatever was going on, T1 both learned how to modify her input in a way that children could benefit, and, as she claims, she also developed her own fluency in English.

As in K2, data collected in K1 also indicate that Total Physical Response (TPR) activities were highly appreciated by children, most probably because these activities provided an engaging and meaningful frame in which very young learners received input in English. During TPR tasks, T1 used short instructions doubled by movements, which provided further support, and therefore made children feel more secure. Her findings also suggest that children relied primarily on the situation when making sense of the new language (Donaldson 1987). In addition, Bátri notes that children were far more willing to participate in activities if they saw her involved too: "I could only keep them around me when I sang very loudly, disguised my voice and jumped in the air ... when I experimentally stopped, the younger ones never did them [TPR activities] without me" (pp. 54–55). She also recalls that "they did not like it when they did not see me, so many times they refused to close their eyes," (p. 55). While Bátri does not explore the reasons, this probably happened because children dislike unexpected situations, and prefer to go for what makes them feel secure. Interestingly though, data show that children loved to play Peek-a-boo with their heads covered with a towel, since this was probably a game they were familiar with from home. The excerpts above are also relevant because they show T1 who experiments (e.g., "I experimentally stopped") with tasks and reflects on the outcomes.

A narrative episode in her thesis suggests that Bátri (2015) grabbed every opportunity to apply language that the children had been exposed to earlier in a formal way (e.g., through flashcards) in real-life contexts. She recalls how she and the children once "found a spider outside the house, and with the exception of one older girl they were all very surprised when I told them it was a spider. They knew it was "pók" in Hungarian, but they claimed that "spider" was on the card only. We also tried to get it climb up the water spout, with no success." (Bátri 2015, p. 57). Besides T1's effort to create a meaningful frame for learning, this short story also gives insights into young learners' language acquisition processes: the children in the story apparently did not make the link between the word *spider*, which they had learned in a formal situation (e.g., through cards and flashcards) and the referent. They did not recognize the formally learned word in a new context, unlike in the case of the language forms acquired incidentally during mealtimes, which they could spontaneously apply in new contexts. This episode also reinforces Alstad and Tkachenko's findings (chapter "[Scaffolding Discourse Skills in Pre-primary L2](#)")

Classrooms", in this volume) about the way outdoor environment creates conversational topics for children, and promotes their language development.

Both in our personal communication, and in her thesis, Bátri (2015) felt free to admit that she found it a challenge to use English naturally with the children. It seems that at the beginning she had difficulties in adapting her speech, which was actually a strategy she often applied in Hungarian with her own children. It is interesting to notice at this point that primary and secondary EFL teachers of young learners also found it challenging to implement the experiential knowledge they had from other contexts to the classroom context. Instead, they relied on tasks and techniques they experienced as learners of English themselves (Lugossy 2006, 2009). These results also point to the need to focus on developing classroom interactional competence (Walsh 2011) in teacher training institutions.

"I Consider My Experience to Be a Positive One"

Bátri's (2015) field notes, her teaching journal and the professional discussions we had allowed insights not only in her practices, but also in the way practice shaped her cognition as a teacher of very young learners of English.

T1's initial beliefs about early bilingual education were shaped by her readings on the topic, as well as by professional discussions with her peers and tutors during her seminars at the university, and during thesis-writing consultations. As she claims in her final thesis, she believed that involving children into early experiences with English would create intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes for the target language and culture. Therefore, before she became a teacher in K1, Bátri also tried to teach English to one of her own children at home, but due to her son's reluctance to accept her in this position, she dropped the project.

T1's beliefs about teaching and learning English were further shaped by her experiences in K1, where she gained insights into the complexities of early bilingual education in her specific context. She started to reflect on her daily practice and she tried to integrate the apparently minor teaching and learning events with the relevant theories (Bátri, personal communication). As it appears from her teaching narratives, she succeeded in creating a context where theory and practice continuously scaffolded each other and her own professional expertise.

From an epistemological perspective, T1's case documents the development of teacher cognition as shaped by engagement in social activities (Vygotsky 1978), highlighting not only what has been learned, but also how teacher learning occurred. As pointed out above, Vygotsky (1978) proposes a socially situated understanding of cognitive development, and suggests that learning is indissociable from the social context. In this paradigm, teachers' professional development also appears as constructed in community in a dialogic process. T1 made sense of her experiences and constructed knowledge and professional identity in an ongoing dialogue with her learners and colleagues, her university peers and tutors, her readings, and herself.

As the following excerpt from her thesis shows, she managed to develop a growth mindset (Dweck 2006), which enabled her to regard challenges as opportunities for further development:

I faced a lot of difficulties at the start. Yet, I consider my experience to be a positive one, because I benefited a lot from it professionally. First of all, my fluency in English improved a lot, as I learned how to comment on the state of affairs all the time in order to provide as much input as possible. Secondly, ... I learned how to adapt to children's actual needs. ... Unsuccessful tasks and failures made me consider and examine carefully children's behaviour and my own teaching methods as well. I learned not to insist on tasks or activities that were not popular with the pupils and not to be afraid of changing things if I considered this change was for the children's benefit. (Bátri 2015, p. 73).

5.3.2 Linking Theory and Practice

Both Bátri (2015) and Samu (2014) admitted that it was not easy to develop a critical understanding of the collected data. Samu remembered she felt "puzzled" (Samu, personal communication) when she was invited to reflect critically on their observations during the seminar on children's language development. Samu (2014), who collected data as an observer and later as an interviewer in K2, initially agreed with K2 teachers' practices, and found it difficult to adopt a critical perspective when it came to analysing data during the seminars, and later in her thesis. As it turned out during our one-on-one consultations, the reason for this was twofold.

First, she found it hard to apply the theories she learned about in her MA programme to her concrete experiences gained in a bilingual preschool setting. She admitted that despite the seminar tasks that aimed to integrate theory and practice, she still considered her theoretical knowledge as something that "had to do more with the university and less with real life" (Samu, personal communication). Therefore, "it took time to understand that those small things [i.e. teaching and learning events in K2] had to do anything with theories" (Samu, personal communication). Her word choice, i.e. "those small things," also indicates that at this stage there is still work to be done in the area of developing academic discourse.

Through repeated discussions, which involved shared analyses of certain parts of her data set, Samu became increasingly able to make sense of her empirical data in the light of the underlying theories about how children think and learn in general, and about how they acquire foreign languages in particular. During our consultations, she identified her newly acquired ability to integrate apparently minor classroom events in broader theoretical frames as crucial in her professional development, as she was preparing to become a kindergarten teacher of English.

Samu's meaning making process also made me question and rethink my own teaching. It made me more conscious of the need to support trainees' perception of theory and practice as being equally important parts of teacher cognition. I also decided to involve students into reading and reflecting on more practice-based studies carried out in diverse teaching and learning contexts.

The other reason why Samu, who was the observer and interviewer in K2 found it difficult to adopt a critical approach to her data set was of a more affective nature:

she was afraid that the teachers she observed and interviewed would feel “criticised” if in her final thesis she “commented on what she did or said” (Samu, personal communication). Samu’s difficulty in getting a sufficiently distanced perspective is partly explained by the research methodology applied: ethnographic research requires the researcher’s immersion in the research context, (Chapelle and Duff 2003). What seemed to create a tension and a challenge in her development as a researcher at this point, was the need to associate her emic perspective with critical insights. In order to do this, Samu’s development as a critical viewer was scaffolded by reading other studies of an ethnographic nature, and by focusing her attention to the conventions of academic discourse.

6 Conclusions

In line with Vygotsky’s understanding of learning as a dialogic process (Vygotsky 1978), this study explored how knowledge was constructed in interaction on several levels. On the first level, it used linguistic ethnography to extend our knowledge on young children’s foreign language development and the socio-affective factors related to this development. It also explored teachers’ pedagogical practices, particularly their language use and scaffolding techniques, as well as the beliefs that underlie their practice. First, I will consider findings in this area.

6.1 *Young Children and Their Teachers*

Data collected through qualitative processes in the two institutions revealed teachers’ attempts to create a safe environment, and to use English in meaningful and playful situations, by building on topics and frames that made sense to children (e.g., using picture books and board games). However, in the observed instances, teachers rarely gave evidence of their expertise in scaffolding children’s language learning experiences and meaning-making in the foreign language. For example, three of the four teachers observed relied extensively on the L1 to support meaning-making even when here-and-now support was available. In one of the institutions, teachers expressed their belief that translation (“sandwiching”) was an appropriate technique with young learners, which suggests that their understanding of how young children learn languages is questionable. Further examples suggest that teachers’ classroom interactional competence (Walsh 2012) also needs development, mostly in the areas of elicitation and giving feedback, which are crucial techniques in scaffolding children’s language development (Bruner 1983; Donaldson 1987). In the observed instances teachers missed out on opportunities to provide target language input in meaningful contexts: they rarely built on children’s comments in English and thus, they did not create space for learning (Walsh 2011). Findings in this area proved to be rather discouraging, and raised questions about the implementation of the observed early bilingual programmes.

Even so, there was evidence for children's foreign language development. Kindergarten children (ages 4–7) showed signs of understanding language in interaction, and tended to provide yes-no answers to some of their teachers' questions. Children were also found to use formulaic language in English, mostly on informal occasions, outside the focused English sessions. They were observed to use unanalysed chunks at mealtimes and when they were playing on their own. In these informal contexts, they also exploited a ludic function of language (Cook 2000). It also appeared that children who had a genuine need to communicate in English, because they had no knowledge of Hungarian (e.g., Chinese and Korean girls), acquired relevant vocabulary, such as words designating food, and language formulae faster than their peers, mostly if they were involved in interaction with peers who were more expert in the target language than themselves. On the other hand, it also appeared that embedding new language in a meaningful context is crucial for children's language development. Whenever this was not the case, the children became either distressed about (K1), or uninterested (K2) in their teachers' input.

6.2 Professional Development Through Reflection

On another level, the study explored the professional development of two MA students of English who collected primary data through ethnographic processes in the above-mentioned preschool settings, and at the same time were writing their final theses based on a part of the data they collected. One of the two students was also employed as an English language teacher and caretaker in K1, where she collected data through self-observation. Thus, another main area of findings concerns the importance of observation and reflection as tools for teacher development. Ongoing reflection on practice allowed the two young professionals to construct an understanding of teacher's role and practice in the preschool context. This is most visible in the case of T1, who became a better teacher by observing her daily practice, by relating what she observed to the theoretical frames she was aware of, and by experimenting with new ideas in her teaching. She also came to believe that small changes made a difference in the long run. The findings that emerge from the observations, as well as from the discussions shared with the two young professionals reveal the power of systematic and principled reflection on practice.

Findings that emerged from the professional discussions carried out with the two young pre-service teachers, as well as a critical analysis of their data sets and final MA theses highlight that both young professionals found it challenging to integrate theory and practice. While they were familiar with theories underlying children's learning in general, and their foreign language acquisition in particular, both thesis writers benefited from scaffolding (e.g., focused seminar discussions, and one-on-one consultations with the thesis advisor) when making sense of the data they collected. Both thesis writers admitted that they found it difficult to apply a critical perspective when analysing data in their theses.

6.3 *Implications for EFL Teacher Education and Practice*

Some of the implications of the present study obviously refer to pre-primary and primary EFL education. First of all, the study highlights the need to perceive children's linguistic development as a contextually embedded process. Data suggest that in the observed contexts, the best learning opportunities were those where language was linked to children's daily routine, such as eating, drinking, and playing. Other studies focusing on early EFL education also highlight the role of learning contexts that make human sense to children (Prošić-Santovac 2016; Williams 1995). Mercer and Howe (2012) argue that children's intellectual achievements depend not only on their efforts, but also on culturally situated forms of social interaction. In this sense, creating a supportive environment where children feel safe yet cognitively engaged, matters.

Linked to the above implications, but from a slightly different perspective, the present study draws attention to some of the challenges in EFL teacher education. One of these is the need to provide relevant input in the area of EFL preschool pedagogy. While there is an increasing demand on the part of parents for preschool institutions which provide bilingual education, particularly in English, kindergarten teachers are rarely proficient in English. On the other hand, specialist foreign language teachers employed by kindergartens rarely have the expertise to teach very young learners, therefore they tend to rely on what they themselves experienced as learners of English, and these models usually imply a focus on form and analysing language, as well as the frequent use of translation.

Another important implication concerns foreign language teachers' need to develop competence in their subject areas. It is important to remember that teachers' language proficiency has implications for their confidence, as low self-esteem may also induce over-reliance on L1, as a compensation strategy in the EFL class (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011), which was the case in the observed contexts. This is a point to consider in EFL contexts in particular, where the classroom is one of the few sources of target language input.

Yet another implication for teacher education is scaffolding students' critical thinking. The pre-service English teachers in this study found it hard to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical context, which indicates that teacher education programmes should involve opportunities for integrating theory and practice. One way of doing this is by encouraging pre- and in-service teachers to reflect on current successful and less successful practices, so that classrooms become legitimised spaces for teacher learning (Johnson 2009). In this sense, teacher educators' methodological expertise is also an area that invites further research and development, in particular when it comes to helping trainees develop critical thinking skills, as shown by this study.

One of the limitations of this study is implied by the research methodology applied: qualitative studies work with few participants, therefore findings cannot be generalised to all contexts (Mackay and Gass 2012). Besides, observational data about children and their teachers were collected at two different pre-primary

institutions, with different researcher involvement, and over different time-spans. Yet, it seems that it is exactly the uniqueness of settings and participants that permit insights into the heterogeneous, conflictual, negotiated and evolving aspects (Chapelle and Duff 2003) of the culture of EFL preschool education. Further research should also address children's and parents' experiences, views and attitudes in the matter of learning English in the observed settings and beyond.

As a teacher educator and researcher, I benefited greatly from the ongoing dialogue with my students and thesis writers in the course of this research. Our discussions allowed me insights into the complexity and contextual embeddedness of the teaching and learning processes in preschool settings, as well as in the process of emerging professional identity of young teachers of English. Besides, intrigued by Bátri's (2015) and Samu's (2014) findings and questions, I also had the privilege to rethink my own practice in an academic setting.

Acknowledgements I am grateful to Marianne Nikolov for her comments on an earlier draft of this paper. My thanks also go to Virág Bátri and Barbara Samu for allowing me to rely on the primary data they collected, their final theses, and our shared discussions for the purposes of this analysis.

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Part II
**Creating Language-Conducive Contexts
to Engage Children in Language Learning**

Longing for Quality: Experiences of Finnish-Russian Bilingual Kindergarten in Finland



Ekaterina Protassova

Abstract In retrospect, the experience of a Finnish-Russian bilingual day care center in Helsinki shows that educational policy, political situation, and composition of the children's groups and staff are factors influencing the flexible linguistic strategies of the teachers and their attitudes toward children with various family linguistic backgrounds (Finnish-speaking, Russian-speaking, bilingual, or multilingual). From the very beginning (in 1990), there have been three linguistic roles among the staff: Finnish-speaking, Russian-speaking, and bilingual. This enables the staff to switch between languages without mixing them, and to intervene in the language appropriate to each situation. Bilingual adults serve as examples for children who acquire both languages simultaneously. The strategies of the staff include languaging and translanguaging. Encounters during routines, organized activities, and spontaneous play happen in different languages and contribute to enhance their use and to enlarge vocabulary and understanding. Children who continue to study at the nearby Finnish-Russian school show good results in both languages.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, Russian-speakers are the largest immigrant community in Finland. Newly arrived immigrants have joined the traditional Russian-speaking community mostly in the last few decades, and the needs of the community influence the infrastructure of the service provision in the public sector. Bilingual Finnish-Russian pre-primary education is widespread. Clubs organized by Russian-speaking societies (including ones for Swedish-Russian bilinguals) have also played an important role in efforts to fulfill parents' wishes about quality education. The underlying idea is often that Russian education is better than Finnish, even if the model of Finnish education is in great demand all over the world.

A number of studies investigate adequate interaction between such agencies as parents, pre-primary and school teachers, and society as a key to successful bilingual

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education (Hélot 2006; Cummins 2010; Kersten and Rohde 2013; Schwartz 2013; Arias 2015). Different projects have demonstrated the usefulness of parents' involvement in bilingual education (Berndt 2009; Hutchins et al. 2012).

The study was conducted over 26 years, starting in 1990, in Helsinki, Finland, and is focused mainly on 1 day care center, Kalinka,¹ taking into account the situation with other bilingual Finnish-Russian day care centers in Finland. This will be an example of sustainable development of a bilingual educational institution. Early bilingual educators throughout the world may be able to draw inspiration from Kalinka's slightly different bilingual model and the teachers' effective bilingual strategies. The specificity of the case lies in the threefold framework of teaching: staff, family, and community. From the very beginning, this institution was conceived as a place where two languages and cultures meet and enrich each other – where teachers, parents, and communities, both Finns and Russians, meet and cooperate with the goal of raising children bilingually. This transparent model was open to ideas and visitors and informed the wider society about its development through different media. Indeed, it was a combination of immigrant, expatriate, minority, and elite education because different groups within society came together there. For example, some families had undertaken a project of putting their four children into different language programs, and Russian was chosen for one of them. Or there were rich families of the so-called Old Russians (descendants of the Russian-speaking population that lived in Finland before WWII) who continued to use Russian as their heritage language for decades. Some Russian-speaking repatriated Ingermanland Finns (those who had Finnish ethnicity and previously lived on the territory of the Soviet Union) wanted a soft version of integration for their children. These diverse backgrounds added to the challenges that the staff was facing.

The aims of the chapter are to demonstrate how the default bilingual education formula (one adult is Finnish-speaking, one is Russian-speaking, and one is bilingual) is adapted to changing family and societal circumstances and the competences of the teachers through the years, and what the outcomes of bilingual education were for all of the partners involved.

The structure of the chapter includes a theoretical background (including Vygotsky's approach, second language teaching at an early age, and questions of quality bilingual education), context of the study (the choice of the language pair and the organization of bilingual institutions), methods (research design, participants, instruments), data analysis, and results. I discuss everyday bilingual interactions and organized activities directed toward language development and how they are seen by parents and teachers. The discussion and conclusions concern questions of quality and strategies in bilingual education.

¹ *Kalinka* (after a bush from Russian folklore song) is a popular name for day care centers outside Russia.

2 Theoretical Background

The basis for the study was Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and especially his work "On the question of multilingualism at pre-school age" (Vygotsky 1982: 329–37). Of particular relevance are Vygotsky's ideas of a cultural-historical approach, interiorization of the action with the speech sign, play as the main activity of the pre-primary child, and dependence of multilingualism upon developmental situation (Protassova 1992). Swain and Lapkin (2013) have introduced into the context of bilingual education some theoretical concepts borrowed from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mind, such as mediation, languaging (a cognitive process connected to language learning resulting in meaningful production), the cognition/emotion relationship, and zone of proximal development (children will do tomorrow without help what they can do today with help). They formulated the important principles of L1 and L2 use in the bilingual classroom: (1) permitting children to use their L1 in collaborative dialogues or private speech in parallel with L2 encouragement (L1 helps to mediate their thinking); (2) children should be confident about how they can use both languages (teachers serve as a model and set certain rules which they make explicit to learners); (3) the L2 remains a priority for teachers, while the use of L1 is justified as a tool for cross-linguistic comparisons, for semantization of some abstract meanings, for organization of activities, and to express feelings. The use of L1 does not remain stable over time (Swain and Lapkin 2013). The new tendency is that avoidance of direct translation does not exclude translanguaging as a repertoire of possibilities offered in dynamic bilingual situations with bilingual speakers; it is a useful strategy while drawing on different resources (Creese and Blackledge 2010; García and Wei 2014; Schwartz and Asli 2014).

2.1 *Second Language Teaching at an Early Age*

Most of the findings in the pedagogical domain of L2 teaching to the very young evaluate the ways in which teachers must address learners in the target language (Scott and Ytreberg 1990; Brumfit et al. 1991; Vale and Feunteun 1995; Rixon 1999; Cameron 2001; Slapac and Dorner 2013). The articles discuss materials to be used, the optimal age at which the teaching should start (e.g., Krashen et al. 1982; Johnson and Newport 1989; Birdson 1999; Flege et al. 1999; Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson 2000; del Pilar García Mayo and Garcia Lecumberri 2003; DeKeyser 2013; Hernandez 2016), and the possible results and limitations of appropriate acquaintance with a second language (Marinova-Todd et al. 2000; Murad 2006; Nikolov 2009; Rich 2014; Salzmann 2014).

It appears that researchers and practitioners are not in accord about the prolonged results of teaching, the quality of pre-service and in-service training for this specific domain, or detailed methods and their applicability to different audiences (Nikolov and Curtain 2000; Edelenbos et al. 2006; Curtain and Dahlberg 2008; Enever et al.

2009; Mourão and Lourenço 2015; Palviainen and Mård-Miettinen 2015). In addition, teaching contexts do not lend themselves to comparisons, especially when it comes to teaching English to children from well-educated families, support of immigrants' languages, and revitalization of languages in the ethnolinguistic minorities (Moon and Nikolov 2000; Thompson 2000; Tabors 2002; Saunders Semonsky and Spielberger 2004; Pasanen 2015). Given that the current chapter focuses on Finnish-Russian early bilingual education, Finland's long history of bilingual education might serve as a good example of various approaches towards immersion (e.g., Björklund et al. 2014). The same applies to the Russian history of teaching a second language at an early age (e.g., Malkina 2008; Protassova 2010).

2.2 *Quality of Bilingual Education*

2.2.1 *Combining Quality and Bilingualism*

Europe as a whole is trying to improve quality of education (Key principles of a quality framework 2014). The international research community proposes various types of quality measurements concerning well-being and achievements of children and staff, effectiveness of programs and methods, etc. (e.g., Cassidy et al. 2005, or the review by Vermeer et al. 2016). Bilingual education is on its way to becoming a quality education if it can prove that it is better than monolingual education and if it can be organized in a way that may be considered satisfactory for all the stakeholders. Yet some arguments arise as to whether it is an actual educational investment rather than mere compensation, a transitional model, or a way out for families or educators (Brisk 1998; Howes et al. 2004; García and Frede 2010; Espinosa 2013). Bilingual education has more to offer than an inspiring learning atmosphere: its benefits include the lasting cognitive effects of early bilingualism, an increase in family self-esteem, and the child's self-acceptance as a positive basis of identity (Valdés 1996; López 2001; Nesteruk 2007; Buysse et al. 2014; Tracy 2015). Bilingual education creates jobs for immigrant teachers who can put their professionalism to use and help parents of bilingual children to cope with their minority situation; this contributes to harmonic relationships between all parties involved (Freeman 1998; Fitts and Weisman 2010; Wubbels 2010).

2.2.2 *The Quality of Pre-primary Education in Finland*

Children in Finland start school at the age of seven. Before that, they are expected to have one year of preschool education in a day care center or school. Day care in Finland aims to foster the development of social, interactive, and cognitive skills in children. This includes ability to communicate, participate, and cooperate with peers and adults, attention to other people's needs and interests, and positive attitudes toward other people, cultures, and environments. In the case of bilingual

kindergartens, this must happen in two languages. In recent years, researchers have found out that the reasons behind Finland's recurrent success in the PISA tests include high standards of pre-service preschool teacher education, continuity of in-service training, and working conditions in day care (Taguma et al. 2012). Quality means satisfaction, and parents, pre-primary teachers, and children are usually satisfied with pre-primary education in general. Children must be prepared to self-motivate learning as a life-long process (Alila 2003; Hujala and Fonsén 2012; Niikko and Havu-Nuutinen 2012). Special attention is paid to training educators who can handle problems and cope with the needs of multicultural children (Dervin and Suomela-Salmi 2006; Paloheimo 2009). The immigrants' education includes equality and functional bilingualism; they are encouraged to maintain their first language as well as the own cultural identity. Children are prepared for integration into the Finnish education system and society while supporting their cultural identity and their own language. Universities and other professional training institutions offer courses concerning multiculturalism. The intercultural competence of a teacher must include awareness of different cultures and adjustment processes, knowledge about intercultural sensitivity development, experience in intercultural communication, etc.

2.2.3 Challenges of Bilingual Pre-primary Education in Finland

Hickey and de Mejía (2014) claim that the main question in bilingual education nowadays is quality assurance. The issue of quality has been pivotal for everybody involved in the educational process in the target day care center Kalinka. The stakeholders have had to answer a range of questions connected to it, e.g.:

- how to distribute educational and languaging work among members of pedagogical teams and among the staff as a whole;
- how to address children with different levels of proficiency in either language;
- how to provide appropriate developmental challenges in view of the deficits in understanding and expression typical for bilingual children at early stages of language acquisition,
- how to integrate children with special needs into the group.

This study attempts to analyze the answers that have been reached and the questions that remain.

3 Context of the Study

Finland is a bilingual country, with Finnish and Swedish as the official state languages among a population of 5.5 million. Russian-speakers, who make up 1.2% of the population (75,444 people), are the largest linguistic minority; in addition to recent immigrants, there is a traditional Russian-speaking historical minority that

has dwelt within Finnish borders for centuries (Statistics Finland 2017). Children from bilingual families are not included in these figures. Finland borders Russia, which means that the Russian language is important for business, politics, and culture; therefore, the interest in studying it is relatively strong. Protassova (2009) and Mustajoki and Protassova (2015) provide a summary of the situation of Russian in Finland and historical aspects of Finnish-Russian bilingual institutions in Finland.

3.1 The Finnish-Russian Bilingual School

Our main research was carried out at the Finnish-Russian day care center Kalinka, situated close to the Finnish-Russian school in Helsinki. The school was created in 1955 as a successor to the former Russian schools, which had existed in different forms since the mid-nineteenth century when Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy under Russian rule. The school became a state institution in 1977. It offers particular programs for children from various family linguistic backgrounds. The day care center has the mission of enhancing the quality of language education by offering an early start.

3.2 The Preschool Finnish-Russian Bilingual Education: A Case of Kalinka

From 1990 on, the Kalinka day care center, specializing in Finnish-Russian bilingual education, has provided a significant number of pupils for the school. With the growing Russian-speaking immigrant population arriving from the former Soviet Union, the profile of the kindergarten has changed, and now consists of pupils aged 1;6 to 6 from Finnish-speaking, bilingual, or Russian-speaking families in equal proportions. The number of children receiving education in the day care center is about 84–98 (depending on the year). Three adults usually work with a group of children: one native speaker of Finnish (the team leader, whose main goal is to implement the Finnish program and enhance Finnish language use), one native speaker of Russian (who teaches in Russian and helps the Finnish teacher), and one bilingual (who switches between languages and organizes special activities for language learning depending on the child's proficiency). All activities are planned during sessions involving the whole staff (twice a year), among the Russian-speaking teachers (once a month), and for each group (once a week). Therefore, projects are planned on different levels (group, language, institution as a whole, for parents, together with the school, and with Russian-speaking societal organizations). Large-scale projects connected to fairy-tale motives occupy everybody for half a year; they usually culminate in a theatrical performance in which all the children and adults take part. There are numerous everyday activities provided together by all three

teachers in the group: visiting the woods or an exhibition, making big collective paintings, or preparing settings and props for dramatization, etc.

It has not always been easy to find financial support for Kalinka, which exists as a non-municipal, non-profit society-owned institution. In order to survive, Kalinka has had to prove its competitiveness, for example by demonstrating quality results and establishing good relationships with the Finnish-Russian school, other schools teaching Russian, and mass media. Close contacts with the University of Helsinki have been one of the arguments for convincing the community that the staff knows what it is doing.

Kalinka is unique in certain ways. First, it was created by the Old Russians in collaboration with Finns and with the goal of preparing Finnish-speaking or bilingual children for school. Second, it is led by Finnish educators, has always had a Finnish director, and follows the Finnish curriculum. The idea behind Kalinka was the great need for Finns to learn Russian (the language of the neighboring country). Everyday interactions between children and adults with different languages were seen as the optimal way to pick up expressions and cultural competence from one another. Kalinka has later developed into an incubator of different forms of early bilingualism, arguably providing the best possible educational trajectory for children from bilingual families.

The satisfaction of parents is monitored every year and is above the average for the Helsinki area; thus, there has always been a justification for all the efforts undertaken. The sociocultural background of the parents and their views about successful family language policy are discussed in Moin et al. 2013 and Protassova et al. 2012. It was shown that the sociocultural background of the parents was somewhat higher than average, and their expectations about bilingualism were not exaggerated, although these were higher among Russian-speaking parents than among Finnish-speakers. It was acknowledged among speakers of Russian that the level of Russian attained would not be the same as in Russia. Finnish-speaking parents recognized that the result would not be a native-like proficiency in Russian. In the case of bilingual learners, the expectation was that both languages would be enhanced. Most of the parents plan to continue bilingual education within the Finnish-Russian school and support bilingualism at home. The Russian-speaking parents wish that the Finnish language was taught more intensively, and the Finnish-speaking parents vice versa, with the hope that Russian might obtain a more prominent place in the learners' everyday lives.

Kalinka is not the only kindergarten providing services in Russian in the capital region. There are plenty of Russian-Finnish cooperative and private institutions for children in Finland. According to individual and group interviews with teachers and parents conducted so far, as well as group discussions and Internet forums, most of the other day care centers prefer a predominantly Russian context and activities organized in accordance with Russian programs. Differing attitudes toward childhood, its meaning, and ways of making children free and happy cause the principal discrepancy in their didactic views. For the average Russian-speaking parent, day care should involve as many lessons as possible, teaching children to read and write early, involving them in drama projects, and offering large numbers of songs and

poems for the children to learn by heart. For the Finnish-speaking parents, by contrast, day care primarily means acquisition of social skills, various types of play, and acquaintance with surrounding nature and society (according to results of the project Interreg Central Baltic “Development of Parent Involvement Models for Bilingual Pre- and Primary School”). Usually, day care centers with a good reputation among the Russian-speaking parents are those where music is taught daily and the children are occupied with counting, playing didactic games, etc. (cf. Meng 2006; Zbenovich and Lerner 2013). Such kindergartens have more Russian-speaking educators and more or exclusively Russian-speaking children. In contrast, for Finnish-speaking parents, a day care center must agree with parents upon their educational methods, they want stress-free play for children, perhaps with some additional activities, but always prioritizing interaction with peers. There are striking cultural differences between the Russian and Finnish educational systems, for example in how adults speak to children, how they handle their behavior, use and name emotions, etc. (cf. Protassova and Miettinen 1992). All in all, from the very beginning there has been a compromise between the aspirations of the stakeholders and the real composition of the staff, between high goals and reality.

4 Methods

4.1 *Research Design*

This ethnographic research project study was conducted by the author over a quarter of a century, starting in 1990, in Helsinki, Finland. The creation of a bilingual Finnish-Russian educational institution coincided with the end of the Soviet Union; the contingent depended on the role of the Russian language in Finnish society, the configuration of the children’s home languages, degree of employment among pre-school teachers, the financial situation, and the educational programs of the city of Helsinki. During the first four years, I monitored Kalinka on an everyday basis. Inter alia, I studied the parents’ reasons for putting their child into bilingual education, the founders’ goals in organizing such an institution, and the Finnish and Russian systems of education and teachers’ views about the role of the pre-primary years in child development. I also followed the children’s progress. Later, I continued to visit Kalinka several times a year with different purposes. In addition, students mostly from the University of Helsinki, but also from other universities and educational institutions, have carried out research on this site. The purposes of data collection varied between linguistic features of the child bilingual language development and curriculum, communication (e.g. teacher-child interactions, peer interactions, circle time, instructional activities), and intercultural relationships, stereotypes about musical education, attitudes of the staff, opinions of the parents, family support, etc. Kalinka needed this all-sided approach because it had to adjust to the changing political, legislative, and linguistic situation, to update its syllabus, and to be attractive for

society. I organized in-service training for teachers and lectured for parents, invented educational toys, and produced instructional materials.

4.2 *Participants*

Overall, about 1000 children and 50 teachers participated in this research project during all those years. All Finnish-speaking teachers were educated in Finland, the Russian-speaking teachers were professionally educated as teachers in Russia or in Finland, and the bilingual teachers had philological or pedagogical education.

4.3 *Instruments*

I have used a combined methodology: ethnographic approach (in and out of the classroom, with video recordings, in-process surveys, and discussions, cf. Codó and Pérez-Milans 2014), field notes from participant observation, transcripts of interviews with teachers, teachers' assistants, administrators, and parents (cf. Hall 2002; Denzin and Giardina 2008); documents analysis and linguistic landscape analysis (cf. Spolsky et al. 2014); and content analysis of Internet forums (cf. Christensen and Park 2012). I have also included summaries of previous investigations.

In the data analysis, everyday bilingual practices (i.e. communication between children and adults, among children, and among adults with the same and with different languages) are revealed with the help of salient transliterated excerpts from video recordings using conversational and thematic analyses (cf. Braun and Clarke 2006).

5 *Data Analysis*

In order to find out what constitutes the quality of the adopted educational approach, I try to analyze the everyday interactions between teachers and students. I analyze how the teachers distribute their work and how they approach their goals by languaging and translanguaging, how they adapt their speech to the level of the child's understanding, how they use the zone of proximal development to introduce new things, and how they reflect upon their attitudes. Cognitive, motivational, emotional, and intentional aspects of the teacher's attitude and her/his position among adults and children were investigated by means of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and video recordings. The guidelines for the interviews can be found in Palviainen et al. (2016).

6 Results

I will juxtapose the views of the staff and parents and compare them to the reactions of children. First, I will show an example of how the interactions are developed on the micro-level. I will then present a wider picture of the variety of educational forms and an overview of the results achieved immediately and in longer perspective. In addition, I will add the parents' and teachers' perspectives on bilingual education. My final consideration will be the role of day care in the community.

6.1 *Everyday Flexible Bilingual Interactions*

The presence of the two languages is not always balanced; sometimes one of them is more active depending on the language of the teacher and/or the child and the goals of interaction. Throughout the day, these situations follow each other constantly, even during playtime. Teachers let children speak and motivate them to participate, trying to take into account their levels of comprehension and production. The following excerpts illustrate the dynamic reactions of teachers and children in different situations of day-to-day life. Excerpts come from video-recorded and transcribed interactions. The abbreviations used: BT = bilingual teacher, FT = Finnish-speaking teacher, RT = Russian-speaking teacher (different people in different excerpts), C1, C2... = child1, 2..., Cn = children in group, BC = bilingual child coming from a bilingual family, RC = Russian-speaking child, FC = Finnish-speaking child, (Rus) = in Russian, (Fin) = in Finnish, Pl = plural, Sg = singular. In a mixed utterance, Finnish is in bold letters.

Ex. 1 Children are playing on the floor together with the teacher; they are involved in the actions and have fun. The transcript illustrates how the BT is managing the use of languages. Children know the toys to a certain extent, which enables the teacher to stick to Russian throughout the conversation. They can pronounce the words themselves or repeat after someone else. BT repeats in Russian what was said in Finnish. In the internationalisms (words present in many languages), one can grasp phonetic influences: the Finnish word *makaroni* (stressed on the first syllable) differs from the Russian *makarony* (stressed on the third syllable) both phonetically and with regard to the precise type of pasta it normally refers to; the children pronounce the word in a hybrid way. The word *tri* 'three' is pronounced like *dri*, which may be a regressive assimilation caused by the next word *drakon* 'dragon' in Russian. As an animate noun, *drakon* should have a different accusative form (*trjox drakonov* instead of *tri drakona*).

- BT: Segodnja u nas magaziny. (Rus) *Today, we have shops.*
 Cn: Magaziny. (Rus) *Shops.*
 BT: Pomnite? (Rus) *You remember?* (2Pl)
 FC1: Pomnish'? (Rus) *You remember?* (2Sg)

- BT: V odnom magazine prodajutsja zhiivotnye. Kto éto? (Rus) *In one shop, they sell animals. Who is it?*
- Cn: Apina, apina. (Fin) *Monkey, monkey.*
- FC2: Apina. (Fin) *Monkey.*
- BT: A po-russki éto... (Rus) *And in Russian, it is...*
- FC3: Apina. (Fin) *Monkey.*
- RC4: Obez'jana. (Rus) *Monkey.*
- BT: Obez'jana, obez'jana. A éto kto? (Rus) *Monkey, monkey. And who is this?*
- Cn: Koshka, koshka, koshka. (Rus) *Cat, cat, cat. [...]*
- BT: A éto kto k nam prishjol? (Rus) *And who is it who came to us?*
- FC1: Dinosaurus. (Fin) *Dinosaur.*
- Cn, BT: Dinozavr. (Rus) *Dinosaur. [...]*
- BT: Chto Kiti budet prodavat'? (Rus) *What is Kiti going to sell?*
- C1, C2: Porkkana. (Fin) *A carrot.*
- BT: Morkovka. A cht/ A éto chto? (Rus) *Carrot. And what is this?*
- Cn: Banaanit, banany. (Fin, Rus) *Bananas, bananas. [...]*
- BT: Chto ty eshchjo budesh' prodavat'? (Rus) *What else are you going to sell?*
- BCn: Xleb. (Rus) *Bread.*
- BT: Xleb. (Rus) *Bread.*
- BC1: Ja budu sejchas **kohta** vot étu **sininen** kak Jura prodavat'. (Rus+Fin) *I will now soon this blue like Jura sell.*
- BT: A éto chto? (Rus) *And what is this?*
- Cn: MAkaroni. (Fin+Rus) *Pasta.*
- BT: MakarOny. (Rus) *Pasta. [...]*
- BC2: Ja xochu kupit' dri drakona. (Rus) *I want to buy three dragons.*
- BT: Molodec. (Rus) *Good boy.*
- BC2: Ja rahaa. (Fin) *And money (comes back).*

In Excerpt 1, the BT simplifies her language while addressing children and stimulates the use of Russian. Sometimes, she repeats in Russian what was said in Finnish, more often, she does not correct the sentences. Children switch between languages and mix them.

Ex. 2 A RT distributes food from the carriage in front of the group; children are sitting at the tables, coming up by turns to the carriage. Most of the questions are routine ones, containing names of different dishes. First, she gives some meat, and then she adds salad. Finnish is used by the Finnish-speaking child to express emotion.

- RT: Davaj ja tebe nemnozhko polozhu. (Rus) *Let me put you a little bit.*
- FC: Ne-a, **mä en halua**. (Rus) *No*, (Fin) *I don't want. [...]*
- RT: I salat. (Rus) *And salad.*
- FC: Mnogo. (Rus) *Much.*

As was observed, mutual understanding can happen in both languages, and communicants make small steps towards each other to ensure the smooth running of the conversation.

Ex. 3 Children are playing with the Russian-speaking teacher who makes them use different colors. They understand his Russian and react in Finnish, and vice versa. The goals of this activity are interesting for them and motivate participation. The interactions have a natural development, although participants use different languages.

- FC1: Mne krasnyj, krasnyj mne! Ja xochu! (Rus) *To me red, red to me! I want!*
 RT: Éto kakaja kraska? (Rus) *What is this color?*
 FC1: Éto **keltaista**. (Rus + Fin) *It is yellow.*
 RT: Zhjoltaja, da. (Rus) *Yellow, yes. [...].*
 RT: Chjornaja kraska rasserdilas' na vse drugie kraski, i nachalas' u nix vojna. (Rus) *The black color became angry with all other colors, and they started a war.*
 FC: Minua pelottaa, että se suuttuu. (Fin) *I am scared that it becomes angry. [...].*
 FC: Mä tuun tekemään sinulle ansan. (Fin) *I am going to make a trap for you.*
 RT: Aa, menja okružhajut. (Rus) *Ah, I am surrounded.*

In this Excerpt, the RT is interested in interactive play based on a “war” among the colors, and complex things are reacted upon because of the visual explications. As was evident, the play is intense and possible even without a common language.

Ex. 4 BT and RC (a 4-year-old boy from a Russian-speaking family who has lived in Finland for about 7 months) are sitting at the table and playing. The child must guess what is missing from the picture, say it aloud, and turn the picture over; if he guesses accurately, he can take a Duplo building block and start to build a house. The game uses pictures where something is missing from a boy’s portrait. The translation tries to mirror the particularity of constructions in Finnish and Russian, which are typologically different languages, but share important features such as the absence of articles and a complex case system. The teacher goes over to Russian only in the situations where he thinks that the boy did not fully understand his words. The teacher knows what Finnish vocabulary the boy has already acquired, e.g., he knows what *tukka* ‘hair’ means (although it corresponds to a plural form in Russian – *volosy*). There is an interesting detail of miscommunication when the two languages clash: when addressed in Finnish, the boy understands the question about the missing hair as a question about the presence of hair and answers this latter question. The Finnish verb *puuttua* ‘be missing, lack’ can be translated into Russian as *otsutstvovat’*, which is not used in children’s play, so the teacher replaces this verb through the general ‘be’ that has a different government; it is only then that he receives an appropriate answer from the boy. We see that the grammar is difficult to understand without the introduction of translation. If the boy were older, the teacher could explain to him what the differences between the meanings and forms of the Russian and Finnish words are.

- BT: **Tässä duplo-palikoita, ne on kaikki erivärisiä, ja niistä rakennetaan talo.** (Fin) Iz nix my postroim dom. Ty svoj dom, ja svoj dom. No dlja togo chtoby postroit' dom, nuzhno ugadat' po kartochkam, u kogo chego ne xva-taet. (Rus) **Aloitanko minä vai aloitatko sinä?** (Fin) **Here are Duplo blocks, they are all of different colors, and from them, going to build house.** *From them, we will build house. You your house, me my house. But in order to build house, one must guess after cards, what someone is missing. Am I going to start or are you going to start?*
- RC: Sinä. (Fin) *You.*
- BT: Minä? No minä aloitan. Tässä pojalta puuttuu suu. Puuttuuko suu? (Fin) *Me? So, I start. Here, from the boy is missing mouth. Is mouth missing?*
- RC: Ei, ei. (Fin) *No, no.*
- BT: Ei puuttuu suu, vaan tukka. Siis väärin. Sinun vuorosí. Joku näistä. (Fin) *Not missing mouth, but hair. Thus wrong. Your turn. Any of these.*
- RC: Tukka. (Fin) *Hair.*
- BT: Puuttuuko tukka? Puuttuuko tukka? (Fin) *Is the hair missing? Is the hair missing?*
- RC: Jo. (Fin) *Yes.*
- BT: Puuttuuko tukka? Ei puuttuu tukka. Pojalla on tukka. Minun vuoro. Pojalta puuttuu tukka. Puuttuuko tukka? (Fin) *Is hair missing? Not missing hair. Boy has hair. My turn. From boy is missing hair. Is the hair missing?*
- RC: Ei. (Fin) *No.*
- BT: **Eikö?** (Fin) U nego ne/ u nego est' volosy? (Rus) **Why no? He has no/ has he got hair?**
- RC: Ei. (Fin) *No.*

The excerpts presented above illustrate the flexible linguistic behavior of the teacher (Swain and Lapkin 2013; Hickey et al. 2014) including the justified code switching building upon the competence of the child and contributing to the confidentiality of the interaction. In such ways, both languages are used in everyday situations and support children's development and understanding of the world. Teachers have to plan activities themselves, although they can use existing lesson plans, toys, descriptions of games, and—most important of all—their own experience of teaching small children. Multiple sensitive, motoric, intellectual, and emotional approaches sustain the unstable perceptions of the very small children. In a changing situation, teachers must adjust their techniques to the mood of the children, their immediate needs, attention and memory limits, their interests, levels of proficiency in both languages, and age-related restrictions.

In the following sub-section, I will show more examples of activities leading to intensive language use. I believe that speech-provoking activities stimulate the use of language in the zone of proximal development; the experience of using language helps to interiorize the language elements with the accompanying actions; the repeated actions vary, so that the generalization happens through creative use of language.

6.2 *Organized Activities Directed Toward Language Development*

A life in day care usually includes a mix of teacher-planned and child-initiated activities. During free-play time children explore sensory-motoric and aesthetic materials, and the purpose of self-constructing of play-sets could be considered as a mediated way of instruction. Activities are documented, and each child receives a portfolio with his or her results.

At the beginning, when the kindergarten had just been established, teachers complained that they did not have enough toys that could be combined with each other. It was difficult for them to semanticize (give the meaning to) words and ideas. There were only a few ready-made games for a reduced vocabulary. They had to invent new games and activities for each lesson. Now, the collection of materials is big, and children can manipulate things that they have prepared themselves and those that are pre-manufactured. The endless combinations of visual aids lead to endless combinations of verbal elements, to verbal thinking in the context of emerging situations that are not always predictable.

Children's activities must be directly related to language development, so teachers had to introduce themes and episodes provoking the use of the already acquired speech elements and introducing new elements that have to be repeated and trained under variable circumstances. Moving from one setting to another, a character can live in a house, go shopping downtown, go for a trip to the countryside, take a rocket to a chocolate planet, dive to the bottom of the sea, and so on. There are a number of traditional fairy-tale personages as well: a Kolobok (Russian animated pancake), a ghost, a dragon, a magician, etc. Children color pictures of furniture, food, trees, etc., and draw, cut, and glue up all kinds of details. Circumstances are never stable: an idea emerges, lives for a short period, and is then replaced by a new one. Combinations of objects are a visual aid for new combinations of words and grammatical categories. Magic motivation makes children speak: they build a town for people, fish, or bears, travel through the seasons in a plane, on a donkey, or with help from a witch. Children must name all necessary sorts of ice cream, clothes, and animals in the forest, collect and describe them. They recall in the past tense what has happened, or plan what they will do in the future tense. What does a skeleton eat for breakfast and what has his life been like before? Try to find the place where dinosaurs live. The dragon's three heads are in different moods and see the world as a sad, merry, or dangerous place. A terrible wind is blowing, and the disorder caused by this element means that everybody and everything ends up in a different place, so that the children must compare the new locations with the previous ones. If they pour milk on the trees, cheese grows on them. If they plant a screw nut into the soil of an island, a truck grows out of the earth next day, and so on. All the time, teachers pronounce words related to the topic of the game or activity, describing materials, organizing the process of the work, repeating, adjusting, and playing with sound complexes such as onomatopoeias (words phonetically imitating sounds).

Teachers gradually expand the children's utterances by means of questioning, extending, reformulating, and other scaffolding strategies. They try to use motivation typical of children. For example, putting all kinds of things inside a textile toy, the teacher asks: "What has the octopus eaten?" If the children can name the things, they do so. If not, the teacher puts them inside and names them; she then takes them out, showing her astonishment and enumerating the things again. The teacher repeats the same procedure with various emotions in different consecutive orders, until the children can name all the things themselves. Now, she combines nouns with adjectives and/or verbs, repeating the actions, and stimulates the children to speak themselves. At the end of the play, she recuperates what was said: "The octopus has eaten a big black shoe, a small red star, etc.," and she then makes the children tell the whole story to another participant, e.g. a shark who came to visit the octopus. Then the shark can tell what it has eaten, and the play continues for as long as the children are interested. From understanding to production, from lexical acquisition to syntactical structures, from present to past, from constructions (collection of form/function combinations) to narrative, children can try out many things in one day through playful conversation.

6.2.1 Examples of Organized Activities

1. In a group of children aged 3 through 4, two or more dice are prepared with pictures glued to each face, representing an animal, a fruit, a color, a piece of furniture; each dice is dedicated to one lexical group. In the first round teacher organizes a game where children are asked to throw a dice in turns and answer basic questions like "Who is this?," "What is it?," "What color is it?" In the second and subsequent rounds, every child has to through two or more dice, imagining a situation and naming it (the teacher can propose a verb, but after several rounds she reduces scaffolding and the children can play themselves). The sentences that the children produce may include: "A rooster eats (doesn't eat) bananas", "Grandmother Rabbit bought two pencils", "Ghosts sleep in a boat".
2. In a group of children aged 3.5 through 4.5, a game of bingo is played to elicit word combinations with the aim of practicing gender choice and alternative constructions with verbs or adjectives: a serious / sad / merry / angry girl (fem.) or boy (masc.) or sun (neuter); the girl laughs, thinks, cries, is angry, etc. The accumulated knowledge is reflected in the lengthening of the utterances.
3. In a group of children aged 5 through 6, table theater is an activity that consists in understanding elaborated sentences (every component must be identified carefully because there are variations), and afterwards in naming actions: "The big daddy dog in a blue suit is lying on a sofa", "The robot takes a small yellow cup", etc.
4. In a group of children aged 5.5 through 6.5, an elaborate adventure story is played out on a self-prepared scene. The characters are given names, and they go to various places, eat, swim, fly, get stuck somewhere and must be rescued, washed, etc. Children move toys from one place to another, dress them, make them meet guests, go by car or by bus, change apartments, take holidays, visit undiscovered planets, travel through a desert, go to school or to a hospital, etc.

Children speaking different mother tongues manage to collaborate. This helps to involve everybody in language-related activity and enhance the communicative interaction in groups with different languages and various family backgrounds in a naturalistic setting. Teachers first ask those children who are more competent to answer more complex questions, while those who are weaker speakers may be asked to perform simpler tasks after the right answers are received from the stronger ones. Alternatively, the teachers give alternative variants of the answers, so that the children can repeat one of them.

The teachers' bilingual and L2 instruction strategies include a large element of spontaneity based on suggestions from the learners. Dull repetition is not the way to commit things to memory, but if the child has to explain the same things to different characters repeatedly, she reiterates it with playful motivation (cf. van Oers 2013). Teachers may be engaged in interactions, helping to create unexpected and therefore memorable scenarios (a hippo rides on a sledge, puts on a Barbie's dress that is too small, etc.). Play seems to be more interesting when it is humorous (cf. Bell and Pomerantz 2016) and cooperative (shared by others who put forward their versions). Accidents, unusual attitudes, and dramatic interchanges follow one another: grandmother climbs up a tree, Santa Claus searches for treasure at the bottom of the sea, a snowman plays football at the airport, a dwarf becomes a king in the castle, a New Year tree is decorated with vegetables, crocodiles fly to the North Pole, and so on. The teacher directs the main plot, but children have their freedom within it. The play material consists of backgrounds and characters (human and animal families). The subjects covered include the seasons, town, farm, desert, island, sea, planets, railroad, sports, school, house, hospital, castle, zoo, etc. The choice of topics relates to the common practice of the day care centers. Materials can be combined, and they grow into an imagined reality used for language development.

6.3 *Everyday Bilingual Practices as Seen by Parents and Teachers*

6.3.1 Parents' Reflections

As part of the VIA LIGHT project (2012–2013, <http://vialight.eu>), which aimed to develop a training program for teachers working with bilingual children and specific training modules for advanced training of experts for childhood bilingualism, the Kalinka day care center carried out two self-evaluations and commissioned one external evaluation. A questionnaire that included open questions was circulated among the parents, asking for their thoughts on whether Kalinka was reaching its goal of children's balanced bilingualism, seen as being of positive value to children and their cultural and language education (for detailed description, see Linsiö et al. 2012). The special publications are connected to the developments of teachers and parents' involvement and their satisfaction with the care and education provided (Miettinen 2012; Mikkonen 2012).

Cooperation between parents, educational institution and society must be at a high level (cf. Ward 2013), especially when another language taught is not perceived just as a neutral one in the society, like Russian in Finland. One cannot overestimate the role of the mass media, and nowadays also the social media, in showing an educational institution in a positive or negative light. Relevant factors also include the frequency of the institution's presence in public discussion, and the language it is discussed in. Moreover, through Facebook the parents can follow what is happening in the group on an everyday basis.

The results obtained demonstrated that the parents were mainly content with the bilingual day care and their children's linguistic and cultural development. They considered bilingualism to be a normal and practical thing that would give the children positive opportunities for their future. Bilingual and Russian parents appreciated the possibility of receiving early childhood education that supported family bilingualism, and Finnish-speaking parents were satisfied with the fact that their children learned the language of the neighboring country. The suggestions for improving the educational process were taken into account, e.g. that the staff should more intensively and systematically use their own mother tongue and that there should be more information and discussion with parents.

6.3.2 Teachers' Reflections

Members of the pedagogical staff stated that despite their long experience of working with bilingual children, some teachers still had intercultural problems while working together, needed help in distributing functions and organizing collaboration, and lacked professional knowledge in first and second language teaching and assessment. Some worried about the quality of language acquisition in children and tried to do their best when they had to use their less-developed language to explain moral issues to the children. They sometimes experienced problems while addressing parents in the language that was not their own, especially in the sphere of educational culture. It seemed important to continue to develop the pre-primary bilingual education and to become bilingual themselves. The intercultural educational approach (e.g., Portera 2008) presupposes attentiveness to each other's needs and reflections; otherwise, misunderstandings will never be resolved.

The analysis of teachers' attitudes had the goal of elaborating a model of optimal educational behavior for a kindergarten second-language teacher. It turns out that there is a very special attitude that can be seen as a model for success. First, the teacher must have a genuine desire to teach and to involve all her/his capacities and abilities in the work. Also, s/he has to think positively of the results of teaching. S/he has to be aware of language use and of the general interactional strategy that s/he employs in communication. The zone of proximal development is her/his place of professional commitment. S/he should be able to play and communicate in a ludic (playful) form, which is the best key to stimulating second language growth in children.

I will now focus on two examples of teachers' beliefs concerning bilingual development and education, their language strategies, and main pedagogical approaches. These teachers were chosen because they have worked in Kalinka almost throughout its functioning. They are strong pedagogues who appreciate bilingualism.

The Case of M.

Is Bilingual Education an Option for All?

M. is male, a bilingual teacher, a Finn born in Finland and educated in both Finland and the USSR. Implementing a child-centered approach, M. takes into account the children's special needs and their level of language development in both languages. He thinks that bilingual day care is a natural choice for bilingual families because both of the child's languages are supported. In the majority of cases, no serious problems arise while learning two languages in parallel. Yet children who have problems with attention, comprehension, hearing, or emotions might benefit from an environment where people do not speak different languages simultaneously. Children with speech difficulties are in danger of becoming outsiders. It is therefore part of the teacher's job to talk to children when they play, to ask what they are doing, and to help them formulate their ideas. [However, some other members of the staff want to implement an inclusive approach and think that a bilingual environment is always appropriate.]

M. supports peer teaching and mediation: he suggests that socially gifted children learn more from each other while playing and communicating, and this is the best way to acquire language, whereas there are others who learn more from their teachers. Helping each other to find words starts at the age of 4 and becomes common a year later. Whole sentences in the second language can be used spontaneously when they are acquired during natural play.

Priorities in Education

M. agrees with other Finnish educators that appropriate behavior is more important than foreign language abilities, and that social skills must be acquired before entering school. He has witnessed a change in parents' educational principles over the years: Russian-speaking parents have become more lenient and Finnish-speaking parents stricter. M. thinks that the Russian culture could be more noticeable in Kalinka, but this is not essential. Acquisition of Finnish for children from Russian-speaking families is his top priority, especially if the parents have lived in Finland for many years and cannot speak Finnish properly. Teaching Russian to children from Finnish-speaking families is more of a non-obligatory bonus. According to M., his colleagues are now professionally mature and more experienced in addressing the needs of bilingual children of any age and level of proficiency; they have learned it through practice.

M. uses simple syntactic constructions with children who are not confident in Finnish. Sometimes he even resorts to Russian. He tries to speak a correct, fully-fledged, non-colloquial Finnish. With the Russian-dominant children, he concentrates upon intonation and clear pronunciation; in addition, he uses some gestures, leaning upon words that they already know and linking these to new ones. This work is rewarding because the children become more self-assured, their comprehension improves, and they start to play with other children and develop their vocabulary.

Translanguaging

M. regards self-reflection as part of his profession, and he repeatedly turns over in his mind what and how he is doing and saying. Code-switching happens continually because M. is surrounded by many children with two languages, yet he does not mix words. Instances of auto-interpretation are quite common, mostly in his work with Russian children: he makes an utterance in Russian, then in Finnish, then again in Finnish, and asks the child to repeat it (which the child may or may not do). M. confesses that he does not laugh much, although occasionally he makes jokes with words when this does not disturb the general order. He guides children to start saying or doing something one-step before they can do it themselves, on their own initiative.

M's long experience of and his constant endeavor to improve his professionalism is frequently shared by his colleagues in this community of practice, yet he has his own ideologies and follows them sternly. His attitude allows implementing principles of quality of bilingual education very firmly. At the same time, he is a model competent bilingual speaker for children.

The Case of K.

Bilingual Strategies

K. is a female Russian-speaking teacher, born in Russia, educated first in Russia and later in Finland. K. has long-term experience of working in groups of 21 children with different teams of three teachers. Currently K. works with a Finnish teacher in a group of 14 children of different ages. The two teachers can manage without a bilingual teacher because there is little need for translation in a small group. The teachers follow each other's actions and repeat the wordings in their own language if needed. They often divide the group according to the dominant language of the children, organizing the same activities in the teachers' native languages; later, they exchange the groups and speak in the children's second language about the same content. Sometimes they propose separate activities for Russian and Finnish children, usually more linguistically challenging, and sometimes they work together with the whole group, supporting each other if a child does not understand what has to be done (explaining, repeating, demonstrating, etc.). They encourage the children not to be shy and to address both of the teachers in their respective languages. In

turn, the teachers have to show that they expect to be addressed and that they understand what the child means in either language. When a child addresses K. in Finnish, she can show that she does not know the word but wishes to learn it, thus serving as an adult model of a second language learner.

K. is sensitive to children's linguistic background, and her strategies depend on the ratio of Russian- and Finnish-speaking children in the group. She underlines flexible language use as well: she uses some Finnish, but only for a special reason, e.g. when children argue with each other or do not see a danger when climbing somewhere, etc. Generally, K. tries to hold the Finnish child's hand, to show, to explain, and maybe give some key words to enable the child to understand what is expected. One word is often enough to clarify the situation (e.g., the children are going to *dive* in imaginary play).

In K's view, the ideal age for starting bilingual education would be 2 years of age, because these children are open to a new language, they listen carefully and repeat everything, and they are close to the teacher; this is the easiest way to learn. Children of this age take it for granted that people speak different languages. Later, they start to become too cautious to try out a new word, and they weigh their chances of reproducing it accurately; the teacher has to work hard to win the child's trust. K. advocates variation: everyone has an individual way of speaking (automatic reactions, intonation, tempo, vocabulary, expressions); one would say *a cat* and another *kitty*; this is why children must communicate with numerous persons. She would like to see more intensive collaboration between all members of the staff.

Intercultural Experience and Cooperation with Parents

K. says that her Finnish colleagues do not always accept Russian parents' ideas about education. It is difficult for them to understand the stages of integration that Russian-speaking immigrants are going through (whether they are newly arrived, receiving education, having financial difficulties etc.). Russian-speaking teachers are more empathetic, because they have had the same experience. Finnish teachers think that difficulties come from language deficits or from cultural discrepancies, but it is also a matter of 'family psychology', in K.'s words. This is why Russian teachers have a huge role as mediators between Finnish teachers and Russian parents (such topics are addressed in Jauhola et al. 2007, Alitolppa-Niitamo et al. 2008). Taking into account the communicative cultural practices of the Russian-speakers (ways of celebrating, visiting friends, speaking about emotions, solving conflicts, etc.) is also important (cf. Veistilä 2016).

Children from bilingual homes often lack Russian language input if they do not have Russian TV and Russian friends or relatives. Speaking to children from bilingual homes therefore requires more work. Children from Russian-speaking homes can take advantage of sophisticated input.

K. mentions that a parental committee helps financially by organizing parties and events, baking cakes, and running lotteries. Parents offer their recommendations (e.g. visiting particular exhibitions, inviting visiting performers, learning more Russian songs) during regular consultations or through internal post. The staff does

not teach literacy, but if a child learns to read the parents can ask for pedagogical support. Parents bring materials, toys, and educational board games. However, they have not suggested any changes in the work of the kindergarten.

In sum, K. acknowledges the diversity of family backgrounds and of group composition (age, duration of attendance at Kalinka, previous experience, parents' linguistic and social backgrounds, etc.) and adapts her strategies to the needs of each child and the group as a whole. Her main goal is to make children enjoy common activities in the two languages.

All teachers became multilingual themselves and use languages accommodat-ingly. The second generation teachers who are hired today are even more flexible in their attitudes. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is present in their strategies and tactics. Teachers with different languages work as a team. They use scaffolding and add to intercultural education, bringing their own culture into curriculum. Both the interviewed teachers emphasized that not everything goes smoothly, but they try to overcome obstacles.

7 Discussion and Conclusions

Quality education is based on the child's interests, parents' agreement, and teachers' efforts. Theoretically and practically, quality bilingual education presumes that the stronger language of the child is not suppressed but continues to develop while the second language can be of greater or lesser importance for future school success. Experienced teachers address each child individually and plan the child's educational trajectory according to the family language policy, giving advice to the parents. Teachers organize interactions and activities that support the child's comfortable linguistic development. They would like to have a good pace of progress, but this is not always possible if the child has special needs. Teachers must not be afraid of discrepancies in the cultures of parents and pedagogical staff; they can turn it into enrichment. Awareness of problems is a key factor in the acceptance of perceived differences among the staff members. Engagement and commitment to bilingualism provide the prerequisites for success.

Kalinka has a language program that is continually adjusted in view of the age and quantity of children in the group and even taking into account the political situation (e.g. afflux of Russian-speaking Finnish repatriates, prevalence of Russian-speaking expatriates, dominance of bilingual families or of second-generation parents). Some people have worked here for decades, so they have accumulated plenty of experience and reflected upon it through in-service training. Self-reflection must be reinforced and restructured every year; professional knowledge acquired through the decades must be updated for each generation of children and parents. Participation in international projects helps to raise the self-esteem of teachers and parents. It is always good to have a multifaceted lens for looking at the everyday activities.

At different stages of its existence, Kalinka has had to compromise and adapt itself to the challenges of the moment. In the early years, preparatory classes for children aged 6 to 7 were here; later, they moved to the Finnish-Russian school. For a long time only a few children aged 2;6 were accepted; more recently, even children aged 1;6 have been able to enter the programs, this being the current trend. There have been periods of intensive sporting activities, ecological education, and artistic ateliers. Music, fairy-tales, and drama remain important components of the activities. Nevertheless, Kalinka follows the principles of Finnish education, which the Russian-speaking parents have not always accepted: they may miss structured, regulated activities lasting several hours, as well as large amounts of songs and poems imposed on the children instead of free play. Only those who have lived in Finland for a longer time have tended to accept the principles. Nowadays, 1/3 of the children come from Russian-speaking homes, 1/3 come from Finnish-speaking homes, and 1/3 are bilingual.

Discussions with parents and analysis of their Internet forums show striking discrepancies between the expectations of Russian- and Finnish-speaking parents. Newly arrived immigrant families are more willing to adjust to the welcoming society, but they believe in a quality education that differs from the Finnish mainstream (tough timetable, much rote learning, and structured activities, which was the accepted practice in the former Soviet Union and is now in vogue again). They believe that the acquisition of two languages to a high level of proficiency at a pre-primary age is the result of the teachers' professional competence, not of natural progress. For them, knowledge of the pre-school age and the way that the children develop into their future personality is only an excuse not to force children to learn in a hard way. These views may change over time.

The ensuing trajectories of children's developing bilingualism were exposed through collaboration with the Finnish-Russian School, and with the University of Helsinki if the children continued to study Russian there (Protassova 2006; Upornikova 2012). It was demonstrated that after Kalinka, in the 9th grade and later, children from Finnish-speaking families who continued in the bilingual school did almost as well in Russian as the children from bilingual families; at the same time, their Finnish-language abilities were higher than average. They made some errors typical of oral Russian mother tongue proficiency in bilinguals (analogous to heritage language competence). They could understand Russian perfectly and had good communication skills. Bilingual children had satisfying results in both languages; however, their Russian was not mistake-free. Russian-speaking children had worse results in Finnish than those who frequented Finnish-speaking schools. At the same time, their results in Russian were only slightly better than those attained by Russian-speaking pupils from Finnish-speaking schools (who had 90 minutes Russian lesson weekly). It seems that bilingual education in its later stages should balance the input in both languages and pay more attention to grammar skills.

In modern pre-primary pedagogy, play is often an imminent component, yet it is a tool rather than a goal of the process. In Finland, educators put the personal evolution of individual children before the acquisition of concrete skills. The opposite tendency, which is becoming more and more popular, is to start teaching as

early as possible, to read and write at the age of four, to learn poems by heart, etc. Kalinka demonstrates that children may acquire languages playing together and interacting. Languaging, scaffolding, and teamwork are part of everyday life. The teachers' work is never done, and the parents' satisfaction is a significant validation of all efforts. The children's school successes support the idea of a positive foundation for future development (cf. Cummins 2000; Hornberger 2002; Genesee 2004).

If a teacher is capable of cooperating in communication with adults and children in the process of everyday life, s/he creates new play ideas for the learners' previously acquired language skills in a way that is interesting for the children in accordance with their age. This results in a successful adaptation to a new language in a bilingual classroom. Those teachers who really want to obtain good results must concentrate on the aims of their work and use successful techniques and methods, accompanying them with appropriate speech. They have to be tolerant, reliable, and attentive, have a sense of humor and a faith in the goals, strategies, and tactics of their work. This is an education for everybody.

The ludic type of verbal interactions creates a positive image of the language. Although children do not talk politics, they feel how political events and the economic situation influence the attitudes of adults. Fantasy and play are universal tools that open the hearts and minds of children. Artistic activities are something unusual, unbelievable, strongly stimulating. Speech-stimulating toys and play are widely used. In selecting subjects and topics, and by giving at first simple and subsequently more complicated tasks, teachers obtain something that appears to be a sum of all personal efforts. The multiple combinations of elements and colors, play plots and variations of juxtapositions build a foundation for an endless discussion of what is happening "in front of our very eyes".

Educational policy is more wide-ranging and multifarious now (cf. Schwartz and Palviainen 2016). Teachers have become more dynamic and flexible (cf. Bergroth & Palviainen, this volume). The traditional Russian values of emotional richness and collectivism meet Nordic reserve and independence. Over the years, teachers have accumulated constellations of multilingual situations and handled countless educational cases; they have become familiar with innumerable refusals to speak, tantrums and variants of the learning styles. They know how to organize activities that suit each moment of the day and how to manage bilingual communication. The results of bilingual upbringing have grown into a methodological approach that has been further applied to the modernization of bilingual education in many other Russian-speaking bilingual day care situations in Russia and elsewhere. Kalinka serves as a resource center for anyone interested in its experience.

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Dynamics in Interaction in Bilingual Team Teaching: Examples from a Finnish Preschool Classroom



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Abstract The current study aims to explore team teaching as it is manifested in bilingual interactional patterns in a preschool classroom in Finland. The data was collected in a preschool classroom where a bilingual pedagogy in Finnish (majority language) and Swedish (minority language) was implemented with monolingual Finnish-speaking children. Video recordings were made while two teachers with different predefined language roles were team teaching a class of 20 children during two circle times. A two-level analytic model was developed: on the macro level *activity types*, *participant roles* (type of leadership) and *language allocation* (the teachers' relative use of Finnish and Swedish) were identified, and on the micro level teacher *interaction* was analysed in detail in terms of turn-taking patterns and language use. The findings are analysed in relation to the predefined roles of the two teachers – one as a Finnish speaker and the other as a bilingual Swedish/Finnish speaker. The results show extensive dynamics in how the predefined participant and language roles were put into practice: all three types of leadership (single, alternated and co-leadership) were identified in the data and both the teachers communicated both monolingually and bilingually in the various circle time activities. When communicating bilingually, the teachers applied strategies such as code-switching, avoidance of translation and the use of scaffolding to support understanding. Separation strategies (separation by person, topic or purpose) also appeared in the data, however. The two teachers' cooperation was smooth and they supported and assisted each other in various ways both academically and linguistically.

1 Introduction

A classroom is often conceptualised as a site where only one teacher is interacting with a class of students and the interactional roles are predefined (Creese 2006). However, in a team-teaching approach, two teachers jointly instruct the students

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(Dafouz and Hibler 2013). In bilingual classrooms, team teaching can be challenging, especially if the teachers are assigned different language roles (e.g. Dillon et al. 2015). We know, however, only a little about how languages are actually used by collaborating team teachers: “[T]here is a lack of discourse-based classroom research examining how teacher collaboration occurs” (Park 2014, p. 35). Although the research field on e.g. translanguaging practices in bilingual classrooms is rapidly growing as part of a paradigm shift in bilingual education in the twenty-first century (García 2009), the focus is often on a single teacher interacting bilingually with student(s) and on elementary (or later) school contexts (see e.g. García and Li Wei 2014). Moreover, in most studies on team teaching with a language focus, the language of instruction is English only (see further below). Importantly, only a few studies are available on preschool teachers’ bilingual language use (see Gort and Pontier 2013; Pontier and Gort 2016; Schwartz and Asli 2014).

There are a growing number of guides for teachers that describe how to implement team teaching in general (e.g. Sileo 2011), but the guides mostly lack any description of how to use language(s), especially in bilingual classrooms. Dillon et al. (2015) have reported on teachers’ uncertainty on how to implement team teaching in a bilingual classroom context. In our study, we seek to answer this question by focusing on the dynamic patterns of interaction found between teachers in a bilingual preschool classroom in Finland. As the context, we have selected a team-teaching routine that is typical in Finnish preschools, circle time. In this classroom, one of the two kindergarten teachers had a predefined role as a Finnish speaker while the other had a bilingual, Swedish/Finnish-speaking role. We will analyse the participant roles in terms of leadership and possible changes in the roles, as well as how language use was allocated during two team-taught circle times. We will also make a more detailed analysis of the interaction between the teachers and relate this to their predefined language roles. Before introducing the study, we will address the concept of team teaching, focusing especially on bilingually team-taught classrooms, and explain the sociocultural and educational context of the preschool.

2 Bilingual Team Teaching and its Implementations

Team teaching is often used as an umbrella term for a range of different approaches to teacher collaboration. These approaches are in the literature labelled *co-teaching* (e.g. Cook and Friend 1995; Friend 2008; Friend et al. 2010; Pontier and Gort 2016), *team teaching* (as a more specific term, see e.g. Friend et al. 2010; Dafouz and Hibler 2013), *partner teaching* (e.g. Bronson and Dentith 2014) and *collaborative* and *cooperative teaching* (see e.g. Liu 2008, p. 105). The terms are sometimes used interchangeably by the same author(s), and they are not always accompanied with strict definitions of the approach for which they are being used. Common to all the approaches is, however, that two or more teachers share responsibilities, while the extent to which and how the teachers are expected to collaborate in the stages of planning, organisation, instruction delivery and evaluation varies (cf. e.g. Dafouz

and Hibler 2013; Friend et al. 2010; Liu 2008; Perry and Stenwart 2005; Sandholz 2000). For the purpose of this study, we use the umbrella term *team teaching*. In the analysis section, we apply the definition given by Dafouz and Hibler (2013, p. 97), who define team teaching as “a pedagogical approach where two teachers collaborate simultaneously and share in the instructional process for the same group of students within a given subject matter in the same classroom”. We thus focus on what is going on inside the classroom as a part of the actual delivery of instruction, rather than the phases and processes of planning, organisation or evaluation. This is due to the fact that the data collection design (classroom observations) only allows us to discuss the delivery stage of team teaching.

With regard to the status and educational role of the teachers, some researchers find it essential for team teaching that the teachers enjoy the same status, as is the case when two professional teachers work together and share the teaching responsibilities (e.g. Friend et al. 2010). Other researchers also include cases where one main teacher and one teaching assistant collaborate in the classroom (see e.g. Carless 2006). The teachers in the preschool classroom that we examined shared the same professional background (qualified preschool teachers) and had the same status and educational role. In the following, we first present previous research on team-taught bilingual classrooms in general, and after that we discuss the bilingual language practices that have been applied in preschool classrooms.

2.1 *Previous Research on Bilingual Team Teaching*

Team teaching has been argued to have great potential for bilingual education (Bahamonde and Friend 1999; Dillon et al. 2015). However, the vast majority of research on team teaching with a language focus has been conducted in language classrooms where English serves as both the goal and the means of instruction. They are thus not bilingual classrooms *per se* ==> *per se*, although at least one of the teachers is bilingual. One strand of research concerns EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms, for example in Asia, where a native English teacher and a non-native English teacher collaborate (e.g. Carless 2006; Liu 2008; Park 2014), or English-medium CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) classrooms (Dafouz and Hibler 2013). Another body of research examines mainstream English-medium classrooms where a bilingual ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher assists the class teacher (e.g. Arkoudis and Creese 2006; Gardner 2006). Although other languages than English are occasionally reported to be used during the team teaching (e.g. in Carless 2006), the language used for interaction between the teachers is almost always only English.

Studies from team-taught EFL classrooms provide evidence of the benefits as well as the challenges of team teaching. Carless (2006) and Liu (2008), who observed and interviewed teachers and students from different team-taught EFL classrooms, found that students in team-taught classrooms had multiple opportunities to listen to and speak in English and to observe the two teachers demonstrating

dialogues or question and answer routines. However, Careless and Liu also found that one teacher's relative lack of ability in the other's native language could be a barrier to collaboration. Other challenges that have been reported include the anxiety and confusion that can arise as a result of uncertainty as to which role each teacher should have in the classroom (*ibid.*), or as a result of the collaboration having been imposed on the teachers (Davison 2006).

Mainstream or CLIL classrooms also add to the challenge the question of how to integrate and distribute teaching resources to address content as well as language (Arkoudis and Creese 2006; Dafouz and Hibler 2013; Dillon et al. 2015). With reference to children under school age, Dillon et al. (2015) present a study carried out on team teaching in a dual language (English and Arabic) early years education programme in Abu Dhabi. In this programme, two teachers were placed in each kindergarten classroom: an English-medium teacher with primary responsibility for certain subjects (e.g. English and Maths) and an Arabic-medium teacher who was responsible for other subjects (e.g. Arabic and Islamic Studies). The programme had been in a state of "constant change and fluidity" (*ibid.*, p. 22) since a recent reform of national education and the survey carried out as part of the study therefore had as one of its aims to explore the teachers' experiences of team teaching so far. The findings showed a generally positive attitude among the teachers as far as collaboration and partnership were concerned (although some teachers were more positive than others) and the belief that a team-teaching environment "can better facilitate the learning process" (*ibid.* p. 28). However, the teachers asked for more training on models of team teaching as they felt uncertain about how to work with them. Dillon et al. (2015) further found that the challenge in the "area of teaching Arabic and English Literacy simultaneously in an interwoven co-constructed dialogue continues to be an area for concern" (p. 30). The need for further research on actual language practices in team-taught bilingual preschool classroom is thus urgent.

Predefined teacher roles and tasks may carry with them certain expectations on teacher discourse practices in the classroom, albeit with allowance made for deviations from these expectations. Park (2014) was particularly interested in the dynamics of team teaching, floor alternation and how teachers jointly coped with unforeseen instructional and interactional issues. The setting was a Korean EFL elementary school classroom which was team taught by a native English-speaking teacher and a non-native English-speaking teacher. The main objective of the study was to examine the participation patterns in which the teachers interacted with students and with each other. In contrast to e.g. Dafouz and Hibler (2013), where the teachers had fairly predefined and stable roles in the classroom, in this classroom the roles in terms of leadership changed as they alternated in taking the floor and leading an activity: when one of the teachers played the lead role, the other stepped aside and acted as "a silent but vigilant co-participant by remaining attentive to the ongoing talk", but they intervened whenever appropriate (*ibid.* p. 36). The teachers made use of each other's language competencies as a resource in the unfolding discourse. Hence, roles can be predefined and certain constraints set for action, but as Park convincingly showed, the leadership may also shift during the course of a class (see also Gardner 2006).

2.2 *Language Practices in Team-Taught Bilingual Preschool Classrooms*

A common distinction used in the literature for language practices in bilingual teaching is, on the one hand, that of language separation and, on the other, the flexible use of two languages (e.g. García 2009). *Language separation* is common in bilingual education programmes with an additive framework, frequently used examples of which are immersion bilingual education and dual language education in the USA, which showcase separation practices on many levels: teacher-determined (one teacher–one language), time-determined (half a day in one language and half a day in the other), place-determined (different classrooms for different languages) and subject-determined (different subjects taught in different languages) (García 2009, p. 292ff). A recent development is the increasing acceptance in educational settings of the use of *flexible language practices*. An increasing number of studies have examined flexibility in language practices in bilingual school settings. In many studies, these practices are labelled *translanguaging*, referring either to a bilingual teaching methodology where input and output are systematically varied, or to a scaffolding approach designed to engage (emergent) bilingual students and use their bilingual resources as strengths (García 2009; Lewis et al. 2012). In our study, we use the term flexible language practices to refer to how two languages are used in combination and concurrently by the teachers in the classroom.

Studies on language practices in bilingual team-taught preschool classrooms are rare. One exception is the study of Gort and Pontier (2013), who looked at a Spanish-English dual language preschool in the US. Although the research focus was on how the teachers mediated bilingual interactions with the children, and thus not on team teaching as such, the examples that were examined also included cases where two teachers created some joint dialogue. In the first of the two classes they looked at, a language separation policy was followed. There they found examples of the application by the teachers of a separation strategy that was labelled *tandem talk*, i.e., “a type of collaborative bilingual practice where a pair of speakers coordinates the use of two languages so that each maintains the use of monolingual speech in a bilingual conversation” (Gort and Pontier 2013, p. 234). In the other classroom, which followed a language-by-time-of-day separation strategy, Gort and Pontier showed how one of the teachers temporarily departed from the target instructional language (Spanish) to help a child to connect to previous experiences and support the child’s engagement (in English). The other teacher maintained the target language (Spanish) and continued the meaning negotiation, acknowledging the contributions just made by the teacher and child in English. In a more recent study, Pontier and Gort (2016) found flexible bilingual as well as monolingual performances by both teachers, despite predefined monolingual roles during shared readings of English and Spanish storybooks. The teachers’ performances “reflected their collective bilingual repertoire, drawing on their distributed bilingual expertise” (Pontier and Gort 2016, p. 96). Language use was found to depend partly on each teacher’s official language designation (whether as a monolingual English or a monolingual Spanish model for

the children), but also on the children's contributions as well as on the two teachers' collective content and pedagogical knowledge as to how best to support children's oral language, vocabulary and narrative genre development. In a dual-language Arabic/Hebrew kindergarten in Israel (Schwartz and Asli 2014), the Hebrew-speaking teacher and the Arabic-speaking teacher, both bilingual to a certain extent, used their languages flexibly, making use of what Schwartz and Asli label translanguaging strategies, i.e. the frequent use of inter- as well as intra-sentence code-switching, within as well as across teacher turns. In contrast to the tandem talk found in Gort and Pontier (2013), where the use of monolingual speech was maintained, the teachers in the Schwartz and Asli study thus "shared the instruction by following each other and not separating the languages" (2014, p. 27).

In our study, we will examine in detail the dynamicity between two teachers with different predefined pedagogical and language roles, during one particular type of preschool routine, circle time. The insights we gather will add to the hitherto small body of research that has been carried out on bilingual team teaching in preschool settings.

3 The Finnish Setting

In order to situate the bilingual team teaching addressed in this article in a broader socio-linguistic and sociocultural context, we will briefly describe the status of the two languages used in the preschool, Finnish and Swedish, as well as the Finnish educational system. We will also give an overview of Finnish preschools as an educational context in general and of the target preschool in particular.

3.1 The Sociocultural and Educational Context of Finland

Finland is a bilingual country where Swedish is, by status, an official language equal to Finnish, but a minority language in terms of numbers of speakers: at the end of 2015, 88.7% of the population were registered as Finnish speakers, 5.3% as Swedish speakers and 6.0% as speakers of other languages (Official statistics of Finland 2015). A majority of the 316 municipalities are officially unilingual Finnish-speaking (266 municipalities); the remainder are either bilingual (32 municipalities) or unilingual Swedish-speaking (17 municipalities). Although many citizens are bilingual, the Finnish social system is to a large extent built on separate Swedish- and Finnish-speaking institutions, which produces what can be described as a system of parallel monolingualism (Heller 1999). Schools are administratively either Finnish or Swedish medium and the other national language (Swedish in Finnish-medium schools, Finnish in Swedish-medium schools) is a compulsory subject from the age of 12 years. Although attitudes towards Swedish among speakers of the majority language are today generally positive, there are certain political

movements arguing for reducing the status and space of Swedish in Finland (e.g. Lindgren et al. 2011; Hult and Pietikäinen 2014).

As to early childhood education and care (ECEC), the authorities in Finland are obliged to provide ECEC for all children under school age (7 years). ECEC comprises day care for children under the age of six and a Reception year for six-year-olds. In this article, however, we use ‘preschool’ to refer to pre-primary education for children aged 1–6 years. Governed by legislation, preschool services must be offered in the official languages of Finland, Finnish and Swedish, as well as the heritage language Sámi (mainly offered in the Sámi region in northern Finland in government-funded language nests). As stated in the National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education (NCCPE), preschools should also support the language and culture of children with a Romany background or an immigrant background, as well as of those using sign language (NCCPE 2010). In some Finnish-Swedish bilingual areas in Finland there are language immersion preschools that operate in Swedish for Finnish-speaking children and in Finnish for Swedish-speaking children (see e.g. Björklund and Mård-Miettinen 2011). Some preschools operate entirely or partly in a foreign language, mostly in English, but also in French or Russian, using a CLIL approach. The framework of CLIL ranges from immersion-like high-intensity long-term programmes to low-intensity short-term forms, the latter referred to in Finland as ‘language showers’. According to Nikula and Marsh (1997, pp. 24–26) and Mehistö et al. (2008, p. 13), language showers are weekly or daily foreign language activities intended to familiarise children with a foreign language and to develop positive attitudes to language learning.

Debates about language education policy in Finland are only rarely and implicitly concerned with preschool education. The ideology of separating languages in both educational and family contexts is, however, strong in Finland, especially as regards the two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Both language groups have their own schools and there is a consensus among teachers (see e.g. Palviainen and Mård-Miettinen 2015) as well as among parents (Palviainen and Boyd 2013) that the best model to use to stimulate early bilingual language development is a one-person one-language strategy (e.g. Barron-Hauwaert 2004).

3.2 Finnish Preschool As an Educational Context

In Finnish preschools teachers usually work in teams, in contrast to primary school classes, which are typically taught by one teacher. The official staff-child ratio in a preschool group with children under 3 years old is one staff member to four children, and with over 3-year-olds the ratio is one to eight (Act on children’s day care 239/1973). In preschools, children are either divided according to age into under 3-year-olds and 3–6-year-olds or placed in so-called sibling groups, where siblings of the same family are placed in the same group regardless of their age. A typical Finnish preschool group has three adults and 21–25 children (or 12 children if they are all under the age of 3). (Kirves and Sajaniemi 2013, p. 94).

Finnish early childhood education practices and pedagogy combine care, education, and teaching (the so-called Educare approach, see e.g. Kalliala and Tahkokallio 2003). The staff team in a Finnish preschool group is multi-professional, typically including kindergarten teachers with a tertiary level degree (Bachelor of Education or Master of Education or Social Science) and nurses or social educators holding a vocational qualification in the field of social welfare and healthcare. Some preschool groups have temporary assistants and trainees; these are, however, always supervised.

The teacher-initiated activities in a preschool group are usually planned as well as carried out on a team basis (Venninen et al. 2014). The way the team distributes the work is at least to some extent connected with the qualifications and level of responsibility of the team members. Since teachers are pedagogically responsible for the activities that are organised in preschool, one of them usually does the detailed planning on their own and the other staff members share in implementing the plan. Many teams apply a rotating responsibility for pedagogical matters on a monthly or weekly basis, or a rotating system based on routines (e.g., one is responsible for circle time for an agreed length of time, and the other for working in small groups).

It is emphasised in the national preschool curriculum (NCCPE 2010) that there should be flexibility in the organisation of preschool activities, with the children working at different times in large groups, small groups and individually. Large-group activities have been found to be rare (Ojala and Talts 2007). The routines in a Finnish preschool group are basically the same as in preschools in any country: circle time, small group activities, and free and adult-led play indoors and outdoors (cf. Ojala and Talts 2007; Zagalawan and Ostrosky 2011). As part of the daily routine, children in Finland have three meals (breakfast, lunch, and a snack) and rest for approximately one hour in the afternoon.

In this article, we focus on the *circle time routine*. Circle time is a common daily whole-group routine that often, but not always, takes place in the morning. It often lasts from 10 to 30 min (Emilson 2007; Zagalawan and Ostrosky 2011) and is typically led by one teacher, although others may also contribute. Circle time can thus be described as a formal routine during which the discourse is controlled by the leading teacher, often clearly sitting apart from the others, for example on a separate chair. The children sit in a semicircle around the leading teacher and the other staff members sit either among the children or outside the circle, participating in the activities and disciplining the children. The aims of circle time have been found to be social, cognitive, and informative: the children are training various social and conversational skills as well as learning academic content (e.g. Emilson 2007; Zagalawan and Ostrosky 2011). Various case studies have reported that the activities during circle time most often include songs, reading aloud, discussions, drama, arts, exercises, play, the weather, and the roll call (e.g. Rubinstein Reich 1993; Zagalawan and Ostrosky 2011), and many of them include ritualised elements such as a calendar ritual (cf. Maloney 2000).

3.3 *The Preschool Context in this Study*

The bilingual preschool classroom examined here was situated in a preschool unit in a Finnish-speaking municipality with around 130,000 inhabitants. Out of these, around 300 were registered as Swedish speakers. The preschool unit housed two sections: a Finnish-medium section for children from Finnish-speaking families and a Swedish-medium section for children from Swedish-speaking (or Swedish-Finnish-speaking bilingual) families. The two sections operated separately but were led by the same director.

The classroom under study here belonged to the Finnish-medium section, where bilingual pedagogy was introduced in 2012. The aim with this pedagogy was to familiarise monolingual Finnish-speaking children with the other national language, Swedish, and to develop positive attitudes towards language learning. A bilingual Finnish-Swedish kindergarten teacher was appointed to develop and implement the bilingual pedagogy. The staff therefore had predefined language roles: the bilingual teacher was to communicate bilingually in Finnish and Swedish with the children, while the Finnish-speaking teachers would use Finnish.

The activities and routines in this preschool were typical of a preschool in Finland (see above). The three kindergarten teachers had rotating responsibility for planning the activities. The routine that is focused on in this study, circle time, was always team taught by at least two of the teachers, one of them acting as the leader while the other was a co-teacher. In the current study, one of the Finnish-speaking teachers was in charge of both circle times, with the bilingual teacher as a co-teacher. Thus, the staff not only had predefined language roles but also predefined pedagogical roles.

Taking these predefined language and pedagogical roles as the point of departure, the general aim of the present study was to examine how the two teachers cooperated bilingually in two team-taught circle times. More specifically, our research questions were: How can the team teaching dynamics be described in terms of (changes in) leadership, participant roles and turn-taking? How are the predefined language roles reflected in the teachers' actual language use and how does the language use relate to previous studies on language strategies related to separation and flexibility?

4 Methods and Material

4.1 *Research Design and Data Collection*

The data analysed in the current study was collected as part of a larger ethnographic study in which we followed the implementation of bilingual pedagogy in the Finnish preschool for two academic years (August 2012–May 2014). In the first year of the data collection there were 22 monolingual Finnish-speaking children in the group, aged between 1 and 6 years, and three teachers: the bilingual kindergarten teacher and two Finnish-speaking kindergarten teachers. In the following year the group

expanded to include 28 children and another bilingual teacher, a nurse with training in children's care and upbringing, joined the class.

The focus of the study was on the bilingual kindergarten teacher, who was responsible for developing the pedagogy. The data included three 60-min interviews with her as well as two half-day video-recorded observations of her interaction with the children. The interviews, which have been reported in more detail in Palviainen and Mård-Miettinen (2015) and Palviainen et al. (2016), were of a stimulated recall type: the bilingual teacher watched the video-recordings of her interaction with the children in small group activities that she had led and commented on and explained her own bilingual language practices. The principles she described herself as following and the practices she applied are explained further in the following (Sect. 4.2).

As for the recordings, the first one was made in December 2012, and a follow-up recording was made one year later, in December 2013. The video-recorded observations included different preschool routines such as meals, small group interaction and circle time. Although most of the recorded data included only the bilingual teacher and the children, there were also activities in which other teachers were present. For the purpose of the current study, we selected the two circle time sessions which involved the bilingual kindergarten teacher, Johanna, and the Finnish-speaking kindergarten teacher, Heikki. As the data does not include any interviews with Heikki and the interviews with Johanna did not include questions on teacher collaboration, the focus of the current study is an examination of the instruction delivery – what is observed in the classroom – rather than the stages of planning, organisation or evaluation.

The circle time routine was selected as it is typically team taught in Finnish preschools. In this case, it involved one teacher with a predefined bilingual role and one teacher with a monolingual role. The routine is, further, fairly structured, and includes several activities and rituals and set educational roles, which makes it suitable for the analysis of teacher collaboration. As there is limited previous research in this particular area, we developed an analytical framework which included the following categories: *activity*, *participant roles*, *language allocation* and *interaction* (see Sect. 4.4). First of all these categories are explored from a quantitative point of view (Sect. 5.1), and then the categories are elaborated on and examined in more detail, showing how the teacher collaboration played out in practice in terms of turn taking and language use (Sect. 5.2).

The recording of Circle time 1 was 30 min in length and of Circle time 2 was 29 min. The video-recorded data was transcribed by one of the authors and checked by the other two. The transcription key can be found in the Appendix.

4.2 Participants

The two teachers who were team teaching the circle times in our data, Johanna and Heikki, were qualified preschool teachers with long experience. The teacher with the predefined bilingual role, *Johanna*, was a bilingual kindergarten teacher with

20 years' experience of Swedish-medium and Finnish-medium preschool education in Finland and in Sweden, as well as Swedish immersion in Finland. She grew up in Sweden in a Finnish-speaking family and went to a mainstream Swedish school. She completed a lower degree in childcare in Sweden, moved to Finland, and completed a Bachelor's degree in the field of childhood education in Swedish in Finland. She also did a module in pre-primary and primary education and enrolled in in-service courses on immersion education. By the time of the data collection she had lived and worked in a Finnish-dominated area of Finland for over 15 years.

Johanna had the main responsibility for planning and implementing bilingual pedagogy in the class in all types of activities. Previous analyses of her bilingual practices when leading small group activities have shown that she followed certain principles in her use of the two languages: (a) she flexibly and continuously alternated between the two languages, (b) she used the two languages to equal amounts across activities, (c) she adhered to responsible code-switching, avoiding direct translation between the two languages and using the two languages for different purposes, (d) she used rich scaffolding structures (body language, contextualisation, verbalisation of actions, repetition of words and routines, etc.), and (e) she adjusted her bilingual speech to the needs of individual children (for more details see Palviainen et al. 2016). She also emphasised the importance of acting as a role model of a bilingual speaker.

The teacher with the predefined monolingual Finnish-speaking role, *Heikki*, was a Finnish-speaking kindergarten teacher with 29 years' experience in Finnish-medium preschool education in Finland. He held a Bachelor's degree in the field of childhood education from a Finnish-medium university, which he had complemented with a module in pre-primary and primary education and several in-service courses on preschool education. He grew up in a monolingual Finnish-speaking context but studied Swedish as a subject in secondary school (6 years, two classes a week). He had a positive attitude towards Swedish and had a relatively high proficiency in Swedish. Hence, although his predefined language role was monolingual Finnish, he had bilingual skills that he could make use of. Fieldwork observations in the preschool classroom made it clear that he used only Finnish when interacting with the children in small group activities that he led.

4.3 Categories of Analysis

All the recorded and transcribed material was categorised and analysed for *activity*, *participant roles* and *language allocation*. After this first step, four interactional exchanges were selected for more detailed analysis of the *interaction*, i.e. turn taking and language use. They included two examples of occasions when the teachers kept their predefined language roles and two examples of when they deviated from them.

Activities 'Activity' has been defined by Linell (2009, p. 190) as "an overall structured action sequence that somehow form[s] a global whole. An activity is protracted in time and is carried out in a social situation, during a whole social encounter

or a phase thereof.” We have used this as a way of demarcating the activities in our data: opening sequence(s), a main message and closing sequence(s) (Linell 2009, pp. 203–204). The activities have been categorised according to their content, following Zagalawan and Ostrosky (2011), who use activity types such as *academic* (topics like numbers, letters, etc.), *calendar* (date, etc.) or *reading books*.

Participant Roles With regard to participant roles, we see the circle time as a social routine “that is accomplished by all of the parties involved (teachers and children alike) in and through temporally unfolding interaction” (Park 2014). From the data, it is clear that the circle time routine is by its nature a three-party interaction involving the two teachers and the children. However, as our focus is on team teaching, we examine primarily the roles of and collaboration between the two teachers. We take into account that the type of engagement and the expectations of the participants differ from one activity to another and that the roles of the teachers in terms of leadership may change even during the course of one activity (Gardner 2006; Park 2014). We operationalise the *leading teacher* of an activity as *the one who initiates the activity*, i.e., has a turn that frames the activity (e.g., “Now we are going to play a game”) or who is given the leading role by the other teacher (e.g., “Now children, listen to Teacher”). We further specify the role of the *non-leading teacher* as being either a *co-leader* or a *participant* (active or silent). Using Park (2014) as the point of departure, we distinguish three types of leadership:

- *Single leadership*: The leading teacher instructs and disciplines the children and the other teacher takes a child-like participant role, either as a silent or an active (child-like) participant.
- *Co-leadership*: The teachers jointly run the activity but the leading teacher is responsible for the instructional content and leads the nomination of speakers. The other teacher accompanies the leader with disciplinary and/or instructional turns, having either the same types of turns (e.g. both teachers give instructions) or different types (e.g. the leading teacher instructs and the other teacher disciplines).
- *Alternated leadership*: The roles and tasks change during the course of the activity, so that the leading teacher becomes the non-leading teacher and vice versa.

Language Allocation We calculated the percentages for language use – of Swedish and Finnish – on the basis of the number of words used in each language. This was done for each activity and for each teacher. The quantitative results are presented in Sect. 5.1. The outcomes are analysed in relation to the predefined language roles of Heikki (monolingual Finnish use) and of Johanna (bilingual use of Swedish as well as Finnish).

Interaction In order to analyse the dynamics of teacher collaboration and the distribution of language use between the teachers on a more detailed level than a quantitative overview allows, short extracts from the interactional exchanges were selected from four of the activities, two in which the two teachers held on to their predefined

roles and two in which they deviated from them. These examples were analysed from two points of view: how the turn-taking between the teachers happened (cf. Park 2014), and how the teachers played out their language roles and how they used their resources. The dynamics of teacher turn-taking were analysed by identifying the *transition-relevance places*, recognised by the participants as a place where speaker change was possible (Sacks et al. 1974), and examining who gave and who took the turn and for what purposes. The teachers' language strategies were analysed on the basis of categories from Gort and Pontier (2013) and Palviainen et al. (2016): *flexible language practices* (continuous language alternation, code-switching, translation, and scaffolding structures) or *language separation strategies* (separation by person, place, time or subject; cf. García 2009).

5 Results

In Sect. 5.1 we analyse the activities included in the two circle times to ascertain the collaborating teachers' participant roles and language allocation during the activities. In Sect. 5.2 we analyse in more detail the patterns of turn-taking and language strategies in the four team-taught activities.

5.1 Overview of the Circle Time Activities

The educator with the main pedagogical responsibility for both of the circle times examined here was the Finnish-speaking kindergarten teacher, Heikki. His leading role was signalled by the fact that he was sitting on a separate "leader's chair". The children were seated on three benches which together formed a circle. The bilingual kindergarten teacher, Johanna, mostly sat on one of the three benches, with the children.

As far as structure is concerned, the two circle times consisted of similar activities: academic play, reading a book, discussion, information, and the roll call ritual. Still, the circle times were not identical: Circle time 1 comprised several short activities and one longer book reading activity (Activity 1.6: 9 min and 26 s), whereas Circle time 2 was dominated by two longer activities, one with play (Activity 2.3: 15 min and 24 s) and another with book reading (Activity 2.5: 8 min). Moreover, Circle time 1 started with a good morning ritual while Circle time 2 started with information about the programme for the day. However, the two circle times ended with the same type of activity, where the teachers told the children about the transition to the next routine.

We identified 22 activities within the two circle times. A closer look at how leadership and participant roles were distributed among them reveals certain patterns. Heikki was the principal leader of both circle times and was the *leading teacher* in

Table 1 The structure of the circle times: activities, leadership, language allocations and participant roles

ID	Activity	Duration min:sec	Type of leadership	Participant roles and language allocation			
				Leading teacher	Language Allocation (Sw/Fi %)	Non-leading teacher (Participant role)	Language Allocation (Sw/Fi %)
1.1	Academic (good morning ritual)	1:54	Single	Johanna	70/30	Heikki (Active participant)	70/30
1.2	Information (about a visitor)	1:03	Co	Johanna	25/75	Heikki (Co-leader)	0/100
1.3	Roll call ritual	3:16	Single	Johanna	84/16	Heikki (Silent participant)	--
1.4	Information (preview)	2:22	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	67/33
1.5	Song	1:27	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader, Active part.)	0/100
1.6	Book reading	9:12	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	92/8
1.7	Academic play (letters)	2:29	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	100/0
1.8	Academic ritual (counting days)	0:33	Co	Heikki	4/96	Johanna (Co-leader)	100/0
1.9	Academic play (following instructions)	0:43	Co	Heikki	3/97	Johanna (Co-leader)	100/0
1.10	Snack	1:15	Alternated	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	0/100
				Johanna	74/26	Heikki (Absent)	--
1.11	Academic play (naming objects)	2:20	Co	Heikki	1/99	Johanna (Co-leader)	86/14
1.12	Song	1:00	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader, Active part.)	7/93
1.13	Discussion (about behaviour)	1:07	Co	Johanna	25/75	Heikki (Co-leader)	0/100
1.14	Information (preview)	0:58	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	92/8
2.1	Information (preview)	1:19	Single	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Absent)	--
2.2	Roll call ritual	0:26	Single	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Absent)	--
2.3	Academic play (memory)	15:24	Co	Heikki	1/99	Johanna (Co-leader)	90/10
2.4	Discussion (about the play)	0:25	Co	Heikki	35/65	Johanna (Co-leader)	90/10
2.5	Book reading	8:00	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	100/0
2.6	Academic play (postcards, numbers)	2:02	Co	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	62/38
2.7	Discussion (about a book)	1:12	Alternated	Heikki	0/100	Johanna (Co-leader)	0/100
				Johanna	94/6	Heikki (Co-leader)	77/23
2.8	Information (preview)	0:58	Co	Heikki	4/96	Johanna (Co-leader)	33/77

CIRCLE TIME 1

CIRCLE TIME 2

15 of the 22 activities. Johanna was the leading teacher in four activities, and the leadership shifted from Heikki to Johanna in two activities. The most common type of collaboration was *co-leadership* (16 out of 22 activities), where Heikki typically acted as the leader and Johanna as the co-leader, to be followed by *single leadership* by either of the teachers (four cases) and *alternated leadership* (two cases). The most frequent participant role by the non-leading teacher was to act as a *co-leader*, indicating a norm that both teachers should have an active role. One exception seems to be the roll call rituals, which were led by only one of the teachers (Johanna in 1.3 and Heikki in 2.2). For either of the teachers to act only as a *participant* (*active* or *silent*) was very rare. One example of where Johanna had an active participant role was in a song activity (1.5), when she disciplined the children while Heikki was playing the guitar and leading the song. The dynamics of the changes in leadership roles in this preschool classroom show how predefined roles may be put flexibly into practice (cf. Park 2014).

As for language allocation in general, we can see that both languages were clearly present in the majority of the activities: in 19 out of 22 activities, both languages were used. The teachers had predefined language roles, but the overview shows that these roles were used flexibly, as in the study carried out by Pontier and Gort (2016). In our data, the predefined roles were kept in half of the activities (11 out of 22): Heikki then used Finnish only and Johanna used Finnish as well as Swedish (see e.g. 1.4 and 1.13). In Johanna's case, bilingual use often meant that Swedish dominated (see e.g. Activity 1.3, with 84% Swedish and 16% Finnish). When the teachers deviated from their predefined language roles, we found two major patterns: Johanna spoke only Swedish (e.g., Activities 1.7–1.9) or Heikki used Swedish in addition to Finnish (e.g., Activities 1.1 and 2.7). In the following (Sect. 5.2) we will provide and discuss examples of collaboration between the teachers both when they held on to their predefined language roles and when they deviated from them.

To conclude the quantitative analysis, we can see that although both teachers used Finnish as well as Swedish during the two circle times, the relative amounts differed. In both the circle times, Heikki used predominantly Finnish while Johanna typically communicated bilingually: two thirds of the words she uttered were in Swedish and one third in Finnish. Previous analyses of Johanna's language use when leading small group activities on her own showed that she then followed the principle of using equal amounts of both languages when communicating with the children (Palviainen et al. 2016). In this team-taught circle routine, she seemed to aim to counterbalance the dominance of Finnish (as the leading teacher, Heikki, was communicating predominantly in Finnish) by increasing her own use of Swedish. Heikki also helped to make this possible, either by giving her space (see Excerpt 1 below in Sect. 5.2), or by responding to her initiatives in Swedish (Excerpts 3 and 4 below). Overall, however, taking both teachers into account, the dominant language used with the children in most of these activities was Finnish. This was due to the fact that Heikki, who primarily used Finnish, was the leading teacher in most of the activities, whereas Swedish was the dominant language in only two of the activities, which Johanna was leading on her own (1.1 and 1.3).

5.2 Qualitative Analysis of Turn-Taking and Language Strategies

The quantitative overview of language use in the circle time activities revealed the pattern of the teachers holding on to their predefined roles in half of the activities: Heikki stuck to his monolingual Finnish-speaking role and Johanna to her bilingual role. In one sense, these cases can be seen as resulting from a teacher-determined language separation strategy (c.f. Sect. 2.2 above), in that a certain type of language use is connected with a certain teacher. However, in contrast to many studies that have examined language separation strategies where *one person speaks one language* (e.g. Gort and Pontier 2013), in our study Johanna is *one person who speaks two languages*, while Heikki's role is to be *one person who speaks one language*. However, as the analysis of language allocation in the activities above has shown, one or both teachers in our study deviated from this pattern in the remaining half of the activities. This is evidence of the teachers' flexible application of their predefined language roles, something that has also been found in some previous studies in bilingual classrooms (Gort and Pontier 2013; Pontier and Gort 2016; Swartz and Asli 2014). In the circle times as a whole, we can even argue that both teachers – Johanna as well as Heikki – were applying a *one person speaks two languages* practice and thus served as models of adults who can communicate in both official languages (Pontier and Gort 2016). This was a principle emphasised by Johanna when she herself was leading small group activities (Palviainen et al. 2016).

The first example to be discussed is one in which Heikki maintains his predefined role of speaking only Finnish while Johanna uses Finnish as well as Swedish. Excerpt 1 is from an activity where the children and the teachers are playing a memory game (Activity 2.3). Utterances in Finnish are given in bold text and in Swedish in normal text, with English translations written in italics (the full transcription key can be found in the Appendix).

Excerpt 1

1	Children:	[((laughing))]
2	Johanna:	[((gazes at Heikki and firmly raises her hand))]
3	Heikki:	okei (.) [((nods to Johanna))] [okay] (.) [((nods to Johanna))]
4	Children:	[((cont. laughing))]
5	Johanna:	[((makes a silencing gesture towards the children with her hand))]
6	Heikki:	[sen (.) hei sit kuunnelkaas] nyt on Johanna raukka katotaan riittääkö Johannan muisti ((points to Johanna)) [and its' (.) hey let's listen] now it's poor Johanna let's see if Johanna has enough memory ((points to Johanna))
7	Johanna:	Johanna lähti retkelle [och jag tog med mej en (.) e de en <u>bä</u> bis?] (.) va de en bäbi-? Johanna went on a trip [and I took along a (.) is it a <u>ba</u> by?] (.) was it a bab-?

In this scene, all the children are sitting in the circle, Heikki is sitting on the leading chair, and Johanna is sitting on one of the benches with the children, with one of them on her lap. The game is led by Heikki, who has given the instructions in Finnish, and the game, involving the children, has been carried out entirely in Finnish.¹ Up to the point which is illustrated in Excerpt 1, Johanna has been silent, but she has been listening carefully. At this moment, in the middle of the game activity, the children have burst out laughing, as one of the children has said something funny (line [1]). Johanna recognises this as a *transition-relevance place* where she has a chance to get the speaker turn, and she raises her hand very determinedly, at the same time gazing at Heikki, the leading teacher (line [2]). She thus makes use of the institutionally pre-allocated turn-taking system and the way of asking for her turn, as pupils in a classroom would do (Sahlström 1999). Heikki sees Johanna and nods towards her to acknowledge her request for a turn (line [3]). He then explicitly gives Johanna the turn by instructing the children (in Finnish) to listen carefully to what Johanna will say (line [6]).

When Johanna gets the turn from Heikki, she plays the game according to the rituals and says in Finnish (in line [7]) the framing clause, “Johanna went on a Christmas trip”, thus signalling to the leading teacher and the children that her turn is intended as a contribution from a participant in the game. After the framing clause in Finnish, Johanna code-switches (line [7]) and repeats in Swedish each item that the children have previously mentioned in Finnish. In this way, she gives the children access to the Swedish word equivalents. The speech turn exchange which occurs in lines [2–6] thus means that Heikki makes it possible for Johanna to carry out her language teaching task. Excerpt 1 is an example of the type of separation strategy (or a specific type of tandem talk, cf. Gort and Pontier 2013) that it has been determined beforehand will be used in this preschool classroom: Heikki will communicate in Finnish and Johanna will communicate bilingually in Finnish and Swedish. In her bilingual language use, Johanna applies intra-sentence code-switching in line [7], producing the framing clause in Finnish and then continuing in Swedish in order to give the children Swedish equivalents for the items previously mentioned in Finnish. She helps the children to make connections between the item labels in the two languages by various scaffolds, clearly pointing out whose item she is addressing, e.g., with questions like the one in line [7]. However, she sticks to her principle of not providing direct translations (cf. Palviainen et al. 2016).

In the following excerpt, from the co-led activity 1.14, the two teachers are instructing the children about the activity that is going to take place immediately after the circle time routine (baking gingerbread biscuits).

¹ The rules for the memory game are that the first child says “I went on a Christmas trip and I took along a –” (in Finnish), and add whatever they want to say they took. The second child has to repeat what the first child took and then add their own item. Each child in turn then has to remember what the previous speakers have mentioned and then add a new item of their own.

Excerpt 2

1	Heikki:	Ja nyt me tehään sellanen et jos toi Johanna ottaa ne leipojat ensi matkaas ja tästä sinne ehkä kolme tai kaks mahtuu kerrallaa mukavasti. and now we'll do it like this that if Johanna takes those bakers along first and for this maybe there's room for three or two nicely at a time
2	Johanna:	hej ja tror ja tar faktiskt ((eye contact with Heikki)) tre ja hej väntas jag tar <u>ett två tre fyra</u> ((counts with her fingers)) å det är (.) ((points at Miia)) Miia vill du komma å baka pepparkaka? jo: ((stands up and looks at Isabella)) och Isabella får också komma. ((makes a gesture to Miia to join her)) Miia kom. hey I think I'll take actually ((eye contact with Heikki)) three yes and hey wait I'll take <u>one two three four</u> ((counts on her fingers)) and that is (.) ((points at Miia)) Miia do you want to come along to bake gingerbreads? yeah. ((stands up and looks at Isabella)) and Isabella too may come along. ((makes a gesture to Miia to join her)) Miia come.
3	Miia:	((stands up))
4	Johanna:	å Isabella de e två. ((holds up two fingers)) and Isabella that's two. ((holds up two fingers))
5	Johanna:	kukas nyt ei oo ollu sitten vielä? who else hasn't been along yet?
6	Heikki:	eh: ei oo ollu eh:m hasn't been
7	Johanna:	[((looks around))].
8	Heikki:	[toi toi toi toi Timo ei oo ollu]. e:r e:r e:r Timo hasn't been.

In line [1], Heikki, the leading teacher, tells the children in Finnish that a certain number of children will join Johanna in the baking activity. Johanna then recognises the *transition-relevance place*, takes her turn, and continues in Swedish (lines [2–4]). Her task is to select the children for the activity, and when she turns to them, she accompanies her use of Swedish with non-verbal gestures (counting on her fingers, pointing to the children, gazing) and stresses certain words (numbers when counting), hence making use of scaffolding structures (e.g. García 2009 p. 329–336) and sheltered instruction (Gort and Pontier 2013). In line [5] she switches to Finnish and Heikki continues in Finnish [6 and 8].

In this teacher interchange – as in Excerpt 1 above – a predetermined separation strategy is applied: Heikki uses Finnish and Johanna uses both Finnish and Swedish. When Johanna takes the turn in line [2], she continues smoothly in Swedish with the topic that Heikki introduced in Finnish in line [1] (the number of children to be selected for the baking activity). An equally smooth shift of language occurs in line

[5], when Johanna flexibly code-switches into Finnish to think aloud which of the children have not yet done any baking. Heikki then joins Johanna to use Finnish (in line [6]). In this extract, Johanna applies a policy of flexibly and continually switching between the two languages, as she did when leading small group activities on her own (reported in Palviainen et al. 2016). Translation as a strategy is not employed in the interchange in Excerpt 2, since both the teachers understand both of the languages used in the classroom.

There were some instances when either or both of the teachers took another language role than their predefined one. In Excerpt 3 (from Activity 1.1), Johanna sticks to her predefined bilingual language role while Heikki abandons his predefined role and speaks only Swedish.

Excerpt 3

1	Johanna:	å gomorron Isabellas= ((points to Isabella's nose)) and good morning Isabella's= ((points to Isabella's nose))
2	Children:	=NÄSA =NOSE
3	Johanna:	nyt mäsäs otan jotain ihan uutta vänta gomorron Lauras ((stands behind Laura and points to Laura's eye)) (.) hej gomorron Lauras= now I'll take something completely new wait good morning Laura's ((stands behind Laura and points to Laura's eye)) hi good morning Laura's=
4	Children:	=ÖGA =EYE
5	Johanna:	ö:ga. ((approaches Heikki)) o gomorron Heikkis= ((taps Heikki's back)) e:ye. ((approaches Heikki)) and good morning Heikki's= ((taps Heikki's back))
6	Children:	=selkä. =back.
7	Heikki:	rr[ry:gg]. ba:ck.
8	Johanna:	[rygg] ((continues to tap Heikki's back)) m: go <u>mor</u> ron Heikki. [back] ((continues to tap Heikki's back)) yeah good <u>mor</u> ning Heikki.
9	Heikki:	((nods)) öh tack. gomorron. ((nods)) ehm thanks. good morning.

The excerpt is from a good morning ritual, led by Johanna. It is a ritual well known to the children as they have practised it many times before. As illustrated in line [1], the routine is that Johanna says, in Swedish, “Good morning, Isabella’s” and points, for example, to Isabella’s nose, and the children know that they are

expected to respond in chorus with the correct body part in Swedish (lines [2] and [4]). The same ritual formula is repeated for each child.

Up to the turn change in line [5], Heikki has been quiet and has not participated in the children's chorus responses. When all the children sitting in the circle have been addressed and had their turn in this ritual, it comes round to Heikki, who is the last one in order. Johanna addresses him in the same way as she has addressed the children, saying in Swedish the ritual formula "Good morning, Heikki's" while tapping him on the back (line [5]). Both Johanna and Heikki then wait for the children to respond "back" in Swedish, but apparently this is a new word for them and they respond in Finnish (*selkä*, line [6]). Then Heikki recognises and utilises the *transition-relevant place* to provide the Swedish word for "back" (*rygg*, line [7]), partly overlapping with Johanna's uttering the word (line [8]). In the two last turns, which also conclude this activity, Johanna changes the ritual formula somewhat by saying, more conventionally, "Good morning, Heikki" in Swedish. This polite greeting leads to the expectation of a polite response. Heikki responds appropriately, with "Thanks" and "Good morning" in Swedish.

A similar type of separation strategy to the one used in the previous excerpts (1 and 2, above) is used in Excerpt 3: Heikki acts as a monolingual speaker and Johanna as a bilingual speaker. However, in Excerpt 3 Heikki, despite his predefined role as a Finnish speaker, uses only Swedish in the collaboration with Johanna. Johanna, in turn, makes flexible use of both languages, behaving in accordance with her predefined language role. After using only Swedish in line [1], Johanna code-switches to Finnish in line [3] to make the children attentive to what she will say next ("Now I'll take something completely new"). This is an example of her strategy of using Finnish and Swedish for different purposes, which was also found when she was leading small group activities on her own (Palviainen et al. 2016).

By using Swedish in this situation Heikki assists Johanna in the role of language teacher (to provide a new term in Swedish) and at the same time his use of Swedish means that he acts as a model of an adult who can communicate in both official languages (Palviainen et al. 2016; Pontier and Gort 2016). Moreover, as Carless (2006) found in the context of a Japanese team-taught classroom where both teachers used English, the "presence of two teachers was useful in allowing them to model dialogues, demonstrate question and answer routines naturally" (p. 246). Johanna and Heikki provided the children with a model of how to greet people in Swedish (lines [8–9]) and also sent the message that Swedish "is a tool for communication" (Carless 2006, p. 246).

The final sequence to be analysed is from a discussion activity (2.7) which, on the whole, was characterised by bilingual language use by both teachers, but where a micro-level analysis shows how both teachers smoothly transfer from the monolingual use of Finnish to the almost exclusive use of Swedish.

Excerpt 4

1	Heikki:	kuunte[leppa mitä tehään sitten] lis[ten to what we are going to do next]
2	Johanna:	[((eye contact with Heikki, raises her right hand and rotates her fingers))]
3	Children:	((noise))
4	Heikki:	((hushes)) Johannalla oli käsi pystyssä ((points to Johanna)) ((hushes)) Johanna has raised her hand ((points to Johanna))
5	Johanna	((looks at children)) hei mua jäi vähän kiinnos[taan]= ((looks at children)) hey I was just wonder[ing]=
6	Heikki:	[jo:] [yea:h]
7	Johanna:	=kun mä kuuntelin tota tarinaa nii ni ymmärsinks mä oikein et se Viiru hyppi niinkun pöydällä? =when I heard that story yeah if I understood it right that Findus jumped like on the table?
8	Children:	jo:. yea:h.
9	Johanna:	oliks se niin? was it so?
10	Child:	ja: ye:s
11	Johanna:	((looks at Heikki))
12	Heikki:	no ei se t^äti ainakaan mun mielest [ollu] well the <u>quntie</u> didn't at least I [think]
13	Johanna:	[men Heikki] kan du <u>visa</u> ((spreads her hands)) hur Viiru kan hoppa på bordet? vi vill se. [but Heikki] can you show ((spreads her hands)) how Findus could jump on the table? we want to see it
14	Child:	Nej No
15	Heikki:	((laughs)) måste jag? ((laughs)) do I have to?
16	Johanna:	jo du måste (.) ((smiles)) hur ((spreads her hands)) hoppar Viiru på bordet? yeah you have to (.) ((smiles)) how ((spreads her hands)) does Findus jump on the table?
17	Heikki:	((looks around)) xxx finns inte bord ((looks around)) xxx there is no table.
18	Child:	(xxx)
19	Johanna:	vänta. Heikki visar. wait. Heikki will show us.
20	Heikki:	((stands up, smiles, looks for a table))
21		((noise))

(continued)

22	Johanna:	((points at a rug)) de här är bordet (.) mattan är bordet. ((points at a rug)) <i>this is the table (.) the rug is the table.</i>
23	Heikki:	ai <u>mattan</u> e bordet oh <u>the rug</u> is the table
24	Johanna:	så där hoppar Viiru (.) titta. ((points to Heikki)) <i>that's how Findus jumps (.) look.</i> ((points to Heikki))
25	Heikki:	((laughs))

This exchange was preceded by a typical story-reading activity, in which Heikki sat in his chair reading aloud from a picture book in Finnish while the others listened (Activity 2.5). The story was about some familiar characters: an obstinate little cat with the name of Findus (*Viiru* in Finnish), who lived in a cottage with his master, Pettson (*Pesonen*). In the beginning of Excerpt 4, Heikki intended to initiate a new activity and asked the children to pay attention so as to be ready to receive some instructions (line [1]). What happens at this point is that Johanna recognises the *transition-relevance place*, gazes at Heikki as she raises her hand and eagerly rotates her finger to show that she would like to get the turn (line [2]). Heikki acknowledges this and gives her the right to speak (line [4]).

When Johanna has got the turn, she looks around at the children and reconnects to the story they have just heard by referring to an odd event, when the cat Findus jumped on a table (lines [5–7]). She asks the children for confirmation of whether that was actually the case and they confirm that it was (lines [8–10]). This is done in Finnish, as was the case when she wanted to engage the children in discussions when she was leading the children bilingually on her own (Palviainen et al. 2016). She then turns to Heikki, who also confirms it in Finnish (lines [11–12]). Then an imperceptible alternation in the leadership comes about when Johanna starts to take the lead and at the same time the language they both use changes to Swedish: she addresses Heikki in Swedish (line [13]) and he responds in Swedish (line [15]).

Johanna has a somewhat odd request that seems to take Heikki by surprise: Johanna asks him to act out what it looked like when the cat in the story, Findus, jumped on the table (line [13]). He replies with a laugh and asks, in Swedish, “Do I have to?”. She repeats her request and Heikki starts to play along, stands up and looks around to find a suitable table (lines [17–20]). Johanna eventually comes up with the idea that the rug may serve as a table and Heikki accepts that (line [22–23]). In this interaction, a separation strategy based on content was used (cf. García 2009): the initial teacher turns [lines 1–12] were most probably performed entirely in Finnish in order to engage the children in the topic. When moving over to a more concrete content in line [13], Johanna as well as Heikki switched to Swedish. The nature of the activity made possible the use of concrete Swedish verbs that the children probably already knew (*show, jump, look*).

The latter part of the exchange (lines [13–25]) is carried out almost entirely in Swedish. There are two exceptions to this: Johanna uses the Finnish name *Viiru*

instead of the Swedish *Findus* [lines 13, 16 and 24], and Heikki utters a Finnish interjection (*oh*) [line 23]. The first of these code-switches into Finnish can probably be explained as a decision by Johanna to scaffold understanding: the name Viiru is familiar to the children from hearing the story, whereas the name Findus is not. The use of the Finnish interjection *oh* by Heikki is likely to be simply the spontaneous expression of surprise that it seems to be. The sequence shows that teacher collaboration and turn taking can create space for spontaneity, improvisation and playfulness (cf. Park 2014) even in a bilingually team-taught classroom, when the teachers understand both languages. It also clearly shows the flexible attitude the teachers can have to their predefined language roles.

6 Concluding Discussion

This study aimed to examine how bilingual team teaching is implemented in a preschool classroom in Finland, in a typical preschool routine, circle time. The focus was on how the team-teaching dynamics played out in terms of participant roles, language use and allocation, and teacher collaboration. One of the teachers, Heikki, assigned to the class as a Finnish speaker, was the predefined leader of both circle times and co-taught them with Johanna, who had been assigned responsibility for bilingual pedagogy in the class. Previous studies reported by Carless (2006) have indicated that the fact that teachers have different, predetermined language roles might cause confusion and anxiety as the teachers are unsure “about their respective roles in the classroom” (p. 344). We found no evidence of this in our data. On the contrary, our data showed that both teachers flexibly communicated monolingually as well as bilingually in the various circle time activities, changing language roles in a similar way to that shown by Park (2014), Pontier and Gort (2016), and Schwartz and Asli (2014).

The analysis of turn-taking patterns showed that the appointed bilingual teacher, Johanna, made use of the possibilities opened up by the *transition-relevance places* and actively asked the teacher in charge (the Finnish-speaking teacher Heikki) to give her the turn, and he, for his part, gave the floor to the bilingual teacher to create opportunities for the children to receive Swedish input whenever she asked for it. On some occasions (see Excerpts 3 and 4 above), Heikki even responded in Swedish to Johanna’s initiatives and, in doing so, assisted her in the teaching of Swedish to the Finnish-speaking children and served as a model of a person using two languages. This showed that the Finnish-speaking teacher had a positive attitude to bilingual pedagogy in the classroom. It also showed that the two teachers trusted each other and gave each other space to play their own roles (cf. Liu 2008).

The extensive dynamicity in our data was facilitated by the fact that the teachers had similar cultural and educational backgrounds and were both proficient in both the languages that were used in the classroom. Hence, they made use of “their collective bilingual repertoire” as a resource (Pontier and Gort 2016, p. 96). They were able to move fluently through the activities even if the language of communication

changed in the course of an activity. Heikki, the teacher with the predefined monolingual Finnish role, used Swedish to support and assist the bilingual teacher in her role of language teacher, for example by serving as a bilingual model for the children (cf. Carless 2006). Successful bilingual team teaching is, however, even possible in contexts where the teachers have quite different language backgrounds, as shown by e.g. Gort and Pontier (2013) and Pontier and Gort (2016). In these contexts, it is important to agree upon the principles for language use and participant roles in order to ensure that the activities happen fluently and without confusion (Carless 2006).

Despite Heikki's active involvement in the bilingual activities, the overall responsibility for bilingual pedagogy in the class under study lay clearly with the bilingual teacher, Johanna. We identified similar practices in her way of working bilingually during these team-taught circle times to those found when she was leading small group activities on her own (c.f. Palviainen et al. 2016): she alternated between the languages, made use of responsible code-switching and avoided direct translation, and made use of scaffolding structures to enhance understanding. There was, however, one major difference as regards the use of the two languages: while she used Swedish and Finnish more or less equally in the small group activities, she used relatively more Swedish than Finnish during the circle times. This was probably in order to compensate for the dominance of Finnish in the circle times, as the leading teacher, Heikki, used mostly Finnish. Johanna thus seemed to adapt her own language use to the communication situation.

In focusing on a bilingual preschool class in which the teachers used Finnish and Swedish, the study has provided insights into a field which has hitherto been dominated by research on English-medium primary or secondary school classes. The aim of this study has not been to examine the impact of bilingual team teaching on children's bilingual language learning, but rather to give examples of how smooth bilingual teacher collaboration can be carried out. The bilingual team-teaching practices thus serve as examples of "good classroom practice" (cf. Carless 2006) for the collaborative creation of bilingual learning environments to support children's content and language learning and cognitive development, which may be of value to teachers in the field and teacher educators. One limitation of the study was that the interviews with the bilingual teacher were focused on her language practices in small group activities that she led herself, rather than on team teaching. Nor did the study include interviews with the monolingual teacher. Interviews that included teachers' comments on their own team-teaching practices and ideologies would have added further important insights, and we therefore recommend future research initiatives on team teaching in bilingual preschool classrooms to combine observations with teacher interviews. In addition to studies of the delivery of bilingual instruction, there is a need for further research on the planning, organisation and evaluation stages (cf. e.g. Liu 2008), as well as on how team teaching affects bilingual language development in children.

Finally, we believe that the analytical model that we have developed, combining as it does macro- and microanalyses of participant roles and languages practices, will make it possible for other researchers to carry out comparative studies of team teaching in other bilingual preschool settings around the world. This can lead to our learning from each other and developing good bilingual team-teaching practices, and also to learning how specific languages with different linguistic characteristics and statuses can be combined and team taught in preschool classrooms.

Appendix – Transcription Key

Regular text	Swedish
Bold text	Finnish
<u>Underlined text</u>	English
<i>Italics</i>	Translation from original languages to English
(())	Comments of the transcriber
:	Prolonged syllable
[]	Demarcates overlapping utterances
(.)	Micropause, i.e. shorter than (0.5)
AMP	Relatively high amplitude
x	Inaudible word
(tack)	Unsure transcription
◦ ◦	Denotes speech in low volume
?	Denotes rising terminal intonation
.	Denotes falling terminal intonation
=	Denotes latching between utterances
ar-	Interrupted word
<u>Fare</u>	Sounds marked by emphatic stress are underlined

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The Role of Early Childhood Education in Revitalizing a Minoritized Language in an Unsupportive Policy Context: The Galician Case



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Abstract In the Northwestern region of Spain, Galician is recognized as a co-official language, alongside Spanish. The Galician Linguistic Normalization Law (Xunta de Galicia, Lei 3/1983, do 15 Xuño, de Normalización Lingüística, 1983) was designed to reverse a process of linguistic substitution in favor of Spanish that has threatened Galician, along with other minoritized languages in Spain, for generations. Nevertheless, the revitalization goal of Galician language legislation has not been adequately supported by school policy. In this chapter we first report the results of a survey of 3rd and 4th-year ECE majors at a Galician university (approximately 200 students), focusing on their self-perceptions of Galician competence and expectations for using the Galician language as an instructional medium in their future teaching. Then we will analyze examples of ECE Centers that are committed to using and promoting the Galician language, taking into account the particular challenges involved in promoting bilingualism in minoritized language contexts. These go beyond simple linguistic competencies to involve metalinguistic goals such as raising the social status of the language, reducing stereotypes, and creating new positive associations. We will analyze a variety of initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting the use of Galician in ECE contexts, including examples from a range of specific school settings (public and private, urban, peri-urban, and rural, etc.). In a minoritized language context where intergenerational transmission of Galician continues to diminish, these initiatives attempt to revitalize the language among the youngest generation through a range of practices, from the partial introduction of Galician as a medium of instruction to the incorporation of literature, performing arts, and other engaging activities that aim to present the minoritized language as both a modern living language and a common cultural heritage. Despite the disheartening trends concerning language competence and use, the work of these educators and other professionals demonstrate the transformative potential of effective school-based language planning, even in relatively unsupportive policy contexts.

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1 Introduction

In the Northwestern region of Spain,¹ Galician is recognized as a co-official language, alongside Spanish. The Galician Linguistic Normalization Law (Xunta de Galicia 1983) was designed to reverse a process of linguistic substitution in favor of Spanish that has threatened Galician, along with other minoritized² languages in Spain, for generations. This law applies to various social arenas, including education, and stipulates that the Galician language be increasingly used in educational settings. Nevertheless, this goal has not been adequately supported by more specific Galician school language policy. According to current school policy, the so-called *Plurilingualism Act* (Xunta de Galicia 2010), there are no minimum guidelines for teaching in the minoritized language in schools and Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centers, even in urban areas where children will have little or no exposure to the language in their homes or communities.

In fact, Galician schools have been criticized as having no language policy to speak of (Iglesias Álvarez 2003), compared with the more successful language revitalization policy with regard to other co-official languages of the Spanish state, such as Catalan (Arnau 2013). Since Galician, like Catalan, is protected by Spanish law as a co-official language, failure to promote its use in school contexts places the Galician school system at odds with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which recognizes “the need for resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them” (Council of Europe 1992, Article 7).

In this chapter we explore the potential for language revitalization practice in unsupportive policy contexts from the point of view of both future and practicing teachers. We first report the results of a survey of 3rd and 4th-year ECE majors at a Galician university, who described their experiences in the teaching practicum, linguistic competencies, and expectations for future teaching. Then we will analyze examples of school-based language planning at the ECE level, taking into account the particular challenges involved in promoting bilingualism in minoritized language contexts. We analyze the specific case of the Galician language within an overall theoretical framework that seeks to understand minoritized language revitalization initiatives across international contexts, paying special attention to the role of education, and especially ECE, in these processes.

¹ Spain is divided into 17 Autonomous Communities, of which Galicia is one.

² We use the term “minoritized” because it highlights the active and ongoing social processes by which languages acquire unequal status.

2 The Role of Early Child Education in Minoritized Language Revitalization Projects

Language revitalization can be defined as the process of reversing language shift, that is, the reduction of speakers over time (Spolsky 1996). Strategies to improve intergenerational transmission constitute an important part of language revitalization strategies. Fishman (1991, p. 374) argues that strategies that increase the presence of minoritized languages in schools, media, work, and government will not automatically reverse language shift “unless and until a particular language obtains a secure niche in the early pre-school and co-school intimate socialization processes at the family-neighborhood-community level.” While Fishman distinguishes between schools and child socialization agencies that provide pre-school care for working parents, the ECE system constitutes a liminal space between pre-school and school in Galician society. Obligatory education does not begin until age 6, but ECE is government-funded and guided by curriculum guidelines and professional standards, and so provides a free³ quality alternative to other forms of pre-school care. Unlike informal preschool childhood socialization options, it is guided by policy, including language policy, and so indeed has the potential to constitute a “secure niche” for language revitalization efforts. Spolsky (1996, p. 6) in fact, reserves the term *revitalization* specifically to refer to such processes of intergenerational transmission; “It adds both a new set of speakers and a new function, spreading the language to babies and young children who become its native speakers.”

Hickey and de Mejía (2014) point out that immersion education in the early years has played an important role in minoritized language revitalization efforts, in part because it is easier to get approval for them than for primary level programs, and that these initiatives can also play an important role in the community in terms of raising the status of the language. These schools may emerge from community activism, for example in the case of the *Ikastola* Basque-language pre-school movement (Heidemann 2015) or the Kōhanga Reo project, in which grandparents gather to teach Maori to pre-school aged children whose parents speak English at home (Spolsky 2003).

However, difficulties may arise in terms of children’s and teacher’s competencies and preferences. Spolsky (1996) has described teachers in Maori-language medium schools as second language learners of the minoritized language, with stronger proficiency in English. Brown (2015) documents ways in which ethnic Russian children are discouraged (“counseled away”) from enrolment in Kindertgartens designed to revitalize the Estonian language in the post-Soviet context. On the other hand, Hickey’s research in an Irish-medium preschool (Hickey 2007) reveals that the presence of majority-language dominant children may influence minority-language dominant children to switch to the majority language. Teachers in Welsh-medium preschools have been shown to translate into English to accommodate the

³ Some ECE Centers are fully publicly funded, others receive partial government funding, and others are fully private.

majority-language dominant children, thus compromising the intensity and quality of minority language immersion (Hickey et al. 2014). Ethnographic research in a Spanish-English Kindergarten demonstrates that children from Spanish-speaking homes were quick to adopt English as their preferred language, even when the teacher consistently used Spanish (DePalma 2010). Such research is crucial to improving practice by identifying obstacles and suggesting elements of program design and teacher training.

Nevertheless, very little empirical research has been conducted in Galicia on school language practice or on related issues in teacher education. We are aware of only one systematic study conducted at the university level involving the preparation of future teachers to teach the Galician language. This study consisted of a survey administered in 2009 to 554 education majors at the University of Santiago de Compostela, just over a quarter of whom were ECE majors. One of the findings most relevant to our interests was that the ECE majors were somewhat less committed to the principles of language revitalization than their colleagues on the primary education course, or on specialized courses such as music and foreign languages, although they were more likely to identify Galician as their mother tongue (46.1%) and to report using the Galician language as their habitual language all (32%) or most (23.5%) of the time (Silva Valdivia 2010).

Clearly more research is needed on the linguistic competencies and attitudes of future ECE teachers, as well as on current school-based practices. In the most recent survey of urban schools, more than two thirds reported using Spanish predominantly or exclusively as a medium of instruction for 3–6 year-old children, specifically, 5.2% claim to use mostly Galician, while almost 40% report using exclusively and another 36% report using mostly Spanish (Mesa Pola Normalización Lingüística 2015). This self-reported study lacks confirmation based on direct observation, and may very well underestimate the ways in which school practice at the ECE level is conditioned by Spanish hegemony in the broader Galician sociolinguistic context.

3 Galician As a Minoritized Language in the Spanish Territory

Galician is a romance language, closely related to Portuguese, which is spoken in the autonomous community of Galician (Spain) as well as some neighboring territories. Galicia is one of the 17 autonomous communities of Spain, and is located in the northwest corner, just above Portugal. According to the latest population statistics (“Instituto Galego de Estatística” 2015), there are 2,732,347 people living in Galicia. The population has traditionally been dispersed in small villages in remote rural locations, but more recent generations have tended to migrate to urban or semi-urban areas. Another key feature of Galician demographics is an aging population: as of 2014, Galicia has the second lowest birth rate in Spain, following the

neighboring community of Asturias, with 7.2 births for every 1000 residents (“Instituto Nacional de Estadística” 2015).

As for language use, most Galicians describe themselves as bilingual in terms of both competency and use: as of 2013, 50.9% reported using mostly or exclusively Galician, while 47.95% use mostly or exclusively Spanish.⁴ This general positive result is accompanied by less encouraging tendencies among specific demographics: among the youngest cohort (5–14 years), just over 25% use Galician habitually or exclusively, compared with 73.8% among the 65+ cohort. Galician use continues to be concentrated in rural areas: just under 79% of people living in the most rural municipalities⁵ favor Galician, compared to just over 27% of residents in the most urban areas (Instituto Galego de Estatística 2014). The relevance of these demographic statistics to language attitudes is clear, when taken in historical context: The use of the Galician language has traditionally been associated with rurality and the older generations, and has been burdened with negative stereotypes related to these demographics. Ethnographic research with youth has revealed the tendency of younger speakers to internalize linguistic prejudices; for example, associating the language with stereotypes concerning rurality or Galician separatism (Formoso Gosende 2013; Iglesias Álvarez 2003).

Understanding language, power, and history is crucial for analyzing minoritized languages. Indeed, we choose to use the term *minoritized* here instead of the alternatives *minority*, *heritage*, or *regional* languages, terms that appear more commonly in academic and legal texts, because we think it is important to capture the process of *minorization* that has led to current linguistic practices and attitudes. From a socio-historical perspective, languages or dialectical varieties never simply peacefully coexist in a single territory – as may be implied by some interpretations of the notion of diglossia – but their distribution is achieved through linguistic regimes that result in limiting access of certain segments of the population to important social spheres (Martín Rojo 2015).

4 The Present Study

Our study was intended to discover ways forward in terms of how to develop effective strategies for revitalizing the Galician language in ECE contexts. To this end, we identified two key factors: future teachers and the institutional contexts where they will be working. While the review of research on linguistic attitudes and the current policy context might suggest that the potential for school-based practice to contribute to language planning is severely limited, we sought to identify strong points that might both serve as inspiration and provide guidance as to how we can support such initiatives. Our research questions can be stated as:

⁴A remaining 1.15% reported “other situations.”

⁵The most rural municipalities were defined as those with less than 10,000 residents, while the most urban ones have more than 50,000.

1. How do future ECE teachers evaluate Galician language policy and the teaching practice they have witnessed during their practicum experience?
2. How do future ECE teachers evaluate their own capacity for promoting the Galician language in the classroom?
3. How have some exemplary ECE Centers managed to promote the Galician language despite a policy context that does not support the minoritized language?

Menken and García (2010) urge us to consider educators as policy makers, and to interrogate how language policy is not merely implemented or interpreted in classrooms, but also potentially resisted and (re)created. In situations where educational policy does little to reverse language shift, it is the potential for teacher agency that can be identified and strengthened.

5 Methodology

This pilot study consisted of two separate but interrelated phases: The first was aimed at examining students' self-perceptions of Galician competence and expectations for using the Galician language as an instructional medium in their future teaching; the second study was aimed to identify and investigate ECE Centers that go beyond the limits of current school policy in to actively promote the Galician language. The research was qualitative and exploratory in nature. While a survey was used to collect data from the ECE majors, this was a pilot instrument designed to generate an overall view of self-perceptions that could be compared with the perceptions of a key informant, the students' former *Methods of Galician Language Teaching* instructor. The school-based observations and document analysis used to explore 5 exemplary ECE initiatives were also exploratory in nature. The data emerging from the pilot study not only provide some interesting insights, but also serve to initiate a systematic and sustained line of research in the area of Galician language pedagogy, particularly at the Early Childhood level.

5.1 Phase 1: ECE Majors

The first phase focused on University of A Coruña, which is one of three universities in Galicia that offer teacher training courses. The research involved

1. a survey of the students majoring in ECE
2. an interview with the instructor for the course *Methods of Galician Language Teaching*, which students take in their second year of the ECE program.

The survey focused on students' self-perceptions of Galician competence and attitudes towards using the Galician language as an instructional medium in their future teaching. The interview provided an informed reading of this data, as a form of interpretive triangulation.

5.1.1 Participants

We focus specifically on third and fourth-year students majoring in ECE at the University of A Coruña. In this degree program, there is a short practicum in the 3rd year (125 contact hours) followed by a longer one (420 contact hours) in the fourth year. In both cases students are expected to spend 5–6 h a day in the school over a concentrated period of time, and are assigned to a specific classroom teacher. All of the students surveyed, therefore, would have completed at least one of these requirements.

In order to access the maximum number of students in the final 2 years of the ECE program, we conducted the survey among students enrolled in a required 3rd-year course and in seven of the nine optional courses offered in the second semester of the 4th year. From a total of 225 students officially enrolled, a total of 177 students responded to the survey, 80 of whom were in the third year and 97 of whom were in the fourth and final year of the degree program. This cohort did not have a single required course but are required to select four from nine options, so we reviewed course enrolment lists in order to make sure every student had the opportunity to respond. A total of eight course instructors invited us into their classes toward the end of the semester to distribute the survey, which students completed in our presence, taking on average about 20 min, and returned during class time. Participation was optional, but we did not detect any cases where students chose not to complete the survey.⁶ All data was collected between April and July of 2015.

Our key informant was Iria, the course instructor for *Methods of Galician Language Teaching*, a required course in the second year of the program. We shared some of the student data with her and asked her to provide some context based on her experience with this cohort of students, who would have taken her course either one or two years prior to participating in our study.

5.1.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The survey consisted of a total of six statements with the following characteristics: 3 Likert-style response options (on a scale of 1–5, from *not at all* to *very*) and 3 multiple choice selections designed to indicate frequency, also on a scale of 1–5 (from *0 to 20% of the time* to *80 to 100% of the time*).⁷ In the interest of brevity, we have selected 4 questions from the survey to analyze, as they are the most relevant to the topic of this chapter. These specifically addressed students' self-evaluation of their linguistic competencies in the Galician language, their perceptions of the adequacy of the current Galician language policy, their expectations concerning their

⁶All students present completed the survey: the remaining 47 did not attend any of the 8 classes in which the survey was administered.

⁷There was also an open-ended question at the end, where students were asked to describe examples that they had witnessed in their practicum sites of practice aimed at language revitalization. We do not have sufficient space to include this analysis in this chapter.

own language use when they become classroom teachers, and the level of Galician used in their practicum schools. These data were analyzed using simple descriptive techniques, converting raw numbers to percentages in some cases for clarity.

This interview with Iria, our key informant, lasted approximately half an hour, and was audio-recorded. Both authors were present. The interview was semi-structured: we presented our initial analysis of the four survey questions, and asked her to provide additional context, reflections, etc. Over the course of this interview, in response to our initial questions, she described a school-based learning project students conduct in her course, which turned out to be highly relevant to interpreting our data, and which we will describe in more detail in the results section.

5.2 Phase 2: ECE Centers

We then set out to identify and analyze a variety of initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting the use of Galician in ECE contexts. These by no means are meant to be a representative sample of typical practice, but rather a series of cases studies of exemplary approaches to minoritized language revitalization in specific ECE centers representing a broad cross section of teaching contexts. ECE is organized into two cycles in Galician schools: 0–3 and 3–6. Neither cycle is obligatory, but practice is guided by policy and curriculum guidelines established at the level of the Galician Autonomous Community. Some ECE centers provide only 0–3, while others provide both cycles. ECE centers may be integrated into primary, or even primary-secondary schools.

5.2.1 Participants

From an initial sample of 28 schools, we first selected a smaller sample of 16 that included particularly innovative approaches, which we defined in terms of using the Galician language beyond the token presence stipulated by Galician school policy, as well as inspiring language awareness and appreciation. From these we narrowed the final sample to 5 that we wished to highlight in this chapter. The five cases selected provide a range of examples of successful language planning in diverse contexts, as summarized in the following table (Table 1).

As we have described earlier, rural and urban contexts present different challenges for language revitalization initiatives, so we have chosen two schools from rural and urban settings, as well as an additional school in a semi-urban environment. We have also included three public schools and two private schools. One of these is a partially state subsidized school, and so is partially funded and regulated by the local government. The other, a parent cooperative, does not receive any government funding, which also implies a greater freedom in curriculum design and overall institutional organization. Finally, the range of years taught in the school varies: one school focuses exclusively on the first cycle of ECE (0–3), another includes part of

Table 1 Characteristics of selected schools

Name of center	Modality	Age range taught	Locality ^a
ECE Laracha	Public	0–3 years	Rural
Ponte de San Blas	Public	3–6 years, plus primary	Urban
Semente Compostela	Parent Cooperative	2–6 years	Urban
Andaina	Partially State Subsidized	3–6 years, plus primary and secondary	Semi-urban
Virxe da Cela	Public	3–6 years, plus primary and secondary	Rural

^aThese categories correspond with the zoning established by the Galician Institute of Statistics: an urban area is considered a densely populated zone, with 500 inhabitants/Km², a semi-rural area has between 100 and 500 inhabitants/Km², or is adjacent to an urban area, and any zone which does not fall into these categories is considered rural.

the first and the whole second cycle (2–6), another serves the second cycle (3–6) plus primary, and two others serve 3–6 year-olds as well as both primary and secondary grade levels. Of the schools that agreed to participate in our research, all request that the real name of the school be used, except for one (Ponte de San Blas).

5.2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

These cases were identified via three sources:

1. Our own teaching and research experience, as far as it has led to the establishment of contacts with schools and teachers. These included professionals who have been invited to speak in our Faculty as part of course-based or program-level initiatives, site visits with students as part of course work, or university-school collaborative research projects.
2. Professional networks, the most important of these being the Galician New School (*Nova Escola Galega*), a network of professionals dedicated to progressive and innovative education. One of the 8 formal objectives of this professional organization is the promotion of the Galician language and culture.
3. Published materials, including articles in academic and professional journals, conference and seminar presentations (including published proceedings and videotaped interventions), and print media.

Once schools were identified, we collected data from a variety of sources. After initial phone conversations with school personnel from each school, we conducted at least one site visit at each location, and recorded field notes based on observations in classrooms and the common areas of the school, as well as conversations with teachers and parents. This field data was complemented by a review of videotaped professional conference presentations available online, published articles by school teachers in professional journals, print media articles, internal planning documents, and information available on the Center's website and in Blogs related to specific programs and activities. Since this initial pilot study is designed to identify and

characterize sites of promising practice, our analysis is largely descriptive in nature. We have selected elements from each site’s documentation (both internal and external) that compare in interesting ways with Galician language policy and typical ECE-based practice, and compared these in some cases with our own experiences with the Center, observations, or teachers’ own perceptions. This data collection took place between October 2015 and February 2016.

6 Results of Phase 1: Perspectives of ECE Majors

1. Self-evaluation of linguistic competency in the Galician language

The ECE majors we surveyed were asked to evaluate their own overall competence in the Galician language on a scale of 1–5. These results were quite high, on average, for both 3rd-year and 4th-year students (Fig. 1).

As the graph indicates, over 90% of our 3rd-year and almost 70% of our 4th-year respondents considered themselves to be quite or very competent in Galician. This result is encouraging, and coincides with the overall encouraging results of general population surveys, such as the most recent survey conducted in 2013, in which just over 84% of respondents between 5 and 29 years of age claimed to be very or quite competent Galician speakers (Instituto Galego de Estatística 2014).

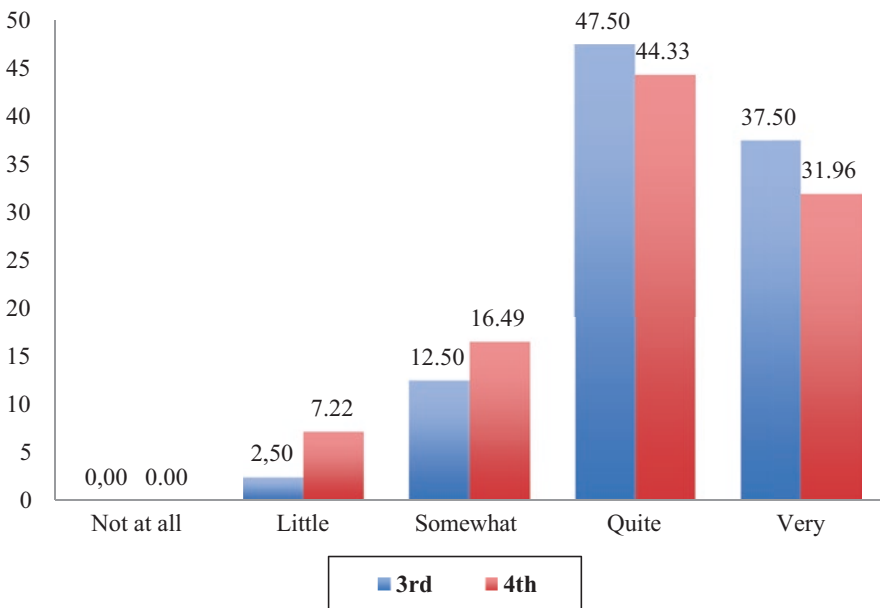


Fig. 1 Linguistic competency in the Galician Language (%)

2. *Perceptions of current Galician language policy – Plurilingualism Act (Xunta de Galicia 2010)*

We also asked students to evaluate the current education policy, which we summarized for them in the following way: “According to current education policy, teachers at the ECE level are to use the home language that is considered to be predominant among the students (to be determined by the school based on a question posed to families prior to the beginning of the school year).” Again on a scale of 1–5, students were asked to rate the extent to which they considered this procedure to be adequate for the survival of the Galician language in our society.

Students expressed relatively strong criticism of this aspect of the current school-based language policy, as just over 60% of 3rd-year students and more than 75% of 4th-year students considered the provisions described in the question to be little or not at all adequate for language survival (Fig. 2).

3. *Predicted language use as future teachers*

We also asked students to describe how much time they thought they would use the Galician language as the language of instruction in their own (future) classrooms. Most of the responses to this question were concentrated in the mid-range of responses, with just over a third of 3rd year students and just under 45% of fourth

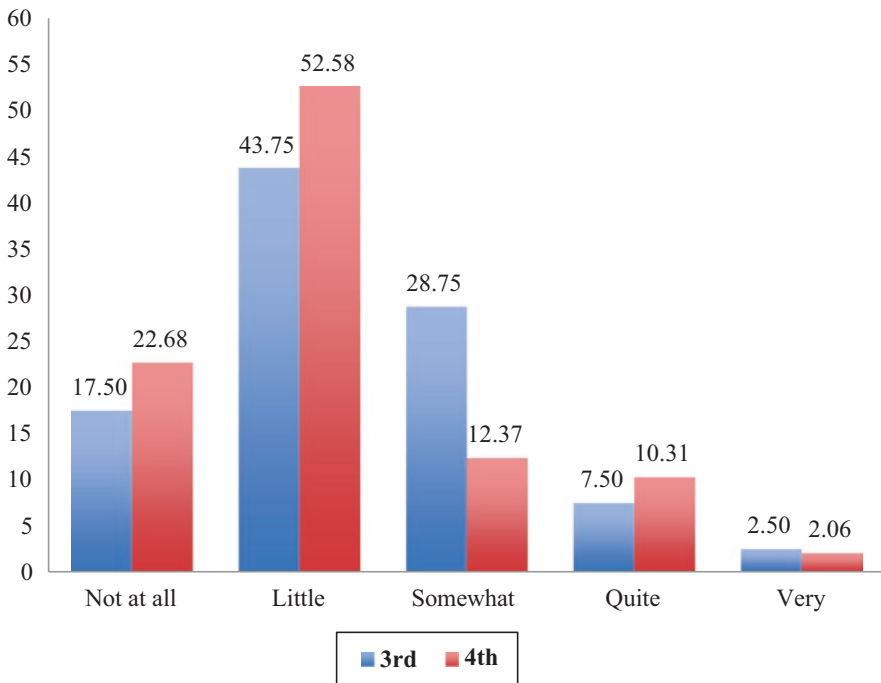


Fig. 2 Perceptions of current Galician language policy (%)

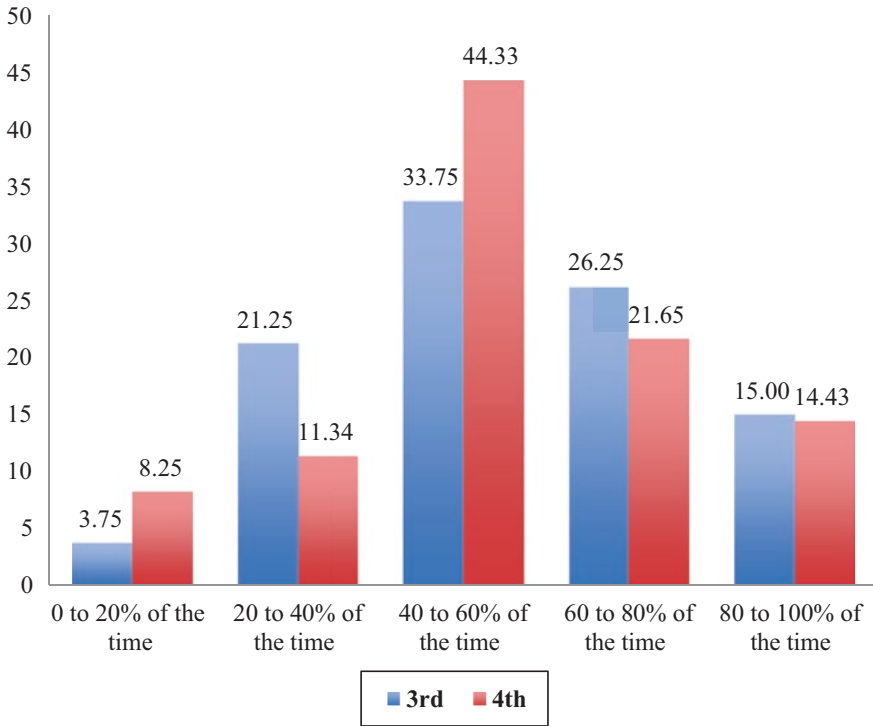


Fig. 3 Predicted language use as future teachers (%)

year students predicting that they would use the minoritized language between 40 and 60% of the time (Fig. 3).

In addition, a considerable percentage of these students expected to teach in Galician more than 60% of the time: just over 40% of 3rd year students and just over 36% of 4th year students predicted that they will use the minoritized language between 60 and 100% of the time. Considerably fewer students expected to use the language 40% of the time or less: a quarter of 3rd year students and just under 20% of 4th years. These data suggest that future teachers' expectations for using the Galician language are relatively high and, together with their overall positive evaluation of their own competence, suggests that they are optimistic about their capacity for promoting Galician use in the ECE classroom.

4. *Level of Galician observed in practicum schools*

The relatively high expectations that students had for using Galician in their own practice contrast sharply with the levels of use they reported observing in their teaching practicum (Fig. 4).

Most of the students report that the minoritized language is present 40% or less of the time in these classrooms, with the highest concentration of responses at the lowest end of the spectrum (0–20%). Keeping in mind that most of the practicum

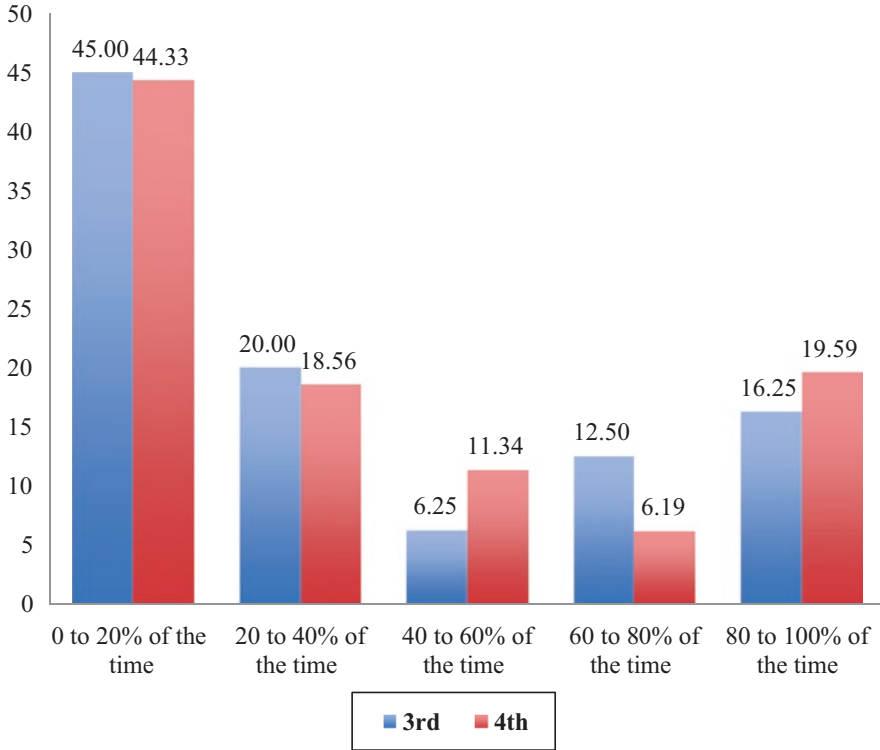


Fig. 4 Level of Galician observed in practicum schools (%)

sites are in the local urban area of A Coruña or in nearby semi-urban municipalities, students’ estimates are consistent with the most recent self-reported survey data that suggests that less than a third of ECE Centers use Galician more than Spanish for the 3–6 year old classrooms (Mesa Pola Normalización Lingüística 2015). As we have described earlier, current Galician educational policy does not stipulate minimum levels of Galician use at the ECE level, so students’ perceptions confirm our expectation that urban ECE Centers will simply reflect the Spanish dominance of the broader community.

5. *The key informant’s analysis of pre-service teacher perspectives*

In terms of students’ impressions of their ability to teach in the Galician language, we can conclude from these data that they consider themselves to be up to the task. Of course, given that early years education is such an important arena for language revitalization, and that this task is more challenging in urban areas where the minoritized language is not reinforced in children’s home and community environments, we might hope for even higher results. Given that these future teachers have received formal education in Galician at the primary and secondary level, and that they will have all taken the required course of *Methods of Galician Language*

Teaching, we might have expected a higher percentage to assign themselves the maximum score.

Our interview with Iria, the instructor for Methods of Galician Language Teaching, provided some additional context for understanding these results. As part of the course, students analyze the concept of communicative competence, and then fill out a short self-evaluation survey. She explained that students who learned to speak Galician at home or in the community, a group she refers to as “lifelong Galician speakers”, tend to be unduly critical about their competence. They argue that the Galician they speak is not “a good Galician” because it is not the standard variety, and is polluted by Spanish interference. Nevertheless, these lifelong Galician speakers are the minority, and the majority of students can best be characterized as new speakers (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2015), who have acquired Galician in academic settings. These students, in contrast, tend to overestimate their competency, perhaps because they consider their variety to be more consistent with the normative version, even if they are not as fluent and comfortable in speaking it.

As a course requirement, student must organize and carry out a storytelling activity in Galician in a classroom setting, which they record and analyze. According to Iria, this experience often inspires a more self-critical approach on the part of the new speakers of Galician, whom she characterizes as habitual Spanish speakers:

Paradoxically, many Spanish-speakers are excessively optimistic about their own [Galician] competence. Yes. And sometimes, when they go out to do a practical experience in the school, and they watch the [videotaped] recording, then they say, “I though I spoke better than that...”

This instructor’s evaluation, based on her classroom observations, analysis of student self-evaluations, and student performance on oral examinations, suggests that students’ perceptions of their Galician linguistic competence may be more complicated than the uniform, generally positive impression afforded by the results of our simple survey. Students’ understanding of competence plays a mediating factor in their self-assessment. For example, the self-assessment component of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR)⁸ associates the highest level of oral competence with a familiarity with colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions, an aspect of fluency that new speakers of Galician are less likely to possess than students from Galician-speaking families. According to this instructor’s experience, students tend to associate competence more narrowly with the use of the standard dialect than with fluency indicators such as those used by the CEFR. This discrepancy is also consistent with sociolinguistic research that highlights the importance of extralinguistic factors, that is, different dialects and the speakers and characteristics associated with them, in speakers’ understandings of language competence (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2015).

Students’ criticism of the current legislation suggests that they have adopted a sociolinguistic approach to language revitalization efforts. The current policy is

⁸For the specific criteria used for CEFR self-assessment, see <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/self-assessment-grid>

based on an assumption of harmonious bilingualism (Losada 2012), and therefore proposes no minimum levels of Galician instruction to compensate for historical processes of language substitution, which is particularly pronounced in urban areas. Silva Valdivia (2010) argues that in the current Galician policy, the means are confused with the ends. The ultimate goal of the 1983 legislation was that students leave school with full bilingual competency in both Spanish and Galician, yet given the asymmetrical presence and status of the languages in the society, the best way to meet this goal is to compensate by placing greater emphasis on the minoritized language. Furthermore, he argues that early immersion in a less familiar language is not a problem when teaching is carefully planned, especially when the two languages are closely related, as is the case with the Romance languages Spanish and Galician. Such language planning is exemplified by certain models of maintenance bilingual education in the US (DePalma 2010), the Catalan school system in Spain (Arnau 2013), or current European policy (Council of Europe 1992), as well as the previous (2007–2010) educational language planning policy in Galicia (Xunta de Galicia 2007).

In this sense, the survey responses are consistent: most of the respondents described current, *laissez-faire* language policy as inadequate, and most also expect to use more Galician in their teaching than the current policy would support. Nevertheless, our interview with Iria provided some evidence that cautions against simplistic interpretations. She pointed out that her observations of student's linguistic practices, when they actually go into schools to carry out their course assignment, do not support their theoretical perspective:

I see that when they go out to do their assignment in schools in the city of A Coruña, they use Spanish. So they are completely inconsistent. I mean, these results [of your survey] might seem, at first, to strongly support the Galician language, but then later, in their practice, aside from those students who use Galician all the time, the rest don't.

When we asked her whether she thought this inconsistency was due to pressures from the Spanish-dominant school environment or because students didn't really support Galician language use as much as their survey results indicated, she suggested that it might be a little of both, since "when they respond to these surveys, they know what you want to hear." Iglesias Álvarez (2003) has expressed a similar criticism of periodic surveys of Galician speakers' attitudes: responses reflect broad social values favoring linguistic diversity and equality, but fail to capture more subtle discrimination in terms of utility and context-appropriateness.

Iria describes the students' approach as pragmatic, "When they go into the schools, they do whatever it is that will cause them less problems." Considered in this light, the role of the institution in shaping future teachers' language practices cannot be overestimated. Our survey results indicate that students perceive that there is little support for the Galician language in their practicum schools, an observation that is supported by school-based research in urban areas (Mesa Pola Normalización Lingüística 2015). In Spanish-speaking urban areas like the city of A Coruña, children tend to come from Spanish-speaking homes. According to Iria,

students discuss the implications of this reality in their reflections on their course assignment:

A lot of times [the students] realize that when the children speak in Spanish, which is the majority in the case of schools here in Coruña, they switch languages too, often without even noticing, to the language of the children.

Teachers' own perceptions and attitudes can further exacerbate the dominance of Spanish in these school settings. She illustrated some of these by describing some teachers' initial reactions to her proposal that students visit the classroom to tell a story in Galician:

They say, "Well, let them come, but these children don't understand Galician." So the teacher has a lot of influence. Sometimes there's a perception that the children have negative attitudes toward the Galician language, but the teacher is telling them that it's a language that they don't understand ... or they present the activity as something very much out of the ordinary. [switches to Spanish to imitate Spanish-speaking teachers] "We're going to tell you a story, we're going to tell a story in Galician, children!" Horrors! Instead of normalizing it.

Such a glimpse into the classroom-based realities that await future teachers suggests that their positive attitudes and high expectations for using Galician as a vehicular language at the ECE level may be overly optimistic. Linguistic practice relies on a set of interrelated social and attitudinal factors that include: fluency and comfort speaking the language, speaking habits (which language do we usually speak, and in which contexts?), and perceptions of status and attitudes, which include unconscious processes such as linguistic convergence (Iglesias Álvarez 2003). Research has shown that convergence is one palpable way in which language hegemony manifests in Galician society: Galician speakers tend to switch to Spanish to accommodate Spanish-speakers, and not the other way around; this is uncritically considered as simply polite behavior (Formoso Gosende 2013; Iglesias Álvarez 2003). In such contexts, language planning is the only way to ensure that future teachers like the ones we surveyed can implement bilingual practice. We have seen that effective language planning is not supported by the current Galician policy context; nevertheless, such planning can still take place in schools and classrooms. In the following section, we analyze a variety of examples.

7 Results of Phase 2: Selected Case Studies of Language Planning at the School or Classroom Level

1. *ECE Laracha: changing politics, changing policies, changing paradigms*

Spanish schools are funded and regulated by the autonomous government, in this case the *Xunta de Galicia*, and ECE Centers are also regulated by this school policy. Among the schools selected for this analysis, ECE Laracha is the school that was most closely affected by the shift in Galician government policy that resulted from the change in local government in 2009, when the conservative Popular Party (PP)

took office. The educational language policy (Xunta de Galicia 2007) that had been developed under the previous government, a coalition between the Galician National Party (BNG) and the Socialist Party (PSOE), had required ECE programs to ensure that Galician be used at least 50% of the time in Spanish-dominant areas. Under the new government, this requirement was lifted with the introduction of the so-called Plurilingualism Act (Xunta de Galicia 2010).

This change in politics and change in policy also had a direct impact on the network of ECE schools that had been created in under the previous administration, called *Galescolas* (Xunta de Galicia 2007). The network of *Galescolas* were established as a part of a government initiative to broader access to ECE, with the goal of ensuring 21 placements for every 100 children of preschool age (which is still shy of the European Union's recommended 33% availability, see Abelenda 2014). These schools were established with the additional goals of incorporating educational technology into the curriculum, increasing family participation, and improving infrastructure. Language planning also figured among these objectives, with each school developing a Language Revitalization Plan. Galician was meant to be the vehicular language of instruction, and this commitment was accompanied by teacher training, both to assure competency and to raise consciousness. There was also a commitment to develop and provide these schools with quality educational materials in the minoritized language (which included books, songs, and videos). In addition, there were initiatives meant to publicize the *Galescolas* project, which included informational seminars, publications, and a documentary video that provided a first-hand view of the educational project and the schools at work (Abelenda 2014).

ECE Laracha was founded as a *Galescola*, and was later rebranded a *Galiña Azul* school when the local government changed. During these early years there were strong ideological attacks in the local news media from political and social sectors that focused exclusively on linguistic aspects, ignoring the rest of the schools' objectives. This is evident in a review of print media at the time. For example, the title of one article in a conservative national paper (ABC) translates as "The BNG (Galician National Party) imposes a uniform identity in the Galician *Ikastolas*" (Montañés Santiago 2007). This article accuses the autonomous government of using language as a means of spreading and radicalizing Galician nationalist sentiment. The comparison with the Basque-medium schools (*Ikastolas*) is significant: these schools are not affiliated with any political project, but simply making the association with Basque nationalism raises the specter of ETA, the Basque separatist terrorist organization. In fact, when the Center Right Popular Party took over in 2009, one of the first things they did was to change the name to *Galiña Azul* (little blue hen), in part to distance themselves from the association with the Basque project (Montañés Santiago 2007).

Another concern expressed in the media was that children would learn Galician at the expense of Spanish competence, "If a child is educated entirely in Galician, he or she will lose out on the formal register of Spanish" (Malvar 2007). According to Ana Abelenda, a teacher who has been at the Laracha ECE since 2007, the predominance of Spanish in Galician society, as well as in the rest of the schooling process, will more than compensate for promotion of the minoritized language in

the early years. Nevertheless, the newly denominated *Galiña Azul* network has eliminated “promoting education in the Galician language” from its objectives and no longer provides support in the form of teaching materials and training. For Abelenda, this shift has removed institutional support for language planning, “Right now the promotion of Galicia depends on each particular school, on each group of teachers ... who decide to continue following that path” (Abelenda 2014).

According to Abelenda, her school has chosen to follow the path established by the original *Galescolas* network, despite the name and policy change. Galician remains the official language of instruction, as well as written documentation and communication. She notes that, even though the school is in a rural area where the Galician language is spoken in the local community, there are still prejudices to overcome among its speakers (Formoso Gosende 2013; Iglesias Álvarez 2003). In school contexts, these manifest themselves in various subtle ways: for example, the tendency to use Galician in less formal teaching contexts, such as diaper changing, lunch, nap, and free play time, switching to Spanish in more formal contexts, such as story-telling.

Nevertheless, the teachers make a concerted effort to expand the use of Galician, particularly in the context of a school-based reading awareness program for children aged 0–3. This program aims to awaken an early love of reading by motivating and educating families, identifying and developing appropriate materials, incorporating oral traditions into the art of storytelling, and building up school and classroom libraries. The project takes a multi-modal approach: reading albums incorporate illustrations from traditional tales and songs, and these along with more traditional storybooks are placed within children’s reach in the stacks so they can take them down and browse freely during the school day.

The reading awareness program’s daily literacy routines are complemented by special events, such as seminars and excursions designed to involve families in the process, the creation of Memory Books that incorporate children’s lives into the reading curriculum, and storytelling and singing activities that are programmed throughout the course of the year. Galician, in both oral and written form, is the vehicular language of this literacy initiative, and the inclusion of the social and cultural life of the village recognizes and celebrates the ways in which the language continues to play an important role within the community. In summary, the challenge faced by this rural public school is to raise the status of the language among its speakers. Coordinating language planning with reading awareness enables the school to simultaneously awaken in children a love for reading and an appreciation of their own home language (González and Abelenda 2013).

2. *Ponte de San Blas: An undercover school language revitalization plan*

Where ECE Laracha continues to draw inspiration from earlier, more supportive, Galician language planning policy, Ponte de San Blas has simply adopted a practice of noncompliance with the current (2010) policy. The situation in this school is complicated by the fact that it encompasses both ECE and primary levels. At the primary level, current Galician educational policy limits the use of Galician to no more than 50% of the time, or even less, since up to a third of instructional time can

be dedicated to English language instruction (Xunta de Galicia 2010). Furthermore, at the early childhood level, schools are directed to emphasize the language dominant among the families served by the school. In this urban context, this would mean teaching children from 0 to 6 years of age primarily in Spanish.

We identified this school through informal channels, as the school leadership team chooses not to publicize the school-based approach of using Galician as a vehicular language. The only published material available is in the form of school or classroom-based Blogs, whose information we have complemented with conversations with 6 teachers, one parent, and two classroom visits. This school, unlike the others in our sample, has been assigned a pseudonym. As one teacher described it, language planning in this school can be described as one of “secret immersion” in the minoritized language. While the school official language planning guidelines comply with Galician policy that does not support Galician language use in urban, Spanish-dominant areas, this plan not appear to guide practice: three of the teachers we spoke with claimed to use the minoritized language exclusively in their teaching, and the other three said they used mostly Galician. The children, they told us, are mostly from Spanish-speaking families from both low and middle-income levels.

At the ECE level, there are six classrooms, all of which are at the maximum permissible student-teacher ratio (25 to 1). This suggests a demand for Galician-medium education, even among urban Spanish-speaking families. The school may prefer to keep a low profile with respect to the local authority, but the families are clearly aware of the unofficial practice: family members enter the school to drop off and pick up their children, and teachers use these times as an opportunity to communicate with carers. These routine exchanges are bilingual, with teachers using Galician and family members speaking in Spanish. Teachers confirmed our observations that these conversations reflect friendly and intimate relationships between classroom teachers and families. Furthermore, the school’s strong emphasis on family participation means that many carers visit classrooms on a regular (monthly or weekly) basis, to participate in programmed classroom activities. Families also have been largely responsible for the design of classroom spaces, such as the well-equipped play centers. In this sense, the school challenges the assumption encoded in Galician school policy that Spanish-speaking families will not support, or even be excluded from, a school project that aims to support the Galician language. While schools are required to accommodate Spanish-speaking families by teaching their children in Spanish (Xunta de Galicia 2010), families who choose to send their children to Ponte de San Blas reject this kind of accommodation.

The six teachers who talked with us coincide in their assessment that teachers are generally supportive of the school’s “secret immersion” language practice, even though many of them might be considered new speakers of the language (O’Rourke and Ramallo 2015) and use Spanish predominantly outside the classroom. Despite ongoing internal debates among school personnel, the majority of these teachers consider it important to “compensate in some way for our students’ lack of competence in this [Galician] language”. One of the teachers we talked to is originally from Valladolid, a Spanish city well outside the borders of Galician-speaking Spain. She describes her early experiences 20 years ago, as a novice teacher in a rural

Galician setting, as a source of inspiration. Despite the fact that these children and their families spoke Galician, it quickly became evident to her that the language was “under-valued by the society and by the families.” As she gradually gained competence and confidence in the minoritized language, she was met by “resistance on the part of many rural families, who asked us to speak in Spanish.”

The teachers described their school practice as a naturalistic and subtle approach designed to provide a rich and varied vocabulary: almost all of the stories and other reading materials are in Galician, as are the oral manifestations of language in terms of theatre, school routines, and group projects. They do not use worksheets or prepared texts, but engage in inquiry-learning projects that are designed to involve family members as much as possible. In the words of one teacher, children learn to read and write by means of “feelings and emotions,” so that they “experience literacy as something magical.”

Every year the families are informed of the (informal and undercover) language planning of the school, and according to teachers, they have never been met with resistance. One teacher explained that the school practice may even affect the way families self-identify. In the yearly survey of family language use, only 2 of her 25 families identified as Spanish-Galician bilingual, while the rest identified as exclusively Spanish speaking. After the meeting, some families changed their responses, so that the number of bilingual families rose to 15. According to the parent we spoke with, the children actively bring the Galician language into the household, “At home, our children play in Galician when they imitate their teachers, or when they imagine that they’re in a school context... Even though they’re Spanish speakers, they speak Galician in these kinds of symbolic play!” She characterized the language learning of her children as “priceless.” Such comments suggest that using the minoritized language at the ECE level may contribute to reversing intergenerational language shift (Fishman 1991; Spolsky 1996), even in this extreme case where children from an exclusively Spanish-speaking family simply begin to use some Galician in certain specific contexts.

3. *Semente Compostela: Language as activism – toward a National Galician School*

The language approach of this ECE Center, as described in its own documentation as “a complete early immersion from 2 to 6 years of age,” is to employ the minoritized language consistently and exclusively throughout the program. Like Ponte de San Blas, Semente Compostela is situated in an urban, and therefore Spanish-dominant, area. Nevertheless, Semente’s explicit approach to immersion education as social activism, encoded in official school planning documents and professional publications, stands in sharp contrast to Ponte de San Blas’ undercover immersion approach. As a not-for-profit parent cooperative, this school has no reason to keep a low profile; indeed, we had no difficulty in accessing published print and audiovisual material.

The school was founded in 2011 by the cultural association *A Gentalha do Pichel* based in the city of Santiago de Compostela. In the 2015–2016 school year a second center opened in a different neighborhood of the same city. Together, the two sites

currently serve 40 children between the ages of 2 and 6 years of age. According to a journal article published by the founding organization, the Linguistic-pedagogical work group of the Semente Compostela ECE Center, the immersion process is explicitly characterized as a response to historical processes of language hegemony:

Respecting the first language of the most strongly Spanish-dominant students, the process of immersion ... aims to increase the use of the [Galician] language in teacher interactions with even the least Galician-speaking students, ultimately situating ours as the language of habitual use. We believe that the acquisition of the language should be a process of enrichment rather than of substitution (Grupo de trabalho pedagógico-lingüístico da Escola Infantil Semente Compostela 2013, p. 72).

As we have seen, the *Galescolas* initiative was met with criticism that their approach was too strongly tied with a regional identity, and was unfavorably compared with the Basque *Ikastola* movement. The organizers of Semente are happy to explicitly connect their approach with the *Ikastola* school movement, as well as similar school-based language revitalization initiatives, including *Diwan* schools in Brittany and *Bressolas* in northern Catalonia (Grupo de trabalho pedagógico-lingüístico 2013, p. 71). The school's full name, *Semente: Escola de Ensino Galego* (Semente: Galician Teaching School), identifies the school with the Galician Teaching Schools that were established in the beginning of the twentieth Century as points of resistance to the existing policy of excluding the Galician language completely from the school system.

The school's official curriculum embraces the connection between language and regional (autonomous) identity, while making it clear that this approach is not incompatible with an international, intercultural perspective. In this sense, the language is conceived as "an inseparable part of our culture, our history, and our future, and we defend its international nature: creating an intercultural space will foment understanding of the importance of respecting other cultures that live in our nation" (Semente 2011). It should be understood here that the term nation (*país*) used here refers to Galicia, and not to the Spanish state; itself a nationalist (regionalist) discourse. Indeed, the school curriculum describes a plan to eventually form part of a National Galician School movement involving a network of schools that will provide an alternative to the Galician public school system, which they find inadequate. While the school is entirely sustained through school fees and public donations, they are quick to reject the label of private school, situating the school instead as a form of social activism:

Semente was born with the desire to be public, to demonstrate through practice that there is a need in Galiza⁹ for education in our language, which has been repeatedly denied... we would like the school to be public, but not at any price. We are not a private entity, we want to make this clear, because there is no desire for profit behind this initiative (Semente 2011).

⁹Galiza is the reintegracionist spelling used by Semente. Throughout this paper, we have used *Galicia*, in accordance with the current isolationist official orthographic rules.

The school might be said to resist linguistic hegemony on two fronts: Spanish dominance in the Galician territory, and the official Galician language guidelines that have been adopted and promoted by Galician institutions such as the *Real Academia Galega* (Royal Galician Academy) and the *Instituto da Lingua Galega* (Institute for Galician Language). The integrationist school (Rei-Doval 2013) advocates for an alternative version of the Galician language that more closely approximates Portuguese, and this counter-normative version is used in all school documentation and official communication. The reference to an international perspective found through Sementes's documentation may be related, in part, to this decision. An integrationist perspective allies Galician with Portuguese, rendering the resulting *galego-português* as a potential *lingua franca* across broader range of territories. However, this is our interpretation, as we were unable to find any explicit explanation of this decision in the available publications.

Emotional education, play-based learning, and communicative methodology are identified as the three pillars of their approach to early immersion education, which has a strong community orientation (Semente 2011). Given Semente's stance of social activism through alternative schooling "at the service of the people's interest," it is not surprising to find in their pedagogical statements a commitment to community-based education, describing their classrooms as "spaces that are open to the community, that are engaged with the realities of the neighborhood." Nor is it surprising that they describe the school garden, measuring 100 m² and equipped with chickens, as a central identifying feature of the school, "Education embedded in nature, where children learn the values of our land through interaction with natural environment... fostering the use of recycled materials and responsible consumption." For the educators at Semente, language immersion is part of a global approach to activism, cultural identity, and the local environment.

4. *Andaina: Redefining plurilingual education and parent choice*

Andaina includes the second cycle of ECE (3–6 years) along with primary and secondary levels. According to its internal language planning documentation, four languages are present in the school: Galician, Spanish, French, and English. Nevertheless, Galician is meant to be used as the medium of instruction in all classroom teaching and school interactions, while the other languages are taught as specific subject areas. It is also a private cooperative, but unlike Semente it is a partially state-subsidized school. This means that it is expected to conform to current Galician educational language planning policy, the *Plurilingualism Act* (*Xunta de Galicia* 2010).

Andaina is situated in a semi-urban environment, and so most of the families whose children attend Andaina are Spanish-speaking; in fact, most of them live in the neighboring major city of A Coruña. Since the school is not public, these parents actively choose to send their children to the school, and teachers say that there has never been any difficulty in filling the available spaces. The school language approach is an important part of the attraction. As with Semente, we had no difficulty accessing school documentation, some of which is available online, and school personnel were happy to provide us with additional documentation (such as the

school's language planning document and the results of internal language surveys). We were also able to draw on published materials, as the school is relatively well-known in academic and professional circles. We complemented this information with a school visit, although we were already familiar with the school through prior visits and university-school collaborations.

At first glance, Andaina's language plan echoes the discourse of the Plurilingualism Act of 2010. According to the school's Language Planning Project, published on the website, the school has received official recognition as a "plurilingual center" from the Galician School Council, which the school describes as "starting with the languages of the immediate vicinity, closely tied with our culture and our identity, to gradually open up to foreign languages" and "a struggle to preserve linguistic identities". Andaina's interpretation of "plurilingual" requires an emphasis on Galician in the early years, to compensate for the dominance of Spanish as the family language of its students, and also involves an ongoing project of reducing prejudices toward the minoritized language.

The Galician government's current language policy reflects an understanding of Galician diglossic context as one of "cordial" or "harmonious" bilingualism (Losada 2012, p. 292), which understands the two languages as coexisting in a balanced distribution across speakers and social domains, with a relatively equal social status. This understanding is not supported by historical and sociolinguistic research. Andaina, in contrast, recognizes the hegemonic history of Spanish in the Galician territory, and understands that in order to achieve the goal of bilingualism, early bilingual education of Spanish-dominant children must emphasize Galician competency. This means using oral Galician not only for teaching and related school activities (including excursions), but also in conversation with families and non-teaching personnel. It also means imbuing the school environment with printed Galician, in terms of internal and external school documentation, letters to families, school newsletters, and the immediate physical environment (posters, murals, etc.).

The relationship between language and culture also forms an important part of this plurilingual approach: celebrating local festivals, playing traditional games, and organizing visits from musical and theatre groups that use the Galician language are examples of practices established in the school's official language plan. The school language program not only aims to increase Galician competency, but also to reduce "negative attitudes toward the language, often based on routines and prejudices." To this end, they organize regular campaigns to elevate the status and presence of the language, which include visits from authors and other professionals who use the language as an artistic medium.

While the Galician *Plurilingualism Act* claims to offer families the right to choose in which language their children are schooled, Andaina's language plan considers that Spanish monolingual children will never have the right to choose if they never acquire a minimum Galician competency. As Parent Association representative Fernández López argues, the parents who send their children to Andaina are seeking a right to Galician language instruction that they are denied in the public school system, particularly in the Spanish-dominant city of A Coruña:

Teaching in the Galician language supplies students with the tools to be able to develop their abilities in both languages. This means that the child is capable of choosing which language to use: only when the child knows both languages is he or she free to choose. (Fernández López 2011)

Another interesting initiative of this school is the “Sociolinguistic Map” that was established in the 2013–2014 school year and is continuously updated. This process of community-based research is meant to keep track of the language practices of families that attend the school, so that school language practices can respond more effectively to their needs. The latest statistics reveal that while families are strongly in agreement with the school’s language practice, adult family members tend to speak in Spanish with children. As a result, “actions aimed at providing a positive discrimination in favor of the Galician language continue to be especially important” for what the school considers the “necessities presented by the sociolinguistic realities of the school.”

5. *Virxe da Cela: Language revitalization embedded in a project-based curriculum*

The last school we will consider is the one we know the best, since we are currently collaborating on both educational and research projects with this center. For the purposes of this research, we have complemented these earlier interactions with a review of school documentation and the web-based information in the form of Blogs associated with particular classrooms and initiatives. The school is located in the rural village of Monfero, where one of its greatest challenges is the steady decline in the local population, due to the overall low Galician birth-rate and to internal migration to nearby cities and towns in search of employment opportunities, which has been exacerbated by the current economic crisis. This public school serves children from the second cycle of ECE (3–6 years) through the end of secondary. Nevertheless, there are currently only 150 students and 25 teachers. This means that teacher student ratios are very low, but it also means that the school is under constant threat of being disbanded.

On the one hand, one might expect that language revitalization might not be an issue for Virxe da Cela, as it is situated in a predominantly rural area. Nevertheless, the school explicitly promotes the exclusive use of Galician throughout the school, as well as campaigns designed to raise the status of the language. These practices are supported by studies that have found negative attitudes toward the minoritized language, even among habitual speakers (Formoso Gosende 2013; Iglesias Álvarez 2003). Since the school curriculum is based on project-based learning, the promotion of the minoritized language is integrated into the school’s global curriculum plan, resulting in 6 cross-curricular strands, of which we will examine 3:

1. Recuperation of natural, cultural, and artistic heritage

This includes the celebration of popular festivals, compilation of traditional refrains and other artifacts of local history, exploration of local trades and artisan craftwork, and collection and performance of traditional songs and dances. There is a strong emphasis on exploring the past and present realities of the local com-

munity. At the ECE level, children have prepared and performed dances to traditional Galician songs, prepared a video documenting their exploration of local flora and fauna, and helped prepare dishes based on recipes collected from older community members. Such activities not only use Galician as the medium of instruction, but also celebrate Galician natural and cultural heritage.

2. Fostering oral Galician

An intergenerational oral history project involves collecting information from older family and community members, and even the youngest children participate in these activities. The Galician-language children's book publisher Kalandraka collaborates with the school library to support early oral and emerging print literacy projects. An intergenerational storytelling project links older children from the upper primary and secondary level with the youngest members of the school community who attend the ECE program. The older children tell stories and perform plays in Galician for their smaller companions. ECE children also participate in the school-wide Galician-language radio program, along with their families and other community members.

3. Fostering written Galician

Since the school has adopted a whole school project-based learning curriculum that includes the ECE level, written materials are produced by the teachers themselves, together with the students. This approach provides the added advantage of producing materials in the Galician language, rather than incorporating existing texts, which are more difficult to find in minoritized languages. The school library sponsors a Reading Club that involves partnerships between emerging readers at the ECE level, or "new readers", with more experienced readers at the secondary level. Following an established schedule, the older child goes to the ECE classroom to collect his or her reading partner to visit the library and read together during recess.

This school offers an example of the importance of a language revitalization project in rural areas where the minoritized language is relatively strong, but subject to prejudices that, in the long run, may jeopardize its health. In addition, assuring a strong Galician presence within the school context assures that children who speak Galician in the community setting have access to formal registers that were not available to their grandparents, or even parents in many cases. It is important to keep in mind that, while the Galician Linguistic Normalization Law (Xunta de Galicia 1983) ended the prohibition of Galician from academic and other institutional spaces, language revitalization will be a complex and slow process.

8 Conclusions

Our research with students who are preparing to be ECE teachers is encouraging to some degree, in that we have found high levels of confidence in students' ability to use the Galician language and a strong (if theoretical) commitment to using the language as a means of classroom instruction in their future profession. Nevertheless,

our interview with the instructor for *Methods of Galician Language Teaching* provides some sobering context for such encouraging results: based on students' own practice their reflection on this practice, we can expect that the environment of the schools where they will eventually teach will have a strong influence on their ability to comply with their own high expectations. As Iglesias Álvarez (2003) points out, linguistic behavior is determined not only by communicative competence and personal values, but also by linguistic habits, the immediate environment, and norms that are shared by the social groups that speakers belong to, or aspire to belong to. In this sense, the formation of a committed professional community and a supportive school climate are crucial elements in determining teachers' linguistic practices. For example, the teachers at Ponte de San Blas told us that a Spanish-speaking practicum student was inspired to use Galician when she saw that this was the predominant language among teachers in this school, despite her professed lack of competence in the minoritized language.

Our review of school-based language planning demonstrates the variety of ways in which schools might serve as agents for sociolinguistic justice, even in weak policy contexts. In a minoritized language context where intergenerational transmission of Galician continues to diminish, these initiatives attempt to revitalize the language among the youngest generation through the partial or complete introduction of Galician as a medium of instruction, as well as through the incorporation of literature, performing arts, and other engaging activities that aim to present the minoritized language as both a modern living language and a common cultural heritage. These go beyond simple linguistic competencies to address metalinguistic goals such as raising the social status of the language, reducing stereotypes, and creating new positive associations. Despite the disheartening trends concerning Galician language use in supposedly bilingual ECE settings, the work of these educators demonstrates the transformative potential of effective school-based language planning, even in relatively unsupportive policy contexts. These examples may provide inspiration and guidance for other practitioners working in similarly unfavorable circumstances; they serve to confirm Menken and García's (Menken and García 2010) insightful understanding of teachers as policy-makers.

There remains a great deal of work to be done in Galicia around teaching and teacher training for effective bilingual education. As a pilot study, our research aims to find directions forward. These include more intensive and extensive research with future ECE teachers, to explore how best to prepare them to be informed, active, skilled, and confident promoters of the minoritized language. Our exploration of exemplary ECE Centers needs to be expanded to include not only more examples of exemplary practice, but also a clearer vision of practice in ordinary schools. In both cases, we hope to initiate an ethnographic research program that can explore how the design of school-based approaches to minoritized language revitalization translates into everyday classroom practice.

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EFL Teachers' Reflections on Their Teaching Practice in Spanish Preschools: A Focus on Motivation



Ana Andúgar and Beatriz Cortina-Pérez

“Children want to discover the world around them, want to enjoy games and pauses, want to be spoken to significantly and to experiment, want to discuss and reflect. They want to be children.”

(Flores and Corcoll 2008, p. 1)

Abstract Teaching a foreign language in preschool is a matter of great interest at the present moment in most European countries. The Council of Europe has paid particular attention to early foreign language learning in order to promote plurilingualism across Europe (European Commission, Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity 2004–2006. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Retrieved from <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/ALL/?uri=URISERV:c11068>, 2003; European Commission, Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable. European Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020). Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/language-policy/documents/early-language-learning-handbook_en.pdf, 2011; Edelenbos P, Johnstone RM, Kubanek A, The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners. Languages for the children of Europe: published research, good practice and main principles. European Commission, Education and Culture, Culture and Communication, Multilingualism Policy, Brussels. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu.education/languages/pdf/doc425_en.pdf, 2006); and the European Council of Barcelona (European Commission, Presidency conclusions. European Council of Barcelona 15–16 March 2002. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/>

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[download_en/barcelona_european_council.pdf](#), 2002) was the beginning of different reports and initiatives aimed at developing this plurilingual European citizenry: Each European country has developed their own strategies to reach this objective and differences exist regarding the starting age of the teaching of a foreign language among the European countries (Eurydice, Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe 2012. Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Brussels. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/languages/policy/strategic-framework/documents/key-data-2012_en.pdf, 2012). In Spain, a lot of effort has been made in this concern with bilingual programmes in the different regions. However, there is an enormous gap between the legislative and methodological level, mainly due to the lack of uniformity with the decentralization of the education system (Calero J, La equidad en educación: Informe analítico del sistema educativo español (No. 175). Ministerio de Educación, Madrid, 2006). A lack of specific teacher training for this early introduction of the language, as well as vague legislative guidelines, has led teachers to implement their own methodological models and strategies. This chapter covers teachers' reflections on the implementation of English in preschools in Spain, paying particular attention to the description of teachers' strategies for increasing students' motivation towards the FL as a paramount objective in this learning. After reviewing the main literature on teaching strategies aimed at very young language learners, we will present a qualitative analysis of 32 structured interviews with English-as-a-foreign-language teachers across Spain reflecting on their own practice in order to describe their strategies for increasing the motivation of 3- to 5-year-olds, rethinking pedagogical models for promoting languages at preschool and language policy in Spain.

1 Introduction

The European Union has stressed the importance of learning a foreign language (henceforth, FL) in any of the different educational stages, with special emphasis on early-years education. The European Council of Barcelona (European Commission 2002) has already highlighted the need for new methodologies to encourage citizens to learn languages other than their mother tongue and requested member states to take action and find ways to achieve the task. This resulted in numerous studies, projects and actions at both national and EU level, like the Action Plan entitled "Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004–2006" (European Commission 2003). However, and as stated in the report "A Review of the European Schools Language and Science Policies" (Nash and Eleftheriou 2008), European education systems are complex and different, and divergences can be found even within countries at the regional level. The age of onset of learning a FL, for example, differs from one country to another. Thus, Nash and Eleftheriou (2008)

conclude that in 2006–2007 more than half of European primary pupils were learning a FL. The latest study published by the Eurydice Network “Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe” (Eurydice 2012) offers an overview of the current state of teaching foreign languages in Europe (32 countries) and concludes that European students usually start learning a FL between 6 and 9 years, except in countries such as Belgium or Spain, where they start earlier. The issue of early language learning (henceforth, ELL) is often subject to arguments that may differ depending on whether we are talking about foreign or second languages (FL and SL, respectively), as the learning context is different (DeKeyser and Larson-Hall 2005; Grotjahn 2003; Hoff-Ginsberg 1998; Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson 2001; Muñoz 2008; Patwoski 1982).

In fact, in an artificial context, i.e., a context where the language is not naturally spoken outside the classroom, it is important to optimize the use of the FL (Álvarez-Cofiño 2003; Morris and Segura 2003; Muñoz-Redondo and López-Bautista 2002–2003), as language learners do not have many opportunities to practice the target language (Leonardi 2012). Yet, according to some studies (Pino and Rodríguez 2010; Morata and Coyle 2012; Palvianien et al. 2016), the teacher may find it difficult to employ the FL all the time. However, as the European Commission (2011) specifies, “working in pre-primary school settings through the target language can help children reach similar or at least comparable competencies in the first language/mother tongue and in the target language.” (p. 14). Therefore, an early start in the FL context is of paramount importance. Nevertheless, the Critical Period Hypothesis is overtly questioned (Wiley et al. 2005), and many researchers have detected advantages in a later start (Eckstrand 1978; Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle 1978; Singleton 2005; Nikolov and Mihaljevic 2006; Muñoz 2006). Still, there seems to be enough evidence to recommend ELL based on features such as brain plasticity, the ability to imitate, appropriate cognitive ability, and the willingness to learn (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2011). In this way, the advantages of preschool FL learning seem to prevail, as stated by Madrid (2001): “[...] those pupils who begin the L2 in the kindergarten or in the first phase of Primary Education normally obtain better results in later stages and overcome those who start in the obligatory phase – grade 3, age 8”¹ (p. 148). Pinter (2015) also declares that “younger learners are less anxious and less inhibited, and overall, they can spend more time devoted to the language compared with those who start later” (p. 29), which facilitates communication in the classroom. Furthermore, according to author Singleton (2014), the crucial factor in learning a FL is not age, but motivation. As Sotés (2000) notes in his study of the trilingual model of the Basque Country (Spain), “given motivation and perseverance, good results in second language learning can be in fact be achieved at any age” (p. 33). Besides, as Dolean (2015) suggests, if the teaching and learning of a foreign language is based on “organizing meaningful age appropriate activities held in the target language, using concepts

¹Note that all quotations in Spanish have been translated.

that children are already familiar with in their native language, then teaching can occur as early as children are registered in educational programs (i.e. kindergarten)” (p. 11), so she recommends a partial immersion at this early stage, teaching the FL implicitly and eliminating the barrier of not understanding the message.

Likewise, the EU emphasizes the need to develop a positive attitude towards language learning in young students in order to promote multilingualism, and lay the foundation for life-long language learning. As suggested by the European Union “it is a priority for Member States to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary school is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed, and the foundations for later language learning are laid” (European Commission 2003, p. 7). The EU has put its efforts into making a series of recommendations that can be found in the document “Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable” (European Commission 2011), which is based on the previous report, “The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners” (Edelenbos et al. 2006) in order to support this learning. As Enever (2015) declares, it is necessary for governments to join forces in order to face the main weaknesses of the teaching of FLs at an early age, such as “teacher expertise, the role of motivation, establishing continuity of learning, setting realistic aims and the role of out-of school learning” (p. 22); otherwise, the advantage of early learning may be nullified.

So it appears that there is a favourable climate for early foreign language learning as long as the methodology used is suitable for the child’s age and its main goal is to develop a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity. In order to achieve this, the different teaching strategies are vital. In this chapter we will analyse FL teachers’ reflections and their main strategies for motivating and promoting a positive attitude towards FL learning with VYLL² in Spain (3–6 years). First, some theoretical issues related to motivation at Pre-primary level will be addressed.

2 Teachers’ Strategies for Increasing Motivation and Positive Attitudes Towards the Foreign Language

2.1 Motivation and Early Childhood Education

Broadly speaking, motivation can be defined as “to be moved to do something” (Ryan and Deci 2000, p. 54). In order to obtain that goal, cognitive and emotional processes are activated (Hakki 2014). Dörnyei (2014) specifies that the term motivation answers the questions: “why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it” (p. 516).

²The term Very Young Language Learners (henceforth, VYLL) refers to language students before Primary Education, in Spain covering the range from 3 to 6 years old.

In preschool education, motivation is understood in terms of children's self-satisfaction. Children at this stage do not want to do an activity because they think of its possible future benefits, but because they have fun and enjoy discovering things (Bruner 1961; Mayer 2004). Activities are motivating the moment they give infants a sense of joy (Heckhausen 1987). From the cognitive perspective, motivation is a rewarding sense of pleasure children obtain when they perform challenging tasks. In a study conducted by Stipek et al. (1995), motivation rates among preschoolers were higher in child-centred groups, rather than didactic-focused ones, proving that better results were obtained in terms of the children's holistic development in those programmes in which children simply play and enjoy themselves. In this regard, success depends on the scaffolding given to the child and the motivation provided in their environment, the school in this case. The relationship between motivation and emotional experiences has been the focus of different studies (Carlton and Winsler 1998; Pintrich and Schunk 2002). This intrinsic motivation "includes both positive affect during a task and situational and personal interest in the task" (Berhenke 2013, p. 5). Furthermore, motivation in the early education stages is also dependent on nearby adults, as Thoumi (2003) suggests. The teacher's task, according to studies on motivation in preschool, will be to scaffold (Vygotsky 1978, 1987; Carlton and Winsler 1998; Mayer 2004) children in the task and design activities that match their interests.

2.2 *Motivation and VYLL*

Motivation to learn a FL is a key factor to keep in mind when designing the curriculum and activities inside and outside the classroom, in order to provide an effective learning experience of the language in formal situations. Gardner (2007) distinguishes between "language learning motivation and classroom learning motivation" (p. 10): the latter may be affected by various factors, such as the teacher, the environment, the contents and materials, etc., and also by the individual features of each student. Gardner considers it essential to study both the educational and the cultural context when explaining the motivation to learn an L2, rather than defining its typology because, as he states, it is "the intensity of the motivation in its broadest sense, incorporating the behavioural, cognitive, and affective components, that is important." (Gardner 2007, p. 19).

Motivation is therefore essential in learning a FL, where actual use of the target language is often restricted to the classroom context. Consequently, teachers should take advantage of their situation with regard to early learners, as they demonstrate a willingness and good attitude towards new learning. The way teachers can motivate students is through proper selection and use of learning strategies that will guide the students to self-realization and enjoyment. As illustrated by the study of Jurisevic and Pizorn (2013), conducted with Primary school students in Slovenia, motivation

is a key factor in the learning and future use of the FL. The same study revealed that VYLLs show predilection for classes that contain playful elements, and although this may be observed in all stages of education, it is especially relevant in the VYLL context. As Vygotsky declares (Vygotsky 1978), “the child moves forward through play. Only in this sense can play be considered a leading activity that determines the child’s development” (p. 103).

However, despite the long tradition in the study of motivation in learning FLs, most of the techniques for increasing it are addressed to older learners, and therefore need to be adapted for our context of study. As stated by Djigunovic Mihaljevic (2012a, b), the most important longitudinal studies on the subject of attitude and motivation in learning FLs at European level, such as the Pécs Project (1977–1995), the Zagreb project (1991–2001) or the Early Language learning in Europe (2006–2010), conducted on students from the Primary stage (young learners), conclude how difficult and important it is to investigate the motivation and attitude of these learners. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that young FL learner attitudes and motivation are phenomena that have a distinct nature and require a specific approach when compared to older learners, and [...] attitudes and motivation not only interact with a host of other individual learner variables and with contextual variables, but their interactions change with learner’s age (Djigunovic Mihaljevic 2012a, b, p. 68).

Therefore teachers need to know how to adapt their lessons to children’s singularities, in order to increase their motivation, because “unless they accept their learners’ personalities and work on those small details that constitute their social and psychological make-up, they will fail to motivate them” (Gilakjani et al. 2012, p. 15). Enever (2015), based on work by Halliwell (1992), considers it essential that the activities carried out in the classroom include a balance between play and cognitive challenge to promote motivation. In short, as Vilke (1997) upholds, the teaching of English in VYLL should be based on three key points: the cognitive development of students, the L1 as a starting point, and the focus on learning rather than teaching, as we shall see in the different strategies that teachers can follow to boost their students’ motivation.

2.3 *Teaching Strategies for Fostering Motivation*

Based on Richards and Rodgers (2001), teaching strategies are those procedures used by teachers to face challenging situations in their teaching practice. Therefore, our focus in this chapter is on those teaching procedures, activities, practices, behaviours, etc., used by teachers to promote motivation in the EFL classroom with VYLL. In doing so, three dimensions need to be considered:

1. The Teacher

The teacher’s attitude is the first main factor that can influence the levels of students’ motivation rates. Teachers are the crucial link in the development of infant attitudes towards learning, having both positive and negative effects on their aca-

Table 1 Teachers

	The teacher...
Related to children	... helps children in their natural development providing enough of a challenge
	... empathizes with children's personal situations
	... knows about children's developmental processes
	... provides a respectful environment and creates a good atmosphere in class
	... supports children's autonomy
	... establishes close relationships
	... scaffolds children's problem-solving
	... uses rewards sparingly and cautiously
Related to attitude	... has a good sense of humour
	... is open to students' suggestions
	... is operative
	... is entertaining and playful
	... has an adequate tone of voice
	... is creative
Related to competence	... has an advance competence in the FL
	... is able to use a variety of materials
	... knows how to introduce cultural aspects in the curriculum
	... knows how the school and the educational system works
	... is able to plan lessons according to students' needs and interests
	... knows how very young learners learn and is able to foster it.

Note. Based on Lobo (2004), Carlton and Winsler (1998) and Murado-Buoso (2010)

demic future (Birch and Ladd 1997; Dobbs and Arnold 2009; Hamre and Pianta 2005). In a study on 8- to 14-year-old FL students on causes of motivation in the classroom (Nikolov 1999), it was concluded that they fluctuate depending on age and that for younger students the following was always fulfilled, "classes must be fun and the teacher is in focus" (p. 53). Although our object of study focuses on 3- to 5-year-olds, this conclusion may also be supported in our case. Accordingly, it seems important to know how motivating teachers should be and what they should do to help create the adequate context in the classroom. As Thoumi declares (Thoumi 2003), a "good motivator is, in general, one who can communicate, deliver, model, guide or suggest something suitable for the progress of children and young people, one who facilitates, guides and directs, bringing support, not dependence on the adult" (p. 16).

As shown in Table 1, the teacher should have a positive attitude, which must be reflected in a good environment, and should pay attention to the individual pace of each student (Flores and Corcoll 2008). It is essential to know the students' level and the cognitive-process stage they are in according to their age in order to maximize their learning opportunities (Muñoz-Redondo and López-Bautista 2002–2003).

2. Teaching methodology

In terms of methodology (Table 2), ELT methods, such as the Communicative Approach, Task-Based Language Learning, and above all, the Total Physical Response (henceforth TPR), are the most recurrent ones in this learning stage (Edelenbos et al. 2006; Pino and Rodríguez 2006), mainly due to the fact that these methods prioritize “the use of real materials surrounding the child, looking for motivation for learning other languages, describing the teacher as a facilitator of learning, and targeting at the simultaneous acquisition of L1 and L2 in a relaxing and motivating atmosphere” (Pino and Rodríguez 2006, p. 153). Additionally, the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology, one of today’s teaching trends, perfectly matches the holistic learning encouraged by early childhood pedagogy (Coyle 2007; Marsh and Frigols Martín 2012). This method, applied to Pre-primary education, involves the daily activities of the pre-school class, but in the foreign language. However, it is noteworthy that these methods need to be adapted to the developmental features of this educational stage. Focused on 3- to 5-year-olds, Rodríguez (2004) proposes a number of strategies for effective teaching of FLs in preschool education, among which we highlight: working eminently on the oral aspects of language, centred on dynamic and playful tasks, using any situation to learn new vocabulary, and employing worksheets only as a support for communicative activities. Fleta (2014) also believes

Table 2 Teaching strategies

	List of strategies
About teaching methodology	Provide comprehensible input, using non-verbal language
	Scaffold students in their learning
	Teach English from a holistic approach
	Promote meaningful learning
	Prioritize oral skills
	Use procedural approaches, such as task-based/project-based learning
	Use TPR techniques to promote kinaesthetic learning
	Offer a variety of activities, mixing both quiet and noisy activities, games, storytelling, creative tasks, etc.
	Use LI when required in order to promote a stress-free environment
	Use of routines in the FL
About planning	Short and frequent session inserted within the daily curriculum
	Plan thematic units, focusing on contents and communication
	Coordinates linguist and non-linguistic contents
	Coordinate lesson plans with the class teacher (non-EFL teacher)
	Take English outside the classroom, planning activities in different scenarios
	Flexible class and task distribution
Circle time, learning areas and formats	

Note. Based on Lobo (2004), Mourao (2014), Mur (2002), Murado-Buoso (2010), Pino and Rodríguez (2010), Shin (2007), and Soberón (2003)

that, apart from developing oral skills, we should also work on both fine and gross motor skills that imply movement, rhythm, and activities that involve silence so as to match different learning styles. Moreover, the use of circle time and learning areas are useful resources at preschool (Mourao 2014, 2015) and teacher-led activity can stimulate child-initiated play taking place in these learning areas, provided that they occur in “an attractive, interesting, welcoming and comfortable place” (Robinson et al. 2015, p. 29). Finally, and according to Mur (2002), the teaching methodology must cover students' capabilities widely, such as the ability to creatively use their limited language. Additionally, children instinctively talk and socialize, thus imagination in using the FL communicative should be a key aspect in the teaching methodology (Mur 2002). Moreover, children's limited capacity for concentration promotes varied and short tasks, not longer than 10–15 min (Shin 2007).

3. Materials and resources

Another key to success in motivating children is the type of materials and resources used. On the one hand, published textbooks are a significant help for teachers that do not have much experience in teaching English to VYLL, providing them with ready-to-use lessons with attractive resources. However, as asserted by Fleta and Forster (2014), textbooks constrain teaching because they barely meet particular students' need: they limit the contents to a specific culture or exclusively reflect the opinions of their designers. It is equally important to involve students and to work on the development of their creativity through materials that challenge their imagination. On the other hand, the amount of online resources makes it very easy to find motivating materials for our students and which can be adapted to the characteristics of the different groups (Rodríguez 2004; Szulc-Kurpaska 2007).

Finally, we cannot fail to mention those resources that provide fun learning in the classroom, such as picture books (Pino and Rodríguez 2010), puppets and realia (Álvarez-Cofiño 2003; Cabanés et al. 2003; Morris and Segura 2003; Zuljevic 2005), chants and songs (Fleta 2014; López-Tellez 2003; Muñoz-Redondo and López-Bautista 2002–2003), audiovisual materials and cartoons (Prošić-Santovac 2017) etc (Table 3).

Table 3 Materials and resources

Materials should encourage creativity and imagination
	... adapt to different needs and learning styles
	... be play-based materials: puppets, games, songs, rhymes, books, realia
	... use audiovisual support, particularly visually attractive materials
	... include students' personal objects and toys
	... make use of internet as a bank of real and authentic resources

Note. Based on Lobo (2004), Murado-Buoso (2010), Rodríguez (2004), Mourao (2014, 2015) and Shin (2006)

As a concluding remark, when trying to promote a motivating environment in the classroom, it is important to consider the three different components of the teaching act, i.e., the teacher, teaching methodologies, and materials. The three of them should be adapted to the learners' needs and interests in order to be successful.

3 Teachers' Perception of Strategies for Promoting Motivation in the EFL Classroom to VYLL in Spain

3.1 VYLL in Spain

Although Spanish Pre-Primary Educational stage is not compulsory, most children start school at the age of three – specifically, 95%, according to the Ministry of Education (2015). Spanish education is mainly monolingual, except for those regions that are bilingual (Galicia, Basque Country, Navarra, Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands). Apart from that, foreign languages – mainly English – are promoted from a very early stage. The teaching of FLs at this very early age is an issue that has achieved paramount importance in the Spanish Education system. It began experimentally in 1996 (Order of April 29 1996, *Official Spanish Gazette* no. 112), and, gradually, successive laws have recommended the importance of this learning at an early age by focusing attention on the oral aspects, but without specifying how it should be performed. At the present time it is widespread and most of the regions have a regulated timing for this stage, although there is a lack of specifications in terms of schedule, teaching guidelines and teacher training (Andúgar et al. [forthcoming](#)). Broadly speaking, we can confirm that at least 60–90 min of the weekly schedule in Pre-primary Education is devoted to the learning of English (*ibid*). In addition, some regions within Spain have plurilingual initiatives, due to their bilingualism. In these cases, Andúgar et al. ([forthcoming](#)) have detected a confrontation between the early onset of the FL and the consolidation of bilingualism in regional policy.

3.2 Research Design

Teaching a FL to pre-schoolers in formal settings is an area in need of more studies aimed at defining guidelines to provide a more successful learning experience. In the words of Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2012b), “[it] seems to us that the qualitative research paradigm has a lot to offer and will one day, when an increasing number of case studies have accumulated enough insights, get us closer to what now seems next to impossible” (p. 174). In this chapter we present a study based on the interpretivist paradigm to analyse the motivating teaching strategies used by EFL teachers within preschool classrooms in Spain.

3.2.1 Research Questions and Aims

Considering this situation, we intend to answer the following questions in this study:

1. Which motivating strategies do EFL teachers consider most relevant when teaching VYLLs?
2. Do theory and praxis match? Do teachers' responses match the motivating strategies analysed from the literature review?

The main purposes of this study are

1. To detect and analyse teaching strategies, according to three main aspects, i.e., the teacher, the teaching methodology and materials that can be motivating for teaching EFL at preschool.
2. To detect the level of correspondence between theory about motivating strategies in EFL preschool classrooms and the real practice in Spanish schools.

3.2.2 Participants

The study was conducted on 32 EFL teachers across Spain, reflecting on their own practice to find out the teaching strategies they use in order to motivate their preschool students. Participants have, at least, a B2 level of English according to the Common European Framework and they comprised 30 women and 2 men. All participants had an average experience of 10 years teaching English in pre-primary teaching. In their self-assessment of their knowledge of the topic of this study, the group's average score was 4.1 out of 5 in a Likert scale, 1 being null knowledge and 5, deep knowledge.

3.2.3 Instrument and Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were administered by email to allow time for participants to answer the questions without pressure, revolving around four categories: difficulties encountered in the classroom, the FL teacher in pre-primary education, teaching strategies, and materials. We used mixed coding techniques, both deductively, i.e., using a pre-designed coding list according to the literature review, and inductively, i.e., condensing raw data into codes. Confidentiality was guaranteed replacing every personal reference to participants with consecutive enumerated codes. Through a thematic analysis of the interviews carried out with Nvivo11 software, we have interpreted a model of motivating strategies for VYLL. As a result, a list of 31 codes organized in three different categories was defined: teachers, teaching methods and materials (see [Appendix 1](#)).

3.3 Results and Discussion

3.3.1 The Teacher

In relation to the teachers' attitude, most interviewees concluded that the teacher in charge of the teaching of EFL at preschool must love what s/he does, showing empathy to children and enthusiasm towards what s/he is doing (Lobo 2004). As participants said, *"I think that at pre-primary the teacher must be close to the students and also know how to deal with them affectionately"* (Teacher 4, henceforth T4). Equally important is that the teacher enjoys what s/he does and transmits enthusiasm to students (T20), which is intrinsically linked to playful learning. Being natural and spontaneous so that the teacher can surprise and thus engage students in their learning of the FL is crucial, T20 continues: *"You have to be very natural and spontaneous with students, and classes must be thoroughly prepared"* (T20). According to interviewee T7, *"Teachers must be highly qualified, like their job and be creative and original"*. These aspects may contribute to the creation of a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in class, where students feel comfortable with the FL, as supported by participant T3.

Teachers must also both know their students and the particular features of their process of learning very well in order to be successful in their teaching and thus in their motivation. As supported by participants (T23, T13), *"Attention should be paid to children of this age's psychological development and be aware of their necessities and interests, as well as the underpinnings of L2 acquisition"* (T23). In this sense, they need to rely on life-long-learning as a strategy to keep updated with new educational, psychological or technological trends (Rodríguez-Suárez 2003).

To sum up, in this analysis we have found that many of the strategies described in Table 1 about the teachers' role in VYLLs' motivation have been encountered in our participants' responses. The motivating teacher that our participants have described is a guide and a reference to the VY students, so s/he must be properly qualified, not only in the teaching of English, but also in the teaching of VYL (Flores and Corcoll 2008; Morris and Segura 2003; Mur 2002; Navés and Muñoz 1999; Pino and Rodríguez 2010; Rodríguez-Suárez 2003), so that they can adapt and scaffold students in their learning process, creating a stress-free and risk-taking friendly atmosphere in class. As described in the theoretical framework, her/his personality will also influence students' motivation; so being enthusiastic, positive, creative, and entertaining is of paramount importance in the encouragement of VYLLs' motivation.

3.3.2 Teaching Methodology

About Learners' Exposure to the Language

According to the results, it seems that one of the recurrent themes in our analysis in relation to teaching strategies is the quantity and quality of exposure to the language, particularly the use or not of the mother tongue. Our interviewees seem to agree on the fact that the more exposure the better, mainly given the FL context, as this will be the only input the children receive. One of the participants' comments about this:

We are not going to learn a language unless we first listen to it and then speak. At the beginning they [the children] are not going to understand anything, everything will be as sounds with no meaning. But soon they will understand words within a context and they will start using them in that context. (T9)

This idea is mainly supported by those interviewees who have worked in immersion programmes, as they consider that it is completely feasible to do the whole class in English, without L1 interruptions (Morris and Segura 2003), provided that enough scaffolding is provided, mainly visual support and non-verbal communication, such as gestures. Participant T12 clearly explains this issue: “*linguistic immersion is the best option. Classes must be conducted in English and supported by visual and interactive resources in order to improve understanding.*” (T12). This issue was also stated in Rodríguez (2004) because the main target at this point is that students understand the message holistically (Fleta 2014). In this sense, participants consider the necessity to communicate in the FL as one of the most useful motivating strategies: it builds upon developing children's necessity to communicate in the foreign language, which may be hard to achieve outside the classroom context, where English is rarely spoken.

However, we have also detected some opinions that are in favour of introducing L1 when necessary in order to offer a safe and comfortable context to children, as Hickey et al. (2014) suggest in their study of Welsh preschools, where teachers use the L1 (English) in order to ensure comprehension and at the same time make sure the target language (Welsh) is used exclusively at some times. Thus, using the L1 whenever needed encourages children's motivation through a pleasant experience of learning. In consonance with this vision, children could be allowed to use the L1 in order to favour understanding so as to prepare the final production in the target language. Moreover, teachers must make clear their expectations regarding the use of the L1 and FL to create a secure environment for children, and it must be borne in mind that the target language must be placed at a paramount position, as the goal is to reach the best possible level of the target language (Swain and Lapkin 2013).

Interviewee T5 argues along this line:

It is very important that students listen to a lot of English, although at the beginning they must feel secure and understand what they are doing. The teacher must address them in English most of the class time, but if it is necessary, they will use the mother tongue for a better understanding. (T5)

What seems clear in both positions is that oral skills should be prioritized, as Fleta (2014) suggests.

Regarding the balance of skills, listening and speaking are the most used at this stage, as writing and reading are not consolidated skills even in their mother tongue. Storytelling, songs, poems, etc. should be present in the English classes. A lot of input is necessary as these strategies offer to students a good pronunciation model and they are highly motivating, as most children like to listen to and sing songs. (T27)

So, as Coyle and Gómez (2014) conclude in their study with five-year-old children, songs can be a key tool in learning new vocabulary at a receptive level, although “it is possible that these preschool children, who were at an initial stage in the language learning process, were still unable to actively produce the L2. It is also likely that 90 minutes of input-based activities that required non-verbal responses from the children were insufficient for them to incorporate the words into their productive vocabulary” (p. 283). Therefore, it is necessary to respect children’s silent period (Ellis 1997, 2008) as one teacher reflects, because if we press shy students to speak, they may lose their motivation, and they will not want to participate again:

I consider that more importance should be given to oral comprehension than to production as students do not feel ready to communicate in a spontaneous way, but they do feel comfortable showing they understand the message, although they answer in Spanish. It is more important to promote participation than to press them to express orally. (T14)

So, at this particular stage it is essential to foster children’s participation so that they feel secure and willing to produce language once they are ready after the silent period. For this purpose, it is necessary to create meaningful experiences and familiar contexts for children in which they can use language in real situations. Other participants state that extensive input is useful, provided that an adequate methodology is implemented, as explained by T5: “An exposure to a rich language model during class time through activities that develop the pleasure for the language and that motivate students to use it; just its use is motivating and enriching”.

Finally, and due to the early FL starting within the Spanish curriculum, some teachers (T24, T20, T27, T23) reported experiences of introducing literacy in the FL, based on the Phonics method as one of the most attractive and motivating ways to do so. We find similar experiences in this regard that reinforce the use of this method to successfully introduce EFL phonemes to speakers of other languages (Álvarez-Cofiño 2003; Navarro et al. 2015), provided that L1 phonological awareness has already been started (Ruiz-Bikandi 2003). Taking into consideration Fleta’s (2014) arguments, among others, about the primacy of spoken discourse within the preschool context, we consider that literacy in the FL should wait until children’s spoken competence is consolidated, despite the successful experiences reported.

About VYLL Methodology

According to our participating teachers, in order to motivate students the methodology should be based on the following underpinnings:

Natural Learning

Most participants seem to advocate imitating the natural process of language acquisition in the FL context, as explained by the following participant: *“The other methodology that should be considered is learning by doing, i.e., learning a language and using it to do something fun, motivating and with a purpose; in this way we guarantee meaningful learning”* (T5). Actually, it implies using the language as a tool to carry out other learning tasks and activities, as proposed by CLIL pedagogies, providing the language with a meaningful context, thus fostering students' motivation. In sum, what we pursue is that *“children like foreign language classes because they have fun, play, sing, move around, but they do not understand the usefulness of the language. However, if used as the vehicular language it acquired sense”* (T10).

Furthermore, teachers should consider creating a stress-free and relaxing atmosphere in which different learning rhythms are respected and students feel comfortable (Rodríguez 2004). An appropriate teacher-student relationship is also essential (Brumen 2011). It is necessary to consider that motivation changes according to age (Nikolov 1999), so strategies different from those employed with adults must be considered (Mihaljevic Djigunovic 2012a, b), and activities must be adapted to the characteristics of the VYLL group to increase their motivation (Gilakjani et al. 2012).

Methodology must be active, dynamic, fun and flexible. Children must feel free, confident, comfortable and loved (they are quite vulnerable at that age). (T13)

Playful and Kinaesthetic Learning

Apart from imitating the natural process of language acquisition, playful learning emerges as the second foundation in which VYLL methodology should be built upon. It is important not only because it is part of children's daily activity, but also because long-term motivation will be cultivated, as argued by this participant: *“at this age children should learn by playing, we must motivate and develop a positive attitude towards English. It is our responsibility child's future attitude towards the language.”* (T20).

Linked to this playful context, we have found many references in the interviews in which teachers affirm making use of TPR techniques (T10, T9, T2, T32, T7, T14, T11), using kinaesthetic activities to negotiate meaning within communication. Movement is also encouraged in other studies such as in Fleta (2014). Nevertheless,

some participants (T14) and researchers also call attention to balancing the use of movement and quiet moments in class: in changing the class dynamic, students are more involved in the class (Pino and Rodríguez 2010).

Learning by Surprise or by Discovery

Awakening children's curiosity through activities that incorporate unexpected or magical elements that can surprise children and be visually attractive can be a very useful resource to enhance motivation, according to our participants' responses (T23, T29, T30). This is in line with recent research in which unexpected elements have been proved to be particularly motivating for babies' learning, as unforeseen elements give space for children's imagination (Stahl and Feigenson 2015). Equally interesting are those techniques in which learners learn by discovering, through experimenting with real objects in English. Through this experimentation with the world, the English teacher can find the perfect opportunity to introduce cultural elements, thus increasing students' motivation towards the FL:

The learning of sociocultural aspects of the language should be considered and I think that it is one of the most enjoyable aspects for students. During English classes the sociocultural aspects of the language must be present, such as the typical celebrations (Halloween, Easter), foods (muffins, tea, fish and chips ...), differences regarding timetables, sports, money (pounds) ... (T7).

In the light of our research data, teaching strategies within this field are basically dealing with making children active participants of the learning process, living and experiencing English in authentic situations in a playful and safe teaching context (Lobo 2004; Flores and Corcoll 2008) as VYLL need an organised and structured environment where repetition and routines are present (Shin 2006) and therefore "teachers need to set clear expectations about L1/L2 use in order to create a secure classroom environment in which students are able to engage in inter-action with confidence" (Swain and Lapkin 2013, p. 123).

About the Organization of Language Instruction

In regard to planning motivating lessons, most teachers share the idea of offering frequent input, so that they propose daily sessions, though short (Mur 2002). Despite this frequency, length and intensity are important too, in order to promote a natural transition between the different activities they do (Flores and Corcoll 2008).

I always pursue higher concentration and attention rate of students of five years old, if compared to those of four years old, working with small groups to promote more participation and interaction between students and teacher, and shorter sessions to be divided into two weekly sessions, as with just one longer session per week students feel tired and forget the vocabulary learnt the previous week. (T2)

In this sense it is important to mention that the teacher in charge is not always the most suitable, as "[...] in some countries English in pre-primary institutions is associated with a peripatetic teacher who visits children a couple of times a week, teach-

ing English in short, isolated spurts of between thirty to forty-five minutes of activity” (Mourao 2015, p. 57).

EFL teachers in Spain are mainly the ones in charge of teaching English at preschool, without any training in early childhood education. However, we agree with Cerná (2015) in that “the younger the child starting to learn an L2, the higher the importance of teacher qualifications” (p. 53). The Spanish situation portrayed in our data is also found across different European countries; as Lugossy (Chap. 4, this volume) reflects about the Hungarian context “[...] kindergarten teachers are rarely proficient in English. On the other hand, specialist foreign language teachers employed by kindergartens rarely have the expertise to teach very young learners [...]” (p. 39), so there is a lack of comprehension on how VYLLs learn an FL due to a lack of adequate training on children’s development and early childhood pedagogy (Enever 2015). It is, thus, necessary to address efforts to teacher training programmes, both at the pedagogical and language levels.

Moreover, some participants have highlighted the necessity to coordinate their work with that done by the Pre-primary teacher so as to know students’ necessities, progress, interests and developmental stage. Participant T13 comments:

The teacher in charge of teaching the FL must be in permanent contact with the main teacher so as to know the topic they are dealing with, the main difficulties or progress the students are making, that is, to know more about these little students.

In this coordination, organising their lessons into thematic units and a variety of activities and groupings is essential for providing students with a fun and enjoyable learning experience (T7, T15, T14). Tales can be used as a material, but also as the leitmotif of a lesson plan:

Every semester we work with a story or tale (not necessarily adapted to the pre-primary level as we use traditional tales or others that we have for superior levels). We start by introducing the topic with songs, games and vocabulary and always reviewing the previous content learnt. (T10)

As discussed in the previous section, English must be introduced following the natural dynamics in the early childhood class, using mostly circle times where students can work formats in English (T4, T6, T10, T32).

Lastly, participants feel that the learning of the EFL with VYLLs cannot be enclosed within the classroom; many of them criticise the lack of English exposure through cinema or TV, for instance, thus commenting on the necessity of involving families in the learning: “*It is of paramount importance that families are involved during all the teaching-learning process, by reinforcing their learning and providing the child possibilities to use the language outside the classroom*” (T8); or even to get the home into the classroom, as T18 suggests:

We can ask them to bring to class from home items with words in English or to write down any word they know in English and the next day we talk about it. It is very important they (family) are involved so that children can continue practising English. The more they can listen to the language, the better. (T18)

We detail in what follows a list of activities to get English outside the classroom walls with VYLL that our teachers have proposed in their interviews:

- organise parents and children workshops, for instance, storytelling in English (T29, T32),
- give parents the songs and stories used in the classroom (T2),
- promote watching cartoons in English at home (T27, T32),
- organise the “travelling bag”, in which students will take home a bag with a book every weekend, and they will comment on their experience in a notebook, add drawings or even photos (T14), and
- invite parents with knowledge of the language to the class so that they can participate in any activity (T14).

As a concluding remark about methodological strategies related to motivation and VYLLs, our results are very much in the line with those researchers mentioned previously in the chapter. The motivating methodology described by our participants places exposure in a predominant position. As it is the only contact children may have with the FL, short and frequent sessions (Shin 2007) are recommended, whereas the L1 should be avoided or just relegated to situations that may disrupt the motivating atmosphere in class. Doing so, students’ motivation will be communication-oriented as the language will be the vehicle to fulfil communicative tasks in class. Hence it is convenient to use a holistic approach including guided and free activities by creating opportunities to practice the language in non-formal situations based on children’s previous knowledge and interests (Alstad and Tkachenko, Chap. 9, in this volume), so similar to the L1 learning process (Flores and Corcoll 2008). Focusing attention on oral aspects (Rodríguez 2004), and providing a meaningful and stress-free context, playful and kinaesthetic activities will provide the necessary rich and comprehensible input (Fleta 2014). In addition, as part of these motivational strategies it is important to incorporate activities that include unexpected elements and learning by discovery (Flores and Corcoll 2008), to boost students’ motivation and creativity (Mur 2002). So, the motivating methodology should be based on communicative tasks that promote participation such as circle time, learning areas (Mourao 2014, 2015), songs, tales, puppets, flashcards, etc., as well as manipulative activities. Finally, proper session-planning is also essential, as well as a continuous coordination between teachers in order to perform the described methodology successfully. Aside from this, not only the classroom context is relevant, but also society (Pérez-Esteve and Roig 2009), and family (Flores and Corcoll 2008; Prošić-Santovac 2017).

3.3.3 About Materials and Resources

Another recurrent theme running through the interviews is that the materials and resources used by the teacher need to be varied, and use as much as possible pre-school materials:

The most useful are those that we found in any preschool classroom (as usually all pre-primary classes have a wide variety, such as ABC, numbers, shapes, calendars, colours, realia, toys, fruit toys, animals, toys, class objects, home objects, learning areas, flashcards, DVDs, big books, stickers, work sheets, paints, etc. (T6)

Materials should also be adapted to the group's needs and interests (T6) to foster their motivation: "The choice of material is basic. Many schools base their teaching on a book, in which the contents that are going to be studied has nothing to do with the students they are addressed to and there is no motivation." (T28). Moreover, most teachers consider the Internet as an inexhaustible source of motivating resources: particularly interesting are animated simple and repetitive songs, videos, or storytelling, which promote spoken communication (T7). But ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) are a resource too; the digital whiteboard, above all, can help introducing different formats (photos, videos, texts, etc.) into the class and promotes interaction with the students.

Another recurrent resource in early childhood education according to interviewees is the puppet, which can be extremely motivating for YL and useful in terms of communication, as the following participant explains:

According to my experience, it is very important to use a puppet as it has many functions. There is a moment when students forget that it is the teacher who is speaking and interact with the puppet. [...] It is important that the puppet only speaks English and the children are aware of that, so if they want to be the puppet's friends they must speak in English to communicate. Through this technique students feel very much motivated and confident (they do not feel embarrassed about talking). Students with good behaviour will take the puppet home to practise English with it (parents must participate). (T7)

Finally, participants are not very keen on the use of textbooks at this age, as they cannot match all groups' needs, thus decreasing motivation (T28). However, some interviewees stress the fact that textbooks can sometimes be useful, chiefly the extra resources they provide, such as picture books, sets of flashcards or interactive software (T16, T20).

To sum up, interviewees have manifested some features of the motivating materials for VYLL. According to our analysis, materials should be varied to reach different learning styles and adapted to students' needs and interests. Moreover, they need to be interactive, manipulative and communication-oriented; and at the same time simple, reiterative and visually attractive to help children engage in real communicative situations (mainly orally).

4 Conclusions and Future Directions

Thanks to EU policies the importance of VYL learning to promote language and cultural sensitivity in a plurilingual area has been brought to light, provoking changes in the different member states' education systems. To this regard, several studies stress the role of motivation as the main objective to be achieved in this early teaching/learning process. However, there is still a need for further studies within the particular VYLL context, as recently argued by Murphy and Evangelou (2015). We consider that qualitative analysis has a big potential to address the complexity of this field.

This chapter has presented a study of EFL pre-primary teachers' reflections on their own practice, focusing on the development of students' motivation. Through the analysed interviews a model of motivating strategies for VYLL has emerged, based on three dimensions that need to fit together with one unique purpose, i.e., motivating students. First, we have detected that a friendly and positive personality that provokes a pleasant atmosphere in class can facilitate the learning of the FL, assisting children to take risks in communicative situations. Moreover, the teacher must be able to adapt the lesson to the young learners' peculiarities in term of personality and learning processes, and this involves adapting the teaching method to natural, kinaesthetic, playful learning, including unexpected elements to implement learning by surprise. Additionally, materials must be adjusted to the target group and, in this sense, all preschool materials can become good assets, provided that they promote communication. It is the teacher who must fit together these three aspects in a motivating English classroom; hence, more specific training is required to update teachers' skills about this young group of learners. As Enever (2014) declares "[...] there remains an insufficient supply of motivated, well-prepared teachers available and willing to meet this demand" (p. 231). Finally, we conclude that theory and praxis seem to adjust in terms of motivating strategies, as the results are in line with the analysed theoretical framework.

Future directions in this research would need to contrast other communities, such as preschool teachers or parents. Furthermore, direct observation in the classroom of the strategies detailed in this chapter would also shed light on the complexities of VYLL processes, such as the relationship between students' motivation and parents' knowledge of the target language, or implications of the use of textbooks versus audiovisual materials, or whether need-oriented motivation justifies the abandonment of the L1 in the English preschool classroom. As a final remark, we think that we must be cautious about 'romanticising' the teachers' imperative statements about what must be or should be in the language classrooms in terms of 'good practices', as future research should set up an ethical and responsible theory of preschool EFL leaning and multilingual education.

Appendix

Appendix 1 List of Codes and Frequency

	Paraphrase	Code	Frequency
About the teacher	Knowledge required	KNOW	12
	Empathy	EMPATH	12
	Creative	CREAT	8
	Confidence	CONFI	5
	Enthusiastic	ENTHU	5
About the teaching methodology	Exposure to the FL	EXPO	31
	Playful learning	PLAY	28
	Communication-oriented	COMMU	19
	Natural learning	NAT	16
	Skills distribution	SKILLS	15
	Family's role	FAM	13
	Coordination with the preschool teacher	COORD	12
	Routines and formats	ROUTI	7
	Total Physical Response method	TPR	7
	Classroom atmosphere	CLASS	5
	Content and Language Integrated Learning Methodology	CLIL	5
	Phonics Method	PHONICS	4
	Active learning	ACTIVE	3
	Corners and learning areas	CORNER	3
	Magic or unexpected learners	MAGIC	3
	Circle time or assembly	ASSEM	2
	Cultural elements	CULT	2
	Grouping	GROUP	2
	About materials	Varied materials	VARIED
Use of songs		SONG	9
Use of storytelling and tales		STORY	9
Adapt materials		ADAPT	8
Audio-visual materials		AUDIOVIS	5
Information and Communication Technologies		ICT	5
Use of textbooks		TEXTBOOK	5
Use of puppets		PUPPET	3

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Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Creating Multilingual Spaces: The Case of English Teaching in Norwegian Early Childhood Education



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Abstract This chapter turns the attention to teachers' practices and beliefs about teaching English in early childhood education and care (ECEC) contexts comprising a holistic view on upbringing, learning and care. We explore how teachers manage educational environments for language learning and relate to the linguistic resources available in the group. The data we present come from two studies in Norwegian ECEC; one multiple case study exploring second and foreign language teaching practices and beliefs (Alstad GT: Barnehagen som språklæringsarena: En kassstudie av tre barnehagelæreres andrespråksdidaktiske praksiser [Language learning environments in early childhood education. A case study of second language teaching practices in Norway]. PhD thesis. Universitetet i Oslo, Humanistisk fakultet, Oslo, 2013; Alstad GT: Andrespråk og flerspråklighet i barnehagen: Forskningsperspektiver på barnehagepraksiser [Second language and multilingualism in early childhood education: Research on teaching practices]. Fagbokforlaget, Bergen, 2016) and one action research study investigating the introduction of English as foreign language (Tkachenko E, Bakken Å, Kaasa GI, Talén D: Lek med engelsk i barnehagen: Gleder med språklig mangfold [Playing with English in kindergarten. Enjoying language diversity]. Kommuneforlaget, Oslo, 2013). The data demonstrate different methods of early language teaching in terms of managing the classroom for language learning and language choices and practices. In our discussion, we call for a re-examination of language teaching methods and for a more holistic approach to language teaching practices in early childhood education contexts. In the light of our findings, we discuss how linguistic diversity makes a powerful tool that fosters children's engagement in the learning processes.

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1 Introduction

In Norway, as well as in many European countries, there is a trend to start teaching English as a foreign language early, already at a preschool age (Eurydice 2012; Murphy and Evangelou 2015). This tendency is not surprising since in today's society English is a dominant feature of the linguistic landscape in which the children are immersed. At the political level, the European Commission (2003) stresses the importance of early foreign language teaching from a very early age and encourages the European education to ensure proficiency in two foreign languages in addition to one's home language(s) or first language (L1). However, researchers have recently called for re-examination of what methodologies and approaches to language instruction are used with very young language learners and which of them provide successful results (see e.g., Mourão and Lourenço 2015). The European Commission's guidelines for early language learning emphasize that foreign language learning in the early years should be "a communication tool to be used in other activities" and it "should be integrated into contexts in which language is meaningful and useful such as in everyday or playful situations" (European Commission 2011, p. 14). However, as some studies have documented, practitioners in early childhood education and care (ECEC) often lack appropriate methodologies and strategies for creating meaningful contexts for foreign/second¹ language learning with young learners and resort to quite formal teaching methods that are in conflict with the political guidelines and early years pedagogies (see e.g., Lugossy, chap. 10, this vol.).

At the same time as teaching English from a very young age² grows in popularity and gains political importance in Europe, the linguistic diversity increases in the western societies, in general, and in schools and ECEC, in particular, due to immigration (Statistics Norway 2016a, b). Accordingly, although many children are exposed to languages other than the majority language in their everyday life at home, their multilingual competence may nevertheless stay unnoticed or unvalued in a majority language context of education (Cummins 2007). This chapter combines these two perspectives, namely, early English language teaching and children's multilingual competence in ECEC. The particular focus is how these perspectives might enrich and strengthen each other.

Studies of language teachers' beliefs show that these, as well as classroom practices are shaped by both the students' age and the institutional context (Breen et al. 2001). In European early childhood contexts, little is known about the teachers' understandings of the facilitation processes of foreign language development. As

¹The term 'second language' is often used to describe the specific language learned after a first language, especially in contexts when the language learner is a resident of an area where the language is in general use. In contrast, a foreign language is a language that is learned in an area and context where that language is not generally used. In this chapter, we use the distinction between 'foreign (or additional) language' and 'second language', even if the term 'second language' is more often used as a general term comprising both contexts (Block 2003, p. 56f).

²In this article, we define 'very young language learners' as children aged 0–6 years.

several researchers point out (Cummins 2007; Genesee 2015), language teaching practices have, for a long time, been shaped by a commonly held belief that languages should be kept separate. As a result, minority children are often discouraged from using their home languages in school, as one of the objectives for them is to learn the majority language (Hélot 2012). In the same vein, foreign language (FL) teachers often impose a language policy that enjoins the students to solely use the target language which allows only a minimal use of the learners' home language(s). Most of these studies are carried out in formal school contexts and rarely in educational contexts that usually involve very young language learners under the age of six. In creating multilingual pedagogical spaces, there are always variations in the degree to which one has the unlimited capacity to exercise choice (Cummins 2009). This chapter focuses on such choices when creating multilingual spaces in monolingual settings.

Following this short introduction, we provide a literature review of the topic. This will be followed by a short description of the context for the two studies, namely, we give an outline of the sociolinguistic situation in Norway and Norwegian ECEC education as well as provide information on the methodology employed in this study. We then turn to data analysis focusing on the management of the learning environment and the teachers' language choices where we discuss some common issues which arise in the two studies.

2 Literature Review

2.1 *Language Teachers' Beliefs*

Studies focusing on language teachers' beliefs, comprise language teachers' professional, linguistic and pedagogical knowledge, assumptions, reflections, cognition and perceptions. The research field of language teacher beliefs has become an established domain of inquiry within educational linguistics, particularly since the 1990s (Borg 2006, p. 41). The research domain draws on traditions of general educational research on teachers' knowledge and thinking. Besides, it relies on research traditions in applied linguistics studying both observable language use and the norms, values and conventions underlying such language use. The studies of language teachers' beliefs are thematically orientated towards either generic or domain-specific elements of language teaching, where the former aims to understand the processes of planning and decision-making irrespective of curricular areas, whereas the latter focuses on cognitions related to specific curricular areas such as literacy, grammar or writing, i.e. the traditional formal school contexts. Research on language teachers' beliefs in ECEC contexts had its early beginnings in the 2000s (Burgess et al. 2001; Hindman and Wasik 2008; Lynch 2009; McLachlan et al. 2006; Ure and Raban 2001; Yoo 2005), focusing first and foremost on literacy instruction in monolingual contexts. Thus, the focus on ECEC teachers' beliefs about pedagogical aspects related to multilingualism and second language teaching will extend our knowledge about language teachers' beliefs and in particular their language choices.

There is a growing body of research on teachers' language choices and ideologies in multilingual school contexts. Some studies investigate the use of students' previous linguistic experiences and teachers' reflections on language choices in education, such as the extent of first language (L1) use and the teachers' beliefs surrounding what role the L2 ought to play (e.g., Crawford 2004; Vaish 2012). Other studies show that many teachers use first language in second/foreign language classes, in spite of the recommendations and to the contrary as outlined in the various guidelines and curricula (Cook 2001; Levine 2011; Polio and Duff 1994; Song and Andrews 2009). One study, for instance, explores the pre-service teachers' ambivalence in using L1 in FL teaching (Macaro 2001). Although the student teachers believed that the use of L1 supports the development of the target language, they also considered this as unfortunate and that students should have as much exposure to the target language as possible. Studies also reveal different purposes that teachers have in using L1. One purpose identified is of organizational nature, for example, in giving comprehensible instructions. Another purpose is linguistically orientated, i.e. using L1 as a tool for second language learning, such as explanations, translations or metalinguistic comments and comparisons (Polio and Duff 1994). Ellis underlines how different views on L1 use in L2/FL teaching relate to different theoretical frameworks (see also Swain and Lapkin 2013):

From an interactionist perspective, emphasis needs to be given to ensuring learners receive maximum exposure to L2 input. In contrast, in sociocultural theory the L1 is seen as a useful cognitive tool for scaffolding L2 learner production and facilitating private speech [...]. Theories of L2 motivation also lend support to the use of the L1 as a means of reducing learner anxiety and creating rapport in the classroom (Ellis 2012, p. 128).

Gradually an alternative approach in the L1 versus target language debate has emerged, challenging a monolingual 'bias' in both research and teaching.

2.2 *The Multilingual Turn in Education*

The 'multilingual turn' focuses more on the multilingual practices that characterize a dynamic, flexible view of multilingual competence (Baker 2003; Blackledge and Creese 2010; Creese and Blackledge 2010; May 2014). According to Baker (2003, p. 288), the term *translanguaging* was originally coined in 1994 by Cen Williams in Wales to describe a systematic way of organizing teaching in which some parts of the training took place in Welsh and other parts in English. Translanguaging is not about code-switching in the traditional sense, but a facilitation that normalizes multilingualism without distinguishing between functional languages. While code-switching is used as a term to describe the exchange between language systems, translanguaging does not refer to a monolingual standard in the same way:

Our concept of translanguaging shifts the lens from cross-linguistic influence, proposing that what bilinguals do is to intermingle linguistic features that have here to be administered or linguistically assigned to a particular language or language variety. Translanguaging is thus the communicative norm of bilingual communities and cannot be compared to a prescribed monolingual use (García 2009, p. 51).

In recent research 'translanguaging' is used not only as a tool for developing literacy in several languages, but it also functions as a descriptive term for language use in and outside the classroom, whether or not it is employed for teaching purposes. The question of whether or not home language(s) should be used is thus beyond contention; instead, as several studies have pointed out, the focus is directed towards how to use the linguistic resources available (Franken and August 2011; Inbar-Lourie 2010).

Studies on translanguaging from early childhood education contexts point out how very young language learners translanguage, apparently not bound to implicit or explicit rules about what languages to use (García 2009; García and Kleifgen 2010; Garrity et al. 2015), and display how teachers respond to and follow up the children's language use (Garrity et al., 2015). In Schwartz and Asli's (2014) study of bilingual teachers' language strategies in an Arabic-Hebrew kindergarten in Israel, the bilingual teachers frequently adopted a translanguaging strategy. According to one of the teachers, this enabled the children to learn efficiently. The studies of multilingual learning environment referred to so far relate to cases where teachers have expertise in or otherwise have access to the languages involved in the educational setting. Access to all languages involved in diverse linguistic settings is not realistic in many educational contexts, and in Norwegian ECEC it is not common to have practitioners who have competence in all the children's home languages (Andersen et al. 2011, p. 84).

2.3 Multilingualism in Monolingual Settings

More recent studies show how multilingualism can be used systematically as a resource in teaching irrespective of the teachers' competence in the students' home languages. Drawing on the children's competence in different languages may involve activities such as group work, where children sharing the same language work together on specific tasks and then present their work to other students. Children and teachers together can explore similarities and differences between different languages they have proficiency in, and teaching one another words and expressions in different languages, giving those students who have a command of different languages the expert role (Genesee 2015). In a study of a monolingual kindergarten teacher's use of the children's home language (Spanish) de Oliveira et al. (2016) clearly indicate that monolingual teachers can develop skills to use students' home languages as an effective literacy teaching tool. Similarly, Schwarzer et al. (2003) report how a monolingual teacher in a linguistically diverse American pre-kindergarten class creates a multiliterate community. The teacher is actively working to foster the children's linguistic awareness and skills in both their second language and home language(s).

In the Scandinavian context, a few action research projects have been carried out exploring how teaching can take advantage of the linguistic diversity in education. A pilot study in Danish kindergarten, involving children under the age of 6,

(Kristensen and Daugaard 2012) and a longitudinal action research study of children 6–15 years (Laursen 2010) show, among other things, how teachers and children explore letters and alphabets across languages and how minority children act as language experts both with regard to adults and other children. Danbolt and Kulbrandstad's study (2013) of teaching literacy and multilingualism in grade 2 (students aged 7), demonstrates how multilingual awareness may contribute to the students' literacy development, and how the students' parents can become actively involved in the work.

These studies have parallels to Cummins and Early's studies of identity texts (2011). Cummins and Early describe how Madiha, a 13 year old student who had recently arrived in Canada, developed her literacy skills by using her home language (Urdu), despite the fact that the teacher had no knowledge of Urdu and that the medium of instruction was English. When the teacher encouraged Madiha to actively draw on her linguistic and cognitive resources in creating identity texts, it was possible to display and acknowledge Madiha's intellectual, linguistic, multi-modal and artistic talent that Cummins refers to as collaborative relations of power:

Students whose schooling experiences reflect collaborative relations of power participate confidently in instruction as a result of the fact that their sense of identity is being affirmed and extended in their interactions with educators. They also know that they will be heard and respected within the classroom. Schooling amplifies rather than silences their power of self-expression (Cummins 2000, p. 44).

According to García (2009), multilingualism in education is not only a practical question about the extent to which different languages are taught or spoken, but it also reflects different views on multilingualism and multilingual development. Some conditions are controlled by larger societal factors as language policy and norms, while other choices and decisions are exercised and negotiated in classrooms (García and Menken 2010). The purpose of this chapter is twofold: First, the chapter is intended to investigate teachers' beliefs and practices regarding foreign language teaching in monolingual contexts. Furthermore, the chapter provides a discussion on how such teaching strategies potentially might be relevant to second language teaching in similar contexts.

3 Background

3.1 *The Norwegian Sociolinguistic Context*

Norway is a small country with a population of 5.2 million people. It has two official languages (Norwegian and Sami) where the Norwegian language has two different written varieties, namely, Bokmål and Nynorsk. Furthermore, due to their high social status, dialects are widely used in all spheres of everyday life, including educational and political arenas. In addition to the official languages, a number of other languages used by minority groups are acknowledged by the state (e.g. Kven,

Norwegian Sign Language, Norwegian Romany and Romanes). As many other European countries, Norway is experiencing an increase in the influx of immigrants. Immigrants or persons born in Norway to two immigrant parents, make up 15.9% of the population of Norway (Statistics Norway 2016b). In 2016, the largest groups of immigrants were from Poland, Lithuania and Somalia. There are no official statistics on immigrant languages spoken in today's Norway. However, according to the immigrants' background, Polish, Lithuanian and Somali are estimated to be the non-Scandinavian languages with the most speakers. As the composition to the immigrant population changes over time, the immigrant languages spoken will change accordingly.

The majority of the population has a reasonable command of English. With the implementation of a new curriculum in schools in 1997, English became compulsory in 1st grade (previously 4th grade). In 2010, the Norwegian National Centre for Foreign Languages in Education's field of responsibility was expanded to include early childhood education. There are no statistics reporting to what extent English is introduced in early childhood education and care settings in Norway, but there seems to be a tendency in introducing foreign languages earlier in education system, similar to tendencies in Europe in general (Eurydice 2012).

3.2 Early Childhood Education in Norway

Early childhood education and care in Norway comprise children under school age, aged 0–6 years. ECEC institutions are called 'barnehage', literally translated as 'kindergarten'.³ The size of children's groups in Norwegian kindergartens varies according to the children's age. Some groups may be organized by age, i.e. 0–3 years or 3–6 years, other groups may consist of children of all ages in the same group (0–6 years). On average, there are between 12 and 18 children in a group, with 3–4 practitioners working in any given group. Some of the practitioners are teachers, while others are assistants. At a national level 35% of the staff in Norwegian kindergartens work as teachers with a bachelor degree in early childhood education and care. In addition, 39% are untrained assistants, and 17% are assistants with a lower educational background (Gulbrandsen 2009).

All kindergartens in Norway, both municipal and private, are obliged to follow the national curriculum for early childhood education and care (ECEC) – the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (Ministry of Education and Research 2011). The document offers a comprehensive socio-educational policy framework for ECEC, deeply rooted in an educational philosophy with a child-centered approach to teaching and learning and in values as Nordic child-

³In the Norwegian early childhood education and care contexts, there is no distinction between 'kindergarten' and 'preschool', however 'kindergarten' is used generally and is the term we use in this chapter.

centeredness in general (Wagner and Einarsdottir 2006). According to the Framework Plan, free play and children's participation are important aspects of ECEC in Norway. Thus, the informal language learning environments in Norwegian ECEC differ from formal language learning environments in school contexts. Language learning activities are closely linked with informal everyday activities that occur during play, upbringing and other interaction. However, formal language teaching activities planned and led by the staff are also embraced in the Framework plan. Along the scale of incidental, contextualized language learning versus learning through direct instruction, Norwegian ECEC teaching is close to the incidental end of the scale (Aukrust 2007, p. 21).

As a result of migration, many children who speak a home language other than the majority language start their formal education in Norwegian ECEC and/or schools with limited proficiency in the majority language. The number of children from linguistic and cultural minorities, i.e. children learning Norwegian as their second language, has increased in recent years, from 6% of all children attending kindergarten in 2003 to 15% in 2015. Although ECEC is voluntary, nearly all children in Norway (above 90%) attend kindergartens. However, ECEC attendance of children from linguistic and cultural minorities is somewhat lower; i.e. 75% of all children in this age group (Statistics Norway 2016a).

According to García's notions of monoglossic and heteroglossic ideologies (2009), the socio-political setting in the Norwegian educational system is based on a monoglossic norm. Although the latest White papers on both integration policy (Ministry of Children Equality and Social Inclusion 2012) and education policy (Ministry of Education and Research 2013, 2016) promote linguistic diversity as a resource, ECEC are still primarily seen as an important context for learning Norwegian. The framework plan states that the ECEC staff are supposed to "work actively" in order to promote Norwegian language skills, in addition to "support[ing]" the emergent bilinguals in the use of their first language (Ministry of Education and Research 2011, p. 31). Since 2003, there have been several government initiatives to increase the number of minority children in ECEC, for example, through the government subsidies that foster early intervention and language development. A recent evaluation of the government subsidies reports that the initiatives are used to facilitate Norwegian as a second language (Rambøll Management 2008, 2014), and national surveys report that only 15% of the Norwegian ECEC institutions which have children from minority backgrounds, regularly and systematically support the children's home language development (Andersen et al. 2011). The support of the bi-/multilingual children's home language is usually the responsibility of the bilingual assistants, who may organize language stimulation activities in small groups, provide language help/interpreting for the children in the whole-group activities run in Norwegian, or work with the same topic in the children's home language(s) as the whole group is engaged in. It seems that home language support often aims at scaffolding the minority children's understanding of the activities in the majority language, Norwegian, rather than developing language skills in the home languages.

4 Methodology

The data we present and discuss come from two different studies in which second/foreign language teaching practices in Norwegian ECEC were in focus (Alstad 2013, 2016; Tkachenko et al. 2013). Both studies were conducted in monolingual settings where Norwegian language was the dominant language. Both studies had an explorative qualitative research design. As pointed out earlier, the data consist of in-depth interviews with teachers, teachers' narratives about their own work and video-recorded observations of teacher-child interactions.

4.1 A Case Study of Teachers' Second Language Practices and Beliefs

One of the studies (Alstad 2013, 2016) referred to in this chapter, was a study of Norwegian ECEC teachers' second language teaching practices in terms of their management of language learning, language use, and their knowledge, perceptions, and understanding of their second language teaching.

4.1.1 Research Objectives and Questions

The purpose of the study was to investigate Norwegian early childhood education as an L2 learning environment and shed light on how the language teaching practices and beliefs are embedded in and related to overall historical, cultural, political and social contexts. The study addressed two research questions. The first question concerned the teachers' preferences regarding second language learning settings for such young language learners, while the second question pertained how multilingualism was expressed in their language teaching practices.

4.1.2 A Case Study Methodology

In order to describe and analyze ECEC teachers' second language teaching practices in detail, a qualitative case study methodology was adapted. According to Yin (2009, p. 18) a case study is an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context". In general, qualitative case studies are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of participants by using multiple sources of data. In addition, it draws on existing theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. By using observations and interviews, this study documented the teachers' views and reflections, observable language use and interactions with L2 learners, and their language teaching methods and activities.

4.1.3 Participants

The participants were purposively sampled from the local authorities' pool of experienced teachers (Cohen et al. 2007, p. 114). This chapter focuses on one of the participants from this study, called Astrid, who works in a public, mainstream kindergarten. Astrid holds a bachelor degree in early childhood education and has been passionately engaged in the facilitation of children's language development. Her degree includes a course in child language. At the starting point of data collection, Astrid had over 30 years of teaching experience; in addition, Astrid had carried out a project involving the teaching of English as a foreign language, which had lasted for 1 year prior to the starting point of data collection. In her group, there were 16 children aged 0–6 years, organized in one group with approximately equal distribution between each age. Two of the children were bilinguals, one speaking Norwegian and Vietnamese and the other speaking Thai and Norwegian at home. The rest of the children were speaking Norwegian at home. The observed interactions between Astrid and the children took place in Norwegian and English.

4.1.4 Data Collection

The data collection methods included observations and interviews. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted. The researcher used an interview guide with prepared open-ended questions, allowing new ideas to be brought up and followed-up through the interview. The interviews focused on Astrid's conceptions about language teaching in general and on her own practices in particular. Astrid was asked to provide examples of what she considered good language teaching and to comment on why she had used a particular strategy or activity. The data also include observations of language events in different activities such as play and circle time. The observations of teacher-child interactions were video-recorded during a period of 4 weeks including interactions that took place in both informal settings, like play, and more formal settings, like circle time. Nine different activities, such as interactions during circle time, informal interactions in play, reading aloud, block play, writing activities and songs were observed by the researcher, they amounted to 2 h and 12 min of observational data. Astrid was asked to comment on these events before and after the observations were video-recorded. The observational data and interview data were collected simultaneously, and some of the observations were used as a background in developing the interview guide for second and third interview with the teacher. Transcriptions of the interviews and observations were the basis for the analysis, and were used to identify the teacher's L2 teaching practices. Prior to data collection, written informed consent was obtained from the teacher and from the parents. The study was approved by the Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Social Science Data Service.

4.2 *Action-Based Research on Introducing English in Norwegian ECEC*

The second study (Tkachenko et al. 2013) was a development project that lasted for 3 years, from 2008 to 2011, and involved more than 30 kindergartens with over 1000 children aged 1–6 years old.

4.2.1 Project Objectives and Organization

This project was experimental in nature, with focus on introducing English as a new element in the kindergartens' language environment, rather than on the children's achievement of certain levels of English language proficiency. This choice was made taking into account that learning English is not part of the national preschool curriculum for Norwegian ECEC (Ministry of Education and Research 2011) and in working with the very young learners, the emphasis should be more on process-oriented, rather than result-oriented goals.

The project started with a kick-off seminar for the practitioners where the objectives were discussed and major principles formulated. All kindergartens received teaching materials for a start-up, a package *Learning English with Teddy* (Monsen 2008), which included a Teddy bear, several short picture books about Teddy, a CD with some English songs and a brochure with the lyrics, and a teacher's guide with suggestions for how to use the materials and ideas for learning activities. The participating kindergartens were organised in network groups that met regularly throughout the project period. Every 4–6 months, all participating kindergartens were invited to take part in the project seminars. The network groups and the seminars formed a space in which it was possible to exchange experiences and ideas, evaluate the project results and interventions as well as to develop theoretical and pedagogical principles.

Each kindergarten could freely choose the children's groups it wanted to work with and the teaching methods, organizational principles and any additional materials to be used in teaching English. Some kindergartens chose to start with structured and teacher-led activities that took place once or twice a week for 15–30 min (depending on the age group); others chose to incorporate English in their usual everyday activities (e.g. singing English songs at circle times, read some English books when came natural, do the counting in English when it was appropriate, learn some English phrases in different situations, etc.). This diversity of approaches allowed us to evaluate different experiences, and strengths and weaknesses of various teaching methods and organization models, as well as to obtain insight into the factors that may positively influence the project implementation.

4.2.2 Action Research Methodology

This study was grounded in action research methodology (Tripp 2005). Action research is usually described as practice-based research undertaken by those who participate in that practice. The aim of action research is quite often to change and improve the observed practice, and in educational contexts this often might be to improve or make one's own teaching more effective or influence the students' learning (Tripp 2005).

During the three-year period, the practitioners involved in the project aimed at changing and improving the observed practice with focus on enriching the pre-schools' linguistic environment. Throughout the duration of this project, the researcher closely observed how the practitioners met and resolved the challenges that their planned interventions posed. Different "actions/interventions" were tried out in each of the participating kindergartens when introducing English in their linguistic environments, such as singing English songs, reading books in English, having an English speaking character during circle times. The interventions would be subsequently appraised and re-implemented, often with some modifications, being continually responsive to the practitioners' and children's emerging needs. Thus, the research process can be characterized as cyclic, responsive and emergent (Tripp 2005).

4.2.3 Participants

More than 30 kindergartens with over 1000 children aged 1–6 years old participated in the project during the three-year-period. The kindergartens were mainstream Norwegian kindergartens, some were municipal and some privately owned. Since each kindergarten had freedom to decide on how to organize the project work with English, they could also chose on the responsible teachers to run the English activities. Some kindergartens assigned this mission to one particular teacher who had responsibility for English activities; in other kindergartens, they decided to involve the whole pedagogical team in this project work; and some kindergartens invited a native-speaking English teacher. The practitioners involved in the project represented the whole spectrum of kindergarten personnel: qualified pre-school teachers with a Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education and Care, qualified staff with professional college/high school education in working with children, and teacher assistants with no formal pedagogical qualifications. Most of the participating practitioners were L2 users of English and had enough proficiency in English to use it with the children; however, some kindergartens assigned the responsibility for English to those who had it as L1, if they had an English-speaking practitioner among the staff, or engaged a qualified English-speaking teacher on a part-time basis.

4.2.4 Data Collection Methods

The project work was documented by the practitioners in each kindergarten, normally in the form of narratives from practice which they wrote down and/or orally presented at the seminars and in the evaluation and supervision sessions. Many kindergartens normally use narratives from practice as their standard internal documentation form, that is why it was chosen for the documentation of this project. The aim of narratives from practice is not to render the event exactly as it happened (event-as-lived), but to reconstruct it with a focus on the narrator's interpretation of this event (event-as-told) (Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Cortazzi 2002).

The project leaders and the researcher would visit the kindergartens involved in the project, at least twice a year, to observe, consult and evaluate the project. In addition, an annual evaluation was conducted based on the interviews and surveys with the kindergarten personnel and the children's parents. These data, evaluation reports and narratives from practice are used here to illustrate and point out some of the findings and results.

4.3 Data Analysis

This chapter is based on a reanalysis of the data from the two studies: the teachers' written narratives, transcribed video-recorded observations and transcribed semi-structured interviews with the teachers. For this chapter, we have made a rough translation of the relevant extracts into English. As is typical for many qualitative studies, an abductive analytical approach (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2009) was used in order to simultaneously explore the theoretical insights and empirical data. While induction stems from empirical facts and deduction from theory, an abductive approach stems from empirical facts, but do not reject theoretical conceptions. The abductive approach implies that the researcher throughout research process, alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other (Alvesson og Sköldbberg 2009, p. 4). The content analysis of the data involved an alternation between the written narratives, transcribed interactions and interviews in order to shed light on the many facets of language teaching as well as the teachers' descriptions and rationale for providing different kinds of support.

The data were analysed on two levels. In the analysis of the *organizational* level, we made episode summaries of language learning activities based on categories derived partly from our data and partly adopted from second language teaching research (Gibbons 2006, p. 95; Tsui 2003, p. 138; Wright 2006, p. 74). This involved categories related to the physical and organizational aspects, such as 'time', 'participant structure', 'room' and 'group organization', and 'resources'. These episode summaries have two purposes. First, they form the basis for analysing organizational aspects of the kindergarten teachers' practices. And second, they constitute a contextual framework with which to undertake the analysis at the second, *detailed*

linguistic level, relating to language use and teachers' decision-making mechanism and understandings of language use, such as language choice (Cummins 2007, 2009; Cummins and Early 2011) and bilingual strategies (García 2009).

5 Results and Discussion

In our presentation and discussion of the results, we focus on the teachers' practices and beliefs about second and foreign language teaching in the ECEC context. We have chosen some narratives from practice and observations from our research material that document good practices and analyze the examples of strategies the teachers used and their beliefs with regard to creating multilingual spaces for language learning, scaffolding the children's learning and making language learning meaningful. In what follows, we organized our analysis and discussion in several aspects that turned out to be prominent in our data. We discuss how the teachers managed the learning environment to maximize language learning opportunities, how they optimized the physical environment for language learning and what strategies they used to make children more engaged in language learning. We also analyze the choice of the language for interactions and discuss how introducing a foreign language in the ECEC's environment may empower the children who have other home language than Norwegian and promote linguistic diversity.

5.1 *Managing the Learning Environment and Maximizing Language Learning Opportunities*

The narratives, interviews and observations from both studies reflect the teachers' beliefs on how the language learning environment were managed in a way that best facilitated learning. The analysis of our data shows that the teachers espoused a holistic approach to English learning and teaching, by combining both direct intervention, which is based on a specific, structural syllabus, and a more indirect intervention, which creates conditions where children can learn experientially through learning how to communicate in the target language (TL) (Ellis 2009, p. 16). The teachers helped language learning spaces to develop and take form by creating connections between teacher-led activities, where a new language is introduced and practiced for the first time, and child-initiated activities, which provided several opportunities for practicing and exploration of the TL. This holistic approach is in line with the Nordic early childhood education tradition of combining upbringing, teaching and care (Ministry of Education and Research 2011).

This holistic approach may take different forms, something which was also reflected in our data. By way of illustration, let's take a look at the following narrative from practice written down by Anne, a teacher in the Mountain kindergarten, in

autumn 2009, which was one of the kindergartens in the action-based research project. This narrative is about the decision to bring Teddy, an English-speaking teddy bear, which was part of the teaching materials consistently used in teacher-led English learning activities in a classroom, on a weekly tour to the forest. The narrative shows how a different kind of language learning situation, which mostly was child-initiated, was promoted.

Narrative 1, Study 2: What Are Cones Called in English?

In the Mountain kindergarten, we have been working with English for a while and the children were introduced to Teddy. Today is a tour-day, and we are planning to go to our usual place in the forest near a small lake. Eva, the pedagogical leader, is sitting in the dressing room and is holding Teddy on her lap. "Who wants to have Teddy in the bag today?" she asks the children in Norwegian. Almost everybody raises their hands. Eva decides to use children's playground rhyme to choose who is going to have Teddy in their bag – it will be a five-year-old boy, Tor. He looks happy and says in English: "*Hello, Teddy!*".

The teacher then puts Teddy in Tor's bag and Tor takes care to position him properly so that Teddy sticks out a little bit in order to be able to see where they are going. They arrive at the lake 30 minutes later and start playing soon after.

"Can I take Teddy over there to find some cones?" Tor asks the teacher.

"Yes, of course, you can. Take Teddy with you and let him play in the forest as well," says Eva.

After some time, Tor approaches the teacher again and asks what the cones are called in English. Eva gives him the word in English and asks why he is so curious about this. "It's because Teddy wants to know what those are."

In this narrative, we see how the teacher's decision to take the English-speaking character with them on a tour creates opportunities for the children to get involved in language use in the target language and learn new words in the new language. Tor spontaneously practiced saying a phrase in English that he had learned before, by uttering "Hello Teddy". It is also possible that he might have been practicing saying more phrases in his free play with the English-speaking character. Although we do not know what language the child was using in his communication with Teddy, the fact that he asked the teacher about a word in English may suggest that he was likely to have been playing in English, i.e. using some English words and probably speaking pretend English. As shown in the narrative, the setting lead to a new word in the target language, which the boy initiated himself, a word that would have probably not been taught in the indoor environment where the teacher-led activities found place more often. Research draws attention to the fact that teachers seem to underestimate outdoor learning opportunities, and emphasizes how children need differ-

ent environments to create meaning, individually and together with adults and peers (Norling and Sandberg 2015). Teacher-child interactions in an outdoor environment might differ from teacher-child interactions in an indoor environment. The outdoor environment opens the possibility for a different set of conversational topics, in particular, topics about the phenomena accessible from the immediate physical surroundings, such as plants, animals, water and rocks.

Our data reveal the teachers' attempts to incorporate language learning in the meaningful context for the children and make it an integral part of everyday activities, not just keep it to isolated teacher-led activities. This holistic approach is also reflected in terms of planning. In the interviews in study 1, the teacher, Astrid, pointed out that language learning or teaching should not be limited to a lesson or time and space. According to her, teaching English should take place in all settings and be part of all activities throughout the day, without its being random or unsystematic. Astrid prepared a syllabus, including learning objectives, and a list of topics and suggestions about the sort of activities that should be carried out during circle time and in groups. In addition, she prepared a weekly schedule which she handed out to the parents, including the words and phrases that she would teach. Although only the activities in circle time were mentioned in the weekly schedule, the syllabus stated that teaching English was integrated in all activities, i.e. play activities, wardrobe situation, outdoor play, meals and activities without specific learning objectives:

Teacher Statement 1, Study 1

The syllabus states that we are supposed to focus on English during free play and we search for opportunities to do so. I had not planned to join the children in the doll play area today, but I noticed an opportunity and then joined in. We have planned to use some of the topics set by the schedule and maybe expand and elaborate on this (Teacher Astrid).

By making it explicit in her weakly plans that both formal and informal activities should include teaching English, Astrid established an understanding among the staff that all situations can potentially be used for language learning and that the staff had to actively look for language learning opportunities in these situations. Rather than a detailed, top-down planning of the language teaching activities, she underlined the importance of a more bottom-up approach. In the interviews, Astrid stated that such work with English would be appropriate for the children's language development in Norwegian as well:

Teacher Statement 2, Study 1

In my opinion, the children's Norwegian proficiency hasn't suffered from their being introduced to English, it's rather the opposite (Teacher Astrid)

When elaborating on her statement, Astrid explained that the entire staff had a common goal and worked systematically with language development in all situations, and that this resulted in a significant improvement in the children's Norwegian and English proficiency. While the daily L1 teaching included child directed speech, reading and the use of learning materials, this focus on English provided a common

understanding of language teaching in general, resulting in larger variety of language teaching opportunities than before, as Astrid commented in the interviews:

Teacher Statement 3, Study 1

We use a lot more props now. Previously when we assisted the children in getting dressed we'd say things such as "this is your sock", for example. But now they're getting exposed to this kind of information in so many different ways. We have pictures on the walls, we repeat the words and pronounce them more clearly. For example, in circle time and Kim's play, we make photo stories and explore the difference between words in Norwegian and English: "We call this 'strømpebukse' [tights], but what's that called in English?" When the entire staff do this, and in slightly different ways too, all of this will have a cumulative effect on the children's learning (Teacher Astrid).

In the example that Astrid mentioned, "We call this 'strømpebukse' [tights], but what's that called in English?", we can take notice of the teacher's awareness of the variety of opportunities that can arise from teaching languages by means of cross-linguistic instructional strategies. According to Cummins, such strategies acknowledge the reality of, and strongly promote, two-way cross-language transfer (Cummins 2007, p. 229).

Additionally, in Astrid's quote we can observe how the English syllabus serves another function beyond being a tool for particular teaching activities. According to Astrid, a detailed syllabus on language learning and teaching, which is not common in Norway, raised the kindergarten staff's awareness of language learning opportunities in general and, therefore, played an important role in noticing when such opportunities may arise both in respect to the child-initiated and staff-initiated activities. Informal language learning activities, as reported above, might be challenging for the teachers, as the learning situation occurs spontaneously and thus cannot be planned in detail in advance. Teachers might therefore benefit from a balance of scripted lessons and *disciplined improvisation* (Sawyer 2011). Even if spontaneous and incidental, improvisation is still *disciplined* because it always occurs within broader structures and a specific educational framework. Improvisation demands of teachers a high level of expertise in exactly the same way as jazz improvisation does of jazz musicians. Like detailed planning, improvisation may lead to challenging learning environments as long as the teacher is aware of the learning potential of both approaches. Recent studies illustrate how improvised learning environments, which are responsive to children's situated initiatives and interests, often lead to advanced and linguistically challenging conversations, such as children's own narratives (Alstad & Kulbrandstad, 2017). However, both detailed planning and other more comprehensive educational frames relate to issues of optimization of the available human, temporal, spatial and material resources.

The teaching practices presented above are characterized by both organizational and linguistic flexibility. The organizational approaches can take the form of planned sessions drawing on a structural syllabus. However, the teaching can also find place in unplanned sessions, such as in play activities. The linguistic flexibility is related to the language choices and cross-linguistic instructional strategies, using Norwegian and English in flexible ways in order to meet the children's needs and interests. In

the following text we will elaborate how these practices and beliefs are deeply embedded in the holistic approach to teaching children in Norwegian ECEC.

5.2 *Optimizing the Physical Environment for Language Learning*

The language learning environment is constituted by the participants, time, space, emotional engagement, and human and material resources. A print-rich, physical, semiotic and material environment consisting of books, messages, labels and ABC charts on the walls is a common way of displaying languages and turning children's attention to written language. Our data show how this physical environment was actively used to encourage the children's initiative and interest for English, particularly in informal language learning settings such as free play and mealtimes. Astrid (study 1) created a physical and print-rich environment that consistently drew the children's attention towards English. For example, she decorated the walls of the main room with large flannel board pictures shaped like different coloured crayons with colour names written in English. She also put up the children's drawings, with text in English and Norwegian, over the sofa; and in the reading corner, books in Norwegian and English as well as bilingual Norwegian/English PC-games were readily accessible. In the interviews, Astrid reported how these changes in the physical environment contributed to the children's growing curiosity for languages, for example, that the children would often take special notice of the physical environment, especially after some small changes had been made. In one of the interviews, Astrid recounted a story regarding a three-year-old boy who noticed the flannel board crayons, and how she took advantage of his interest in these crayons to expose him orally to the colour names written in English:

Teacher statement 4, Study 1

[I remember] a little three-year-old [boy]. The crayons had not hung up since maybe June, and then he came up to me and he wanted to know the names of the colours [in English]. And then we talked for quite a long time, really, about the colours and the colours on his clothes. And then we looked around for a bit at what the others were wearing. And so he asked me to repeat the colours [in English] and pointed at different colours. And then he decided he'd point them out to me and I listened to him and so that I could expand and fill in with other words [in English] (Teacher Astrid).

Several observations confirmed that the print-rich environment invited to such conversations. These conversations themes were based on themes that Astrid had already introduced in circle time, and during informal activities, she repeated words, expanded on the conversation theme introduced in circle time by introducing new words. Such informal follow-up conversations were sometimes child-initiated and sometimes initiated by Astrid. In one such observed conversation initiated by Astrid, she followed up the topic *feelings and emotions* that she had previously presented in circle time, in words as *happy*, *angry* and *tired* singing a song related to these words

("If you are happy, and you know it, clap your hands") and explaining the words. Some days later, Astrid invited a four-year-old boy to hang up some pictograms on the wall, illustrating facial expressions with accompanying text: "happy", "scared", "angry", "sleepy", "tired" and "sad". The two of them sang the song and verses used in circle time (happy, scared, angry, sleepy and tired), and Astrid then introduced a new verse ("if you're sad, find a friend"). The extract below shows their conversation related to the pictogram of the sad face.

Observation 1, Study 1: He Is Sad Sad Sad

- Teacher Ja hva står det der. Vet du det har vi aldri prata om før. Ser du åssen han har det? Er han glad eller lei seg eller hva tror du? (*Yes what's written there (points at the illustration text) you know, we've never talked about that before. How do you think he feels? Is he happy or sad, do you think?*)
- Child lei seg. Lei (*Sad. sad*)
- Teacher Lei seg ja. Og vet du hva? På engelsk så heter det *sad* (*Sad yes. And do you know what? In English that's called sad*)
- Child *Sad*
- Teacher *Sad*, ja (*Sad, yes*)
- Child *Sad sad sad*. Får ikke lov av mammaen sin (*Sad sad sad. His mother won't allow him.*)
- Teacher Nei, han er *sad sad sad*. Han får ikke lov av mammaen sin. Det kan være. Hva tror du han ikke fikk lov til? (*No. He is sad sad sad. His mother won't allow him. Yes, that may be true. What do you think his mother wouldn't allow him to do?*)
- Child Han fikk ikke lov. Å nei (*He was not allowed. Oh no*)
- Teacher Hva tror du han ikke fikk lov til av mammaen sin? (*What do you think his mother wouldn't allow him to do?*)
- Child Han fikk lov å ikke gå i hagen min (*He wasn't allowed to go in my garden*)
- Teacher Nei. Han fikk ikke lov å gå ut i hagen (*No. He wasn't allowed to go in the garden*)

Astrid introduced the word "sad" in Norwegian ("lei seg"), by pointing at the illustration of a sad face, and commented that this might be a new English word to the child: "you know, we've never talked about that before". She allowed the boy to relate the illustration to the meaning of the Norwegian word "lei seg" before she translated it to English "sad". The boy repeated the English word "sad" several times and seemed to be using the newly learnt verse when he answered with the phrase "sad sad sad" patterned after "happy, happy, happy." Astrid built both on the boy's prior linguistic knowledge in Norwegian and contextual factors, known song patterns and the sad-face illustration figure, to support his interest and language learning. In contrast to formal teacher-led language activities, many everyday conversations, such as the example above, tend to have few participants or are even individual teacher/child interactions where the teacher can *scaffold*, i.e. provide linguistic and contextual support, adjusted according to each individual

child's different needs in the particular context. Such individual scaffolding is crucial for children's L2 development (Gibbons 2006).

The language learning environment is a complex system where social, individual, psychological, cultural and institutional forces are interacting. Some forms of language learning are made possible whereas others are made difficult or even impossible in particular learning environments. Some researchers emphasize the importance of environment as a factor that 'acts as a third teacher' (Fraser 2007, p. 20). For instance, visual and written signs create opportunities for both teachers and children to engage in the collaborative exploration of writing systems in general. With regard to the latter, several researchers have looked at how such collaborative spaces, in a preschool environment, get created through the display of writing systems on the school's walls, for instance, by featuring the Latin, Arabic and Cyrillic alphabet charts or labels with children's names written by the children's parents or other family members (Chumak-Horbatsch 2012; Kristensen and Daugaard 2012). Other kindergartens have posters with children's names and the word "hello" written in several languages (Alstad 2013, 2016; Axelsson 2005), inspiring both teachers and children to extended metalinguistic conversations (conversations about language), resulting in a general awareness of language(s) and literacy in the classroom.

5.3 Children's Use of Teaching Materials in Free Play

The observational, interview and narrative data from our two studies give multiple examples of the different ways in which the children practiced English in their free play. They imitated the activities that they experienced in teacher-led sessions, and sometimes they produced prefabricated chunks of language from the teacher-led sessions, i.e. linguistic multi-word units which are quite frequent in a language and perform specific language functions (e.g. I would like....; Thank you very much; How are you?; Can I get....?). Now and then, they tried to communicate in the L2 with the L2-speaking character, sometimes asking for the teacher's help. They also made a role-play of teacher-led sessions, where some children took the role of the teacher.

As mentioned in the methodology, several preschools in our studies made use of an L2-speaking character, the teddy bear called Teddy. It was used in all teaching sessions and symbolized English for the children. Both during the observations and in the narratives, it became clear that it was easy for the children to link English to the toy when it was personified as having some particular qualities (its likes, dislikes, interests, etc.), a life story (for example, why it came to the country, what family/friends it left back home, etc.). The availability of L2-speaking characters or other artefacts associated with the L2, in the play area, and/or other activities provided multiple opportunities for the children to use the new language in their free play. Below is one narrative from the action-based study, demonstrating how such teaching material inspired the children's free play.

Narrative 2, Study 2: Teddy Is Going to Bed

This autumn the topic to be explored at our department was “stars”. Among other things, we’ve talked with the children about lying in bed and looking through the window at the stars. The children were also wondering about whether the children all over the world could see the same stars in the sky as they did here in Norway. During circle time with English, we sang “Twinkle, twinkle, little star” and I’d cut out some paper stars and glued each to a stick so that the children could hold them while we were singing. The children suggested that Teddy be put to bed, so we found a bed for him, bed linen, a pillow and a blanket, and sang this lullaby for him.

After the circle time, four of the children asked me if they could borrow Teddy for their play. They took him and all the artefacts I used during the circle time and went to play in the doll-corner. There, they arranged everything for Teddy to get him to bed: they fed him, washed him and put him to bed. Suddenly, one of the children said: “*Sleep, Teddy!*” (in English). Then they sang a Norwegian lullaby for him, and one of the girls asked: “*Hvor er stars?*” (= *Where are the stars?*). They found four of the paper star wands, gathered around Teddy’s bed and tried to sing “*Twinkle, twinkle, little star*”, while waving with the stars wands above Teddy’s head.

In this narrative, we see that the children can easily absorb the input they have received in the teacher-led activity and transform it in order to include it in their free play. In the narrative, the teacher promoted this kind of learning by letting the children take the props from the circle time and use them in their free play. In the free play, the children practiced the use of English, e.g. one of the children tried to communicate with the L2-speaking character in the target language (“*Sleep, Teddy!*”), another child used a word (*stars*) from the circle-time, which she inserted in her utterance in Norwegian, and they also imitated the song activity. These examples demonstrate how the children’s ability not only to imitate the language and activities they encountered in the circle time, but also to extend the use of the linguistic items they have heard in the target language to a new context. By creatively incorporating the new language into their play, the children also showed their desire to experiment with language as well as show their understanding of the linguistic conventions (e.g. that it would be much more appropriate to use English with Teddy). Previous research (Robinson et al. 2015) shows that in such situations children can help each other by prompting words that others had forgotten or correcting each other’s utterances. Although the narrative above does not explicitly provide evidence for peer scaffolding, it could be the case that the children had to collaborate in order to perform the song, helping each other to remember the lyrics.

Another interesting point from this narrative is that the children did not resolutely insist on using only one language in their play; instead, they drew on their entire linguistic repertoire, translanguaging and using words that they know in

English as well as in Norwegian. In the narrative above, the children sang a Norwegian lullaby until one of the children came up with the idea of using the paper star wands from the circle-time. Robinson et al.'s study (2015) provides evidence that children's use of English in their play stimulates their use of the target language and might have a positive effect on their language development. We find the same tendency in our data: the practitioners who attempted to build a bridge between the learning activities in teacher-led sessions and the children-initiated activities and free play, successfully engaged the children in language learning.

Our examples suggest, however, that the children engaged in such creative language use in their play only if they encountered flexible and dynamic language use in the teacher-led activities, e.g. when the teachers themselves used both languages, and relied on the available linguistic resources. In the next section, we consider the issue of choosing the language of interaction in more detail.

5.4 Choosing Language(s) as Medium for Interaction

When introducing a new language to children, teachers are faced with the challenge of managing the class language policy. Cummins (2007) points out at three assumptions regarding the class language policy that rely on a monolingual instructional approach: 1) "Instruction should be carried out exclusively in the target language without recourse to students' L1", 2) "Translation between L1 and L2 has no place in the teaching of language or literacy", and 3) "Within immersion and bilingual programs, the two languages should be kept rigidly separate" (Cummins 2007, p. 222). He criticizes these three assumptions and provides arguments encouraging us to rethink such monolingual language teaching strategies. In the same vein, Weber (2014) questions the principle of language separation in multilingual educational programmes and argues for flexible approaches to multilingual education, where the children's multilingual repertoires can be used as an educational resource.

In spite of the fact that some teachers in our studies tried to apply an English-only language policy when introducing English to the children, they abandoned this policy with relative ease because it turned out to be ineffective. Some of the teachers reported that this strategy was unnatural because they were part of the team and communicated with the children in Norwegian in all other situations. Other teachers, who only came to the kindergartens for the English sessions, reported relational problems, e.g. in establishing contact with the children, which they considered to be caused by the lack of a common language of communication. Thus, all the teachers in our projects chose a bilingual approach, using both English and Norwegian, and they practiced no strict separation of the languages involved.

Two different bilingual approaches were identified: one translating strategy and one strategy where English words were introduced in Norwegian contexts, without translation. As we pointed out above, the children often adopted the translanguaging practices of their teachers. Nicoladis and Genesee (1997) emphasize the importance of norms, values and attitudes in society which act as arbiters of which language

practices may be deemed acceptable. The example below demonstrates the latter approach where the teacher bridges a gap between the children's previous and new knowledge, by giving instructions and explanations in the children's home language (Norwegian) and introducing vocabulary in the children's L2 (English).

Observation 2, Study 2: Translanguaging and Bridging the Gap Between Prior and New Knowledge About Colour Names

- Teacher I dag skal engelsken handle om farger. Er det noen som kan noen fargenavn på engelsk? (*The English lesson today will be about colours. Does anybody know any colours in English?*)
- Petter Ja, jeg kan *red, blue* og *green* (*Yes, I do: red, blue and green*)
- Mattias Jeg kan *black* og *white* (*I know "black" and "white"*)
- Marianne Hva kalles rosa på engelsk? (*What is pink called in English?*)
- Sofie *purple?*
- Teacher Er det rosa? (*Is that pink?*)
- Ivan Nei, det er lilla (*No, that's purple.*)

Although the language of interaction is mostly Norwegian, this example demonstrates that the children were eager to show their knowledge of colours in English. The interaction proceeded quite naturally as the children were allowed to negotiate the meaning in Norwegian, the language they already master, and this discussion elicited joint exploration of the colour terms in L2. The teacher spoke in Norwegian only, and the children translanguaged several times in this conversation, which made practising the new L2 vocabulary items meaningful in this particular context.

Other teachers used direct translations in their approach, introducing both Norwegian and English words in the context where the Norwegian language clearly dominates, as in the extract below:

Observation 3, Study 1: Translating Colour Names

- Teacher Ser dere hva det er på de korta? (*Do you see what's on these cards?*)
- Child 1 *Red*
- Teacher Rødt. *red*. ja (*red. red. yes*)
- Child 2 *Green*
- Teacher Grønn. *green* (*green. green*)
- Child 3 *Blue*
- Teacher Blå. *blue* (*blue. blue*)

In the example above, the teacher (Astrid) used Norwegian to make instructions comprehensible, but also to make comparisons between the languages. In several of the observed activities, she juxtaposed Norwegian and English, such as when she repeated the children's English words in Norwegian: "red (.) rød (.) yes". She followed the same pattern in the subsequent utterances (*grønn/green*). She also encouraged the children to juxtapose colour names in the two languages in the same way. By repeating words in both languages, she implicitly stressed the cognates and the similarities in the two languages

Other studies of foreign language teaching show that teachers prefer to use first language for organizational and classroom management purposes, such as giving

instructions or for reasons of discipline (Cook 2001; Inbar-Lourie 2010; Macaro 2005; Polio and Duff 1994). Another study of bilingual teaching in early childhood education contexts reports how teachers, instead of using the children's home language, made extensive use of paralinguistic elements, such as gestures (Lyster 1998). In these studies, home languages or gestures compensate for the children's lack of language skills, and the teachers strive for a high degree of exposure to L2/TL. The teachers in our studies also observed and commented on this tension between exposure and comprehensible input. In the interviews, Astrid underlined that the amount and variation of English exposure related clearly to children's opportunities to learn languages:

Teacher Statement 5, Study 1

When children learn Norwegian, they may, for example, walk around carrying their shoe, and then we'd say "Where is your shoe? Come here and we'll put it on for you. We'll put on your shoe for you." Then you try to say the same thing in different ways [...] and then the child might come back again later and say "shoes". And we'd repeat the word in the context of a complete sentence. But if a child comes to me saying "shoe" in English I do not elaborate as [as I do in Norwegian], I simply confirm his utterance with "yes, a shoe yes" (Teacher Astrid)

In this statement, Astrid referred to the difficulties she encountered as an L2 speaker of English when trying to provide what Küntay and Slobin (1996) call *variation sets*, i.e. a repeated partial overlap of successive utterances in child-directed speech, which the research shows helps children to segment the speech and acquire linguistic structures (Onnis et al. 2008). She was not comfortable with using an "English only" approach or "direct method" due to the apprehensive attitude she had towards her own English skills. She believed that the children's exposure to English would have probably been more extensive if she had felt a greater mastery of English herself. Her bachelor degree in early childhood teacher education and care does not involve Foreign Language Teaching, only courses in child language. However, she had a specialization in English at college. Her ideas about introducing English to her group of children are first and foremost related to her personal interests and joy of learning languages.

When it comes to multilingual education, there is an ambiguity in authorities' terms of references to the early childhood teachers. On the one hand, the Norwegian national curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research 2011) does not mention foreign language teaching explicitly, neither does the National Framework Plan for early childhood teacher education (Ministry of Education and Research 2012). On the other hand, ECEC were included in The Norwegian National Centre for Foreign Languages in Education's work to improve the quality of foreign languages in education. This unclear foreign language education policy leaves the responsibility to the teachers.

Astrid's uncertainty and ambivalence regarding the amount of exposure the children have to English seems partly related to her perceptions of her own English skills and professional background, and partly to her beliefs about the children and the amount of their exposure of English. According to Astrid, too much exposure to English would lead to too incomprehensible input and probably therefore reduce the

children's sense of coping with language learning. When talking about the exposure to English, she reported that she started with a minimal amount of English the first year, and based on her experiences, she would increase the amount in the coming year:

Teacher Statement 6, Study 1

We're feeling our way around. We're not sure about this but we – like last year we started with some words [...] and now we're gonna try out some sentences and then see how that works (Teacher Astrid).

According to Astrid, more exposure to the target language would have been optimal. At the same time, she emphasized that English is mediated through Norwegian, as this allows her to actively build on the children's linguistic proficiency, and that this sense of mastery encourages and empowers the children. A study of Australian teachers in primary and secondary schools in Australia (Crawford 2004, p. 10) reports of a tendency for teachers to use the target language in the classrooms: the older the learners, the more likely it is for the teachers to use the target language to a greater extent. In our studies, the teachers' reasons for using Norwegian as a mediating tool can be seen in the light of *affective* purposes such as caregiving and motivation, as mentioned in other studies of elder language learners (Inbar-Lourie 2010, p. 360). As far as the linguistic objectives for teaching English as a foreign language were concerned in the plans, the aims were kept to a minimum. As Astrid stated in one of the interviews, the purpose of teaching English to the children was not so to attain a certain proficiency level, but rather to teach the children to be curious about language in general:

Teacher Statement 7, Study 1

The purpose was that the children should learn some English. Anyway, it was even more important to let them experience how to learn something new and feel the pleasure of learning a new language (Teacher Astrid)

The overall objective then was to encourage language awareness and an interest in language learning rather than aiming to reach a certain level of proficiency, and this was made possible by being responsive to the children's motivation and interests.

5.5 Making Use of Children's Interests and Prior Language Knowledge

The teachers in our projects expressed their surprise at the fact that the children proved to know a lot about English even before they started working with it in the preschool. Some were able to say a few words and phrases in English while others were able to count from one to ten or knew some English songs; yet others used English in various other contexts outside the school, for example with their relatives

and family's friends, on holidays and when watching English TV channels. Almost all children have been exposed to English through the commercialised children's culture promoted through the undubbed English television programmes, such as children's films and cartoons. Many of the teachers developed successful and engaging theme-based projects in English taking as a starting point the children's interest in, for example, My Little Pony, Spiderman, Pokémon etc. Below is an example of how the practitioners in one of the kindergartens capitalized on the children's interest for Pokémon and used it to involve them in language learning on their own premises.

Narrative 3, Study 2: Pokémon

The oldest boys have shown little involvement in the English activities, they'd participate in such activities only reluctantly, wouldn't say much and would disappear as soon as the activity was over. They are absorbed by and prefer to play alone with Pokémon. They know that Pokémon is originally from Japan, but they have seen the English version of the Pokémon films and would therefore try to imitate some English sounds when fighting with Pokémon in their play.

On one occasion, one of the teachers followed the boys to see what they were doing. They were playing with one of the Pokémon figures, Pikachu.

The teacher asked: "What language does Pokémon speak?" – "He speaks many languages, among them English!" replied the boys. "Well, so he speaks English? This is the language we are learning in the English activities. How do you talk to him?" asked the teacher. The boys looked at each other and seemed confused; one of them said that they were speaking English with Pokémon. The teacher asked if all of them were able to speak English with Pokémon, and some of them said yes, some said no, some were not quite sure. Then one of the boys suggested that the teacher help them to ask Pokémon something in English. They had many questions they wanted to ask Pokémon: what he likes to do, what he likes to eat, whether he is good or bad, and about his friends.

This situation resulted in a new project about Pokémon. The boys got the leading role in the project, as they had the most experience on the subject, and they shared it eagerly with other children in the group. The children and teachers collaborated to find more information on the internet. The Pokémon figures became popular to play with, and when the children play with them, they want to speak English.

In this narrative, the teacher placed the children's interests at the centre of the English teaching activities; the children's interests therefore provided a basis for the overall teaching model of English teaching activities, rather than being made subordinate to the teacher's original plan. By asking what language Pokémon speaks, she attracted the children's attention to English, which made the children more engaged in language learning. The children's suggestion about Pokémon being multilingual proves the fact that children are aware of this multilingual reality and the possibility

that one can speak many languages. Having created the motivation for language learning, the teacher then took a role of a mediator, helping the children to express themselves in English in their imagined communication with Pokémon. Vygotsky's concept of mediation (Vygotsky 1978) is a useful way to view at the learning situation taking place in this narrative, and the teacher's role in it. Being a mediator, the teacher scaffolded learning. The teacher mediated by asking a question, directing the children's attention to some relevant aspects of the situation that might promote learning, by giving a hint to make relevant connections, solve a problem or find a verbal expression that the children needed. In this role, the teacher was not leading or controlling the learning activity, but assisting the children to learn by making use of their own resources and within their zone of proximal development. Building the link to English learning activities, the teacher chose to rely on the children's knowledge about Pokémon and made their resources visible and available for other children.

This narrative shows that children had a strong motivation for language learning when the learning environment was based on their own interests. Such an environment stimulated language activity and nurtured motivation for more language learning. Giving children the opportunity to lead a project may also have a positive impact in itself, since believing oneself to be an expert and showing and using one's skills led to a feeling of mastery. Research in early childhood education has demonstrated that children's agency is essential for learning and development (Corsaro 2005). The narrative from practice above provides an example of good practice with regard to promoting children's agency in FL learning (for an overview of different perspectives on agency in L2 learning, see Deters et al. 2015).

5.6 Empowering Second Language Learners through a Foreign Language

Some Norwegian kindergartens in urban areas have a high degree of linguistic diversity where up to 90% of the children may have a minority background. The Framework Plan (Ministry of Education and Research 2011) emphasizes respect for diversity. It identifies different languages and cultures, as well as provides support for the use of the multilingual children's home languages, as high priority areas. However, in practice, these goals may become subject to many challenges. For example, many minority parents and children put more effort into learning the second language, Norwegian, rather than supporting their home language. With a media discourse that places emphasis on the importance of learning Norwegian and the dominance of the Norwegian language in the linguistic environment, many bilingual children might feel the use of the other language inappropriate or they may be ashamed of speaking their home languages in the kindergarten. At the same time, there are positive attitudes to learning English from early years. This situation reflects the unequal power relations between languages where the perceived importance of English might be even more devastating for the promotion and the use of

languages other than Norwegian and English, which are associated with higher status.

The question of whether or not second language learners of Norwegian should be introduced to English, seemed initially to be a controversial issue to the teachers in our studies. However, the teachers turned out to be positive to such a multilingual approach. One of the teachers, Astrid, expressed that English language teaching had a clear benefit for one particular second language learner in her group of children, as the following interview extract indicates:

Teacher Statement 8, Study 1:

I noticed last year that a child with immigrant background benefited from practicing in both [Norwegian and English]. This might be because we repeated the words more systematically, for example, the words relating to our body parts. We don't often talk about such words, but we made drawings of the pupils' eyes and then continued to draw the mouth and tongue and teeth and so on. And we used more props and songs to illustrate and explain these words. When we introduced English – not that we were entirely unaware of this before, but we became more aware when naming things. I think she learned as much from English as she did from Norwegian (Teacher Astrid).

The narratives in both our studies also confirm this experience. The introduction of a new language in the linguistic environment may be a powerful source in promoting the minority children's linguistic resources. Previous studies have outlined how household's 'funds of knowledge' are essential for households and individual functioning and well-being and the importance of establishing strategic connections between home and school (Moll et al. 1992). Similarly, Hélot and Young (2005) point out how language awareness as a model of language education and a shared classroom culture enabled all languages to be given the same status in the classroom. In turn, the children and parents of minority backgrounds felt better integrated into the school, and the teachers' attitudes towards bilingualism became more positive. In line with these perspectives, exploring foreign languages in linguistically diverse settings may contribute to further linguistic exploration and interest in different languages. The narrative below illustrates various aspects of this issue:

This narrative reports how the child with minority language background positively reacted to the introduction of a new language, probably identifying himself with Teddy as a language learner. Relying on the child's engagement, the teacher then supported his positive reaction by asking him to help the others to communicate with Teddy, thus making his competence visible for the group. A few days later, it seemed that the children had noticed Petro's linguistic resources, and when Liv asked Petro about a word in his language, she demonstrated awareness of Petro being multilingual. The teacher chose to strengthen this perspective, and by suggesting to write down the words in Petro's language she acknowledged that Petro's linguistic resources were valuable for the group. Probably, this choice contributed to the Albanian children's socialization in the group, making them more attractive play partners. This narrative shows that English not only inspired the children in the group to explore the linguistic diversity they meet, but also gave the Albanian children an opportunity to be more verbally active and contribute with something

Narrative 4, Study 2: What Is a Ball Called in Your Language?

Putten Kindergarten has three new Albanian children, they are cautious when speaking Norwegian. In the kindergarten they started introducing English, and during their first “English” circle time, Kari, their teacher, introduced the children to a cuddly little bear, named Teddy. Teddy, she said, comes from England, so he can only speak and understand English. Little Petro, from Albania, sat spellbound, following everything that Kari said and did. When Kari held Teddy up in front of her and said “*Hello, my name is Teddy,*” Petro spontaneously replied, “*Hello!*” in English. Surprised, Kari looked at him. Several more children responded, saying they too wish to speak to Teddy. “Petro, what should they say?” Kari asked. Proudly, Petro replied, “*Hello Teddy!*”

A few days later, the teacher overheard a small girl named Liv asking Petro in Norwegian: “What is a ball called in your language?” Petro answered and Liv tried to imitate what he had said. Kari [the teacher] suggested that maybe they should write this word down on a piece of paper and hang it up on the wall. Then they could have fun learning some Albanian words. Liv and Petro were thrilled by such a fun suggestion.

Within weeks, Kari observed that Petro and two of his Albanian friends had received a new status within the group. They are more proficient in English than their peers, and, in addition, they started using their home languages more freely. Petro would point at various items around him, using Albanian words. Liv and the other children would repeat the words both in Albanian and Norwegian. It became a fun game for the children. After just a couple of weeks, Petro became more relaxed and active when using both his home language and Norwegian with his friends. In addition, he became a more active participant generally in the kindergarten. He appears to enjoy playing with the other children, rather than observing them, and speaks more.

special in the learning environment. Introducing all children from that group to English, and thus creating a new language learning situation, helped the Albanian second language learners access Norwegian more easily while simultaneously identifying and legitimizing their situation. This narrative provides thus illustration of the link between the child’s L1 status, his identity and growing self-confidence.

In the contexts where the teachers do not have sufficient command of the children’s home languages, a number of studies underline that involving the children’s home languages systematically and using bilingual strategies may be useful for L2 learning and for boosting the children’s incipient bilingualism and intercultural competence and finally for investing in children’s multilingual identities. Besides, creating a multilingual environment is also beneficial for monolingual students because it might foster their language awareness and develop their metalinguistic skills (Cummins and Early 2011; Danbolt and Kulbrandstad 2013; Kristensen and Daugaard 2012; Schwarzer 2001; Weber 2014).

6 Practical Implications and Conclusions

In this chapter we have presented and discussed results from two studies, where second and foreign language teaching practices in Norwegian ECEC institutions were in focus. We have analysed the teachers' practices and beliefs about teaching a foreign language in early childhood education contexts. In managing the learning environment and in order to maximize language learning opportunities for the children, the teachers chose a holistic approach, combining both direct interventions in teacher-led activities, and more indirect interventions that allowed the children to learn the language experimentally, to try out the new language in meaningful contexts of communication. The teachers used different strategies for creating learning opportunities in informal situations and making the target language more visible in the linguistic environment. For example, they organized the physical environment in a way that invited children to reflect on the language phenomena and promoted the use of English. They allowed the children to use English teaching materials in their free play. They also adjusted their language use in the class to be more flexible and dynamic, so that bilingual practices and translanguaging were considered the norm in the class. In choosing and planning language learning activities, the teachers took into consideration the children's interests and prior linguistic knowledge and gave them the opportunity to be actively engaged in the learning process.

Moreover, the two studies included in this chapter both underscore the ECEC teachers' recognition of the benefits that learning English as a third or a fourth language would have for the emergent bilinguals who are developing proficiency in Norwegian and an additional home language. The teachers experienced how learning a third language did not imply losing either the first or second language (cf. Fillmore 1991), but rather boosted the development of other languages. Introducing a new language in the linguistic environment and promoting linguistic diversity seem to positively influence the children's engagement in language learning. For most of the practitioners, fostering the children's curiosity for languages was an important goal, rather than achieving a certain level of language proficiency.

As we pointed out in the introduction, it is paradoxical that the interest in teaching foreign languages like English, from a very early age, is increasing while many other languages that children in ECEC are exposed to are paid little attention in ECEC contexts because of the focus on the majority language learning. The different kinds of emergent bilingualism are not encouraged equally: throughout the educational system (as reflected in the curricula and framework plans), English as an additional language is given a higher status than the home languages of second language learners, which are sorely neglected. The majority language learning for L2 children is usually mainstream in character and takes the form of full-immersion where the use of the children's home languages is discouraged. It is also quite common that children with other home languages than Norwegian receive additional language support in small groups where the focus is usually placed on the more formal aspects of L2 (e.g. vocabulary) (Rambøll Management 2008, 2014; Andersen

et al. 2011; Alstad 2013, 2016). Our data suggest that teachers adopted a more holistic approach in introducing children to English as a foreign language: they drew more on informal situations, put more emphasis on meaningful communication, created special conditions which further facilitated children's exploration of the new language and drew more on translanguaging practices in their language teaching. Since all these strategies provide evidence of successful learning and children's engagement, we call for a re-examination of language teaching methods in L2 learning in ECEC contexts.

In many of the examples discussed in this chapter, we saw how exposure to a new language fostered children's interest in language diversity, and many conversations between teachers and children led to a deeper exploration of the differences between languages. Such activities stimulated the development of metalinguistic awareness. Metalinguistic awareness is defined as "the ability to objectify language and dissect it as an arbitrary linguistic code independent of meaning" (Roth et al. 1996, p. 258). Research has documented that metalinguistic awareness is a crucial factor in early literacy development (Nagy and Anderson 1995). Therefore, by promoting linguistic diversity, paying more attention to the children's L1 linguistic resources and actively using these linguistic resources in language teaching, ECEC institutions will enhance early literacy development.

Several researchers have discussed what language teachers in general need to know about language (Bredenkamp 2002; García 2008; Wong-Fillmore and Snow 2002). However, there has been less focus on what early childhood teachers need to know about language, and in particular in linguistically diverse settings. At the same time, previous research shows that the multilingual staff's language competence in schools often becomes highly relevant and is therefore countenanced in cases where children and teachers share the same linguistic background (Lund 2009; Ryen 2009; Tkachenko et al. 2015). An increasing number of studies from different educational contexts demonstrate how multilingual teaching approaches are made possible even if the teachers do not share the students or children's home languages (i.e. Alstad 2013, 2016; Creese and Blackledge 2010; Cummins and Early 2011). According to García (2008, p. 392), language awareness programs of the past are no longer relevant for teacher education in the twenty-first century. She maintains the importance of teaching teachers in ways that encourage and empower them to develop multilingual awareness that encompasses the following four understandings: knowledge about language, subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical practice and understandings of the social, political and economic struggles surrounding the use of two or more languages. Such knowledge will provide different perspectives on creating an environment that is supportive and responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity, and how this diversity can be made a resource for both individual children and for the preschool. Johnson (2009, p. 42) claims that mentalist-individualistic definitions of language have heavily influenced the knowledge-base of second language teacher education. She suggests that a knowledge-base should also refer to socio-cultural theories and focus on language as social and cultural practices. Insights from different theoretical perspectives will enable early childhood teachers to reflect upon the exclusionary character of current linguistic practices, which involve not only differ-

ent modalities and particular skills but also the kind of language practices and ideologies in which children are embedded.

From a research perspective, there is a lack of large-scale systematic studies on early foreign language learning in ECEC settings. Due to the explorative, open-minded nature of the current studies, and that we did not want a pre-defined starting point, it is difficult to make any generalizations with regard to the effectiveness of these methods when transferred to other contexts. More research in these areas would provide an insight into how widespread such teaching approaches are. As already discussed, the synergy of the two areas of practice and research – FL teaching and learning and second language acquisition (SLA) – would be a step in the right direction, resulting a relationship that is mutually beneficial.

Our data on the teachers' practices do not and cannot accurately represent the full truth or reality of the actual events that took place in the kindergarten. The teachers' reflections on their practices obtained from the interview data as well as their narratives from practice represent only their own understanding of the practices they are part of: these are not then events-as-lived, but events-as-told. These data are, thus, highly subjective and as all other qualitative data rely on criteria other than validity, reliability and generalizability (Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Cortazzi 2002). As common in some studies of teacher cognition and beliefs, different types of data are used to validate other types of data, i.e. interview data are used to validate observational data or the opposite, seeking for mismatches. Rather than accentuating one type of data to another, the different kinds of data allow us to look at the complexity in the events-as-lived through the practitioner's eyes and their agencies. Such perspectives and combination of empirical materials is understood as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to an inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, p. 5).

As mentioned above, the narratives from practice were either written down or orally presented by the practitioners. However, even those narratives from practice that were initially introduced in written form would subsequently be orally retold during the discussions, often with the addition of substantially more detail than was originally provided in the written text. The practitioners were often asked to write down their narratives for the sake of documentation. These two forms of narrative from practice, oral and written, complement each other: the oral comments provided during the discussions would often enrich the written narrative. Thus, the researcher had to reconstruct the narratives, trying to combine the perspectives and details from both the written and oral presentations of the narrative. As some of the oral narratives were also quite long and detail-rich, a shorter version was written down. All narratives were translated into English. This method has of course its limitations with respect to whose perspective is presented in the narratives we use in our data – the practitioner's or the researcher's, since it was the researcher who reconstructed the narratives told or written down by the practitioners.

As most qualitative research studies, this study focuses on a specific issue that was observed in some ECEC contexts only, namely FL teaching. These findings are therefore less useful for making statistical generalizations, but rather give themselves over to making analytical generalizations (Yin 2009, p. 43). Such

detailed case studies of teaching practices are also of great importance for the practitioners themselves and their professional development. In the discussion of how a competent teacher becomes a good teacher, Biesta (2015, p. 20) underlines the importance of not only subject-matter knowledge, but of developing, what he calls, *educational virtuosity*. Educational virtuosity is explained as embodied educational wisdom and the ability to make wise educational judgements about what is to be done and about what is desirable. According to Biesta, it is by carefully studying educational virtuosity in others that teachers might come to recognise what should be considered a good or, for that matter, a bad example of educational wisdom. The cases discussed in this chapter, may provide such examples for teachers in ECEC, and may become a starting point for professional development.

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Scaffolding Discourse Skills in Pre-primary L2 Classrooms



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Abstract This chapter reports on an observational study of children’s talk with their teachers and its impact on the acquisition of English as a foreign language (L2) (In this paper the term (L2) is used most times to refer to “second/foreign language”, which means any additional non-native language. L1 refers to speakers’ mother tongue) in pre-primary bilingual education classrooms. The focus is the nature of teacher-child classroom discourse, including an analysis of child L2 emerging grammars. The data, comprising classroom observation, field notes and 30 h of audio-recordings over a period of one school year indicate (1) that English grammar construction is driven by oral classroom discourse, and (2) that the practices which facilitate talk amongst teachers and child learners are determinant to help learners during the developmental process. The emerging child English L2 grammars are determined greatly by instructional classroom discourse. During teacher-child interaction, a wide range of teaching and learning discourse strategies were observed: questions, repetition, language mixing, recast, elicitation, explicit correction, expansion, formulaic expressions, metalinguistic feedback and clarification request. Findings suggest that teacher-child communicative interactions help language development by facilitating comprehension and by having an impact on the L2 grammar construction. Finally, the chapter brings together classroom discourse and child L2 acquisition by proposing a range of pedagogical practices to boost conversational skills during teacher-child oral interactions.

1 Introduction

Teaching foreign languages from an early age has become increasingly popular in a growing number of instructed contexts worldwide, the main reason being to help children to become successful global citizens (Eurydice 2012; Rixon 2013).

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In order to promote early L2 learning, successive acquisition of bilingualism at school has gradually become a popular choice for many parents and institutions. The researchers repeatedly stress that young learners are better than adults at acquiring languages implicitly using the social context for language learning (Cameron 2001; Gass and Selinker 2008; Lightbown and Spada 2013). But, in order to make language accessible for academic progress in instructed bilingual contexts, the function of the classroom discourse should be contemplated as it plays a key role for language and for content learning.

While much has been written about how L2s are learned (O'Grady 2005; Cameron 2001; Gass and Selinker 2008; Lightbown and Spada 2013; Kuhl 2010), yet, research on the nature of classroom discourse in pre-primary immersion classrooms is not as extensive. This lack of research may be due to the rapid lowering of age of L2 teaching (Eurydice 2012; Rixon 2013); or it could be also attributed to the difficulty of assessing teacher-child oral interaction processes at pre-primary.

This chapter examines various features of classroom talk by analysing conversational interactions between teachers and child L2 learners of English. The aim of the observational case study research was to widen our knowledge about communication strategies that help to develop the emerging grammars of children who at the age of onset were 3 years old. To that end, the first investigation compares the amount and type of children's L2 oral production during conversational interactions with their English teachers in three pre-primary immersion classrooms. The study explores how the teachers' input drives the growth of children's emerging grammars, which, in turn, helps to understand the language learning rate in the instructed context. The second investigation delves deeper into the social nature of classroom interaction and examines the discourse skills used by both teachers and children during oral performance which helps to understand how educational discourse is built in the young learners' classroom. The findings of these two investigations merge together to show ways in which teachers can benefit from knowing more about the nature of classroom discourse for L2 instruction in pre-primary bilingual contexts.

After framing the topic against the backdrop of child language acquisition, firstly, the chapter analyses English L2 developing grammars of pre-schoolers and secondly, reviews the use of teachers' and learners' discourse skills during classroom conversational interactions. Finally, the chapter focuses on how these findings can be of help to pre-primary teachers.

2 Literature Review

The current case study research is framed against the backdrop of the language acquisition theories that hold that at an early age, languages are learnt implicitly in a discourse context (Cameron 2001; Gass and Selinker 2008; Lightbown and Spada 2013). In particular, the framework draws from the input-interaction-output approach to language learning which supports the idea that children learn languages by listening, by comprehending the messages and by speaking (Long 1996; Mackey 2007; Fleta 2015).

In L2 acquisition studies, the age of onset, the learning context, and the discourse skills are all considered hugely important factors that influence the growth of inter-language. In this section, these key factors which are of utmost relevance to our study are reviewed.

2.1 The Role of Age of Onset

Learning an L2 in early bilingual schools can be compared to first language acquisition (L1) in that in both situations children acquire information of the target language during the interlanguage process using the same language learning strategies and following comparable developmental stages. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), “Age is one of the characteristics that determine the way in which an individual approaches second language learning and the eventual success of that learning” (p. 99). As far as the age factor is concerned, there seem to be close links between acquiring an L1 at home and an L2 in pre-primary, for children learn languages implicitly in a natural and subconscious manner relying on the mechanisms and principles that are known to them from L1 learning; “pupils actively try to experiment and work out the rules of the language in their heads, though they may not be aware of doing this” (Moon 2000, p. 4). Precisely, one of the strongest arguments in favour of starting an L2 in pre-primary is to take advantage of the biological predisposition that children bring with them to the task of language learning, for “young children do not come to the language classroom empty-handed. They bring with them an already well-established set of instincts, skills and characteristics which will help them to learn another language” (Halliwell 1992, p. 3). These skills together with their language making capacity help children to be better at acquiring languages without formal instruction.

There is no age limit to start learning new languages as both, L1 and L2 are life-long processes. However, infants are better than adults at acquiring languages implicitly, without formal instruction (Meltzoff et al. 2009, p. 285). Studies on language acquisition indicate that once the speech code has been ‘cracked’ during the course of L1 acquisition (Kuhl 2010, p. 715), the ability to learn additional languages remains available indefinitely. Nonetheless, despite the fact that it is never too late to start learning new languages, it is never too early to consider exposing children to an L2 (Johnstone 2002, p. 13). Children use the social context to reach ultimate attainment in language learning (Meltzoff et al. 2009, p. 285). As Cook (2002) puts it, “given the appropriate environment, two languages are as normal as two lungs” (p. 23). In the same vein, DeKeyser and Larson-Hall (2005, p. 101) describe young L2 learners as being distinct from adult learners in their implicit manner of approaching languages relying on communicative social interaction.

In sum, the earlier children start learning an L2 the better, provided that they have long and quality exposure to the target language as well as plenty of opportunities for conversational interaction. In this way, children will have longer time to learn and they will make more steady progress in comparison to those who start

later (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 204). As learners' progress is the yardstick of teachers' quality teaching, teachers may need to have a clear understanding of how young learners approach an L2 at school. Besides, they should take into consideration the characteristics of the learning context, the amount of exposure time to the target language and the role of the classroom discourse for building language learning (Cameron 2001, p. 11).

2.2 *The Role of the Learning Context*

Listening is fundamental for speaking" (Rost 1994, pp. 141–142). Children acquire information about the properties of the target language by simply "watching, listening and speculating" (Machado 2015, p. 109); otherwise: "Without understanding input at the right level, any language simply cannot begin. In pre-primary bilingual settings, the classroom becomes a conducive context for learning language and non-language subject-matters through the medium of an L2" (Gibbons 2015, p. 208). The degree of exposure to the L2 may vary in pre-primary education, but usually, less number of contact hours equals less exposure to the input data, and as a consequence, the quality and the intensity of instruction in this learning environment should be higher (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 93).

First language learners acquire their mother tongues during one-to-one social interaction with a wide range of people. Studies have demonstrated that children absorb a huge amount of information and improve their metalinguistic awareness during the one-to-one social interaction process which takes place in different discourse contexts, but not if the information is exclusively presented to them through a television or audiotape (O'Grady 2005, p. 178). Moreover, Kuhl (2010) stresses that not only by listening to the continuous stream of speech sounds from the speakers around them, but also by looking at their gestures, their faces and to the actions. She also emphasises that the only condition to learn to speak an L1 and also an L2 during childhood is the presence of a human being to interact with (p. 722). Furthermore, Vandergrift and Goh (2012, p. 220) stress that, the brain remembers words and expressions better if they are learned with music and accompanied by actions: "...body language, facial expressions, hand gestures, and other non-verbal cues that can facilitate interpretation of a message".

The amount of exposure time that children are immersed in their L1 before attending school is approximately 20,000 hours (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 13). Notwithstanding, it takes children approximately five years to accomplish the L1 learning task in naturalistic and informal settings. Time during which, the amount of language input and output and the intensity of the exposure are extensive (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 38).

Starting an L2 in pre-primary may be affected not only by the amount of time, but also by the amount and type of the input data children have access to. The L2 process is similar to the process children use in acquiring their L1 in which the L2 takes place in a natural and subconscious manner while being engaged in

communicative activities. When children are “faced with trying to understand a second language, they will transfer these first language strategies to make sense of L2 sentences” (Cameron 2001, p. 15). Children in bilingual schools have more opportunities for interaction in the L2 than in schools where the L2 is taught as a language matter for a few hours a week, “Learning a second language through immersion differs from learning a foreign language as a subject several times a week; immersion pupils study school subjects through the second language and thus have more exposure and more experience with the language” (Cameron 2001, p. 17). As a result of this, the amount of time that young learners are immersed in an L2 at school implicitly leads up to the number of opportunities for interaction and subsequently, to the quality and to the quantity of language input and output.

Learning an L2 in bilingual schools not only requires large amounts of time for learning but also quality teaching which, in turn, entails greater or lesser opportunities for conversational interaction. As Murphy (2014) points out, children at school: “...do not have sufficient amount of input (being in an input-limited environment)” (p. 6). In this respect, the next section considers to what extent the classroom discourse skills are paramount for developing language and cognition.

2.3 *The Role of Discourse Skills*

This section deals with the importance of oral communicative interaction for successive acquisition of bilingualism, “because children who start learning a foreign language very young may encounter nothing but the spoken language for several years” (Cameron 2001, p. 17). Yet, formal classroom settings are different from naturalistic contexts in many respects, “Unlike first language children, foreign language learners are not immersed in a continual stream of spoken discourse...” (Cameron 2001, p. 60). Meisel (2011) differentiates between *simultaneous* language acquisition which emerges if exposure to two (or more) languages occurs within a week after birth onwards; and *successive* acquisition of bilingualism which arises when children start an L2 before age five. In both *simultaneous* and *successive* situations, children acquire the target language/s implicitly through social communicative interaction by listening and speaking, “The suspicion thus is that whatever enables the child to acquire the mother tongue might not be lost forever, rather that it could be hidden somewhere among or underneath our other cognitive faculties” (Meisel 2011, p. 1). After five years of age, the acquisition of an L2 is considered second language acquisition. Still, classroom talk is different from talk at home because “Classroom conversations must create the conditions that will foster language development” (Gibbons 2015, p. 24). In addition, the conversational discourse between teachers and children in immersion classrooms is pedagogically oriented and the integration between content and language should be balanced (Lyster 2007).

There are different models of L2 education in a young age: L2 immersion and Content and Language Integrated Learning, CLIL, which just involves familiarity

with a foreign language during a few sessions a week. In both types of L2 education young children may need to get acquainted with the classroom discourse styles, during the first months of schooling (Stilwell 2006, p. 63). By and large, at school earlier is different not only because there is a close correlation between the learning setting, the amount of exposure time and the type of input and output data, but also because, as Moon (2000) emphasises, the teacher is most of the time the main and the only linguistic model available for linguistic interaction in the foreign language: “In a foreign language situation, children will depend almost entirely upon the school environment for input, so you as their teacher, may be the only source of language...” (p. 14).

Today many children start learning an L2 early in pre-primary thus, it is of utmost importance to investigate the manner in which teachers talk to children and how children talk to their teachers (Mackey 2012, p. 38). In terms oral interaction, Machado (2015) stresses that: “Discourse skills – refers to using language in structured ways to go beyond basic conversations” (p. 324). This implies that teachers’ talk provides learners with both positive and negative evidence by catering them with meta-linguistic and corrective feedback (Gass and Selinker 2008, p. 346). Current L2 discourse skills research focuses on teachers’ talk and on students’ receptive and productive language skills (Stilwell 2006; Lyster 2007; Fleta 2008; Mackey 2012; Lightbown and Spada 2013; Gibbons 2015). In essence, while some classroom discourse strategies focus on form (Gibbons 2015, p. 24), others, facilitate meaning (Lyster 2007; Mackey 2012). As Cameron (2001) highlights, children between 5 and 10 years “are not very skillful in planning their talk” (p. 52); hence, teachers’ talk should provide children with clues of the features of the L2 in pre-primary classrooms (Machado 2015, p. 165).

Given the paucity of research studies on teacher-child discourse skills, the present paper on classroom conversations in pre-primary classrooms aims to shade light on (a) how very young learners 3, 4 and 5 years old build up the new language system with mostly classroom exposure to it; (b) how the new language grammar develops in actual practice; (c) what has and has not being learned in terms of the target grammatical features and also, (d) what communication strategies are used in class. Moreover, by reflecting and by becoming aware of what has being achieved should shed light on how English can be better taught, and in turn, these findings would help teachers to decide about the steps to follow in teaching English in English. As stressed by Lightbown and Spada (2013), “Knowing more about the development of learner language helps teachers to access teaching procedure in the light of what they can reasonably expect to accomplish in the classroom” (p. 40).

2.4 Types of Communication Strategies

Several authors have paid attention to teachers’ and children’s discourse strategies during communicative interaction (Machado 2015; Lyster 2007; Lightbown and Spada 2013; Gibbons 2015; Stilwell 2006; Gass and Selinker 2008 and Cameron

2001). As a basis for this paper, the set of communication strategies which are used by teachers and child learners in the immersion classroom to maintain communication in English L2 is presented below.

2.4.1 Repetition

Children have a natural tendency to repeat certain words or structures in instructed contexts, “teachers often hear children repeating a new word trying to become familiar with it” (Machado 2015, p. 179).

2.4.2 Recast

Lyster (2007) explains that “children frequently repeat parental recasts during L1 acquisition” (p. 93). Similarly, teachers provide different forms of feedback minus the error while maintaining the learner’s intended meaning. The recasts in the L2 young learners’ classroom have a twofold purpose: to provide learners with positive evidence, and also to maintain the flow of communication.

2.4.3 Explicit Correction

According to Lyster (2007), “...an explicit correction contains the correct form as well as a clear indication that what the student said was inaccurate” (p. 108).

2.4.4 Questions

Asking questions in class is “an important teaching ability” (Machado 2015, p. 335). Teacher’s questions, “...engage students in interaction and in exploring how much they understand” (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 145). Furthermore, asking the right questions can provide children a bridge between teaching and learning (Fisher 2005, p. 62). While teachers’ referential/open questions seek for information and demand non pre-scripted replies from children, display/close questions elicit answers already known by the teachers (Gibbons 2015, p. 37)

2.4.5 Language Mixing

Mixing languages simultaneously in the same utterance is a skilled activity, normal in a two language learning process (Stilwell 2006, p. 39).

2.4.6 Metalinguistic Feedback

Lightbown and Spada (2013) point out that: “Metalinguistic feedback contains comments, information, or questions related to the correctness of the students’ utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form” (p. 140).

2.4.7 Expansion

During conversational interchange, teachers sometimes recast children’s production for grammaticality correction or for adding extra information to the children’s comments (Stilwell 2006, p. 47).

2.4.8 Clarification Requests

With expressions like: ‘Pardon’, ‘Excuse me?’ or ‘I don’t understand’, teachers indicate that the learners’ message has not been fully understood due to an error of some kind. After a clarification request, learners are invited to modify the output and provide the correct information in the form of repetition or reformulation (Gass and Selinker 2008, p. 329).

2.4.9 Elicitation

Elicitation is a teaching skill which invites learners to use the correct form during conversational interaction (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 141).

2.4.10 Formulaic Expressions and Cognates

The language that goes with daily routines and transitional moments allows learners to participate in communicative tasks at school. Formulaic expressions are ready made chunks of language which are first rote-learned as wholes and later on split up into individual words and analysed by the learners for grammatical construction (Cameron 2001, p. 50). In the same vein, cognate words which are vocabulary items with the same or similar spelling, pronunciation and meaning in two languages (actor, doctor, animal, hospital) favour incidental learning as they help children to comprehend meaning and they help teachers to explain the concepts (Gass and Selinker 2008, p. 465).

3 Purpose of the Study

The main goal of the present descriptive case study research (Duff 2014) is to gain insight into the manner in which teachers foster children's English L2 use and how child learners grow proficient in the target language by studying teachers' and children's conversations during natural classroom interaction. The study raises the following questions about the developmental stages of the children's emerging grammars and classroom communicative strategies:

1. Do child learners show developmental stages for L2 acquisition of English syntax in pre-primary bilingual classrooms?
2. What type of utterances can be found in the young learners' oral production?
3. Is it possible to observe teachers' and children's discourse strategies that help children to scaffold English L2 grammar in pre-primary classrooms?
4. What classroom practices which involve teachers and children in conversations provide opportunities for L2 production?

4 Methodology

4.1 *Early Childhood Education in Spain*

Spain is a multilingual and multicultural country. The vast majority of the population speaks Spanish as a mother tongue, but other languages such as Basque, Catalan and Galician are co-official languages with Spanish in the corresponding regions. Pre-primary education in Spain is non-compulsory. It consists of two cycles: the first cycle takes children from birth to 3 years of age. This type of school can be run by local administrations or by private institutions. The second cycle takes children from 3 to 6 years of age and except for private institutions, it is free for all of those children who chose to be enrolled.

The teaching of foreign languages has been part of the statutory curriculum in most Spanish Autonomous Regions after the 2006 Act on Education. In 10 out of 17 Autonomous Communities, *all* children start their exposure to foreign languages (e.g., English, French, German, Mandarin) in the 2nd cycle of pre-primary education at age 3 (Eurydice 2012, p. 25). The goals of foreign language instruction at pre-primary level are to engage the learners' interest in the target foreign language, increase their self-confidence and participation, develop their oral skills and encourage awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity.

4.2 *Research Context*

The study, which was undertaken to address the questions posed above, was carried out in the British Council, School of Madrid, a private immersion school founded in 1940 to teach bilingual education English/Spanish to pupils from 5 to 14 years of age. Since 1990, this school takes students from 3 to 18 years of age, the majority monolingual speakers of Spanish (96%), and provides its students with a bilingual and bicultural education. The hallmark of pre-primary education is the integration of language with content instruction in which English L2 learning is an integral part of the academic, social and cognitive development.

In this conducive bilingual language learning environment, English is both the medium of and the object instruction. Children use English as a medium for learning non-language subject-matters. From age 3, the languages of instruction are Spanish and English and children learn English embedded in meaningful communication, as 90% of the instruction is provided in this foreign language. English language learning is incidental through content based instruction of most academic subjects (Personal, Social and Health Education; Communication, Language and Literacy; Mathematical development; Knowledge and understanding of the world; Information Technology; Physical development; Creative development (Arts, Crafts and Music). Language and Literacy education in Spanish represents 10% of the tuition.

From the beginning, children get familiarized with English throughout the school day in a natural way. Every pre-primary class, with an average of 20 children, has three fully-qualified professionals: a native English speaking teacher, a specialist Spanish teacher and a bilingual classroom teaching assistant. All teachers have an undergraduate degree, a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), Master or CAP, two years teaching experience and three work experience references. Moreover, the UK teachers must be in possession of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Right from the start teachers use a wide range of verbal cues and non-verbal communication techniques to help children understand content. The instructional focus of the classes is not on language forms but rather on the use the language to teach content and to express meaning.

The pupils follow the English national curriculum until the end of Secondary school and in the pre-primary section, the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been implemented (Department of Education 2012). Within this framework, the emphasis is on listening and speaking, which are the foundation skills on which literacy is built. The practices in which teachers and children were engaged in during the observational study were educational activities (maths, crafts, singing sessions, playing, storytelling). In addition, conversational interactions were also observed during different daily routines and transitional times over the course of the school day, such as arrival and departure, meals or toileting.

4.3 Participants

Sixty one Spanish speaking boys and girls, three English native teachers and three Spanish/English bilingual teaching assistants from three pre-primary classrooms participated in the study. Children from Nursery (number 18), Reception (n.22) and Year 1 (n.21) were available for the observational study. Their age range was from 3 years in Nursery, 4 years in Reception to 6 years in Year 1. In the main, children from age 3 to 6 are still developing their fine and gross control skills, they have little knowledge of the world, their attention span is short; and moreover, they are at the first stages of developing the literacy skills, namely reading and writing.

Children in Nursery were absolute beginners of English and children in Reception and Year 1 had already been attending bilingual education for one and two years respectively. During the first stages of English L2 acquisition in this learning setting, teachers are aware that language is primarily used for understanding and for communicating meaning; thus, they do not encourage children to interact among themselves in English until higher grades.

From the linguistic perspective, children who start learning an L2 in pre-primary years do not start from scratch as monolingual children; as noted above, if they start at 3 years of age, their L1 is still developing (Cameron 2001, p. 12; Meisel 2011, p. 91). Children in this study have previous linguistic knowledge and experience of what learning a language means because their mother tongue (Spanish) has developed to a certain extent. As far as English L2 is concerned, what children need to do in pre-primary is "...crack the code through exposure and opportunities to converse" (Machado 2015, p. 82). As this study shows, children's previous linguistic knowledge may affect the L2 language developmental process.

4.4 Data Collection

The database for this observational study, which yielded 30 hours of audio-recordings of a variety of lessons and routines in everyday school situations during big and small group activities, examines the amount and type of discourse skills used in three pre-primary classrooms, Nursery, Reception and Year 1.

One of the reasons to observe children while interacting with their teachers was to gain understanding of the role that classroom discourse plays for L2 development. The speech events were audio-recorded in nine observation sessions at three single points in time during one school year: the end of the first, second and third terms (December, March and June); thus, resulting in a longitudinal and cross-sectional database. The tape-recorder was placed close to the teacher as it had been observed previously that the L2 utterances had mainly occurred in interaction with the teacher during teacher-led activities. The teachers were selected on the basis of their willingness to have their lessons observed and tape-recorded, and were also aware of the researcher's interest in language acquisition. However, they were

unaware of the researcher's interest in exploring the discourse skills being used during classroom conversational interactions. Given the young learners' age, it is often difficult to devise tests to collect data to measure and study the emerging grammars. For that reason, data was collected observing teacher-led large and small group instruction that encouraged the use of the discourse skills.

4.5 Data Analysis

The mixed-method research design adopted for data analysis focuses firstly on child English L2 emerging syntactic production (quantitative) as a way to assess and to analyse syntactical development (Brown 1973). Secondly, on the use of communicative strategies (qualitative) during big and small group children's conversations with their teachers. In this manner, the longitudinal and cross-sectional data allowed the possibility to observe language development over time. For the qualitative and quantitative analysis, all utterances produced by the teachers and children during the 30 h of audio-recordings were transcribed and the field notes written during observation were incorporated to the transcription. The children in-group interactions in Spanish, which were not relevant for this study, were excluded. Each transcript presents the teachers and children oral interactions (utterances) and also field notes information describing the classroom practices that were being carried out during the data collection as well as teacher-child non-verbal behaviour.

The whole corpus was firstly coded in terms of language production by categorizing and counting the utterances, taking Brown (1973), Radford (1990) and Tabors' (2008) studies as models for analysis. Secondly, the classroom interaction excerpts were examined under the lens of the adjusted categories of discourse analysis studies proposed by Lyster (2007) and Mackey (2012).

5 Results

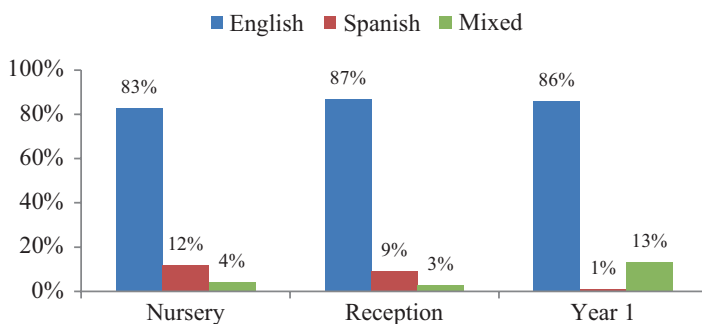
Findings of an in-depth analysis of children's speech emissions show the effects of teachers input on children's output during conversational interactions. In addition, data analysis provides information on how the discourse skills help pre-primary children to understand the messages. As Gibbons (2015) points out, one of the most crucial young learners' tasks in the classroom is to understand spoken language: "language development involves continuing a process of meaning making" (p. 9).

5.1 *Child English L2 Production: Analysis of Types of Utterances*

To address the first question related to the learners' emerging grammars, the purpose of the first study was to account for the amount and type of utterances found in the young learners' oral production during conversational interactions with their English teachers. Data are presented both, qualitatively with excerpts and quantitatively with graphs. The teacher-led dialogues consist of spontaneously produced speech at different times of the school day which reflect the opportunities that children had to process language through input.

The total number of analysed utterances was 1411. Graph 1 presents the proportion of utterances in English, Spanish, and also the mixed-code utterances produced by child learners.

During conversational interactions, teachers followed the principle of one person-one language addressing pupils at all times in English. The majority of children's contributions were in English: Nursery, 351 utterances (83%); Reception, 525 utterances (87%) and Year 1, 535 utterances (86%). As it can be inferred, this corpus indicates that the use of English becomes more habitual with children who have been longer in the school. In some instances, children use Spanish in response to their teachers' questions, Nursery being the group of children with the highest percentage of utterances in Spanish, 12, % (44 utterances), followed by Reception, 9,1% (48 utterances) and by Year 1,1,6% (9 utterances). The number of mixed-code utterances is higher in Year 1 (71 utterances) than in Nursery (15 utterances) and Reception (19 utterances). As suggested by some authors, "learners are faced with the need to express a concept or an idea in the second language but find themselves without the linguistic resources to do so" (Gass and Selinker 2008, p. 285).

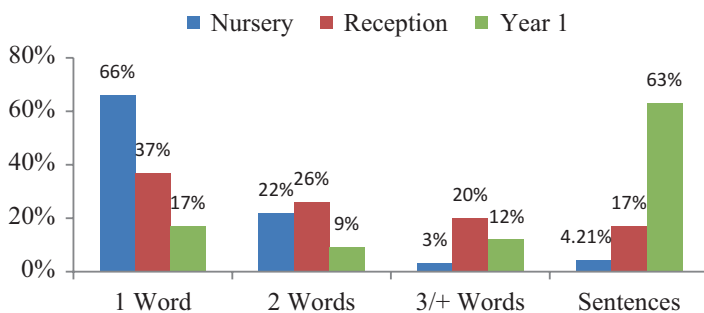


Graph 1 Proportion of utterances produced by the total number of children (N = 61)

Knowing more vocabulary and more grammatical structures in English puts children in the position of mixing languages in order to be able to communicate. These language switches may be explained by the fact that Year 1 children have a wider and richer linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate more effectively in a more spontaneous and more creative L2 (García and Wei 2014). Children mix languages in two directions, Spanish into English and English into Spanish. Examples of spontaneous utterances that contain words in Spanish are presented in (1):

- | | | |
|-----|---|------------------------------|
| (1) | Looking for <i>una cosa</i> . [English=something]
I finish when <i>tocaba la campana</i> . [English=the bell went]
In addition, examples of Spanish utterances containing English words can also be found in (2): | Reception (R)
Year 1 (Y1) |
| (2) | <i>Si es</i> tidy up <i>lo pinto después</i> [English=if it is tidy up time, I' ll paint it later]
<i>Casi todos los tengo</i> finish [English=I have almost all]
<i>Un estanque con peces</i> for the fish | Nursery (N)
(Y1)
(R) |

As far as English grammar is concerned, children are progressing through a series of developmental stages comparable to the stages found in English L1 acquisition (Brown 1973; Radford 1990). One of the characteristics of children's inter-language is the length and type of utterances. As Graph 2 illustrates, the majority of the oral production by children in Nursery and in Reception has not developed beyond the one- and two-word phase. According to Tabors (2008, p. 39), there is a specific developmental sequence for L2 acquisition in early childhood settings. During this phase, children continue using their mother tongue; subsequently, they produce individual words and phrases in the L2 before becoming productive users of the new language. This telegraphic speech stage, is not only characteristic of the earliest stages of L2 acquisition but "... also used by children learning their first language" (Tabors 2008, p. 60).



Graph 2 Types of utterances in terms of word length across the three year groups

More and more, utterances of Year 1 children are multiword containing simple and complex sentences that gradually increase in length showing productive use of the English language.

Utterances from the earliest stages of interlanguage are essentially of one (n.158) and two words (n.53) in Nursery (66 % and 22 % respectively). This percentage drops significantly in Year 1 (17 % and 9 %) in favour of the production of simple and complex sentences (63%). Examples of (3) illustrate the 1 or 2 words production. As it can be observed, children rely mainly on content words like object and colour names or counting sequences:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|-------------|
| (3) | Blue. | (Nursery) |
| | A snowman. | (N) |
| | No presents. | (Reception) |
| | Is white. | (R) |

Examples of (4) present multi-word stage productions with more than two words but still with no subject-verb-object structure:

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------|
| (4) | Down in the bed | (N) |
| | And a fish like this | (R) |
| | A paper for the shells | (Year 1) |
| | To the other house to the
head of the man | (Y1) |

Some simple and complex sentences (n.68) appear primarily in Reception (17%) and become abundant in Year 1 (n.275) data. Examples in (5) illustrate this point:

- | | | |
|-----|---|------|
| (5) | This is a ice-cream. | (R) |
| | I am angry, I is sleep and sick. | (Y1) |
| | We tried to make a house to
swim with the stickle bricks | (Y1) |
| | Today, me go to cut my hair. | (Y1) |

One of the most relevant structural features of Spanish grammar is that it is a free-word order language, while English is fixed-word order language. Contrary to what might be expected, findings show that the majority of children's utterances exhibit the correct English word order. An in-depth analysis of the earliest verbal constructions reveals that [*is*], from the copula verb To Be, is the verbal form most often used and that interrogative and negative sentences are scarce. It has been observed by various authors that English interrogative sentences are acquired late by monolingual and L2 speakers (Brown 1973; Radford 1990; Fleta 2001). The

only interrogative sentences found in the corpus are memorised routine formulaic speech phrases that children use to ask permission:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------|
| (6) | Go to the toilet? | (N) |
| | Miss Ann, can you help me? | (R) |
| | Can I play in the writing centre? | (Y1) |

As far as comprehension is concerned, children's understanding is directly related "with what they already know about the topic, including what they know in the mother-tongue/other languages" (Gibbons 2015, p. 43). As examples in (7) show, it may be the case that children encounter new concepts and their related words for the first time and they need to learn how to label them not only in English but also in Spanish:

- | | | |
|-----|---|------|
| (7) | <i>¿Qué es headache en español?</i> [English=what's headache in Spanish?] | (R) |
| | <i>¿Pero en español cómo se dice hedgehog?</i> | |
| | [English=But in Spanish, how do you say hedgehog?] | (Y1) |

This child is aware that there are two different linguistic terms for referring to the same lexical item (headache; *dolor de cabeza*) which contributes to develop the L2 competency.

Children usually show understanding in spite of the fact that they depend entirely on their teachers' talk for interpersonal communication. Most times, they convey meaning through speech in English, other times, by making the appropriate response in Spanish

- | | | |
|--------|---|------|
| (7) a. | Teacher (T): Have you put the glue on? | (N) |
| | Child (Ch): <i>Si lo he puesto</i> [English=yes, I have put it] | |
| b. | T: Does anybody know why are we cutting this out? | (R) |
| | Ch: <i>Porque si no los padres no tendrán invitación</i> | |
| | [English=because otherwise parents won't have an invitation] | |
| c. | T: Use your imagination. | (Y1) |
| | Ch: <i>Que te lo inventes!</i> [English= Invent it!] | |

To conclude this section, the analysis of Nursery and Reception data indicates that at the earliest stages of English L2 acquisition, children's emissions of one, two or three words seem to be enough to communicate with their teachers. All in all, it seems that English grammar is emerging gradually and that children are in the earliest stages of the acquisition process, learning English syntax in a piecemeal fashion – step by step in a way similar to English L1 developmental stages (Brown 1973; Radford 1990).

5.2 *Child and Teacher English L2 Production: Analysis of Discourse Strategies*

This section analyses the use of the teachers' and children's discourse skills to successfully bridge the gap between language research and language pedagogy for ultimately help teachers to understand the theoretical underpinnings of their practices. Data were analysed inductively by detecting patterns within the categories of strategies identified in various discourse analysis studies during teacher-child communicative interactions in classrooms (Lyster 2007; Södergård 2008 and Mackey 2012). The communicative strategies were of three types: teachers' positive feedback to foster language and content comprehension (questions, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, expansion, cognates); teachers' corrective feedback (recast, explicit correction, clarification requests); and children's spontaneous productive strategies (repetition, language mixing, formulaic expressions).

5.2.1 Repetition

The proportion of spontaneous repetition of words and expressions seems to occur more often in Nursery and in Reception than in Year 1. This can be explained by the fact that young children need more repetitions to map new words in their lexicon than their older peers. Often children repeat words and structures during dialogues while carrying out task-based activities and also during story reading sessions. Excerpt 1 presents the conversational interaction during one story reading session, Nursery children were sitting on the carpet and before reading the picturebook 'Skyfire' (Asch 1984), a story about a bear and a bird that saw the rainbow, the teacher asked children questions about what was inside her bag. She was trying to elicit from children language related to Spring.

Excerpt 1 Children's spontaneous repetition

Turn	Children	Teacher	Commentary
1		What do you think is in my bag today?	<i>T asks children an open question.</i>
2	∅		<i>Children don't respond.</i>
3		A basket, what do you think might be in my basket?	<i>Teacher provides key word and asks another display question.</i>
4	Basket		<i>Children repeat the key word.</i>
5		In my basket	<i>Teacher repeats key word in utterance.</i>
6	In my basket		<i>Children repeat teachers' utterance</i>
7		Apples?	<i>Teacher makes an intonation question.</i>
8	Apples		<i>Child repeats key word.</i>
9		Do you want to see it?	<i>Teacher asks a close question.</i>
10	Apples		<i>Child repeats key word.</i>

Excerpt 2 Recasting

Turn	Child	Teacher	Commentary
1		... so the small pig runs into the mud, he sits down and sinks down into the soft good mud.	<i>T is finishing reading the picturebook "Small Pig".</i>
2	I finished		<i>One child makes a semantic error</i>
3		The story has finished. I finished reading the story.	<i>T "recasts" what child said.</i>

According to Cameron (2001): "when children are asked to take part in conversations that are beyond their development, they cannot fully participate and may be forced to repeat without understanding" (p. 53). The repeated words and utterances of the excerpt above (basket; in my basket) do not appear to be communicative. The Nursery child L2 learners seem to be rehearsing and working on productive language and "quietly unravel the patterns of the new language in their environment" (Tabors 2008, p. 53). As Lightbown and Spada (2013) stress: "however, this type of imitation may be an individual learning strategy but it is not a universal characteristic of language learners" (p. 202).

5.2.2 Recast

Most instances of teacher's corrective feedback in the three immersion classrooms involved recasting or reformulation. Excerpt 2 corresponds to a conversation in Nursery when the teacher is finishing reading the picturebook 'Small Pig' (Lobel 1969) to the children who are sitting on the carpet. A close look at the dialogue illustrates how the teacher reformulates one child's utterance.

This is an example of implicit reformulation of the child's utterance involving syntactical and semantic information. Given the child's level of English and also the complexity of the English structure, the teacher is merely reformulating the utterance, but not expecting uptake from the child.

5.2.3 Explicit Correction

Sometimes teachers correct children's oral production explicitly. Excerpt 3 illustrates the use of explicit correction. Before playtime, the teacher is showing Reception children name cards to learn to recognise their written names. She asks them to go and sit at a table for snack when they see their name written on the card.

As shown in Excerpt 3, the teacher indicates children that what they are saying is incorrect; she provides them with the correct form and makes it explicit. In spite of the fact that the teacher corrects the oral error by echoing the children's response and by giving the correct form, children do not seem to be uptaking, it seems that: "certain forms of recasts may be more or less salient to L2 learners" (Mackey 2012, p. 124).

Excerpt 3 Explicit correction

Turn	Children	Teacher	Commentary
1		You don't say <i>mio</i> [mine] unless is yours. You say: it's mine	<i>T explicitly points out the child's linguistic error and provides the correction.</i>
2	<i>Mio</i> [mine]		<i>Ch makes the same error.</i>
3	<i>Mio</i> [mine]		<i>Another Ch makes the same error.</i>
4		I don't want to hear <i>mio</i> any more. Mine. Mine [rept]	<i>T explicitly points out the child's linguistic error and provides the correction again.</i>
5	<i>Yo</i> [I]		<i>One Ch starts using a different word in Spanish</i>
6	Mine		<i>One Ch uses the correct form.</i>
7	<i>Mio</i> [mine]		<i>Yet, the same error occurs.</i>

Excerpt 4 Teachers' questions

Turn	Children	Teacher	Commentary
1		Do you think he needs his coat on today...?	<i>T begins the conversation with a question</i>
2	No		<i>Ch respond</i>
3		No, I don't think it's cold any more. So, now the weather bear has got his...	<i>T adds information and uses closure.</i>
4	<i>Pantalón</i>		<i>Ch gives the word "trousers" in Spanish</i>
5		Who knows how to say <i>pantalón</i> in English?	<i>T asks a question to elicit the correct word in English.</i>
6	Shirt		<i>Ch shouts out.</i>
7		Alex?	<i>T asks Alex.</i>
8	Trousers		<i>Alex gives key word</i>
9		His trousers; he's just got his trousers on.	<i>T. repeats key word, and enlarges utterance into a meaningful simple sentence to expand information.</i>
10	Trousers		<i>Ch repeat key word.</i>

5.2.4 Questions

As pointed out above (Sect. 5.1) children's production of questions was merely formulas to ask permission. In this section the questions that the teachers used to elicit information from children are considered. Among the many purposes of the strategic use of teachers' questions, eliciting language and ideas and checking understanding stand out as being the best means for children's participation in communicative interaction. In Excerpt 4, the teacher from Nursery is dressing up the weather bear during the morning routine and asks the whole class the type of clothes the bear should wear.

Excerpt 5 Language Mixing

Turn	Child	Teacher	Commentary
1	I don't like the month of September because there is <i>invierno</i> .		<i>Ch mixes languages</i>
2		Autumn	<i>T recasts in English</i>
3	Autumn (rept) because I don't like <i>castañas</i>		<i>Ch repeats the teacher recasting and continues mixing languages</i>
4		Chestnuts	<i>T recasts in English</i>
5	∅		<i>Ch does not repeat the teacher recasting</i>

Excerpt 4 involves quick questions and answers, in line 4 a child shouts out *pantalón* as an answer to the teacher's question. The teacher in line 5 introduces a metalinguistic dimension by increasing children's linguistic awareness by showing that one item can be labelled in two different ways according to the L1 or L2 language, the teacher's questions in this whole-class interaction have an effect on the quality and quantity of children's output. They are not only intended to motivate children to participate in conversation but indirectly also to test vocabulary. In this example, the teacher is building on child's one word utterance by adding information and by using longer grammatical structures. Moreover, the teacher uses closure: "a technique that prompts guessing by the child" (Machado 2015, p. 176).

5.2.5 Language Mixing

Excerpt 5 corresponds to the dialogue between the Year 1 teacher and one child during a session on the carpet reporting on the week-end news.

This dialogue is a clear example of translanguaging, by which emergent bilingual children perform bilingually (García and Wei 2014, p. 5). The child's need to fill in a lexical gap in English results in this case in the equivalent word in Spanish. The teacher recasts the child's utterance by providing him with the correct lexical item in English: "Such switching between languages may sometimes reflect the absence of a particular vocabulary word or expression" (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 31). In spite of the fact that children mix English and Spanish in the same sentence, they do not seem to get confused when combining both languages, "just because children mix up their languages in their speech does not necessarily mean that they mix up their languages in their mind" (Rowland 2014, p. 178).

5.2.6 Metalinguistic Feedback

During the course of the classroom conversational interactions, teachers may raise questions or make comments on the learner's errors using metalinguistic cues. Excerpt 6 shows the Reception teacher-led dialogue about sea animals and plants

Excerpt 6 Metalinguistic Feedback

Turn	Child	Teacher	Commentary
1		We also have some plants, what are the plants for?	<i>T asks an open question</i>
2	For eat the fish		<i>One Ch responds making a grammatical error</i>
3		To eat the fish?	<i>T uses metalinguistic cues to elicit the correct structure.</i>
4	No		<i>Ch is not capable of analysing the error.</i>
5		For the fish to eat, not to eat the fish but the fish to eat	<i>T provides the correct form.</i>

Excerpt 7 Expansion

Turn	Child	Teacher	Commentary
1		and a jelly fish	<i>T introduces key word</i>
2	<i>medusa</i>		<i>Ch. translates into Spanish showing comprehension</i>
3		long tentacles and they hurt. Oh!, very nice... well... not very nice with long, long tentacles and they are very bad...	<i>T gives additional conceptual information.</i>
4	very bad		<i>Ch repeats key words.</i>
5		... they're poisonous; if they sting you, you're going to be very ill.	<i>T keeps adding more conceptual information</i>
6	And the snakes		<i>Ch introduces a word related.</i>
7		Eels, eel's a very long snake that lives in the water, not snakes	<i>T gives key word and expands information.</i>

that takes place while working with a small group of children at a table on a crafts activity making fish and plants with card to stick inside a fish tank.

In spite of the fact that the Reception teacher provides linguistic modelling and indicates explicitly that there is an error by asking a question using metalinguistic cues, the child is not capable of analysing the error or uptake due to his level of English and to the fact that it is a complex utterance involving syntactic and semantic information. Finally, the teacher provides the correct form.

5.2.7 Expansion

Excerpt 7 shows how the Reception teacher expands children' conceptual knowledge of sea animals and plants.

As example in Excerpt 7 shows, after prompting information from the child who is not familiar with the words, the teacher provides him with the key terms. Therefore, the conceptual meaning of child's utterance in (7) is expanded. The teacher amplifies

Excerpt 8 Clarification request

Turn	Child	Teacher	Commentary
1	<i>Tengo una idea</i>		<i>Ch spontaneous utterance.</i>
2		Sorry, I don't understand	<i>T uses clarification request.</i>
3	I have an idea		<i>Ch produces modified output.</i>

the language in a way that helps to develop understanding of key concepts. Expansions “provide mini-learning lessons for the child” (Stilwell 2006, p. 112).

5.2.8 Clarification Requests

Excerpt 8 describes the conversational interaction during the morning session on the carpet while taking the register, one child interrupts the conversation.

In Excerpt 8, the learner is being spontaneous during communicative interaction using an utterance in Spanish. A simple request for clarification by the teacher pushes the child to modify his production into English. The function of this clarification request is to persuade the child to use English. Clarification requests are ideal corrective strategies to encourage children's L2 production at the earliest stages of L2 acquisition.

5.2.9 Elicitation

Teachers seek the completion of an utterance by delaying speech, by pausing, and by giving children time to think of an answer. Elicitation skills: “allow time for (students) to attempt to self-correct what they say, or to reword an idea...” (Gibbons 2015, p. 27). In Excerpt 9, the Nursery teacher is talking to the children about Tuesday's activities.

The dialogue of Excerpt 9 shows that the teacher is giving children time to formulate a response. Some authors consider that children are usually given too little time to think their responses when talking in a new language: “we need a lot more time to process what is being said in order to make sense of it” (Gibbons 2015, p. 43). Research shows that teachers trained to give learners more time to respond questions results in the students production of longer and more complex structures (Lightbown and Spada 2013, p. 147).

5.2.10 Formulaic Expressions and Cognates

At the initial stages of L2 acquisition, formulaic expressions provide children with the basic tools to participate in class from day one. Children rote-learn the formulas and these formulaic expressions allow them to become productive in English during conversational interactions: “by joining in, they get more exposure to input for

Excerpt 9 Elicitation

Turn	Child	Teacher	Commentary
1		Today is...	<i>T asks a close question.</i>
2	...Tuesday		<i>Ch use key word.</i>
3		Tuesday, well done. How do you know it's Tuesday?.....	<i>T repeats key word and asks an open question.</i>
4	∅		<i>Ch don't respond.</i>
5		...because I drew a tricycle and on Tuesdays very often if the sun shines and it doesn't ...	<i>T provides information and pauses waiting for the key word.</i>
6	... rain		<i>Ch use key word.</i>
7		Then, we go out and play on the play...	<i>T pauses waiting for key word.</i>
8	... playground		<i>Ch use key word.</i>
9		but only if we are.....	<i>T pauses waiting for key word.</i>
10	... quiet		<i>Ch use key word.</i>
11		if you are quiet and.....	<i>T pauses waiting for key word.</i>
12	good		<i>Ch use key word</i>
		...good, then we can go out on the tricycles.	<i>T repeats key word to confirm Ch contribution.</i>

Excerpt 10 Formulaic expressions

Turn	Child	Teacher	Commentary
1		Good morning Maria...	<i>T uses formula</i>
2	Good morning		<i>Ch uses formula</i>
3		Is Jaime here...?	<i>T asks if a child is in class</i>
4	Not today		<i>Ch use formula</i>
5		Good morning Luis	<i>T uses formula</i>
6	Not here today		<i>Ch use formula</i>
7		Good morning Ana	<i>T uses formula</i>
8	Good morning		<i>Ch uses formula</i>

language learning and more practice” (Moon 2000, p. 6). The example in Excerpt 10 illustrates how Nursery children use formulaic language while the teacher is taking the register.

The use of formulaic expressions during the first stages of language production plays a twofold role: to promote communication (Cameron 2001, p. 100) and to raise metalinguistic awareness that help children to develop the underlying grammatical structures of the target language (Lyster 2007, p. 65). During the first stages of early language acquisition, short and simple formulas should be introduced first as chunks, among other things because children as young as 3 years old are unable to process long string of words even in their L1. At the beginning for instance, when children ask permission to go to the toilet, they may use a short formula like: ‘Toilet, please?’, later on, a long formula like: ‘Can I go to the toilet, please?’ can be introduced. Later

on, formulaic expressions can be expanded and introduced to children (Cameron 2001, p. 112). Moreover, teachers use of cognate words which are similar in the L1 and L2 languages in terms of phonological, syntactical and semantic forms (e.g., doctor, train, ambulance) help children to learn vocabulary and content.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

This case study research did not address the initial L2 developmental stages such as the silent period or receptive bilingualism, but provides evidence of more advanced stages of language acquisition such as the telegraphic, formulaic and grammatically productive stages. Additionally, it presents the relationship between language research and language pedagogy by exploring various features of classroom discourse through child L2 production in an early immersion bilingual school. Findings are illuminating in that they provide information on how child learners grow proficient in English L2 within a communicative instructed context in which "...it is not enough simply to listen and to take in forms or to output new forms. It is important to engage with material and interact cognitively and socially in ways that produce and extend the students' languaging and meaning making" (García and Wei 2015, p. 229). In relation with English L2 production, findings show that children follow developmental stages: a first phase with one, two or more words seems to be sufficient to communicate in the target language during the first stages of L2 acquisition. This holophrastic phase is followed by subsequent more complex phases in which simple and complex sentences appear. During the early stages of L2 production, children mix the language codes and make developmental errors similar to L1 learners' errors, which in terms of acquisition seem to be part of children's language developmental progress.

Likewise, the research contributes to gain understanding of how teachers and children use English to communicate during the early stages of immersion by looking at the functions, features and effects of classroom discourse. The analysis of the conversational interactions reports on the strategies used by the teachers to guide, monitor and assess language and content knowledge. In relation to the features of conversational interactions, the teachers not only listen to what children are trying to communicate verbally, but they also try to make sense of what children are not able to say. Findings indicate that the classroom discourse is mostly focused on meaning rather than on form and that teachers are more inclined to check comprehension than to correct language production. This is shown by the fact that positive feedback (questions, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, expansion, cognates), rather than explicit corrections had a salient role. In the main, the teaching patterns adopted by teachers in the form of corrective feedback (explicit correction; recast; clarification request) have an informative and conceptual function rather than a formal corrective function. In this way, by providing children with this type of feedback, teachers scaffold language, promote communication as well as provide opportunities for language uptake.

The major findings of this observational study show that teachers tried different strategies to make themselves understood in English L2. Furthermore, findings can be extrapolated to other early L2 teaching contexts. In spite of the local conditions that make schools different from each other, the classroom is the common context in which language learning takes place. Even though schools may differ in the amount of exposure time to the L2 or in the availability of teaching resources, yet, the learners' age is a common factor which makes all children in naturalistic and formal contexts learn languages similarly by listening, by understanding the messages and by speaking (Long 1996; Mackey 2007; Fleta 2015).

7 Practical Implications

There are a number of principles that help to develop new understandings of the role that classroom discourse plays for L2 development and which can guide pre-primary teachers in the selection of best practices. For example, being aware that listening and speaking are the cornerstone skills during the first stages of language development. Hence, communicating and participating always in English during school life, from day one, from start to finish and everywhere at school would help child learners.

One of the scaffolding tools that can help to develop the auditory and speaking skills is incorporating simple multisensory and multimodal teaching practices. For example, using verbal and non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, hand gestures, body language and illustrations to facilitate comprehension. In addition, providing children with the magic words, greetings, formulas to ask permission or give out materials encourage participation and equip children with the basic linguistic tools to practice English very early on.

Moreover, in early immersion contexts, it is of utmost importance to allow children time for participation. For example, giving wait time during dialogues and devising activities to elicit children's speech such as shared reading, singing or reciting.

To conclude, this chapter has raised awareness of the importance of oral communicative interaction for early language learning in pre-primary settings. To that end, the study explored children's emerging English grammars and the discourse skills involved during face-to-face communicative interactions that helped children to scaffold the new language.

Focusing on the grammatical structures, outcomes suggest that children did not build the grammar of English by learning words in isolation, but by interacting orally with their teachers, namely, listening to the teachers' talk, understanding the messages and speaking; much in the same manner as monolingual English children.

Conversational interactions with teachers which integrated language and context were of paramount importance for early L2 learning for they provided input and output opportunities. Furthermore, children's oral production was encouraged by teachers in a systematic and consistent way, through fostering children's

participation, by creating opportunities for language and content learning and by promoting social oral interaction.

In sum, in order to speed up children's L2 learning process, one of the pre-primary practitioners' priorities should be to be fully acquainted with discourse skill strategies and to design and plan appropriate conversational practices.

Acknowledgement I would like to express my gratitude to the British Council School of Madrid and to the teachers in the Early Years for opening their classrooms for observation.

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Part III
Children as Language Experts and Models

Play and Peer Interaction in a Low-Exposure Foreign Language-Learning Programme



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Abstract This chapter discusses the possibilities of enabling peer interaction through structured child-initiated play in a low exposure, foreign language context. The research took place in a pre-primary institution in Portugal with a group of sixteen 5–6 years olds, whose shared classroom language was Portuguese, and who were given two 30-min English lessons a week by a visiting teacher. Together with these teacher-led sessions in the foreign language, children were also given access to English through structured child-initiated play in a resourced English learning area (ELA), one of several learning areas in their room. With a view to understanding the way these children interacted with peers, I focus on the different activities carried out between the learners and how they used English while in this area. Using observation field notes and photos of children engaging in free play in the ELA, interviews with children and their educators, I analyze data considering Blum-Kulka and Snow's contextual features of peer talk (Discourse Stud 6(3):291–305, 2004: 298) considering the collaborative, multi-party, symmetrical participation structure of the activities and the shared worlds of these children's classroom culture. The results provide evidence of children easily using the L2 with peers and supports the inclusion of an approach which enables child-initiated play in foreign language learning contexts to promote language development. I conclude with recommendations for educators in foreign language learning contexts of low exposure.

1 Foreign Language Learning in the Early Years

There is a worldwide trend to lower the starting age for learning another language (Rixon 2013) and in many cases this other language is English (Mourão and Lourenço 2015; Murphy 2014; Rixon 2013; see also Lopriore in this volume). Existing models for language learning in pre-primary range along a continuum, moving from language awareness, where children are expected to 'develop the perception and recognition of different sounds and concepts of one or more languages'

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to full immersion programmes, where children are taught in ‘an official or minority/regional language other than the child’s first language/mother tongue’ (European Commission 2011: 15). This chapter looks in particular at language exposure programmes the objective of which is often to ‘prepare and help children to learn a new language’ (op.cit.). These often low-exposure foreign language (FL) programmes differ quite considerably to immersion or bilingual programmes in that the children receive a restricted amount of exposure to the FL in a classroom setting; there is little or no access to this language outside of the classroom, and there are no opportunities for interacting with peers who speak the FL, for children share a majority language in the classroom.

The problems associated with introducing a FL in pre-primary are seen to include the inadequate nature of provision, transition from pre-primary to primary where English is omnipresent, and the lack of suitable teacher education programmes (Černá 2015; Murphy and Evangelou 2016; Portiková 2015; Rixon 2013; see also Lugossy in this volume). Reports are emerging which suggest that English in pre-primary is usually one of low-exposure context (under 1 h of exposure per week), depending upon specialist FL teachers to visit institutions as peripatetic teachers, and thus often taught as standalone lessons, involving children in whole group, teacher-led activities based on formal explicit language instruction with the objective of developing discrete language skills, and ignoring the importance of integration and age appropriate pedagogies (see country case studies in Černá 2015; Mourão and Ferreirinha 2016; Portiková 2015 and Rokita-Jaśkow 2013).

Little research has been undertaken in relation to the teaching and learning approaches in a low-exposure context (Mourão 2014). Approaches should take into consideration the educational attributes of pre-primary education and notwithstanding the disparity of provision we can assume these are shared characteristics worldwide, despite being interpreted through a variety of cultural lenses. Mourão foregrounds the importance of taking a holistic approach to early childhood education to support children’s cognitive, physical, social and emotional development, and urges for language practitioners in particular to ‘respect how children learn and emulate the approaches used by their pre-primary teachers’ (p. 263).

The European Commission highlights a set of orientations for pedagogical processes stating that children ‘should be exposed to the target language in meaningful and, if possible, authentic settings, in such a way that the language is spontaneously acquired rather than consciously learnt’ (European Commission 2011: 17). In addition, ‘early language learning should be integrated into contexts in which the language is meaningful and useful, such as in everyday or playful situations, since play is the child’s natural medium of learning in pre-primary’ (p. 14). Child-initiated play in the FL is rarely taken into consideration in FL projects, nevertheless, see Elvin et al. (2007), Mourão (2001, 2014), Mourão and Robinson (2016) and Voise (2014) for reported projects that do emulate pre-primary approaches and make reference to play activities in a FL.

2 Play and Language

The concept of play is a slippery one (Lillard et al. 2013). Play is characterized as an approach to action, not an activity in itself (Bruner in Moyles 1989); it is recognized as being ‘a source of development and creates the zone of proximal development’ where children act a head above themselves (Vygotsky 1978: 74). For Vygotsky play was the leading activity for children in pre-primary, he described ‘real’ play as being essentially dramatic or make-believe, and portrays it consisting of three components: the creation of an imaginary situation, the taking on and acting out of roles, and a set of rules determined by the specific roles. Thus, through play, a child relives real experiences not imaginary situations, for mature play – creative play that requires higher-level thinking – is the ‘ability to take on and sustain a specific role by consistently engaging in actions, speech and interactions that fit this particular character’ (Bodrova 2008: 364).

Play is distinguished from other activities by pretense and ‘being in “what if?” and “as if” modes which provide opportunities for imaginative and flexible ways of thinking and acting’ (Wood 2010: 2). Play is also said to lack extrinsic goals, ‘its motivations are intrinsic and serve no other objectives’ and ‘it is not obligatory but freely chosen by the player’ (Garvey 1990: 4). Finally, it is important to remember that play should be meaningful to its players, and as such is a low-risk activity, sociable and joyful, and allowing for humour and excitement (Kernan 2007).

Play has been placed at the center of the early childhood curriculum for over a century and has a number of forms nevertheless it is free-play, or child-initiated play, that is considered essential in children’s development (Moyles 1989). Child-initiated play is ‘the opportunity to explore materials and situations for oneself’ (Moyles 1989: 14). According to Bruce (2011), through child-initiated play children become responsible for their learning; they can experiment, make mistakes, exhibit choice, and decide for themselves – in all, they are respected as autonomous learners. The combination of teacher-initiated group work together with child-initiated ‘potentially instructive play activities’ (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002: 43) is thus recognized as being essential in early childhood education and care. However, Björk-Willén and Cromdal (2009: 1495–6), state that free play is often considered a ‘non-curricular activity (...) more or less spontaneous and loosely organised’, and erroneously considered a non-serious activity. As such, they describe it as a ‘hotbed for peer and group socialization’ and an ‘arena in which children explore concepts, language and develop a whole range of mental as well as social skills.’ In addition, they state: ‘It is hard work, it is dead serious and bears profound consequences for the participant’s social relations’. They argue for play to be seen as an instructional activity despite being ‘pre-defined as specifically non-instructional’ (p. 1515).

As has already been touched upon, play supports child development as a whole providing affordances in socialization, cognition and language to mention just three areas. In relation to language development, Ervin-Tripp (1991) highlights the importance of play with peers in, among other things, the areas of imitation and correction and in relation to the development of sounds, vocabulary, social markers,

syntactic elaboration and strategic language. In Björk-Willén and Cromdal's study (2009), we see evidence of multilingual talk – Swedish (L1) and Spanish and English (L2) – during play, showing children imitating and correcting, as well as reinforcing sounds, vocabulary and syntactic elaboration. In such contexts, L1 and immersion, extensive exposure in the target languages supports and prompts such behaviour by the children, there is however little research that investigates play in low-exposure foreign language contexts.

3 Peer Interaction and Language Learning in the Early Years

Peer interaction is defined as 'any communicative activity carried out between learners, where there is minimal or no participation from the teacher' (Philp et al. 2014: 3). In this definition, Philps et al. are considering peer interaction from an organized language classroom perspective and state that 'peer interaction is *one* of other contexts for learning, including teacher-student interaction' (p. 10, italics in original). They recognize that as a context for learning, peer interaction is shaped by 'the central emphasis of language use in the interaction' (p. 11), the medium or mode and the task itself, which in a formal classroom context aims specifically at creating opportunities for this language use.

When considering peer interaction in the early years, Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004: 293) recognize that research into peer interaction, as a general phenomenon, has been seen from at least five perspectives: (1) a cross-cultural perspective (e.g. patterns of child-rearing around the world); (2) a social-psychological perspective (e.g. peer- interaction for social development); (3) a child sociolinguist perspective (e.g. language use in relation to setting and interlocutors); (4) a psychological perspective (e.g. cognitive development from peer-peer learning versus child-adult learning) and (5) an educational perspective (e.g. promoting subject matter achievement). They propose that a more focused approach to peer talk, or child discourse, enables an emphasis on language development, which is often associated with children's 'co-construction of their social and cultural worlds' (p. 293). In addition, they suggest for research into peer interaction requires a belief in (1) the child as an active agent; (2) language use effecting how children learn about language and its cultural rules; (3) language as a system of communication which includes pragmatic skills and (4) data being collected from naturalistic contexts involving talk between children. As such Blum-Kulka and Snow are more interested in the young child learner and the socio-linguistic affordances peer talk provides, for there are advantages to pairs or groups of children involved in peer talk: it is unhindered by 'the inherent asymmetry of adult-child interaction' (p. 298), and allows for children to take on both expert and novice roles.

The acquisition of a second language through such social interaction in a classroom context is said to benefit from exposure to proficient speakers of this second

language especially in bilingual or immersion contexts, or situations where learners are speakers of a minority or heritage language (e.g. Langman et al. 2005; Tabors 1997; Wong Fillmore 1991). Studies into peer interaction have shown that there are benefits to second language learners interacting with native speakers. For example, Piker (2013) describes dual language learners in the US benefitting in terms of language development from interacting with L1 English peers during play scenarios resulting from ‘optimal circumstances for producing extended and complex English language’, if the L2 learner was eager to continue playing even when ‘their English faltered and they made language errors’ (p. 196).

Angelova et al. (2006) discovered that in a dual language programme of Spanish and English in the US which privileged both languages in a 50/50 model, children from L1 English speaking backgrounds and L1 Spanish speaking backgrounds alternated as experts depending on the language context. They also discovered that children who came from bilingual English/Spanish backgrounds were identified as ‘*dual language experts* who mediated learning in both contexts’ (p. 176, italics in original). Children in this study, either as peer teachers or learners, were observed ‘practising by repetition, paraphrasing, translating, echoing, clarifying, scaffolding with cues, codeswitching, invented spelling, use of formulaic language, and non-verbal communication (p. 179). Angelova, et al., conclude for their study that children served as valid language resources for one another, were successful peer teachers, and were able to fluidly move from novice to expert depending on the language context (p. 187).

In further studies evidence is presented that non-native speaking peers can support each other as co-language learners taking on expert-novice roles and becoming valid linguistic resources. Cekaite and Björk-Willén’s (2012) research in multilingual settings, which included a multilingual pre-primary programme of English, Spanish and Swedish in Sweden, where children were not native speakers of Swedish provides an excellent example. Children ‘spontaneously initiated corrective actions, including criticism and evaluation of each other’s use of the *lingua franca* [Swedish]’ (p. 185). Cekaite & Björk-Willén also highlight what learners ‘explicitly notice as problematic’ by giving ‘particular importance to lexical items, picking on peers’ inappropriate vocabulary/lexical choices’ (p. 185). Their conclusions include the recognition that social relations and social order within the peer group play a role in the children’s language development. Similar research has been documented by Fassler (1998) in an ESL classroom in the US, where she observed L2 English learners from multiple language backgrounds ‘enacting roles of both the good language learner and the good language facilitator’ (p. 401).

In early years, context peer interaction, and thus opportunities for peer talk, is often associated with free play and child-initiated activity, as ‘play is essentially the method by which children communicate with each other in social settings’ (Coplan and Arbeau 2009: 143). Free play is emphasized as important in all of the above-mentioned studies. Aukrust (2004: 394) researches ‘peer play talk’ and describes it as being special as it moves ‘into and out of pretence’. This kind of play will not be directly related to teacher-led activity, though it may be a result of the resources

made available to the children which remind them of teacher-led activities, this is specifically the case when children are engaged in structured play.

Within the context of low-exposure FL education in a pre-primary context, very little opportunity for peer interaction is contemplated. This is due in the main to FL teachers planning for teacher-led activities only, with a focus on teaching discrete language items as a result of their (mis)understanding of (1) the need to emulate pre-primary practices (European Commission 2011; Mourão 2014); (2) the children themselves as a linguistic resource; (3) the children's capacity to acquire chunks of the FL and move beyond single words and (4) the likelihood of successful interaction in FL. The absence of planned child-initiated activity is also in part due to the short amount of time spent with the children and a lack of articulation between pre-primary professionals and FL teachers (Mourão 2014). As a result, I am not aware of any research into peer interaction in pre-primary FL contexts.

The rest of this chapter takes data from a year-long international study involving researchers in Portugal and South Korea, and presents some of the data from Portugal to discuss peer interaction in a low-exposure foreign language-learning programme.

4 The Study

4.1 A Brief Overview

The study, '*English learning areas in pre-primary classrooms: an investigation of their effectiveness*' was funded by a British Council ELT Research Partnership Grant, led by the University of Leeds and took place in the academic year 2013/2014. The purpose was to evaluate the impact of a more holistic and integrated approach to the teaching and learning of English in pre-primary education in Portugal and South Korea. The central focus was to analyze children's use of the ELA and to determine its contribution to the overall development of the children's English language competence. A report of this study has been published (Robinson et al. 2015). This chapter discusses data collected from the institution in Portugal only and analyzes it further with a view to understanding the linguistic benefits of peer interaction in a foreign language context while children were playing in the ELA. I begin by describing the context and then the study itself, before sharing the results of my analysis.

4.2 *The Country Context*

4.2.1 Pre-Primary Education in Portugal

Pre-primary education in Portugal is considered to be an important foundation for successful schooling and the first step in the process of life-long learning. Provision is made for children between the ages of 3 years and the school starting age of five or 6 years. Attendance is at around 96% for 5 year olds, 90% for 4 year olds and 77% for 3 years olds. Just over 53% of the pre-primary institutions are state run (GEPE 2015). There is no official curriculum to support teaching in this sector, however government produced guidelines exist providing principles for pre-primary educators. This document outlines three content areas: ‘Personal and Social Education’, ‘World Knowledge’, and ‘Expression and Communication’, each of which should be articulated across the curriculum (Ministério da Educação 1997).

The three most prominent approaches to influence teacher education at this level are: *Movimento da Escola Moderna* (MEM),¹ the HighScope Model,² and the Reggio Emilia Model³ (Oliveira-Formosinho 2013). All are considered socio-constructive in their approach and favour active, child-led learning. As a result, a typical pre-primary classroom in Portugal is open plan and divided into different learning areas or activity centers, which aim to provide opportunities for children to benefit from teacher-initiated group work as well as have access to child-initiated play. Effective educators create opportunities for children to learn by doing, in the belief that, by interacting with their environment children develop as autonomous and responsible learners (Ministério da Educação 1997; Oliveira-Formosinho 2013).

4.2.2 Languages in Portugal

Portuguese is the official language in Portugal, and any other language has the status of a foreign language. Portugal has a history of emigration and thus Portugal’s immigrant population is low in comparison to many European countries – presently it is equivalent to 3.4% of the population (SEF/GEPE 2015).

In September 2015 English was introduced as a compulsory foreign language in grade 3 (age 8 years old) lowering the official starting age by 2 years, previously at grade 5. Despite this, English had been taught in grades 1–4 of Portuguese basic

¹*Movimento de Escola Moderna Portuguesa* (MEM) began in the 1960s following the natural method of learning of the French pedagogue Célestin Freinet, and is an approach which values cooperation solidarity and democracy. For further information see <http://www.movimentoescola-moderna.pt/modelo-pedagogico/>

²The HighScope Curriculum is an approach that emphasizes adult-child interaction and a carefully designed learning environment with teachers and students being active partners in shaping the educational experience. For further information see <http://www.highscope.org/>

³For more information about the Reggio Emilia Model see Edwards, Gandini and Forman (2011) or <http://reggiochildrenfoundation.org/?lang=en>

education (from ages 6 to 10) as an enrichment activity since 2005/2006, with official figures stating that between 2008 and 2014 the number of children learning English in grades 3 and 4 was over 85% (DGEEC 2014). In relation to early language learning in Portuguese pre-primary institutions, a recent nation-wide survey (Mourão and Ferreira 2016) shows that English is selected as the first foreign language in all cases. Twenty-four per cent of state-run schools provide opportunities for children from three to 6 years old to learn English, though just under 60% of these projects occur during after school activities within the local family support programme and are thus not attended by all children. Sixty nine percent of private institutions have an English project, of which 76% take place during curricular time. In both sectors English begins at the age of 3 years old and the majority of projects – an average of 70% – take place just once a week for between 30 and 45 minutes, indicating a typical low-exposure context. Teachers, in the main, are recruited from outside the school to give the lessons and usually these are English teachers trained to teach learners from 10 to 18 years of age, who have little or no training to work with young children. There is no official early language learning strategy for pre-primary education in Portugal.

4.3 *The Pre-primary Institution*

The pre-primary institution (hereafter referred to as the *Centro*) is a semi-private institution in a medium sized district in central Portugal, situated in the suburbs of the district capital, a city with a population of around 127,000 inhabitants. The *Centro* is subsidized by both the Portuguese Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Work and Social Services (Private Institutions of Social Solidarity),⁴ and so parents pay an income-adjusted fee for their child to attend. The *Centro* provides care and education services for babies and toddlers (from 4 months old) and pre-primary children (till the age of 6) and the majority come from low to low-middle socio-economic backgrounds. The *Centro* is open from 08.00 till 19.00, but most children in pre-primary attend from 09.30 to 17.00. Children are grouped according to their ages and are the responsibility of a qualified pre-primary educator, an *educadora*, and an auxiliary helper. Since 2001, all children from the ages of 4 to 6 have learned English for 1 h a week at the initiative of the *Centro*'s director. An English teacher is hired to give these English classes.

⁴Around one third of all pre-primary establishments in Portugal are Private Institutions of Social Solidarity (European Union 2011, 104).

4.4 *The Classroom, the Children and Their Teachers*

The children's classroom is characteristically open plan, with a circle time carpet area, groups of tables and chairs and clearly set up learning areas for structured child-initiated play. At the beginning of September these learning areas included a house area for dramatic play; a book area for quiet reading; a game area for board games and puzzles; a construction and garage area for building blocks, Lego and toy transports and a modeling table for clay and Plasticine. By the end of September, the *educadora*, together with the children, had also set up an area devoted to English, an ELA, in preparation for English to begin again in October. As with all areas, the children knew there were rules to follow, rules which they had contributed to creating. For the ELA, there were two main rules, (1) use English as much as possible; (2) a maximum of four children could play there.

According to the *educadora* children were engaged in child-initiated play activities most days on two occasions:

1. In the morning during structured free play time after a teacher-led activity (which could have been an English session). The children are asked to choose where they wanted to play and with whom. They were gently reminded that they should diversify their choice and encouraged to select different areas. After free play the children and their *educadora* sometimes talked together in a circle time session about their play experience and resolved any issues that have arisen.
2. In the afternoon after the *educadora* has finished her official duties for the day. This free play time was supervised by the helper only, was less structured and involved no formal choice and reflection time.

In September 2013, the group of children in the classroom involved in the study comprised six girls and ten boys, aged between 5 and 6 years old. All children spoke Portuguese at home with the exception of two male twins, who spoke Ukrainian – these boys had been in the *Centro* since they were 4 months old, and so they were confident speakers of Portuguese. This was the children's second year of English, so they had had around 30 h of exposure to formal instruction in English. They all appeared to enjoy their English activities and in September, after a summer holiday with no English sessions, they were keen for the English teacher to begin her visits.

Maria, the *educadora*, spoke very little English, but was highly motivated towards supporting and encouraging the children in their English experience. She had been responsible for the children since many of them began in the crèche in 2009. Ana, the English teacher, began working as a pre-primary English teacher in the *Centro* in October 2008 and had been the children's English teacher the previous year. Like many English teachers in pre-primary in Portugal, Ana had trained as an English teacher for children from 13 to 18 years old. However, difficulty in being placed in the Portuguese education system meant she had been teaching English in Portuguese primary education since 2001 and in pre-primary education since 2008. She had attended a number of in-service courses about teaching English to children from 6 to 10 years old and was a regular attendee at English Language Teaching conferences in Portugal.

4.5 *English at the Centro*

As there are no national guidelines the *Centro* has elaborated their own set of aims for their English programme. These are stated as being:

- To provide an enjoyable first encounter with another language;
- To cater for the whole child, their physical, social, emotional, psychological and cognitive development;
- To foster a positive attitude towards other languages, other peoples and other cultures;
- To develop learning skills such as predicting, deducting, and hypothesizing;
- To develop listening and speaking skills;
- To build a solid foundation for continued language learning.

The children have two 30-minute English sessions per week with their English teacher, as well as a 30-minute story telling session with English picturebooks once a week. In addition, once a term a morning is devoted to an extended activity in English e.g. an arts and crafts project or a cooking activity. The *educadora* is present in all activities.

The English sessions take place first thing in the morning. English is the language of choice for the English teacher and she uses Portuguese judiciously. The children often begin by responding in Portuguese but over the two-year period they use more and more English. The English sessions are teacher-led and take place as a circle time activity with a puppet – all children are present. These sessions begin and end in a routine way with greetings, talking about the weather, counting the boys and girls in the class and singing a song. The topics planned in English support what the children are doing with their *educadora*, e.g. developing self-esteem or following a certain topic like jobs. Together with the English teacher and their puppet the children sing songs, listen to stories and engage in play-like activities, often with flashcards or activities that require moving around or a physical response. These activities not only support the learning of the new language, but also give the children real reasons for using language in context. The activities were typical of EFL methodologies, however, a small battery of activities is used consistently, ensuring that children became familiar with the focus language as well as with the structure of the activity and its organizational language (see Mourão 2014). These activities also support the development of cognitive skills, like attention, memory, logic and reasoning, and audio and visual processing. As such these sessions provide what Vygotsky (1978) has referred to as ‘formal’ instruction – instruction that is teacher-led or schooled (Gallimore and Tharp 1990). They are also age-appropriate and emulate typical pre-primary practice in Portugal.

All the resources used during the formal teacher-led sessions are left with the children in their ELA. These include the puppet, illustrated song and rhyme sheets, flashcards, story cards, picturebooks and boxes with games inside (e.g. bingos and dice games), board games and large dice and any other resource e.g. props (often clothes) for role-playing stories. The walls of the ELA are used to display craft

activities the children have completed related to English. As such, the ELA is a space that is resourced to deliberately stimulate memories of the teacher-led activities in English and to aid recall of the language associated with these activities (see Robinson et al. 2015).

The English teacher and the *educadoras* plan together to ensure that English is integrated into the short- and long-term planning of the children's learning programme. The English teacher plans activities which support and extend what the *educadoras* are doing with the children, for example with this group of children the *educadora* planned to work with professions, as she had noticed children were interested in this. The English teacher also planned a sequence of activities around the theme, using a picturebook *Good Night Piggy Wiggy* (Fox and Fox 2000). The *educadora* also plays a role in integrating English by showing an interest in their learning, referring to and reminding children of what they are doing and encouraging them to use English during the day in certain key moments, e.g. greetings. They have meetings at strategic times of the year to plan and reflect upon the learning programmes they are preparing/have prepared for the children. These meetings, along with the ad hoc conversations they have when they work together in the classrooms, ensure a consistent and coherent approach to integrating English into the children's day.

5 Methodology

5.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Following an interpretative paradigm focusing on action and trying to understand it, a naturalistic approach was taken to data collection and its analysis. English lessons began in October 2013 and the ELA was also in place by then, however data was only collected between January and May 2014. The data referred to in this chapter comes from observation field-notes and photographs of child-initiated play in the ELA, informal interviews with the *educadoras* and guided interviews with children. Reference is occasionally made to observation field-notes taken during the observed teacher-led English sessions.

5.1.1 Children Playing in English – Naturalistic Observations

The children already knew me as coordinator of English at the centre, a regular visitor and their weekly English storyteller, so my presence in the classroom was taken for granted, in addition, children under 8 are not usually perturbed by observers (Dunn 2005). As non-participant observer, I was only able to observe child-initiated, free play in the morning on 16 different occasions between January and May 2014. Observations took place for as long as the children played in the ELA, which varied from a couple of minutes to around 45 minutes. On occasions either child-initiated,

free play had not been set up when I arrived, or on that particular day no child was in the ELA at that time, so my visits did not always coincide with successful observations. During my observations I sat about two meters from the ELA, far enough to be unobtrusive, but near enough to hear what the children were saying. My notes were in narrative form, a ‘running record’ of what happened (Mukherji and Albon 2015: 137), where I recorded time intervals, action and speech and resources – I also took photographs. There were rarely more than three children in the ELA, so this form of observation was quite appropriate. On occasions Ana, the English teacher, also observed, took photographs and relayed information to me and during the morning sessions the *educadora* was also able to casually observe and provide anecdotal evidence related to how the children used the ELA. These notes enriched my own observed data.

The result was a set of unstructured data in shorthand, which was then rewritten and expanded based on memory. These transcribed running records were submitted to a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), and themes emerged which captured the important key elements of the questions that led the research, specifically the children’s use of an English learning area. These themes were then cross-referenced with data collected from other sources.

5.1.2 Informal Interviews and Classroom Chats with the Educadoras

Informal interviews took place on two occasions during the year, in November and in March. These were unscripted and followed the *educadora*’s lead, with questions from me for clarification. Informal encounters were frequent, with the *educadoras* either passing on information by email or verbally in class. These comments were collected and grouped as anecdotal evidence in relation to each child.

5.1.3 Guided Interviews with Children

The guided interviews took place on 28 January 2014, when children had had 4 months of playing in their ELA. A bear called Buddy led the interview. He was introduced as a friend from Brazil, who spoke Portuguese but didn’t have English lessons. Some of the questions, but not all, included reference to the ELA, such as:

- Do you play in the ELA?
- What do you do there?
- Who do you like to play with in the ELA?

The interview was given in Portuguese during the morning while the children were engaged in art and craft activities and free play. Children came one by one, sat at a table with me and answered Buddy’s questions. Interviews lasted approximately 10 min and the children’s responses were audio recorded. These interviews were analyzed with a view to obtaining further information about children’s perception of English and their use of the ELA.

6 Results and Discussion

Within a sociocultural theory, the use of the L1 in L2 learning contexts ‘links communicative purposes with the accomplishment of social relationships, cognition and human learning’ (Daily-O’Cain and Liebscher 2009: 135). The children’s classroom language is Portuguese, however with the inclusion of an integrated English space, the two known languages, Portuguese and English, were used during authentic classroom experiences and a ‘plurilingual didactics’ (Kramsch et al. 2011: 417) was incorporated naturally. According to Lüdi (2006), it is practical communication and social action together that contribute to formatting linguistic repertoires, ‘the totality of linguistic resources which speakers may employ in a significant social interaction’ (Blom and Gumperz 2000: 104), which in turn leads to ‘multilingual speech as a response [to] precise, locally situated needs’ (Lüdi 2006: 12). In the ELA, the children had agreed upon a rule with their *educadora*, that they would play with the resources and use English as much as possible. However, they were also aware that both languages were accepted. Language in the ELA emerged from the semiotic experience that was meaningful interaction and the children spoke in English and Portuguese. The results are therefore analyzed in this light, recognizing that children in a low exposure context will use their total linguistic repertoire in the ELA.

6.1 Peer Interaction in the ELA

The published study report (Robinson et al. 2015) highlighted three significant themes based on play behaviours which emerged from the analysis of observations in Portugal and South Korea. Each of these themes naturally prompted peer interaction and the use of English in the ELA and were:

- Replicating teacher-led activities
- Taking on the role of teacher and pupil
- Inventing games/play-like activities. (Robinson et al. 2015: 20 and 28)

The play behaviours involved the resources in the ELA, though not always as they had been used in the teacher-led activities, nevertheless, what appears to prompt the talk is the resource itself. I emphasise this as I also observed single children talking to themselves in English while engaging with a particular resource (e.g. a puppet, a book, a folder with images or a game intended for two or more players). I am not discussing these occurrences in this chapter, for they do not involve peers. What I would like to do is look more closely at those play behaviours I observed in the Portuguese context and analyze them in relation to the different ways peers interacted and the affordances they provided the children to use English.

6.1.1 Replicating Teacher-Led Activities

The most popular resource in the observed free play was the flashcards, which were also used in most teacher-led sessions for a range of different activities. Children interacted with the flashcards in an assortment of ways, from simply placing them in a row on the floor and labeling to cognitively challenging games like the pair game (also known as pelmanism) or a guessing game. The examples that follow show how the flashcards were used for recycling and repetition of language.

Flashcards and Recycling and Repetition of Language Excerpt 1 is an example of two children, Magda and David,⁵ playing with some flashcards – David is one of the twins who speaks Ukrainian at home. These children had already been looking at English picturebooks together and it is Magda who decides to take the flashcard box and place it next to her on the blue seat in the ELA. David is sitting on the floor in front of her. Magda chooses to play with a set of Piggy Wiggy flashcards which feature professions.

Excerpt 1: Magda and David Part 1

25 February 2014

1. Magda ((Removes the Piggy Wiggy flashcards and holds one against her chest))
2. ((Looks at David))
3. David: Pilot
4. Magda: ((Nods)) ((Places all the Piggy Wiggy flashcards in a row between her and David))
5. David: Pilot. Piggy Wiggy is a doctor. Piggy Wiggy is a astronaut, digger driver, chef.
6. Magda: ((Holds out the different hat flashcards)) *Isto é de onde?* [Where does this go?]
7. David: *Aqui* [Here]. ((Takes the hat flashcards and places them under the profession flashcards)) *Isto é do* [This belongs to the] doctor, *do* [to the] pilot, *do* [to the] chef, digger driver, racing driver *e* [and] astronaut. (in Mourão 2018: 72)

In this example, the children interweave two games they've played with Ana during teacher-led English sessions, a guessing game and a matching game. Turn 1 is the guessing game – a flashcard is hidden (against a child's chest) for others to guess. In the teacher-led sessions children are encouraged to use, 'What is it?', 'Is it ...?', 'Yes it is!' or 'No it isn't!' However, here we see a very simplified version with David just using the noun, *Pilot* as a response (turn 3) and Magda responding with a curt nod (turn 4). Magda then turns up the profession flashcards as David confidently labels the images using formulaic language, a unit of unanalyzed language picked up from the teacher-led sessions – 'Piggy Wiggy is a [...]', or just the profession as a single lexical chunk, 'pilot' (turn 5). Magda decides to match the professions with their hats. In the teacher-led session Ana asks 'Whose hat is this?',

⁵All children's names are pseudonyms.

however Magda questions David in the L1 (turn 6), who responds confidently using both codes – intra-sentential code-switching (turn 7). This particular play episode continued for around 8 min, and changed little in an interactional sense – Magda continued to question in Portuguese, ‘*O que é isso?*’ [What’s this?] or just give David the flashcard and David responded by labeling in English, when he could, and placing flashcards in long rows under each other. He used no further formulaic language. The interaction provided an extended opportunity for David in particular to repeat lexical items in what appeared to be an enjoyable play activity. It is evident from this Excerpt that David knows much of the language shown in the flashcards, as he very successfully labels the objects or uses formulaic chunks with little help from Magda. In fact, he knows far more than Magda and is a more confident user of English during the teacher-led sessions, however on one or two occasions Magda prompted David with an English word, see an example in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2: Magda and David Part 2

25 February 2014

1. Magda: ((Takes the pet flashcards, hands them one by one to David))
2. David: ((Receives each flashcard and places it in a row)) Dog, fish, cat, bird
3. Magda: ((Hands David a turtle flashcard))
4. David: ((Takes flashcard and shrugs his shoulders))
5. Magda: Turtle
6. David: Turtle
7. Magda: Va lá escolha um outro vez [Go on chose one again]

In Excerpt 2 Magda scaffolds David with the English word, ‘Turtle’ (turn 5) and he obediently repeats it after her (turn 6). Rather like an expert/novice interaction (see Angelova et al. 2006; Kanagy 1999), Magda imitates a teacher role, and prompts David to continue making a row and selecting where to place the turtle flashcard, thus confirming, albeit briskly, he has said the word correctly. It is interesting that Magda reacts in this way, as she is the weaker language learner of the two, but in this play episode she is also taking on the role of leader for she was naturally an outgoing and dominant child who loved organising her peers. During the whole play episode both children appeared engaged and focused and after 8 min had covered the floor between them in flashcards. The episode came to an end when the flashcards did.

The next Excerpt is an example of three children interacting around a set of colour flashcards. These flashcards were part of their ELA in the previous year, but they are still very popular resources, most likely because the children are confident about using the colour words in several contexts. The children, the twins who speak Ukrainian at home and a friend they have chosen to play with, have been in the ELA for 30 minutes prior to this play episode, and have just finished using the colour flashcards to play a noughts and crosses game. They have tidied up their game and look a little bored. Vitor is sitting on the floor and

David (his twin) and Sara (with the puppet on her hand) are standing nearby. Excerpt 3 is from my field notes:

Excerpt 3: Vitor, David and Sara Part 1

4 February 2014

1. Vitor: ((Places the colour flashcards in a pile, turns one over and looks at Sara)) What's the colour?
2. Sara: ((Waves with the puppet on her hand)) Red
3. Vitor: ((Keeps turning over colour flashcards))
4. David & Sara: Blue, green, yellow, orange
5. David: ((Moves away))
6. Sara: ((Moves around the ELA with the puppet))
7. Vitor ((Keeps turning colour flashcards)) Brown, black, white, pink, purple.
8. ((Makes a new pile and begins turning flashcards again))
9. David: ((Sits next to Vitor on the floor))
10. Vitor & David: Red, blue, green, yellow, orange
11. Sara: ((Stands next to the boys))
12. All: Red, blue, green, yellow, orange, brown, black, white, pink, purple
13. David: I'm the best!
14. All: ((Laugh))

Placing flashcards in piles and turning them over for labeling is an occasional activity in the teacher-led activities, however it was observed occurring in the ELA on many occasions by the *educadora*. Vitor begins the play episode with 'What's the colour?' (turn 1), formulaic language memorized from teacher-led sessions when Ana. What's interesting about this play episode is the shift from playing as a three (turns 1 to 4), to playing alone (turns 5 to 8) and then returning to playing together (turns 9 to 13). I did not take notes in relation to how these children used eye contact or gesture to interact while Vitor played alone with the flashcards. However, as they rejoin after a brief separation, turn 12 demonstrates how confident these children are as they chorus the colours together, not only in saying the colours, but also in their evident camaraderie and the *educadora* confirmed that they often played together as a three. David asserts how well he thinks they have done by ending with 'I'm the best!' in turn 13, formulaic language taken from a picturebook (Cousins 2011) they have shared. Cekaite and Aronsson (2004) discuss recycling language in children's second language conversations and highlight their creative use of previously heard utterances to engage in joking interactions. David may or may not have meant everyone was the best, but even if he didn't, his response shows a pragmatic awareness of the interaction to create a 'spontaneous joke' (p. 377).

David appears in all three of these Excerpts – he is one of the twins who speak Ukrainian at home. In Excerpts 1 and 2 he takes a subservient role in the interaction, the fact that Magda is on the chair and David on the floor emphasizes this through

bodily orientation (Karrebæk 2011). In these interactions Magda is playing at being the leader, something she does regularly, and David is the led, despite the fact that David is more confident at using English, both in the teacher-led sessions and during free play. In Excerpt 3 David is a co-player of equal status, even though Vitor is in charge of the flashcards – they co-create the play episode enjoying the verbal choring of the colour words. Notice in Excerpt 3 that the children speak no Portuguese during their interactions, for they are using target language which came directly from the teacher-led sessions, and which they were all confident with using.

Bingo and Rotating Callers and Players I will continue with Sara, David and Vitor and another part of the play episode I observed which provides an excellent example of replicating teacher led-activities. The *educadora* told me afterwards that during their circle time preparation for this particular free play session, the twins had talked about not being in the ELA for a while, so they chose to play there that day and had selected Sara as their play mate. I was told they had been playing for about 5 min when I arrived to observe and they continued their play for 36 minutes (Excerpt 3 took place at the end of this play episode). Excerpt 4 occurred 3 min into my observation, Sara is sitting on the chair and has chosen to play with the ‘I’m the Best’ Bingo set based on a picturebook (Cousins 2011) they have been sharing – the bingo cards and covers are on the floor with the boys and Sara has the flashcards as she is the caller. However, unlike in teacher-led sessions when the caller calls out an expression with the key words in it, she just holds up the flashcards and the boys in return say ‘No!’ and ‘Yes!’ depending on whether they have the image on their bingo card or not. David completes his Bingo card first – Excerpt 4 begins here.

Excerpt 4: Vitor, David and Sara Part 2

4 February 2014

1. Sara: Dis Bingo! [Say Bingo!]

2. David: Bingo

3. David: Agora sou eu [Now it’s me]

4. Sara: Toma as cartões [Take the cards]

((David and Sara swap places and Sara sets up a bingo card on the floor ready to play))

5. David: Dog can run

6. Vitor: No

7. Sara: ((Covers her picture))

8. David: ((Shows ‘Dog can dance’ card))

9. Vitor: Dance

10. David: ((Shows ‘Ladybird can fly’ card))

11. Vitor: Butterfly

12. David: ((Shows ‘Dog can swim’ card)) Dog can swim

13. Vitor: No

14. David: ((Looks at but doesn't show a card)) sad ((Looks at Vitor)) tu tens [you have it]
 15. Vitor: No happy
 16. David: I'm the best sad ((shows 'Dog is happy' card))
 17. Vitor: Happy
 18. David: Happy ((shows 'Dog can swim' card)) dog can swim
 ((Vitor finishes first and calls out bingo. They continue till Sara has finished too))
 19. Sara: ((To Vitor)) Agora és tu [Now it's you]
 ((Vitor swaps with David and they begin again))

The interaction we see here is a mixture of English and Portuguese with a very clear emerging pattern: the organizational language used to manage the game is in Portuguese, (see turns 1, 3, 4, and 19) but game related language is in English. Sara is not as confident as the twins and she does not use any English during this Excerpt, even though she appears to be more in control and leading when she is the caller. The boys however use English almost exclusively, recycling formulaic language from the teacher-led sessions (see turns 5, 12, 16, and 18). Heedless of David as the caller, Vitor happily says the English words related to the flashcards images in turns 9 and 11 and even mistakes 'ladybird' for 'butterfly'. Notes from earlier in this observation, while setting up the game with Sara, show that Vitor has already employed 'Ladybird can fly' correctly, yet he doesn't use the formulaic language here, neither do his peers correct him.

Later in the Excerpt, Vitor attempts at correcting David, and an interesting dialogue ensues, which begins with David mistaking the 'I'm happy' image for 'I'm sad', and using 'Sad' as well as prompting Vitor in the L1 to cover the same image (I'm happy) on his Bingo card (turn 14). Vitor tries to correct David by negating the adjective, 'No happy' (turn 15), but David appears not to understand responding with 'I'm the best sad' (turn 16). This comes from taking the formula 'I'm the best' as a prefix to the adjective 'sad', instead of just 'I'm' – they have been exposed to both these formulas in the activities associated with the picturebook. Vitor makes one more attempt to correct by repeating the adjective (turn 17), and David repeats 'Happy' and they move on (turn 18). Maybe it is because these boys are twins that they are able to interact so successfully in the L2, they seem almost intuitive as they use the language together – they are certainly very creative.

As my observation of these children during this play episode continued, they played bingo a total of eight times, using different thematic sets and as the bingo games progressed the boys began using 'Yes, it is' and 'No, it isn't' when they have an image or not on their Bingo cards. These formulae are rarely used during the teacher-led Bingo games, as they are not grammatically correct in this context, but the children play a guessing game which requires that they use, 'What is it?', 'Is it ...?' and 'Yes, it is' and 'No, it isn't', so they are bringing the script from a different teacher-led activity into their game here (see also Mourão 2015, 2018). After four games Sara begins to say 'Yes, it isn't', when she doesn't have the image on her Bingo card – the boys initially take no notice. In their penultimate game of Bingo, David is caller again, and Vitor decides to correct Sara's use of 'Yes it isn't' with an

emphatic ‘NO, it isn’t’, in so doing, taking on the role of expert. Sara appears not to respond, but in their last game, David decides not to play any more and so Sara plays Bingo alongside Hoola their English puppet, who is on her hand, taking responsibility for two Bingo cards (one for her and one for Hoola). Excerpt 5 shows what happens as she begins to play:

Excerpt 5: Vitor and Sara

4 February 2014

Vitor: ((Holds up ‘shoes’ flashcard)) Shoes

Sara: ((Sara holds Hoola up, looks at her and shakes her head)) No it isn’t pois não Hoola? [is it Hoola?]

Sara correctly uses ‘No it isn’t’ and confirms she has it right by looking at Hoola, nodding and using a Portuguese question tag. The theory of children appropriating puppets to give them confidence in the use of the L2 is widely known (e.g. Slattery 2008), and this might have been what helped Sara use the correct expression here, or it might just have been Sara playing with the language and in her own way making fun of the mistake she had made – we will never know. As observer of the teacher-led sessions I was also able to notice that Sara continued to use the formula correctly during the ensuing teacher-led circle time activities.

Board Games and Numbers and Counting The board games placed in the ELA were miniature versions of the large circle time board game, which was played as a whole group towards the end of a unit of work. The children were in theory more confident about the language they would be using at this stage and would therefore be more successful in playing the game in English, as it involved identifying the different visuals placed around the board. The game was played in teams of three or four children and the children were also encouraged to help each other. Playing the board game provided opportunities for children to learn to wait their turn, play as a team and help a team member if necessary, as well as develop their ability to subitize (recognize a small number of objects, in this case dots on a die, without counting), and in English count, nominate the images in the game, and ask for help when needed. When the miniature board game was placed in the ELA, the children played in pairs or threes as individual players, but not in teams. The following Excerpt comes from an observation at the end of March, 2014. André and Augusto are playing the board game together and Vitor is sitting close by reading a book. The two players are having lots of fun. André has the die.

Excerpt 6: André, Augusto and Vitor

25 March 2014

1. André: ((Swings his arms as though he is a cricket bowler and the die flies across the room)).
2. Augusto: Oooooo!

3. André & Augusto: ((Giggle))
 4. André: ((Rushes after the die)) SEIS! [SIX!]. ((rushes back, holds the die and counts the dots in English)) One, two, three, four, five, six.
 5. ((moves his counter)) One, two, three, four, five, six doctor.
 6. Augusto: ((Takes the die)) 'Agora sou eu' [Now it's me]
 7. ((throws the die, not so far this time, takes counter, stops, returns to the die, points to the dots)) One, two, three, four, five.
 8. ((moves counter on board game)) One, two, three, four, five, blue.
 9. Vitor: ((Joins the boys holding a purple counter)) Posso jogar? [Can I play?]
 10. Augusto: ((Hands Vitor the die)) Toma! [Take it!]
 11. Vitor: ((Throws the die))
 12. Augusto: ((Takes Vitor's counter)) Ah só um [Ah just one]
 13. ((moves counter one space)) One
 14. Augusto & Vitor: Orange

In this sequence of interactions the children follow the rules of the game very clearly, speaking in English as they count the dots on the die (turns 4 and 7), as they move around the board (turns 5, 8 and 13) and as they nominate the image they have landed on (turns 5, 8 and 14). This is exactly what they are required to do in their English sessions. However, the communication is held together by their interactions in Portuguese, 'Agora sou eu' [Now it's me] (turn 6), Toma! [Take it!] (turn 10), Ah só um [Ah just one] (turn 12). Such language has been modeled during formal instruction, but the children do not appear to have acquired it yet, and so they happily code switch between the L1 and the L2 inter-sentially. As such, similar to Excerpt 4, the organizational language of the game is Portuguese but English is used during the game itself and thus incorporates numbers and counting in English.

In this section I have tried to show how play behaviours replicating teacher led activities and using the different resources (flashcards, bingo games and a board game) have successfully enabled peer interaction in English. Children were able to engage in spontaneous labeling, in confirming or negating, in creatively using what they knew in English to engage in play and of expert/novice interaction. There were also examples of children using the L1 during these play episodes when they were unfamiliar with a word or expression or to organize an activity. It was also a strategy used by less confident language learners, who nevertheless wanted to play in the ELA. This is an important observation as in the ELA the child will be exposed to more English which may help them gain in confidence as an L2 user in the future, in fact there was evidence of this when Sara was corrected by David and went on to 'No, it isn't' correctly.

6.2 Taking on the Role of Teacher and Pupil

Several of my observations included play episodes where children replicated teacher-led activities and very obviously took on the role of teacher and pupil. There were two girls who did this more than most, making announcements in Portuguese such as, ‘Queres ser a aluna? Podes, eu sou a Ana’ [Do you want to be the student? You can, I’m Ana] (Magda, 9 January 2014). Interestingly Magda was not very confident at using English, but she was a leader and enjoyed playing at being the ‘teacher’. Notice that Magda was the leader in Excerpt 1 and used little English, but was quick in her role as teacher to correct or prompt when she knew something her play partner did not. Personality is one of the individual differences in language learning and this will affect how the child approaches the language learning experience.

The children confirmed the fact that they role-played teacher-student during their interviews on 28 January 2014 with the Brazilian puppet. For example, Pedro described what he did in the ELA like this:

Jogo o Boris, a Isabel faz de professora. O Boris não sabe falar ingles. Jogamos diser as cores e stop, o bingo e jogo de galo [I play Boris, Isabel is the teacher. Boris doesn’t know how to speak English. We play the colour game and Stop!, Bingo! and noughts and crosses]. (in Robinson et al. 2015: 24)

Pedro admits to being the pupil when he plays with Isabel, but even more interesting is his insistence in pretending to be Boris, a three-year old child in another class, who comes from Russia and does not even speak Portuguese very well or have English lessons. This is an example of Vygotsky’s (1978) real play – dramatic and make-believe – an imaginary situation (an English lesson), the taking on of roles (a learner who really can’t speak English), and a set of rules that determine the roles (the pupil never teaches the teacher).

I observed Isabel playing at teacher, with Pedro as student, on three occasions. The *educadora* described Isabel as being a dominant child, confident and popular and in the teacher-led English sessions she was participative and easily picked up language. An example of her leading the interaction is shown in Excerpt 6, where she is playing with Pedro and Sara. The three children had been in the ELA for around 10 min, and had begun playing before I arrived. I observed them interacting with story cards about a snowman (Coelho and Mourão 2009) and a set of clothes flashcards. Isabel places the set of clothes flashcards in a row, chanting the words and imitating the mime actions learned when these lexical items were first introduced during the teacher-led sessions (e.g. patting her head for hat). Pedro and Sara sat back and watched, Pedro on a stool and Sara on a cushion on the floor. Isabel looks at Pedro and Sara and Excerpt 6 is a transcription of what happened next:

Excerpt 7: Isabel, Pedro and Sara

21 January 2016

1. Isabel: Put on your hat ((miming patting her head))
2. Pedro/Sara: ((Mime patting their heads)) Hat
3. Isabel: STOP!

4. Pedro & Sara: ((Freeze))
5. Isabel: Put on your gloves!
6. Pedro & Sara: ((Mime putting on gloves)) Gloves
7. Isabel: STOP! You moved! ((points at Pedro))
8. Pedro: Mas eu estou a respirar [But I'm breathing] ((sits down))
9. Isabel: Put on your coat!
10. Sara: ((Mimes putting on a coat)) Coat
11. Isabel: STOP!
12. Pedro: ((Stands up))
13. Isabel: Put on your scarf!
14. Pedro & Sara: ((Mime winding scarf around neck)) Scarf, scarf, scarf (Mourão 2015: 63)

What Isabel and her peers are doing here is an exact imitation of a teacher-led activity, it only lasted a minute or two for the children moved into another game using the flashcards to play a pair game, but what Isabel says in English represents formulaic language memorized from the teacher-led sessions. In particular the formula 'Put on your [...]', which the children have enjoyed saying as a chant:

Brrr, It's cold! Put on your hat
 Brrr, it's cold! Put on your scarf
 Brrr, it's cold Put on your gloves.
 Umm much better! (Coelho and Mourão 2009: 45)

This language was also reinforced through dramatization involving the children miming putting on their clothes, pretending to get hot and then taking them all off again and pretending to get cold. They enjoy the pretense of feeling over hot and then over cold, and of course are exposed to the formula, 'put on your [...]' repeatedly.

This is supported further in a movement game called STOP! which the children have replicated in Excerpt 7. Isabel instructs children to do a mime (turns 1, 5, 9 and 13). Notice Pedro and Sara do the mime and repeat the clothes word, part of the teacher-led game (turns 2, 6, 10 and 14). Isabel calls out 'STOP!' and when Pedro moves she chastizes him by saying, 'You moved' (turn 7), which is exactly what Ana their English teacher says. Pedro tries to justify himself in the L2, 'Mas eu estou a respirar' [But I'm breathing] (turn 8), but follows her command all the same. Pedro was a confident student, who used English a lot in the teacher-led sessions, yet he was happy to pretend to be a (non-English-speaking) student when playing with Isabel, just as Vitor in Excerpts 1 and 2 was happy to be led by Magda.

The moments of teacher student imitation were entertaining to observe, and at times Isabel in particular was an uncanny likeness to their English teacher Ana. The interaction followed a pattern and tended to be led by the teacher figure, who was confident in her role, and in the case of Isabel, very confident about using the scripted language she had experienced in the teacher-led sessions with Ana. Though as we saw earlier in Excerpt 1, the teacher figure need not be confident in using the script, but instead confident as a leader, thus demonstrating a stronger personality.

6.3 *Inventing Games or Play-Like Activities*

Play occurs in such a variety of guises and during my observations of the children in the ELA I was aware of the importance of accepting everything I saw as play. As such I will share an example of a play episode which involved peer interaction creatively meshing what the children have encountered in their formal English sessions and which prompted much L2 use.

Imagination, invention and creativity are the very essence of play. As educators, we can plan for play to take place, but we can't plan a child's play for they are the sole authors, deciding how they will exploit resources, language and even their peers. Excerpt 1 above developed into an invented game, with Magda and Vitor engaging with the flashcards in a fashion they had not seen in the formal English sessions (making rows and rows which had no apparent connection). Nonetheless, they had used English. The first play episode I want to share in this section is similar. David and Bruno are playing together in the ELA and later joined by Miguel. They are using the wild animal flashcards, a favourite topic from the previous year. They have collected the flashcards into pairs, using the L1 and the L2 together, saying such things as 'Falta a lion' [the lion is missing], 'Tá aqui' [It is here], 'Snake, tá aqui' [Snake, is here]. Once they have found all the pairs Bruno collects them up and clutches them to his chest, challenging David and Miguel with 'Advinha!' [Guess!]. As the boys' guess, saying the animal words in English, Bruno responds with a nod or a shake of his head and places the flashcards on the floor. If they can't guess, he mimes to give them a clue. As they come to an end of the flashcards the following interaction occurs:

Excerpt 8: Bruno, David and Miguel Part 1

7 January 2014

1. Bruno: Só faltam dois [just two left]
2. David & Miguel: Snake
3. Bruno: Sim [Yes]
4. David: O jogo de stop, vamos jogar o jog de stop [the game of stop, let's play the game of stop]

In this Excerpt we can see that the boys once again use Portuguese to organise the activity (turn 4) and use English for the actual game (turn 2) when they remember, for they also know how to say 'yes', but use the Portuguese 'Sim' (turn 3). It's also interesting to see how one activity, a guessing game is set up to lead to another, Stop!. Stop! was also played in Excerpt 7 above. It is possible that Bruno's mimed prompts in this guessing game have reminded David of his favourite game and he now wants to play it.

I continued to observe this particular play episode: the boys tidy away the flashcards led by David. Once everything is clear he takes the wild animal flashcards again and places them in pairs on the floor, labeling the animals to himself in English. Bruno and Miguel join him and the line gets longer. David begins to throw the cards, calling out the words, 'Lion! Zebra! Monkey!' The other boys collect them and

continue the long wiggly line which goes way beyond the limits of the ELA, exclaiming ‘Opa!’ [Hey!] and ‘Caramba!’ [Blimey!], the latter a word the *educadora* uses a lot! Once prepared, David and Miguel sit on the blue chair and Bruno stands in front of them and the game begins with David and Miguel calling out animal words and Bruno miming the animals, freezing whenever he hears ‘Stop!’. They play like this for a minute or two until Miguel and David have a short discussion:

Excerpt 9: Bruno, David and Miguel Part 2

7 January 2014

1. David: Monkey.
2. Bruno: ((Mimes a monkey))
3. David: Stop!
4. Bruno: ((Freezes))
5. Miguel: ((Giggles)) Bear.
6. David: Não! É lion. Estamos aqui [No! It’s lion. We are here] ((points to the lion flashcard))
7. Miguel: Tá bem [Ok]. Lion.
8. Bruno: ((Mimes a lion))

This Excerpt demonstrates that David was following a set of rules he had decided on himself, to follow the sequence of flashcards in the line they had created. In the original circle time game, played with their English teacher, there is no set sequence of words or expressions to use, but here in the ELA David has taken control but Miguel has apparently not quite understood. David explains in Portuguese, with the animal word inserted in English, ‘Não! É lion. Estamos aqui’ [No! It’s lion. We are here] (turn 6) and they continue. Miguel seems happy to follow David’s rules. They co-created the line of flashcards, a game in itself, and it then guided David’s choice of which animal to call out. This is also very clear in the way David ends this play episode:

Excerpt 10: Bruno, David and Miguel Part 3

7 January 2014

1. David: Já acabou [It’s finished]
2. Bruno: ((looking at me)) Nós fizemos estes todos [We did all these].

In turn 1 of Excerpt 10, David announces the game over, inferring that he has come to the end of the flashcard line. Bruno reinforces this by explaining to me as the observer in turn 2, ‘Nós fizemos estes todos’ [We did all these]. The boys were highly engaged while I observed for approximately 14 minutes. These are further examples of children using both codes, the L1 for organising and giving orders and the L2 when playing the game proper.

Observing children use English during invented games is was an exciting experience and shows that they were really taking control of the resource and the English they knew and being creative with it. I would like to suggest that this shows children’s language and understanding was developing as they interacted with the resources. Creativity is said to be both social and dynamic (Moran 2010) and “emerges from the interaction that exists between the child, the group of children, and [the resource]. This creativity evolves over time, to include elements of what has come before” (Mourão 2012: 361).

7 Conclusions

The original study (see Robinson et al. 2015) that enabled me to observe children during child-initiated play in English is, as far as I know, the first to provide data that demonstrates children can and will play in a foreign language in a low exposure context. The intention of this chapter was to look further at the ways in which the children in Portugal were able to do this focusing in particular on peer interaction during child-initiated play, with a view to further understanding the linguistic benefits in a low exposure foreign language context. I selected 10 Excerpts from my transcribed field notes to demonstrate how three significant play behaviours prompted peer interaction in the ELA: (1) Replicating teacher-led activities; (2) Taking on the role of teacher and pupil and (3) Inventing games/play-like activities.

The collaborative, multi-party, symmetrical participation structure of peer talk in these child-initiated activities, together with a classroom culture that allowed and respected a shared linguistic repertoire of Portuguese and English, assured peer interaction took place successfully in the ELA. What do I mean by successfully? That English was incorporated into this interaction. It was however Portuguese that often facilitated the relationship among and between the learners and the ELA resources and afforded opportunities for children to use English in a safe, empowering, playful environment. Portuguese was used by the children to manage the play in many of the Excerpts (e.g. Augusto in Excerpt 6) or to resolve or explain a situation (e.g. Pedro in Excerpt 7). It was also used when a child wanted to lead but lacked the confidence to do so in English (e.g. Magda in Excerpt 1), or simply when a child wanted to play there with friends (e.g. Sara in Excerpt 4). There were also observations of children using Portuguese for spontaneous exclamations (e.g. Excerpt 9). Portuguese was the ‘matrix language’ (Myers-Scotton 1997), used by the children to support their emerging use of English in, what for them, was a significant social action.

Resources in the ELA were a key to affording peer interaction, as we have seen from the examples, children interacted with and around the resources, which provided opportunities for them to incorporate single words and memorised formulaic language into their interactions. Portuguese, as their dominant language, set the morphosyntactic framework (Myers-Scotton 1997) around which the children were able to embed single words, words strings or whole formulaic chunks in English. For example, English nouns were in the place of Portuguese ones, ‘Isto é do doctor’ [This belongs to the doctor] (see Excerpt 1) and Portuguese question tags followed an affirmation in English, e.g. ‘No it isn’t pois não Hoola?’ [No it isn’t is it Hoola?] (Excerpt 5).

The resources enabled children to replicate what they had done with the English teacher as well as adapt these activities as they wish, for this is the essence of play. English, either alone or within the Portuguese supportive matrix, was used successfully in a number of different ways, such as for labeling or when chunks of formulaic language were used for questioning and confirming, for giving instructions and even for making jokes.

7.1 *The Linguistic Benefits*

Word level output, or labeling, is the first step in first language acquisition (Tomasello 2003) and second language acquisition (Lightbown and Spada 2013; Tabors 1997; Tabors and Snow 1994) and there was evidence in my observations that children took great pleasure in the act of labeling, for this permitted the use of known content words in context. The question and answer-as-label interaction was frequent (e.g. Excerpts 1 and 3) and the different resources found in the ELA provided many affordances for labeling:

1. Flashcards are associated with labeling
2. A variety of guessing games that involve flashcards prompt labeling
3. The bingo game requires the calling out (labeling) of known words for the bingo players
4. The board game requires the labeling of images as the children move around the board.

Ellis (2012) states simply that ‘formulas are recurrent sequences’ (p. 27), and in discussion around a definition of formulaic language he refers to ‘lexical bundles’ which are learned due to their frequency in a particular context. Eskildsen (2008) refers to formulas as a ‘recurring sequence of words used together for a relatively coherent communicative purpose’ (p. 337). In the context described in this chapter, the formulaic language came directly from teacher-led circle time sessions, and was incorporated into (sometimes) innovative interactional instances, which demonstrated children were able to transfer knowledge from one situational context to another, something Wells (2009) suggests is a demonstration that a child is on the way to mastering this piece of knowledge. The strategy of embedding English words and chunks into a Portuguese utterance is one which enables a child to confidently overcome the hurdle of not knowing quite enough to proceed or participate. The intra-sentential strategy of using the L1 to support communication also demonstrated that children knew how to use the word or chunk within their own morpho-syntactic framework.

7.2 *The Affordances of Play*

Peer interaction is rarely contemplated in low-exposure FL education in a pre-primary context, the reasons for which I have already outlined. Nevertheless, it is evident from the examples I have provided that children learning English as a foreign language in a low exposure context of one hour a week are able to use English together and for pleasure. Play is a natural way for children to communicate and thus interact in such a context. The very properties of play ensure that it is a suitable, and in a pre-primary context, a natural affordance for language use and development. Affordance is seen by van Lier (2004: 92) as ‘action potential’, it emerges as the learner ‘interacts with the physical and social world’. As language teachers we

need to embrace this affordance for language learning opportunities – play is a particular property of a pre-primary environment. A learner’s perception of this affordance also needs to be taken into consideration, for children should be able to detect these potential properties in their natural environment – this is the magic of play.

7.3 Implications for Practice

There are a number of implications for setting up an ELA to enable child-initiated play and peer interaction in English to occur. When an English project is part of a pre-primary institutions programme, most important is the existence of a collaborative relationship between *educadora* and English teacher, which will allow for the existence of an ELA. The *educadora* becomes responsible for the space and providing time for children to engage in structured child-initiated play in the areas, including the ELA, and the English teacher is responsible for the language content and resources (Mourão 2014). This however, implies that an *educadora* should feel both interested and motivated by the idea of an English programme for the class of children she is responsible for. Not only should she feel that this approach is valid and replicates what is happening in the classroom already, but she should also see the relevance of such an approach and support it. An *educadora’s* attitude toward any additional activity will be felt keenly by the children and will affect their attitude towards that particular activity.

The original study set out to demonstrate that it was possible to play in English in a low-exposure context and I believe the data I have shared here confirms that peer interaction in English can be a result of this play. However, this study was a very small one, in scale and method, and merely scraped the surface of an approach to FL learning that requires further, systematic study. Nevertheless, in a low-exposure foreign language context which is heralded as being child-centered, follows sociocultural approaches to learning that respects interaction between peers and adults and the inclusion of play as an approach to learning, ELAs should flourish and should provide opportunities for children to use English together for pleasure. As such children will become active participants in their language learning experience and engage in age-appropriate activities in English.

* * * *

Appendix 1

Transcription Key

((Text)) = Described actions

Text = Spoken in Portuguese

[Text] = Translated speech

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The Role of Language Experts in Novices' Language Acquisition and Socialization: Insights from an Arabic–Hebrew Speaking Preschool in Israel



Mila Schwartz and Naomi Gorbatt

Abstract In the context of peer interaction and L2 learning in the classroom, Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) distinguished between two types of peers: novice L2 learners and L2 experts. The latter are at a more advanced stage of competence and can play the role of L2 ‘teachers’. Through their interaction with L2 experts, the novices develop linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence in L2. The main aim of this study was to examine and analyze patterns of the young language experts’ sociolinguistic behavior and their agency in a bilingual Arabic–Hebrew-speaking preschool. Data were collected throughout one academic year and included setting-focused video recordings of the children’s conversations in the classroom as well as in-depth interviews with the teachers and the children. The target preschool is located in central Israel, and at the time of data collection, was attended by 29 children: 19 L1 Arabic-speaking children and 10 L1 Hebrew-speaking children. Language experts were seven bilingual Arabic–Hebrew-speaking children—three girls and four boys, with L1 Arabic, who had received early exposure to Hebrew through television and radio at home. Two of them had also attended a monolingual Hebrew-speaking preschool before entering the bilingual preschool. We focused mainly on talk among the experts and novices in the context of social interaction among children speaking Arabic and Hebrew as their L1 and L2. The following patterns of the young language experts’ sociolinguistic behavior were extracted from analysis of the data: a. Language mediation for the novice peers; b. Language mediation for the novice teacher; c. Social mediation as a bridge between ethnic groups; d. Bilingualism as social power; e. Language management. Our findings show that in addition to the experts’ role as language mediators, they might also play the role of social mediators in the bilingual classroom. Based on the available data, the practical value of the findings for novice L2 learners and teachers is discussed.

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M. Schwartz (ed.), *Preschool Bilingual Education*, Multilingual Education 25,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77228-8_12

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1 Introduction

Recent research shows a significant correlation between acquiring a second language and emotional, cultural, and social changes in the learner (Barkhuizen 2008; Feger 2009; Norton and Toohey 2011). According to the literature, these changes are derived from integrated activities and sometimes even contradictory gender, ethnic, cultural, and social identities during the learner's integration process with speakers of the target language. This chapter presents a longitudinal ethnographic study aimed to examine and analyze this integration process by focusing on young L2 experts' sociolinguistic behavior patterns in the bilingual classroom. In addition, we explored how the preschool teachers addressed the phenomenon of young experts as a resource for the novice L2 learners. In the context of peer interaction during L2 learning in the classroom, Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) distinguished between two types of peers: novice L2 learners and L2 experts. The latter are at a more advanced stage of competence and can play the role of L2 "teachers" Through their interaction with L2 experts, the novices develop linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence in L2.

The study was conducted in a bilingual preschool in central Israel. The dual language program applied in the preschool incorporates instruction in both the social majority language (Hebrew) for the L1 Arabic-speaking children and the minority language (Arabic) for the L1 Hebrew-speaking children. In the following sections, before moving on to our study, we will present a brief overview of the sociocultural theory and its contribution to the second language acquisition domain, and will look at existing research on the phenomenon of L2 experts' mediation in the second-language classroom.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Acquisition*

Sociocultural theory claims that cognition and knowledge are dialogically constructed (Vygotsky 1978). Learners' cognitive development does not occur in a vacuum and is stimulated by others with more mature developmental states. Stetsenko and Arievitch (1997) asserted that "psychological processes emerge first in collective behavior, in cooperation with other people, and only subsequently become internalized as the individual's own 'possessions'" (p. 161). Vygotsky (1978) saw the child as first doing things in a social context, helped in many ways by other people and language, and gradually shifting away from reliance on others to independent thinking and action. The Vygotskian approach to children's mental development highlights the critical role of experienced adults as experts in shaping the most favorable learning situation for enhancing and regulating this development.

Learning through interaction and mediation is a characteristic of human intelligence. Vygotsky (1987) coined the notion of the human mediator and emphasized that what the child is able to do initially in collaboration, he will be able to do independently in near future. In a whole range of ways, an older expert mediates and makes the world accessible to children. The mediation could be provided by such a strategy as scaffolding, which was viewed by Bruner (1986) as synonymous with the process of adult–child interaction.

The sociocultural theory of learning and development was transformed and adapted to different educational frameworks including the L2 classroom (Lantolf and Beckett 2009; Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Thus, a practical adaptation of the Vygotskian approach perceives the institutional context, such as a school, as a formative setting for the child's developmental process. A substantial number of studies have focused on mediation strategies provided by teachers in L2 classrooms, such as corrective feedback, modeling and imitation, and their relation to L2 acquisition and the zone of proximal development (e.g., Lantolf and Thorne 2006; Lyster et al. 2013; Ohta 2001). However, the peers might also play the role of a more knowledgeable person. Thus, recent research supports an idea that peer mediation might significantly promote L2 learning (Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004; Bayley et al. 2005; Swain et al. 2002). This research will be further addressed in the following section.

It is noteworthy that the sociolinguistic role of L2 experts is not restricted to their L2 mediation in the classroom context, but was found to be manifest also in “language brokering”—a term coined by Oreljuman (2010). Language brokering was found to be mostly invisible daily labor of children who deployed their language skills to translate for other family members, including siblings and grandparents, in diverse social institutions and immigrant community contexts, as well as for their peers at school. This variety reflects a diversity of brokering experiences. Interestingly, it was found that language brokers, who were defined as “active,” obtained significantly higher scores on academic achievement tests in fifth and six grades after control for their first-grade scores (Oreljuman 2010). Thus, it was concluded that the language brokering positively influenced the children's academic development. In conclusion, Oreljuman (2010) called to examine the language brokers' social skills, such as empathy and perspective taking. In light of these data, in our study, we asked whether our experts are involved in their language brokering as a part of their everyday life and whether their mediation brings social benefits.

2.2 Sociocultural Theory and Peers' Mediation in the Second-Language Classroom

When applied to L2 learning, Blum-Kulka and Snow (2004) highlighted that peers as language ‘teachers’ create the possibility of an equal participant structure whereas teacher–child interaction is asymmetric and provides less opportunity for reciprocal exchanges (p. 298). They stated that interaction between L2 experts

(hereafter experts) and novice L2 learners (hereafter novices) offers both groups of children “a wide range of opportunities for mutual learning of pragmatic as well as linguistic skills” (p. 294, Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004). Learners are “novices” who are guided by “experts” to requisite knowledge, including linguistic knowledge, and ways of knowing within a particular social group. Novice members gradually acquire the necessary practices to be accepted as effective members of a social group; that is, they move from novice to expert status” (Kohler 2015, pp. 134–135). Thus, it has been found that the experts’ and novices’ roles are not fixed and that the novices gradually demonstrate L2 experts’ skills (Angelova et al. 2006).

Most studies to date on the language-expert phenomenon focused on junior high and high school children (e.g., Langman et al. 2005; Ohta 2001; Swain and Lapkin 1998). In the comprehensive analysis of peer–peer support in L2 learning through collaborative dialogues, (Swain et al. 2002) showed that in junior high school-aged peers’ dialogues during academic activities, such as writing of narration and persuasion, evidence of diverse mediation strategies was found. These included corrective-feedback and asking questions for clarification of L2 use regarding both form and content. It has been stressed that such peer collaboration might result in self-revisions. Thus, school-aged peers’ collaboration on language tasks encouraged self-regulated behavior. With regard to negotiation of the novices’ comprehension, Bayley et al. (2005) showed how L2 experts were voluntarily engaged in direct translation of the teacher’s instructions and math task interpretation in the science classroom. Notably, no direct translation of what the teacher said was observed; only a simplification of the teacher’s message (e.g., details of the task and not scientific goals).

2.3 The Role of Young L2 Experts in Second Language Teaching

Within the preschool and early school age context, the phenomenon of L2 experts and their mediation role in the bilingual classroom has received very limited attention (Angelova et al. 2006; Gorbatt-Brodstein 2012; Fassler 1998). At the same time, early childhood is a critical period in a child’s intensive social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development, and peer interaction plays a significant role in this development and in children’s socialization. Thus, a focus on young experts and their role as language mediators is necessary to extend our knowledge about factors affecting second language acquisition and language socialization in preschool bilingual contexts.

Recently, Gorbatt-Brodstein (2012) focused on how young L2 (Hebrew) experts assisted their immigrant peers in Israeli monolingual preschools. Adopting a socio-cultural perspective, the study followed the Hebrew L2 acquisition patterns of the novices during their first two years in preschool. The data showed a number of

examples of different language mediation activities including imitation of those adopted by the teachers. For example, it was observed how the expert girl acted as teacher in a role-playing game of storytelling in L2 to the novices and mediated their understanding using spontaneous signs and gestures.

In the ethnographic study by Angelova et al. (2006), the focus was on experts' language mediation strategies in a dual Spanish–English language program in the United States. In this study, the first-grade children from L1 English-speaking backgrounds and L1 Spanish-speaking backgrounds alternated as experts depending on the language context. The findings showed variability in the experts' and novices' roles, which was attributed to the language model used in the program; language separation by teacher and time. Thus, it appears that during science lessons in English, the L1 English-speaking children played the role of language experts, whereas in the same science lessons in Spanish, the L1 Spanish-speaking children played the role of language experts. It was also shown that the young experts recognized the novices' need for support and spontaneously initiated mediation without explicitly being asked for help.

In light of the limited data that exists on the young experts' language mediation in the bilingual classroom, the aim of this study was to broaden our understanding of the phenomenon by focusing on two types of classroom interactions: expert–novice interactions and expert–teacher interactions. The following research questions were examined:

1. How do the language experts mediate language for the novice peers?
2. What place do language experts have in the bilingual preschool classroom?
3. How do the teachers reflect on their 'use' of the language expert phenomenon?
4. How do the teachers manage the experts' language mediation?

3 The Sociolinguistic and Educational Context of the Study

3.1 Hebrew and Arabic in Israel

Israel is officially a bilingual country, with both Hebrew and Arabic as state languages. Hebrew is the socially dominant language in most life domains, such as government and other social institutions, e.g., media and popular culture. Arabic is a minority language and is the mother tongue of one fifth of the Israeli population. Hebrew as L2 is part of the curriculum in Arab schools from second or third grade through twelfth grade. In addition to the young Arabic-users' exposure to Hebrew in the classrooms, they might also be surrounded by a Hebrew-rich environment such as exposure via TV programs and news broadcasts. At the same time, L1 Hebrew-speaking children have a relatively low level of daily exposure to Arabic due to the longstanding tension between the Arab and Jewish populations and the

tendency to live mainly as separate communities (Feuerverger 2001). The two separate communities have parallel cultural milieus as well as separate education systems, not including tertiary education where the two communities meet and study together in Hebrew as the majority language. This reality inevitably leads to L1 Hebrew-speaking students' decreased motivation to study Arabic (Donitsa-Schmidt et al. 2004). In this context, one of the declared aims of bilingual Arabic–Hebrew-speaking education in Israel is to encourage the L1 Hebrew-speaking children to learn Arabic.

3.2 Center for Bilingual Education

In 1997, the Center for Bilingual Education was established to promote bilingual and bicultural education and the development of both Jewish and Arab ethnic communities. The structure of this education network is based on its main ideological objective to raise young L1 Arabic-speaking and L1 Hebrew-speaking children with mutual respect and understanding from early childhood. Thus, the Center's schools and preschools each engage a teaching and management staff that represents both groups equally, with two teachers in each class—one Arab and one Jewish.

3.3 The Target Bilingual Preschool

The target bilingual preschool was established in 2004 and was defined as a bilingual preschool with a two-way language program incorporating instruction in both the majority (Hebrew) and minority (Arabic) languages of the children in the classroom. The preschool is located in central Israel in an Arab community as an integral part of the bilingual school. Besides having the objective of bilingualism, this preschool setting is designed to help the Arab and Jewish children develop a high level of mutual tolerance, respect, and acknowledgment of their cultural similarities as well as differences from early childhood.

Both language teachers are supposed to coordinate their daily instructional practices and to share responsibilities. In the classroom, both languages are taught without allocating time for each individual language, and they share the same classroom space. Even though each teacher acts as a language model for one of the designated languages and is responsible for delivery in this language as a medium of instruction, they both sometimes use both Hebrew and Arabic and apply flexible language practices. During their co-teaching, the teachers do not build on translating each other, but on elaborating and extending and continuing each other in their designated language (for details see Schwartz and Asli 2014).

4 Method

This longitudinal ethnographic study was part of a large-scale project aimed at examining early bilingual Arabic–Hebrew education in Israel with a focus on peer interactions and their role in L2 acquisition.

4.1 *Participants*

4.1.1 Children

The children were 5-to-6-year-olds who had entered the target preschool at age 5 (one year before entry into elementary school at age 6) and were observed by the researchers during one academic year (for details, see the Procedure section). There were 29 children in the class, of whom 19 were L1 Arabic-speaking and 10 were L1 Hebrew-speaking. Six L1 Arabic-speaking children—three girls (Basmah,¹ Jamila, and Luna) and three boys (Hani, Shareef, and Asad)—had entered the preschool with a relatively high level of competence in spoken L2 Hebrew (speech understanding and production) and could be defined as L2 experts (Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004). Two of them, Basmah and Shareef, who were cousins, had spent 2 years at a monolingual Hebrew-speaking preschool before entering the target setting. As reported by Sukainah, the L1 Arabic-speaking teacher, the other four experts, Jamila, Luna, Hani, and Asad, had received early exposure to L2 Hebrew through TV and radio at home. The presence of the L2 experts in this classroom was a phenomenon that could be attributed partly to their (Arab) parents' language policy of taking practical steps to promote their children's exposure to L2. Some of their family language policy might be attributed to their belief that their children's competence in Hebrew is a primary predictor of their future academic and economic success in Israel (Bekerman and Tatar 2009).

In addition, one boy in this classroom, Adi, was from an ethnically mixed family, in which the mother was an L1 Hebrew-speaker and the father was an L1 Arabic-speaker. Since the dominant language of communication in this family was Hebrew, the child self-identified as an L1 Hebrew-speaker and at the beginning of the academic year, his Arabic understanding skills were much better than his Arabic speaking skills. In the course of time, Adi showed willingness to communicate in Arabic with his Arabic-speaking peers and teacher, and, as will be presented later on, excelled in his L2-expert role.

¹The names of the children and the teachers have been changed.

4.1.2 Teachers

The study participants were two preschool teachers: one Hebrew-speaking teacher, Avital, and one Arabic-speaking teacher, Sukainah. The teachers expressed their willingness to participate in the study. Avital was a novice teacher, who had joined the preschool in September 2013, and did not have any previous knowledge of Arabic. Prior to entering the preschool, Avital had obtained a bachelor's degree in preschool education, and then gained rich pedagogical and bilingual teaching experience as an L2 Hebrew teacher for adults and as a preschool teacher in the monolingual preschool. Sukainah was an Arabic-speaking teacher, who had a bachelor's degree in preschool and first-grade teaching. She had been teaching in the preschool since its establishment in 2004, had more than 10 years of professional experience, and spoke fluent Hebrew.

4.2 Procedure

The data were collected during the academic year, from October 2013 through June 2014. Throughout the research period, 16 observational sessions were conducted (two to three times each month during 7 months) including six sessions of field note taking from October 2013 to January 2014 and 10 sessions of video recording from February to June 2014. Each observation session lasted about 4 h from early morning to midday. The process of data collection included: selected focus of the video recordings on: (a) groups of the experts' interactions with the novices while engaged in joint play in various areas of the classroom, and (b) experts–novices–teacher interactions during classroom activities and spontaneous communications.

The data were collected by the first author and the L1 Arabic-speaking research assistant, an MA candidate in educational consulting. Both the researcher and the research assistant had as little involvement as possible in the observed peers' and teacher–child interactions.

4.3 Instrumentation, Data Generation, Transcription, and Analysis

To investigate a particular phenomenon of the L2 experts' mediation, we used multiple sources of data (video-recorded observations, field notes, and semi-structured interviews with the L2 experts and teachers). That is to say, we applied methodological triangulation, which permits a comparison of the findings derived from different data sources to interpret the phenomenon under study and to reduce observer or interviewer bias. In addition, the methodological triangulation increases scope, truth value, and consistency of our data (Flick 1998; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

4.3.1 Field Notes and Video Recordings and Their Transcriptions

We received permission to perform video recordings in the preschool from the Israeli Ministry of Education. The teachers were informed that the purpose of the cross-cultural project was to examine characteristics of the L2 experts' interactions within everyday preschool situations. They were asked to allocate a suitable time-point for observation that included diverse daily activities such as a meal, circle time, some structured and planned teacher-led activities within small groups, as well as unplanned and unstructured activities such as free play, games, and other activities during leisure time.

The video-recorded observations were transcribed in detail, in table form, which allows for the inclusion of non-verbal information from the videos. Each transcription was made by two transcribers, a native Hebrew-speaker and a native Arabic-speaker. A second transcription was made, following Conversational Analysis transcription conventions, to provide a detailed microanalysis of the transcriptions. This served as the basis for our understanding and interpretation of the observed experts' mediation activities (Hamo et al. 2004).

4.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews with the L2 Experts and Their Teachers

During the research project, we conducted semi-structured interviews with each expert and each teacher individually. The interviews with the experts took place 6 months after the onset of the school year, in May 2014, and were conducted by the research assistant in Arabic. Each interview lasted approximately 20 min. Our goal was to examine whether experts are aware of their mediation role in the classroom. We sought to obtain the experts' reflections on the sociolinguistic patterns of their behavior observed during the study. In addition, we asked about the advantage of learning languages, about similarities and differences between Arabic and Hebrew, Arabic/Hebrew use at the children's homes and in the environment, and about the children's ideas on the best way to teach L2.

Two interviews with the teachers were conducted by the first author in Hebrew; the first took place in November 2013, and the second in March 2014. Each interview lasted approximately 60 min and was tape-recorded with the interviewees' consent. Regarding our study aims, the teachers were asked to reflect on the experts' role in the classroom and specifically on observed patterns of their language mediation behavior.

4.3.3 Data Generation and Analysis

Based on Braun and Clarke (2006), we applied a theoretical thematic analysis of the collected data. The observations of the L2 experts' sociolinguistic behavior and the interviews with them and the teachers were analyzed using the following thematic analysis steps:

- (1) Transcribing the data corpus (all observations and interviews collected for the study), which comprised a first transcription version.
- (2) Familiarizing ourselves with the data by reading and rereading the classroom observation transcriptions and interviews and discussing them between the researchers. Through the discussion meetings, we began to search for the data set that addresses the topic of the current study: examining how the L2 experts provide scaffolding for the L2 novices and the teachers.
- (3) Identifying the patterns of the L2 experts' behavior.
- (4) Coding L2 experts' possible behavior patterns and organizing all relevant extracts of the entire data set into a table.
- (5) Reviewing the L2 experts' behavior patterns and the relevant extracts through an interrater to enhance the analysis by means of interrater reliability.
- (6) Defining and naming the patterns of the L2 language experts' sociolinguistic behavior:
 - a. Language mediation for the novice peers: this category included the following subcategories:
 - i. Explicit language teaching of the novices;
 - ii. Experts' language mediation as a behavioral model for the novices;
 - iii. Teachers' regulation of the experts' language mediation activity.
 - b. Language mediation for the novice teacher;
 - c. Social mediation as a bridge between ethnic groups;
 - d. Bilingualism as social power;
 - e. Language management.
- (7) Selecting the most informative and vivid extract examples and their final analysis regarding the research aim and literature review.

5 Results and Discussion

5.1 *Language Mediation for the Novice Peers*

In the first interview with Sukainah, the Arabic-speaking teacher, in November 2013, she stressed that our research was conducted during an unusual academic year because of the presence of seven L1 Arabic-speaking children whom she defined as experts. As stated by Sukainah, these experts' language mediation contributed significantly to the teachers' efforts, particularly during the first months of the children's incorporation in the preschool:

I see many expert children this year and ... it helps in games, while they are playing. *The experts mediate the interaction* and that's *very helpful* because they are able to speak Arabic and Hebrew and tell the Arabic-speaking kids what the Hebrew-speaking kids are saying and vice versa. They also mediate the intent behind the words and *this mediation is priceless* (November 2013).

Example 1 demonstrates how Sukainah openly asks Shareef, the expert, to negotiate the novice learners' comprehension by translating from Hebrew into Arabic (Turn 4).

Example 1: Observation: 2 January 2014.

(in the English translation: italic text = Arabic, boldface text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Hebrew-speaking teacher, Avital, the Arabic-speaking teacher, Sukainah, and an L1 Arabic-speaking expert boy, Shareef.

Situation: Circle time.

1	Avital:	איך נוכל לדעת כמה פירות יש מכל סוג? Ex noxal ladaat kama perot yesh mi-kol sug? How will we be able to tell how many fruits there are of each kind?
2	Sukainah:	فهمتو شو سالت اڤیتال؟ Fhimto shu sa'lat avital? <i>Did you understand what Avital asked?</i>
3	Children:	لا. La. No.
4	Sukainah:	مين فهم؟ شريف؟ Meen fihem? Shareef? <i>Who understood? Shareef?</i>
5	Shareef:	كيف بنفع نعرف ادني في من كل نوع؟ Keef binfa' ni'raf adee fi min kul no'?' <i>How can we know how many there are of each kind?</i>

Interestingly, in this example, Shareef does not translate Avital's utterance word for word in the future plural tense (*will be able*), but formulates the question in the more age-appropriate present tense (*can we*) (Turn 5). He also omits the word *fruits* since this is clear from the context. The paraphrasing and simplification of the teachers' message in terms of both content and grammar was observed in many other cases of the experts' translations. These transformative possibilities, demonstrated by the experts during the mediation process, might be evidence of psychological function such as *internalization*. Vygotsky (1987) viewed this function as a result of the connection between social communication and mediation and the individual's mental activity.

5.1.1 *Explicit Language Teaching of the Novices*

In addition to the frequently observed negotiations of the novice learners' understanding by direct translation, paraphrasing, or clarification of meanings, other unexpected behavior patterns of the experts emerged such as explicit teaching of words or phrases in L2 (Arabic/Hebrew). Example 2 below illustrates how Jamila, the expert girl, gives a mini-lesson in Arabic to a Hebrew-speaking novice boy, Uri:

Example 2: Observation: 21 May 2014.

(in the English translation: italic text = Arabic, boldface text = Hebrew)

Participants: an L1 Arabic-speaking expert girl, Jamila and an L1 Hebrew-speaking novice boy, Uri.

Situation: Free play; Jamila teaches Uri the words in Arabic.

1	Jamila:	לב, לב, قلب זה בערבית לב. Lev, lev, qaleb, ze be-aravit lev. Heart, heart, this is heart in Arabic. (makes a movement with her hands and draws a heart shape in the air)
2	Uri:	قلب. לב. qaleb Lev. <i>Heart.</i> Heart.
3	Jamila:	אתה יודע מה זה صفر? Ata yodea ma ze sefer? Do you know what zero is? (turns to Uri, Uri answers in the affirmative with his head)
5	Uri:	אפס. Efes. Zero.
6	Jamila:	נכון. Naxon. Correct.

In this example, Jamila appears to be imitating her teachers by the use of gestures and by producing a conventional visual image of a heart, by translating into Hebrew and repeating the translation three times to enhance her “instruction” (Turn 1). As a teacher, she also gives Uri positive feedback (Turn 6). While analyzing this social interaction between Jamila and Uri, it is noteworthy that Jamila was observed frequently playing with peers from both ethnic groups and enthusiastically helping the L1 Hebrew-speaking novice peers as well as the Hebrew-speaking novice teacher. We will address Jamila’s behavior more extensively later on.

In general, even though mini-lessons such as the one illustrated above were not frequently observed, in their interviews, all seven experts reported experience in explicit teaching of new words or expressions vis-à-vis their novice peers. This point is illustrated in the following example from the interview with the expert girl, Basmah:

Once Samia asked me how to say, for example, if someone is playing on the swing, and Samia is counting for him and Avital (the Hebrew-speaking teacher) comes and calls her, so I would say to Samia, "how would I say: 'I'm sorry' or 'I want to stay on longer.' " (May 2014).

Experts’ language mediation as a behavioral model for the novices

The teachers viewed the experts as a behavioral model for the novices as bilingual children. In her interview, Sukainah recognized that the experts' modeling presented bilingualism as a social advantage and helped the teachers to encourage the novices to use the L2:

Children who speak both languages demonstrate this to the [other] children. *This is modeling*. And that *sparks the other children's motivation* to speak the language as well. I say this because the place where this [modeling] *really helps* ... *This really triggers the other children's interest* in the language (January 2014).

As was observed, the teachers openly acknowledged and praised language mediation as a behavioral pattern, which appeared to be fruitful. Indeed, over time, we began to observe how the novices gradually imitated the experts' language mediation behavior. Example 3 demonstrates this point:

Example 3: Observation: 6 February 2014.

Participants: The Arabic-speaking teacher, Sukainah, an L1 Hebrew-speaking novice girl, Rima, and boy, Alon, and, an L1 Arabic-speaking expert boy, Shareef.

Situation: During the water break, Sukainah explains to the children what to do, in Arabic. The L1 Hebrew-speaking children, Rima and Alon, ask for a translation into Hebrew. The teacher negotiates understanding without direct translation of frequently used words such as *cup*, *bottle*, *water*, *big* (Turns 2, 4, 6), which she expects the children to know after six months' exposure to Arabic.

1	Rima:	תגידי בעברית. Tagidi be-ivrit. Say that in Hebrew.
2	Sukainah:	يعني في قنينة كبيرة, מה זה قנينة كبيرة? Ya'ni fi qanineh kbeereh, ma zeh qanineh kbeereh? <i>It means that there is a big bottle. What is a big bottle?</i>
3	Shareef:	בקבוק מים גדול. Bakbook mayim gadol. A big bottle of water.
4	Sukainah:	نأ, وملئء بالماء واحنا منعبي لكم في الكبايات. Nu,u malee' bilma' u ihna min3abbi lakum fi alkobayat. <i>Yes, and it contains water and we will pour it into your cups</i>
5	Alon:	מה זה ماء? Ma ze ma'?' What is water?
6	Sukainah:	أو بالكاسات بالكاسات . Aw bilkasat bilkasat. <i>Or into cups, in cups.</i> (Sukainah mimes pouring water, and points to a plastic cup).
7	Rima:	אבל אין לי. Aval, eyn li. But, I don't have[a cup].

(continued)

8	Sukainah:	لكان قناني، عنا قناني. Lakan qanani, e'na qanani. <i>So, into bottles. We have bottles.</i>
9	Alon:	היא אמרה שיש להם בקבוק מים. Hi amra she-yesh lahem bakbook mayim. She said they have a bottle of water.
10	Sukainah:	بالزبط! Belzabet! <i>Exactly!</i>

As presented in Example 2, Alon, a novice Arabic learner, who initially asked Sukainah for the translation of the word *water* (Turn 5), in Turn 9, demonstrated his understanding of the teacher's message by explaining it to Rima, *She said they have a bottle of water*. It is clear that Alon's mediation follows the expert-Shareef's initiation to negotiate Rima's and Alon's understanding of the teacher's message (Turn 3). Alon imitates the expert's observed behavior and dares to engage in language mediation himself. In addition, Example 3 shows that in the same discourse event,² the child could play both roles, of novice (Turn 5) and expert (Turn 9). In sociocultural theory, imitation is viewed as the unique human ability which lays the foundation for children's development (Vygotsky 1987). Lantolf and Thorne (2006) stressed that the imitation is a conscious process which can result in transformation of the original modeling of behavior (p. 203). Previous research showed the novices' imitation of what they heard from the teachers and peers in the classroom during the process of second-language acquisition (e.g., Lantolf and Genung, 2002; Ohta 2001; Saville-Troike 1988). The current example adds to the theory that the novices could imitate not only what they heard from the experts but also their language mediation techniques.

5.1.2 Teachers' Regulation of the Experts' Language Mediation Activity

We observed that the experts' contribution to the teachers in negotiating the novices' understanding was highly contextualized and changed over time. Thus, whereas during the initial months, Sukainah often requested the experts' assistance, toward the end of the academic year, we observed several cases in which language mediation was viewed as unnecessary. Example 4 shows how Sukainah prevents assistance by Luna, an expert girl (Turns 2–3):

Example 4: Observation: 4 May 2014.

(in the English translation: italic text = Arabic, boldface text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Arabic-speaking teacher, Sukainah, an L1 Arabic-speaking expert girl, Luna, and an L1 Hebrew-speaking girl, Rima.

²Discourse event was defined by Blum-Kulka (2012) as a communicative unit that requires the focus of attention of those who are involved in discourse on a shared topic and who constitute a stable participatory constellation throughout the event.

Situation: Classroom activity. Sukainah helps Luna draw round her hand. Rima stands next to the table.

1	Sukainah:	<p>كمان شوي ماشي؟ كمان شوي بنادي عليكي ريماء ريماء أنا بنادي عليكي. رومي برة ريماء رومي وأنا بنادي عليكي.</p> <p>Kaman shwai mashi? kaman shwai banadi aleki rima, rima ana banadi aleki, ruhi barra rima ruhi u ana banadi aleki.</p> <p><i>In a little while, okay? I'll call you in a little while, Rima. Rima, I will call you. Go outside Rima. Go outside and I will call you.</i></p> <p>(Sukainah points at herself and at Rima while talking to her)</p>
2	Luna:	<p>תלכי לשחק והיא תקרא לך.</p> <p>Telxi lesaxek ve-hi tikra lax.</p> <p>Go and play and she will call you.</p>
3	Sukainah:	<p>فش حاجي. هي بتفهم.</p> <p>Fish hajeh, hee btifham.</p> <p><i>There is no need [to translate]. She understands.</i></p>

This example shows how the teacher regulates the expert's mediation in the case of a simple instruction, which seemed to be understood within Rima's zone of L2 development at the end of the academic year. In her interview, Sukainah explained that the aim of this regulation was in line with Vygotsky's theory, to activate the novice learners' "zone" of L2 development whenever they reach a target in their developmental space (e.g., Kohler 2015; Lantolf and Thorne 2006).

5.2 Language Mediation for the Novice Teacher

The experts' role was significant for Avital in her struggle with the communication barrier with the L1 Arabic-speaking children. Avital made use of their bilingual competencies as a resource to negotiate understanding of what was spoken or written in Arabic:

I (Avital) say to them: "Do you want to be my helper today? To help me with this, to help me with that ... that I ... What is written here? ... My Arabic is still not good enough ... by the end of the day I will learn and you will help me" (November 2013).

As well as in the observed cases of the peer mediation, Avital did not always need to ask the experts explicitly to help her because the experts could see that either the teacher or their peers were having trouble. Example 5 demonstrates how Shareef, the expert boy, negotiates understanding of both Avital (Turn 3, 10) and a novice L1 Arabic-speaking novice boy, Samer (Turns 4, 10), in the conflict situation in which he, too, is involved.

Example 5: Field Workwork, 3 December 2013.

(in the English translation: italic text = Arabic, boldface text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Hebrew-speaking teacher, Avital, two L1 Arabic-speaking boys, the expert Shareef, and the L2-Hebrew novice, Samer.

Situation: While sitting in the classroom, Avital heard boys screaming outside in the playground. Samer kicked Shareef during a football game. Avital called them to her to understand what had happened. Shareef mediated for both Samer and Avital.

1	Avital:	אני קראתי לכם כי רציתי לשמוע מה קרה. Ani karati la-xem ki ratziti lishmoah ma karah. I called you over here because I wanted to hear what happened.
2	Samer:	ممم أنا كنت واقف وصار "بندل" واخذ مني الطابطة. Ana kont waqef wsar "pendel" o axad mene eltaba Mmmmm... <i>I stood up and then there was a penalty kick and then he took the ball from me.</i>
3	Shareef:	זה לא כך ואז הוא רץ ככה וככה ואז היה פנדל ואז האני בא עם סאמר. Ze lo kax. Ve-az hu ratz kaxah ve-kaxah ve-az hjamila pendel ve-az hu ve-Hani baoo im Samer. It wasn't like that. And then he [Samer] ran like this and like that [Shareef got up to show her how he was running] and then there was a penalty kick and then Hani came with Samer.
4	Samer:	مفهمتش مفهمتش <i>Mafhemtesh mafhemtesh</i> <i>I didn't understand, I didn't understand</i> (Shareef translates exactly what was said)
5	Avital:	מה אתה רוצה להגיד על זה? Ma ata rotzeh le-hagid al ze? What do you have to say about that? (Avital asks Samer)
6	Samer:	סליחה. Seliha. I'm sorry.
7	Avital:	תגיד לשריף. Tagid le-Shareef. Tell Shareef.
8	Samer:	أسف لن اعيدها كل يوم. Asif lan aaidha kol yom. <i>I'm sorry. I won't do that again every day.</i> [Meaning that he will never do that again.]
9	Shareef:	طيب. Tayeb. OK
10	Shareef:	הוא אמר לי סליחה. שהוא לא יעשה את זה אף פעם. Hu amar li Seliha. She-hu lo ye'ase et ze af paam. He said he was sorry. That he won't do it again. (Shareef translates for Avital)

Shareef's voluntary assistance highlights his sensitivity to the needs of both his peer and his teacher. It is also noteworthy that Shareef helps Samer to negotiate

understanding between Avital and Samer despite the situational tension between them (Samer had kicked Shareef) and provides a precise translation of the novice peer's version of the accident (Turn 4). Shareef behaves honestly and fairly. This mediation helps to solve the conflict and Samer apologizes (Turns 6, 8). Similarly, in the study by Angelova et al. (2006) experts as young as 6 years old showed their sensitivity to the novices' troubles. This expert-behavior pattern might be evidence of developed pragmatic skills.

5.3 *Social Mediation as a Bridge Between Ethnic Groups*

Our observations show also that the experts felt more confident and open to initiate an intergroup communication. This finding could be attributed to the experts' sense of control of both languages and their roles as language mediators. Their social role was particularly important in light of one of the aims of this bilingual setting; to help the Arab and Jewish children develop a high level of mutual tolerance, respect, and acknowledgment, taking into consideration that they belong to two groups who have a longstanding history of mutual intolerance. This role of the experts was acknowledged in the following excerpt from Sukainah's teacher interview:

This year, I see more connection between the Jews and the Arabs because we have many children who are both Arabic- and Hebrew-speakers and they bring the Arab and Jewish children closer together (November 2013).

In general, the teachers characterized all seven experts as willing to help their novice peers as well as their novice teacher. This pattern of findings is consistent with other studies in the field, emphasizing the importance of the leading mediator and his/her willingness to help (Langman et al. 2005; Nehm and Ridgway 2011; Harper 2007). However, as observed and reported by the teachers, with regard to the intergroup communication, the role of both language and social mediators was played mainly by two experts, Jamila and Adi. These children were initiators of shared activities such as sociodramatic and sports play with the Hebrew L1-speaking novices. The teachers viewed Jamila and Adi as intergroup leaders and attributed their active social mediation to the children's personal characteristics:

... Jamila (the expert girl) does an excellent job ... *She has a very easygoing and open personality.* She acts like it's something routine that she has been doing forever. She plays with the Jewish kids and the Arab kids and *connects them* to each other. *With her mediation, they play together.* It's amazing to watch, it really is amazing! Michael and Opal, who knew no [Arabic] words at the beginning of the year, now understand everything and are now friends with all of the other children (Sukainah, January 2014).

... Adi (the expert boy) sometimes helps when I'm talking during circle time and he translates, *he helps the children ... he brings everyone* together, it's amazing ... he is amazing ... (Sukainah, January 2014)

Adi got the role of teacher, of leader. He is a born leader, I would say. (Avital, November 2013)

5.4 Bilingualism as Social Power

In the present study, the perception of bilingualism as social power and an advantage was another distinguishing characteristic of the young L2-expert phenomenon. The following example demonstrates this point:

Example 6: Observation: 9 January 2014.

(in the English translation: italic text = Arabic, boldface text = Hebrew)

Participants: Abeer, the L1 Arabic-speaking research assistant, an Arabic-speaking L2 novice girl, Nadira, and two L1 Arabic-speaking L2 expert boys, Hani, and Asad.

Situation: Talk during breakfast. All the children sit together around the table, Abeer sits alongside the table.

1.	Nadira:	<p>هاد بحكي عربي بس بفهم عبراني.</p> <p>Had bihki arabi bas bifham ibrani</p> <p><i>He speaks Arabic but understands Hebrew (Nadira is talking about Hani).</i></p>
2.	Abeer:	<p>اهه, بتعرف عبراني هاني؟</p> <p>Aha btiraf ibrani hani?</p> <p><i>Oh, you know Hebrew, Hani?</i></p>
3.	Hani:	<p>اهه, انا مزببط!</p> <p>Aha ana mzabbet</p> <p><i>Yes, I've got it made!</i></p>
4.	Asad:	<p>وانا مزببط!</p> <p>U ana mzabbet</p> <p><i>And I've also got I made!</i></p>
5.	Hani:	<p>احنا مزبطين, بتعرفي اوفك؟</p> <p>Ihna mzabten btirafi Ofek?</p> <p><i>We've got it made, do you know, Ofek? [Ofek is the Arabic-speaking L2 novice learning boy]</i></p>
6.	Abeer:	<p>اهه.</p> <p>Aha.</p> <p>Yeah.</p>
7.	Hani:	<p>دايما بسالني شو معنى وشو معنى هاي وانا بقله.</p> <p>Daiman bs'alni shu mana u shu mana hai u ana baullo</p> <p><i>He always asks me what this means and what that means, and I tell him. (Hani looks proud and smiles)</i></p>
8.	Abeer:	<p>איזה יופי.</p> <p>Eze yofi.</p> <p>That's great.</p>

As we can see from Example 6, both Hani and Asad express their sense of superiority as bilinguals "... I've got it made!" (Turn 3), and "And I've also got it made!" (Turn 4). What does it mean to have "got it made"? It means to help the novice

learners of Hebrew and to gain some social advantage over other peers (Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004; Cekaite and Björk-Willén 2012; Gorbatt-Brodstein 2012). Hence, the L2 expert, Hani, plays the role of L2 teacher and model. Hani states proudly that "He [Ofek] always asks me what this means and what that means, and I tell him" (Turns 5–7). Similarly to Gorbatt-Brodstein's findings (Gorbatt-Brodstein 2012), Hani and Asad appeared to be in a superior social position among their peers. A social advantage of the experts was addressed also by the teachers in their interviews:

This gives them (the experts) a huge leap, you see the: "I am coming to help ... I am coming to give support ... I help others." (Avital, November 2013)

5.5 Language Management

Children are generally perceived as "their caretakers' dependent, passive and vulnerable baggage" (Duran 2015, p. 74). Lanza (2007, p. 47), however, points out that the child is not "something that needs to be molded and guided by society in order to become a fully-fledged member," but that children should be seen as "active and creative social agents who produce their own unique children's cultures, all the while contributing to the production of adult society." Children's language management might be considered as a part of their social agency and as a part of their active language policy. Spolsky (2009) defined language management as "the explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over the participants in the domain to modify their practices and beliefs" (p. 4). Drawing on this definition, in our study, we observed that all seven language experts played the role of language managers as they explicitly dictated the rules of which language should be used by whom in diverse contexts of teacher–child and peers' interactions. Example 7 illustrates this active language management:

Example 7: Observation: 2 January 2014.

(in the English translation: italic text = Arabic, boldface text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Hebrew-speaking teacher, Avital, the Arabic-speaking teacher, Sukainah, three L1 Hebrew-speaking children, Dani, Alon, and Rima, and an L1 Hebrew- and Arabic-speaking child, Adi, who is an L2 expert.

Situation: Circle time, Sukainah and Avital continue to present the topic of fruit.

1	Avital:		מה זה?
		Ma ze?	
		What is this?	
2	Dani:		לימון.
		Limon.	
		A lemon.	

(continued)

3	Sukainah:	باللغة الثانية. Billugha ilthanyeh <i>In the other language.</i>
4	Adi:	מי שמדבר ערבית אומר בעברית ומי שמדבר עברית אומר בערבית. Mi she-medaber aravit omer be-ivrit ve-mi she-medaber ivrit omer be-aravit. Those who speak Arabic have to say it in Hebrew and those who speak Hebrew have to say it in Arabic.
5	Sukainah:	עכשיו בערבית. Axshav be-aravit. (Sukainah lifts up an orange) now in Arabic.

In Example 7, Adi, the L1 Hebrew- and Arabic-speaking child, supports the teacher's effort to encourage L2 production by proclaiming: "Those who speak Arabic have to say it in Hebrew and those who speak Hebrew have to say it in Arabic" (Turn 4). Through his clear-cut statement about language choice, Adi played the role of language policy maker in this bilingual preschool. Thus, Adi answered Fishman's (1965) classical question of: "Who speaks which language to whom and when?" and by doing this, declared the preschool language policy as designed to promote L2 use. This explicit dictation of the preschool language policy by the L2 expert shows his proactive behavior in the classroom language management and expresses Adi's agency.

6 Conclusions

From a sociocultural learning theory perspective, the mediation is viewed as an active process, central to teaching and learning through interaction. In this study, we examined how the experts mediated their peers and teachers' L2 understanding through analysis of the classroom interactions. Our analysis of the data led us to the following insights. First, we found that the phenomenon of L2 expertise has a multifaceted nature. Similar to the previous findings of Angelova et al. (2006), it was observed that experts as young as 5 or 6 years old could directly teach a new word and negotiate their novice peers' understanding. In their acting as mediators, the language experts showed flexible language practices, or translanguaging practices, and used languages as a social resource counting on their bilingual "repertoire of linguistic features selectively" (García and Lin 2017, p. 126).

In addition to the role of the language teachers and language mediators, our data explored a significant role of the experts in the classroom language management. We found that the young experts are able to manage language policy in a bilingual preschool and, as a result, enhance the teachers' language policy. This language

management was expressed through the experts' meta-linguistic talk, which explicitly indicated which language their peers should use in which situation to realize the preschool language policy, namely bilingual development. This proactive social behavior could be considered as a manifestation of the experts' agency.

Another important finding was the experts' role in the interethnic group communication. As stressed by Angelova et al. (2006), in addition to their role as language mediators, the expert may also play the role of social mediators in the bilingual classroom. Similarly to Angelova et al. (2006), we found that the social mediation was expressed in the experts' sensitivity to the novices' communication and learning needs. However, our study broadens the data from the study by Angelova et al. (2006), and shows that the experts' role as social mediators can be expressed by voluntarily assuming leadership by initiating interethnic group communication. Thus, it appears that through their bilingual competence, the young experts might socialize children from different sociolinguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, similar to Cekaite and Björk-Willén's (2012) findings on more advanced L2 users' social superiority in the L2 immersion preschool context, in our study, the experts' leadership in language and social management seems to place some of them in a higher hierarchical position.

In addition to these insights, our research generated a number of questions for future study. We wondered about the impact of the experts' superior hierarchical position on the classroom social order. In addition, we need to explore in more detail whether there is a link between young experts' personal characteristics and their willingness to be engaged in language mediation and to initiate intergroup communication. We also propose to perform a deeper examination of the experts' understanding of their novice peers' mental states (communicative desires, emotions, and intentions) in light of the Theory of Mind (Flawell and Miller 2000). Furthermore, we wondered about the influence of teachers' regulation of the language mediation on experts and novices' mediation behavior.

Finally, we believe that our findings have practical value for teachers. We suggest that to take full advantage of a peer interaction in second language learning, it is the teacher's responsibility to consider the language proficiency of each individual child. As a second step, there is a need to maximize the experts' mediation as a resource for young novices and for novice teachers by navigating the experts' language and social mediation.

Acknowledgments This work was supported by The MOFET Institute, the Israeli national inter-collegiate center for the research and development of programs in teacher education and teaching in the colleges; and The Israeli Center for Educational Technology. We would like to thank the teachers in the kindergartens, for their unlimited support and fruitful collaboration. In addition, our grateful thanks go to the Director of Educational Programs, Center for Jewish–Arab Education in Israel “Hand in Hand,” Dr. Inas Deeb, and to the School Principal of the Bridge over the Wadi (Gesher al HaWadi), Dr. Hasan Agbaria.

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