

**A Case Study of Social Skills Development
in Bilingual Preschool-Age Children**

by

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A thesis submitted

to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Faculty of Education

Memorial University of Newfoundland

February 2020

St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

Abstract

This study presents a case study of preschool-age dual-language learners' social skills development. The research focuses on several widely recognized dimensions of children's social development: communication, cooperation, emotional management, and problematic behaviours. The case study utilized several methods for data collection, including non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Five dual-language preschool-age children participated in the qualitative data collection, and two early childhood educators participated in the qualitative data collection through interviews and classroom observations. The results indicate that the main reason for dual-language children's exclusion is their language limitations rather than their appearance or other factors that would contribute to them being considered an outsider. Also, the main barrier in the social skills development of dual-language children seems to be negative feelings such as frustration and hesitation that this group of children experience in relationships with others, which appear to inhibit them from interacting with others. The role of early childhood educators, peers and parents in the social skills development of this group of children is significant.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all who in one way or another contributed to the completion of this thesis.

I would first like to give a special thank you to my thesis supervisor Dr. Kimberly Maich. She always accepted me whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. She consistently allowed this paper to be my own work but steered me in the right direction whenever she thought I needed it. Her guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis.

I would also like to thank you to my family, my mom for supporting me spiritually throughout my life. My dearest and nearest person in my life, my husband Alireza, for his continued support for reaching my goals. You are always there for me. And my son Ryan, for all of your love through every step of this academic and spiritual journey. Also, my sisters (Maryam and Atefeh) and my brother (Hosein) are a constant inspiration and support. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The Current Project

The current research studied how immigrant preschool-age dual-language children develop social skills. The context of the present study is Newfoundland and Labrador, the easternmost province of Canada, situated in the country's Atlantic region. The population of this study is preschool-age immigrant children, who are a fast-growing population. Due to a decline in the birth rate and the aging of the population, Canada is welcoming more immigrants (CANADA in 2050, n.d.). This group of participants comes from a different background than children born in this province. For instance, English, which is the official language of this province, is not their mother tongue, and they are considered English language learners.

Bilingualism is a phenomenon with disagreed-upon definition between psychologists and sociologists (Butler & Hakuta, 2006). For this current study, dual-language learners are considered young children who are learning English as a second language while using their mother tongue at home. These children live in families that speak their home language, which can be a minority language in a given society. The majority language is the language used in the community and by official institutions such as childcare or educational systems. These children are taught the minority language at home, and children in these families usually begin to learn the majority language when

they attend either childcare or kindergarten (Hopp, Vogelbacher, Kieseier, & Thoma, 2019).

Social skills are “a person’s ability to interact, maintain and build relationships with others” (Kasture, & Bhalerao, 2014, p. 1913). Developing appropriate social skills is essential to achieving optimal growth in social, educational, and professional areas, (Ryan & Edge, 2012) and their development in early childhood lays the foundation for strong social skills in adulthood (Zahl, 2013). While research has explored the development of young children’s social skills, most studies have focused on high-risk childhood populations (Ben-Itzhak, Nachshon, & Zachor, 2019; Caplan, Blacher, & Eisenhower, 2019; McCollow & Hoffman, 2019; Mpella, Christina, & Eirini, 2019). Few studies have focused on the development of social skills in young dual-language children. Against this backdrop, it is essential to assess programs to ensure the needs of this population are being met.

Therefore, this study focused on social skills development in dual-language preschool-age children. Moreover, building relationships is more challenging for dual-language children than for domestic students, as this group of children are not fluent in English, the majority language, which is considered a significant factor in any relationship. Also, these children have different backgrounds, which can affect their social interactions. Accordingly, this study explores the challenges and difficulties this group of children face when communicating with their classmates and early childhood educators.

1.2 Background of the Study

Creswell (2012) stated that, “researchers have a personal history that situates them as inquirers” (p. 51). Analyzing my background helps to explain my interest in this study. First, although my personal experience as a dual-language international student has been positive and rich, it has not been without challenges. These include linguistic, academic, and cultural challenges, which have the potential to impact any individual’s life adversely. One problem that became clear to me as a dual-language immigrant student is the difficulties that international people experience with building relationships and social skills development within a specific cultural context. Therefore, I decided to pursue this topic in my research. In addition to my experience as a dual-language immigrant, I have heard from parents of dual-language children that their child has been excluded because of their appearance, language, race, or ethnicity, all of which are considered as making someone an *outsider*. For instance, the daughter of one of my Chinese friends was born in the United States, and she speaks English as well as a native English speaker, but she believes that other children are not as interested in being friends with her as much as children from their own background. Her mother also assumes that this exclusion could be because of her daughter’s appearance, which shows that her appearance is not the same as the majority of people from this country.

Yet, another reason why I am interested in this study is because my first master’s thesis focused on the role of play in the development of social skills. Using a quasi-experimental design, I studied how group games might affect the social skills of elementary students. When twelve weeks of group play were integrated into school

programming, my research showed that the experimental group was superior to the control group in terms of their development of communication and cooperation skills. Based on these findings, it can be argued that group games, as a pedagogical strategy, should be given due attention in teaching programs (Sohrabi, 2019). Given this background, I explored how and to what extent social skills development happens in bilingual preschool-age children as a result of their interactions with others. In so doing, I conducted a study in a childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador for a period of time and observed early childhood educators' and native English speakers' interactions with dual-language children concerning their social skills development.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The first objective of the study was to examine what happens in the development of bilingual preschool-aged children's social skills. In other words, it investigated how bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills in the process of communicating with their peers in childcare centre. The second objective of the study was to examine the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual children experience in communicating with their early childhood educators and domestic classmates, who are native English speakers.

1.4 Research Questions:

The Questions that guide my research were:

- How do bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills?
- How might early childhood educators and their interactions with bilingual children lead to social development in this group of children?

- What are the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual preschool-age children experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators and classmates?

To attempt to answer these questions, a qualitative research approach was employed. Qualitative methods focus on the in-depth probing of people's beliefs, assumptions, understandings, opinions, actions, or interactions (Doyle, 2018). Creswell (2012) described a qualitative approach as the best way "to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore" (p.17). Qualitative research is "interested in how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 24). This is particularly relevant to understanding with depth and richness how people—including children—think about or understand an issue. Since this study explored students' experiences, a qualitative approach seemed the most appropriate. A case study method was used as a research design. This study benefited from multimethod fieldwork, which included non-participant observation and open-ended interviews with two early childhood educators.

The value of a case study is that it can be used to understand a more significant issue through a specific case comprised of a small sample size. It inquires about the way people look and build their reality in depth and in context. Hence, the case study approach enables the researcher to go beyond broad explanations and understand behavioural situations within a specific context (Creswell, 2012).

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective of this study is social constructivism as derived from Vygotsky's (1980) socio-cultural theory of learning. Social constructivism argues that

students can, with help from adults or their peers, grasp concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own. Scaffolding, with its link to Vygotskian sociocultural theory, describes how the adaptive and temporary support provided by a more competent person such as an educator, by using several scaffolding techniques (e.g., modelling, bridging, developing metacognition) in learning contexts, can help younger individuals reach the zone of proximal development (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018). Early childhood educators who adopt social constructivism perspectives not only observe children's exploration and discovery, they also guide young students as they approach problems, encourage them to work in groups, prompt them to think about issues and questions, and support them with encouragement and advice. The construction of social meanings, therefore, involves intersubjectivity and shared understanding among individuals—including peers and early childhood educators (Stern, 2005). Social meanings and knowledge are shaped and evolve through negotiation within these communicating groups (Gredler, 1997; Prawat, 1995).

Adding to this, the philosophical perspective of the case study is a qualitative, constructivist paradigm based on the state that reality is socially constructed and can be understood better by exploring the implicit, for example, experience-based, knowledge of individuals (Hammersley & Gomm 2000; Stake 2000; Baxter & Jack 2008; cited in Meyer, 2015). Using this methodology, researchers can identify cases; study them in their condition; note how they behave, think, and talk; and develop a general illustration of the cases.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The development of social skills is pivotal for generating positive outcomes for mental health and wellbeing throughout the childhood period and into later life (Moore, 2006; Sosna & Mastergeorge, 2005). While research has explored the development of young children's social skills, most studies have focused on high-risk childhood populations. Few studies have studied the development of social skills in young dual-language children. According to Ştefan and Miclea (2012), it remains a priority for future research to study what happens in the social skills development of these children.

The current study presents a case study of preschool-age dual-language learners and their social skills development. This population was chosen due to the limited number of studies focussing on the development of social skills within this group. Most of the existing studies focus on social skills development in children who have mental or physical disabilities (Ben-Itzhak, Nachshon, & Zachor, 2019; Caplan, Blacher, & Eisenhower, 2019; McCollow & Hoffman, 2019; Mpella, Christina, & Eirini, 2019). Also, children from immigrant families are the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population. In 2011, the immigrant population comprised 20.6% of Canada's population (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2018). Canada's immigration rate is expected to increase considerably in the near future (CANADA in 2050, n.d.). This trend has profound policy implications for meeting the needs of our nation's children and demands attention. It is widely recognized that childcare and schools are crucial arenas of socialization (Marmot, 2010). Also, it is believed that efforts towards accomplishment in educational goals must be seen through a life course perspective, where cooperation

between childcare, kindergartens, primary schools and upper-level education is essential for children to have proper social, cognitive, emotional and physical development.

Among various levels of education, the early childhood education role is significant since it is the starting point of this cooperation (Kasture, & Bhalerao, 2014). Despite the significance of this period to children's development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), a dearth of research exists on immigrant children during this developmental period (Takanishi, 2004).

1.7 Newfoundland and Labrador's Childcare

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the childcare program assists children from birth to five years old (Government of Canada, 2018). Newfoundland and Labrador's childcare goal is to support parents, families and communities in providing the best possible future for their children (Government of Canada, 2018). The early childhood education approach used in Newfoundland and Labrador is play-based learning (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005). This approach has cognitive, social, physical health and developmental benefits for children (Pellis, Pellis, & Bell, 2010; Pellegrini, 2009). Play-based pedagogy is a context in which children explore, recognize, communicate, take risks and develop meaning through play (Bodrova & Leong, 2010). In other words, play-based learning refers to learning activities that take place in a play-based environment. Children learn by doing and interacting with actual objects in the environment (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016). Newfoundland and Labrador's childcare classrooms are designed according to this approach, and there are various learning areas, such as

areas for dramatic play, block play, storytelling, art, and outside play (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, n.d. c).

1.8 Table of Definitions

The below table (Table 1.1) provides definitions of terms frequently used in this research.

Table 1.1

Definitions

Term	Definition
Social skills development	Social skills are “a person’s ability to interact, maintain and build relationships with others” (Kasture, & Bhalerao, 2014, p. 1913).
Dual-language learners	Dual-language learners in this study refer to children who are learning English as a second language while using their mother tongue at home. The families of these children speak the home language, which is a minority language in that society. These children are taught the minority language at home, and they begin to learn the majority language when they attend either childcare or kindergarten (Hopp, Vogelbacher, Kieseier, & Thoma, 2019).
Preschool-aged children	Children who attended childcare during the research and were expected to start kindergarten the next educational year. The program these children attend prepares them for kindergarten.

Majority language	The majority language is the language used in the community and official institutions such as childcare or educational systems. The majority language in Newfoundland and Labrador, where this study was done, is English.
Immigrant dual-language children	The population of this study is dual-language children from other countries, but not dual-language children who were born in Canada, such as those who speak English and French.
Play-based learning	Play-based learning refers to a context in which children explore, recognize, communicate, take risks and develop meaning through play (Bodrova & Leong, 2010).

1.9 Outline of the Thesis

This chapter introduces the concept of the study. It outlines the background of the research and identifies the purpose and research questions. The significance and theoretical framework of the study are also discussed in this chapter.

The thesis has the following additional chapters: a review of the literature, methodology, findings, discussion, recommendations and conclusion. Chapter 2 provides a background for the study, drawing upon relevant literature. The review of the literature focuses on previous research studies on issues related to social skills development in immigrant dual-language preschool-age children. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology used for the main study and describes the adopted methods, participants, timeframe and

context of the study. In Chapter 4, the results of the study are presented. This chapter reports on social skills development through qualitative findings from interviewing early childhood educators and results from observing participants. In Chapter 5, the study's qualitative findings overall are discussed within the context of the research questions. This chapter also contains the study's conclusions, limitations and recommendations for future research, followed by a consideration of the theoretical perspectives selected and implications for practice. The discussion section discusses and analyzes the findings. Adding to this, the recommendations and conclusions are presented in the fifth chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter draws upon the literature and best practices from themes relevant to the present research topic (social skills development in bilingual preschool-age children). The types of related literature reviewed include books, journal articles, essays, research papers, websites, and government publications. The reviewed literature is discussed thoroughly and critically in the context of the research questions and was used to develop interview questions and a conceptual framework designed to guide this research.

Since this study is about social skills development in bilingual preschool-age children, this chapter begins with social skills development from different perspectives to understand the background of children's social skills development. Also, key dimensions of social skills development that are the focus of this study, including communication, cooperation, emotional management, and problem behaviour, are discussed briefly. This is followed by a brief description of dual-language learners. Then, the barriers and difficulties bilingual children face in their education as well as the advantages of being bilingual are explored. The chapter addresses the importance of childcare and preschool and briefly explores policies related to NL preschool. Moreover, the importance of early childhood educator-child relationships is discussed in this chapter.

2.1 Social Skills Development

Socially skilled behaviour, also referred to as “social skills”, is related to behaviours that enable the individual to adequately satisfy the demands of interpersonal relationships (Marinho-Casanova, & Leiner, 2017). Social skills are crucial tools that are used to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships (Tocknell, 2014). In other words,

social skills reflect one's ability to engage successfully and effectively in social interactions across different contexts (Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009). Social skills include non-verbal, verbal, and cognitive skills that individuals use to achieve social functions such as making friends, working with others and generally interacting with others (Tocknell, 2014). The development of these skills begins from childhood during interactions with others (Marinho-Casanova, & Leiner, 2017).

Developing appropriate social skills is essential to achieve optimal growth in social, educational, and professional areas (Ryan & Edge, 2012). Children with appropriate social skills can successfully navigate many social issues they face (Jafari, Mohammadi, Khanbani, Farid, & Chiti, 2011). Also, their development in early childhood is the foundation of social skills in adulthood (Halle, Whittaker, Zepeda, Rothenberg, Anderson, Daneri, & Buysse, 2014; Zahl, 2013). On the other hand, delays in developing social skills can be considered an important contributor to later difficulties such as problems in friendships (Zahl, 2013). A growing number of researchers believe that the reason for the failure of many children in school is a lack of social skills such as how to properly communicate with others, which is the foundation of any relationship (Ryan & Edge, 2012; Arnold, Kupersmidt, Voegler-Lee, & Marshall, 2012). There is a two-sided relationship between social skills and the educational system. Arnold, Kupersmidt, Voegler-Lee, and Marshall (2012) assume that social skills development positively affects the academic success of children. This is because those who have more developed social skills build better relationships with others and have more positive feelings about school, and these feelings may be a factor that affects academic success.

Also, the educational system and educators are considered components that affect social skills development. Research indicates that structured and safe environments, such as educational environments, positively affect the social development of children (Cluver & Gardner, 2007; Loughry et al., 2006; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000; cited in Lai, Chui, Lo, Jordan, & Chan, 2017). Vygotsky also suggested that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of children (1980). Moreover, the relationship between children and educators provides a pattern for social skills in the next stages of life (Hall et al., 2014). Skinner (2018) stated that all children's development, whether social, emotional, motivational, or cognitive, will be successful if it is built on a foundation of close and caring relationships with trusted adults.

The significance of social skills development is even greater when it comes to dual-language children. Dual-language children's social skills development might be slightly different from monolingual children because of their dual-language and dual-culture situation (Halle et al. 2014).

2.2 Key Dimensions of Social Development

Various aspects of social skills have received the attention of scholars, such as communication, understanding non-verbal cues and signals, understanding and awareness of emotions (both in oneself and others), conversational skills, social interactions and cooperation, conflict resolution, and problem-solving behaviours (Tocknell, 2014). In this study, cooperation, communication, emotional management, and problem behaviours are highlighted. Below, research on these dimensions and their relationship to children's overall development is discussed briefly.

2.2.1 Cooperation. In modern societies, useful life skills and practical social skills are a necessity. One of these skills is cooperative skills (Victoria, Eugenia, Polina, & Natalia, 2018), which is considered a basic social process (Marwell, & Schmitt, 2013). Argyle (2013) defined cooperation as “acting together, in a coordinated way at work, leisure, or in social relationships, in the pursuit of shared goals, the enjoyment of the joint activity, or simply furthering the relationship” (p.15).

Cooperation is the foundation of many skills and individuals’ personality traits. The development of personality is impossible to separate from the society and the relationships that are formed as a result of cooperative interaction (Victoria, et al., 2018). Also, sharing and cooperating in early childhood are necessary to get along in the classroom and, as such, are prosocial skills (Adams & Baronberg, 2005). Having an opportunity to interact, play and learn through cooperative activities also teaches children to appreciate diversity and respect each other (Hossain, & Ahmad, 2013). Children who are not successful in communication are usually disciplined and are in need of an adult’s help in the acquisition of this skill (Fields & Fields, 2006).

Because of the significance of this skill, cooperation is also used as a teaching method. Cooperative learning methods facilitate interaction among students and promote social skills for better collective performance (Ibrahim, 2017). Cooperative learning techniques involve students in the learning activity and require them to interact with each other, as the activities are designed in a way so that an individual can not complete the activity alone (Hosseini, 2017).

2.2.2 Communication. Communication skills are defined as the expression and exchange of ideas and information that help children feel safe and connected to those around them (Alanis, 2011). Communication is also one of the most fundamental skills for modern society. Success in education during childhood and adolescence, as children move towards adulthood, as well as successful participation in all areas of life and relationships, is often dependent on being able to communicate well (Binkley, Erstad, Herman, Raizen, Ripley, Miller-Ricci, & Rumble, 2012; Buckley, 2012). Communication includes nonverbal and verbal channels for conveying messages to others. Nonverbal communication includes eye gaze, facial expressions, physical proximity, gestures, vocalizations, and body language. Verbal communication refers to the use of language, which can be spoken or written. Most face-to-face interactions between people include a combination of nonverbal and verbal messages (Buckley, 2012).

Speech and language are also primary developmental tasks for young children (Kaiser, & Roberts, 2011). Although what is considered appropriate language may vary from society to society, factors such as context, the topic of the discourse, and the gender, age, familiarity, and relative status of the speaker and the listener affect the choices of appropriate language in almost all cultures (Andersen, 2014). Adding to this, acquiring communicative competence includes learning to speak not only grammatically well but also appropriately according to the culture of that society. Vygotsky (1980) suggested that such development cannot be understood as isolated from the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which it occurs. Therefore, the use of verbal or nonverbal communication elements is affected by socio-cultural and linguistic environments. There are rules within cultures that determine what is or is not appropriate in terms of the use of

communication signs. Children typically learn these rules implicitly over the course of their development. For instance, there are differences between cultures about how smiling is used, and which gestures are deemed appropriate (Buckley, 2012). This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding the communication skills development of dual-language learners because these children have different experiences in many ways from those of young monolingual children.

2.2.3 Emotional management. Emotions play a significant role both positively and negatively in many aspects of life such as in supporting relationships and solving problems (Cole, Martin & Dennis, 2004). Cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components all contribute to managing emotions. Emotional management is a conscious, effortful, and reflective response to stimulation (Blair & Raver, 2016) influenced by genetic and environmental factors (Goldsmith et al., 2008). There are two types of strategies for managing emotions: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The first strategy attempts to change the situation that is provoking an emotional reaction, and the second one attempts to change the emotion elicited by the situation (Lightsey, Maxwell, Nash, Rarey & McKinny, 2011). The differences between people in managing their emotions are related to the coping strategies and adaptive strategies they develop through environmental experiences (Goldsmith et al 2008).

Emotional management according to social expectations is an essential factor of social competence (Howse, Calkins, Anastopoulos, Keane, & Shelton, 2003; Zahl, 2013). This area is of particular importance when considering the development of emotion management skills within children (Cole, Armstrong & Pemberton, 2010). Research by

Wisner and Pollack (2004) shows that the early childhood experiences have a strong impact on brain development and subsequent emotion regulatory processes. Managing emotions also helps young children achieve feelings of emotional efficiency and develop a good self-image and optimistic attitude. It can also help them counter emotional challenges and deal with them more effectively (Salehyan, Aghabeiki., & Rajabpour, 2013).

Managing emotion also has been shown to play a significant role in early childhood adjustment and achievement at school (Howse, et al., 2003). The findings of a study by Bierman, Nix, Greenberg, Blair, and Domitrovich (2008) revealed that readiness to start school in addition to arly literacy and numeracy skills is affected by social and emotional competencies including emotion management skills, prosocial skills and aggression control. Although the development of these skills is important for children, a study by (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000) demonstrated that, according to preschool early childhood educators, approximately half of the children in their classes lacked skills in controlling and managing their emotions and behaviour.

2.2.4 Problem behaviour. The ability to manage behaviours and emotions according to the expectations of the society is a fundamental component of social skills development, especially during early childhood, as it plays a crucial role in school adjustment and achievements (Howse, Calkins, Anastopoulos, Keane, & Shelton, 2003). Some children who do not develop social skills may learn other behaviours that contribute to the establishment of negative interactions between them and other individuals (Marinho-Casanova, & Leiner, 2017) that are considered problem behaviours. This is most common in young children, and it is estimated that almost 5–14% of young children exhibit problem behaviours (Yoleri, 2014).

Douglas (2002) stated that there are two main sources for problematic behaviour: features related to the child and environmental factors. The child features are related to the individual child, and environmental factors include family, housing, and social situation features that affect children's behaviour. Campbell (2006) established another category for problem behaviour, regardless of the problematic behaviour sources, which is divided into internalized and externalized problems. Internalized problems are problems that hurt the child in non-visible ways such as by causing worry, sadness, anxiety, and social withdrawal (Campbell, 2006). Externalized problems have visible indicators including aggressive physical behaviour, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (McMahon, 1994). A common problem behaviour among children is aggression, which is generally defined as intentional or harmful behaviours toward other people and other objects (Feldman, 2005). The reasons for these harmful behaviours may either be psychological, namely exclusion from the group, or physical, such as beating, pushing, and kicking (Ostrov & Keating, 2004).

There are linkages regarding dual-language learners' English language proficiency and its negative relationship to both internalizing and externalizing problem behaviours. Qi, Van Horn, Selig, and Kaiser (2019) suggested that language is associated positively with social skills and negatively linked to internalizing and externalizing problem behaviour in children. Also, Halle et al. (2014) summarized the existing knowledge regarding dual-language learners' social-emotional development from birth to five years old. One aspect of children's social-emotional development they focused on was problem behaviour. They identified a negative relationship between second language proficiency

and both internalizing and externalizing problem behaviours. With the increase of second language proficiency, internal and external problem behaviour decreases (e.g., Araújo Dawson & Williams, 2008; Han & Huang, 2010; Han, 2010). Children's interaction in socializing and play is also related to their language skills (Cohen & Mendez, 2009). Dual-language children who have limitations in their second language demonstrated increased social difficulties and difficulties in peer relations (St. Clair, Pickles, Durkin, & Conti-Ramsden, 2011), which can be related to problem behaviours (Qi et al., 2019).

2.3 Dual-Language Learners

Bilingualism is a phenomenon without an agreed-upon definition between psychologists and sociologists (Butler & Hakuta, 2006). In the current study, dual-language learners are defined as young children who are learning English as a second language while continuing to use their mother tongue. These children live in families that speak the home language, which is a minority language in that society. The majority language is the language used in the community and official institutions such as childcare or educational systems. Children in these families usually begin to learn the majority language when they attend childcare or kindergarten.

There are differences that affect the acquisition of a second language by young children (Bialystok, 2001). Factors such as cognitive abilities, previous learning experiences, cultural background, and knowledge have significant roles in learning a second language (August & Shanahan, 2017). Also, research on bilingual young children demonstrates that first-language skills contribute to the development of the second language in different areas, such as reading skills (Rinaldi & Páez, 2008).

Research findings have revealed that when children are exposed to a second language, they go through a specific developmental process (Tabors, 1997). At first, when children are exposed to a second language, they notice the distinction between their first language and the new language. Then, a telegraphically and formulaically speech by labelling and employing common phrases is started. Telegraphic speech is a simplified manner of speech in which only the most important words are used to express an idea, while grammatical function words are often omitted (Nordquist, 2019). In formulaic phrases, children start with the acquisition of language grammar (Ellis, 2012). When children start to create sentences in a new language, they reach a point where they can use their second language (Castro, Espinosa, & Páez, 2011).

2.4 Barriers and Difficulties

Young dual-language learners experience some barriers and difficulties in the early years of their educational pathways. Early education for young dual-language children is crucial since it can fill the school readiness gap that this group of children face because of their language limitations (Castro, Páez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011). For dual-language children for whom English is neither the first nor the home language, second language acquisition often starts with enrollment in English-language childcare centres. During this time, these children have daily exposure to English language and diminished contact with the home or family language (Rodriguez, 1982; Cited Chumak-Horbatsch, 2008). Because of limitations in the main language, these children experience challenges in their pathways as they learn the main language of that society. In the following, some of these challenges are discussed.

Bilingual individuals sometimes experience problems in using either language, such as pronouncing words in a slightly different way, using uncommon words at times, and constructing sentences in different ways. All these issues are due to the second language effects (Genesee, 2008). For instance, mixing languages by using words from another language is common in dual-language children. This happens since children might not know the same words in both languages, and when they want to fill this gap, they use words from another language (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). This problem can affect the social interactions of this group of children (Genesee, 2008).

Also, dual-language children are behind monolingual children in vocabulary size and grammatical development (Hoff, Welsh, Place, & Ribot, 2014; Hoff, Core, Place, Rumiche, Señor, & Parra, 2012). As a result, dual-language children face challenges in becoming skilled readers and are often far behind monolingual students (Lonigan, Farver, Nakamoto, & Eppe, 2013). Bialystok, Luk, Peets, and Yang, (2010) examined more than 1,700 bilingual children between the ages of three and 10 years old and found that monolinguals' scores in vocabulary size were significantly higher than bilinguals' scores at every age examined. Furthermore, as long as bilingual children have not learned the dominant language, they might experience loneliness in educational settings since they cannot communicate with others appropriately (Chang, Crawford, Early, Bryant, Howes, BurChinal, Barbarin, Clifford, & Pianta, 2007).

Linguistically diverse children often become bicultural through their socialization, and ignoring this experience within the schooling process negatively impacts students' achievements (Riojas-Cortez, & Bustos Flores, 2009). For instance, one factor that can

help dual-language learners in early education is a supportive environment built on children's previous knowledge and experiences, such as their home language. An environment that is supportive for all children is an environment in which educators carefully maintain cultural continuity between home and the early childhood setting and in which children can share and maintain their home culture and language. Activities such as providing books, posters, labels, and music in multiple languages as well as stories that reflect diverse cultures will help dual-language learners develop a sense of belonging with the group (Castro, Espinosa, & Páez, 2011). Although the importance of effective practices and environments for all children is widely acknowledged, priority in educational settings is on the native culture and language. Educators, however, may not acknowledge children's cultural knowledge, which often creates misconceptions about school readiness (Riojas-Cortez, & Bustos Flores, 2009).

There is a connection between language and culture and social skills development. How language is used in a society conveys the culture of that society (Nelson, 2003). Also, social skills acquisition is part of cultural knowledge, and these skills are gained through daily interactions within the home and community (Riojas-Cortez, & Bustos Flores, 2009). A study by Van Rhijn, Osborne, Ranby, Maich, Hall, Rzepecki, and Hemmerich (2019) also emphasized that culture affects social skills development, and social skills, in turn, affect success in education (Moreno & Pérez-Granados, 2002; cited in Riojas-Cortez, & Bustos Flores, 2009). During the socialization process, children develop their sense about the culture of the society they are living in and learn how to respond to others and events in their daily lives according to the culture of that society

(Riojas-Cortez, & Bustos Flores, 2009). Dual-language children, beside learning two languages, need to adjust to the language in two different cultures that have different perspectives about behaviour related to social development (Halle, et al. 2014).

Furthermore, most educational practices are not designed for dual-language learners. As Castro, Espinosa, and Páez (2011) note, one factor that contributes to children's development and achievement at school is high-quality educational practices. Improving the quality of early education for typical learners has received a lot of attention, but this has not been the case for dual-language learners. This puts dual-language learners at risk of school failure because early education practices have not been designed to address their linguistic and broader developmental needs. As mentioned by Chang et al. (2007), dual-language learners are trying to develop their home language and second language while also gaining the pre-academic knowledge and social skills that are essential for formal schooling, thus they need high-quality educational support (2007).

Another major barrier for dual-language learners is difficulties in communicating with others. Bradbury, Corak, Ghanghro, Waldfogel, and Washbook (2012) found that immigrant children face many challenges when receiving early childhood services, including communication difficulties, social exclusion, and cultural unfamiliarity. Tabors (1997) noted that, to learn a new language, you must be socially accepted by those who speak the language; however, to be socially accepted, you have to be able to speak the new language. In a classroom in which English is the principal language of communication, if children do not receive support in their home language, they might

find it difficult to understand or speak English and communicate with other classmates (Castro et al., 2011).

2.5 Are There Benefits to Being Bilingual in Early Childhood?

Given the specific issues related to young children developing two languages during their early years, giving attention to the potential positive impacts of bilingualism is a critical part of this discussion. Several decades ago, it was believed that exposing children to more than one language could have negative effects on their performance (Saer, 1923). Recently, however, conflicting arguments on the effect of bilingualism have emerged. Most researchers have found advantages for children's development in being bilingual, though not all have reached the same conclusions (Dunabeitia, Hernandez, Anton, Macizo, Estevez, Fuentes, & Carreiras, 2014). Some of these arguments are discussed in the following.

First, being bilingual provides the ability to communicate with people from other countries (Hemmi, 2014; Cohen, & Wickens, 2015). Enjoying aspects of both cultures and having more study and work opportunities are other positive aspects of bilingualism (Hemmi, 2014). More importantly, dual-language children demonstrate some cognitive advantages. Cognitive development occurs as a result of directing attention to choosing the appropriate language that needs to be used in particular situations according to social and contextual factors (Cheunge, Mak, Luo, & Xiao, 2010; Kroll, Bobb, & Hoshino, 2014). Goldin-Meadow, Levine, Hedges, Huttenlocher, Raudenbush, and Small (2014) stated that the development of children's cognitive systems is influenced by the language environment they experience, and it should not be surprising that bilingualism is a crucial

factor in cognitive developmental outcomes. More specifically, some researchers have found that dual-language children have some advantages in executive functioning (Calvo, & Bialystok, 2014; Bialystok, 2015; Foy & Mann, 2014). Executive functions are a set of cognitive processes (e.g., inhibitory control, working memory, cognitive flexibility, and attentional control) involved in the cognitive control of thought and action in the face of conflicting information (Rubio-Fernández, 2017; Diamond, 2013). There is a complicated relationship between executive functioning and language that develops the executive function of dual-language children (Bialystok, 2015). These advantages may be due to the continued engagement of executive functions, such as attentional control, in managing interference from another language (Foy & Mann, 2014). As bilingual children need to switch between languages when appropriate, they develop this ability more extensively than monolinguals.

One of the executive functions is attention control. Research on monolingual and bilingual children indicates that bilingualism impacts the selective attention system. In other words, bilingualism enables children to maintain the selective attention needed to engage in goal-relevant information and ignore conflicting or irrelevant information (Friesen, Latman, Calvo, & Bialystok, 2015; Soveri, Laine, Hämäläinen, & Hugdahl, 2011). In a study by Soveri et al., (2011) bilingual and monolingual children were exposed to different syllables from each ear, along with interferences, and they were asked to identify as many syllables they could. Bilinguals were able to identify more syllables than monolinguals when attending to input from one ear and to ignore input to the other ear. Also, Hernández, Costa, and Humphreys (2012) investigated whether

bilingualism impacts selective attention during a visual task. They found that bilinguals were faster, overall, than monolinguals at the visual task. They argued that their faster processing was indicative of their ability to assess task demands, monitor for conflict, and their better control of visual attention.

Another argument regarding the emerging differences between bilingual and monolingual children is bilingual children's advanced problem-solving abilities. The findings of studies revealed that bilingual children significantly outperformed monolingual children on problem-solving tasks that require non-verbal skills (Kharkhurin, 2010; Lauchlan, Parisi, & Fadda, 2013).

2.6 Childcare

Early childhood education and care is defined as formal early education and care provision for young children from birth to the age of primary education, which is offered in childcare (Bertram, & Pascal, 2016). In Newfoundland and Labrador, the childcare program starts from birth to five years old, and approximately 37 percent of children attend regulated programs in a childcare centre either full time or part time (Government of Canada, 2018). Each country has its own policy and goals for early childhood education. These goals show that the early childhood system may be focused on achieving different outcomes for children and explain the orientation of early childhood education services in that country (Bertram, & Pascal, 2016). Socioeconomic concerns about women's employment and gender equality are a major reason for investments in early childhood education (Urban, Vandebroek, Lazzari, Van Laere, & Peeters, 2012). However, this reason has not remained the same on a long-term basis. Recently,

children's skills development and emotional regulation abilities have been at the centre of attention of policymakers in many countries (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008). In the 20th and 21st centuries, reformation of the childcare system and improving its quality for enhancing children's development in many countries has been the primary goal of childcare centres (Felfe, 2015). The goal of childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador is to support parents, families and communities to ensure the best possible future for children (Government of Canada, 2018).

High-quality childcare and early education refer to providing developmentally appropriate educational programs in addition to basic safety to facilitate children's development (Palley, 2018). High-quality programs are sensitive to children's health and nutritional needs and provide protection from threats, opportunities for early learning, and interactions that are responsive, emotionally supportive, and developmentally stimulating (Britto, Lye, Proulx, Yousafzai, Matthews, Vaivada, Perez-Escamilla, Rao, Ip, Fernald, & MacMillan, 2017). Also, high-quality early childhood education focuses on fostering positive developmental outcomes including the child-educator relationship, structural features of childcare, and the surrounding community and policy context (Phillips, & Lowenstein, 2011). Study findings demonstrate that high-quality early experiences accelerate the language acquisition of children, support cognitive skills development and socioemotional competencies, and have lifelong benefits for children, including increasing their learning abilities, school achievement, involvement in community activities, and overall quality of life (Boivin, & Bierman, 2013; Ermisch, Jantti, & Smeeding, 2012).

Arranging childcare policies is the responsibility of the provinces and territories in Canada. However, the federal government has been highly involved in this policy by adopting strategies such as income tax transfers and financial transfers to the provinces and territories. There are overlapping goals and approaches among childcare in Canada (Piano, 2104). For instance, the early childhood education approach employed in most provinces in Canada is play-based learning (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005). This approach was identified to have cognitive, social, physical health and developmental benefits for children (Pellis, Pellis, & Bell, 2010; Pellegrini, 2009). Also, most educators in early childhood programs in Canada are women. Most of the workforce in pre-primary education is comprised of females and, globally, approximately only 3% of those working in this field are men (OECD, 2012).

2.7 Preschool

The preschool approach is based on playing, singing, practical activities such as drawing, and social interactions. In most countries, preschool is before kindergarten (Ackerman, & Barnett, 2005). In some education systems, kindergarten programs occur during the first stage of formal education and take place in primary schools (Bertram & Pascal, 2016). Preschool is a crucial stage for children, since it sets a foundation for them to establish positive school achievements (Cook & Coley, 2017; Duncan et al., 2007), and school achievements have a strong relationship with children's behavioural outcomes (Razza, Martin, & Brooks-Gunn, 2015). Also, success in school can set the stage for further growth (Duncan et al., 2007). As Montrose-Moorhead, Dougherty, Lasalle, Weiner, and Dostal (2019) state, attending preschool positively impacts children's

achievements in reading and mathematics during elementary school. Jordan, Kaplan, Ramineni, and Locuniak (2009) also indicated that preschool-age children's proficiency in reading and mathematics predicts their academic success in upper grades. Vitaro, Brendgen, Larose, and Trembaly (2005) also explained that preschool-age children's social skills readiness relates to long-term positive outcomes such as high school completion. Yelverton and Mashburn (2018) assume that high-quality preschool experiences can affect children's skills development and make transitions to other stages smoother.

The common goal of preschool is to support young children in ways that help them adapt to the new demands of the educational system and set the stage for further success in school and life (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016). Because of the critical role of preschool in young children's lives, many researchers and experts have focused on ways to prepare and support young children during this stage to maximize their success in life and education. Many experts believe that the strategic investment of resources and knowledge during this period can have positive impacts on children's well-being and development (Diamond & Lee, 2011; Heckman, 2007; cited in Yelverton, & Mashburn, 2018). As more is expected from children, greater attention needs to be given to providing support for children's successes in early education (Curby, Berke, Alfonso, Blake, DeMarie, DuPaul, & Subotnik, 2018).

Preschool is one of the most challenging points in a child's education. During this time, children experience rapid changes in their neurological, biological, and cognitive systems (Sameroff & Haith, 1996; Werner, 1995; cited in Yelverton, & Mashburn, 2018).

Also, the formal educational system frequently involves changes such as new classrooms, educators, and classmates; a more academic curriculum and learning activities; greater needs for concentration; participation in group activities and cooperation with peers; and expectations for more mature behaviour (Kagan & Tarrant, 2010; cited in Skinner, 2018). Meeting many of these challenges seems to be more difficult for children from immigrant backgrounds, who are more likely to have barriers in English. Additionally, their language proficiency can affect how they communicate with and understand others, which can affect their achievement, thus these children need to be given extra attention (Zill, Collins, West, & Hausken, 1995).

2.8 Preschool in Newfoundland and Labrador

In Newfoundland and Labrador, infants to five-year-old children are eligible to register in preschool before starting school. Preschool is not mandatory in this province, and it is part of the province's childcare program. Full-time and part-time programs are offered throughout the province. Parents can choose to register their children in English or Early French Immersion (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, n.d. a).

Children can attend the *KinderStart* program at age four. This program prepares children for kindergarten; it is offered one year before beginning kindergarten (Hatfield, 2007). *KinderStart* consists of five to ten sessions for children and their parents or caregivers. The aim of this program is to support young learners' adjustment to a new environment and provide parents or caregivers with information about ways to help children learn at home (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, n.d. b).

Many different types of childcare programs and approaches exist in Canada. One of these approaches is play-based education, which aims to develop social skills and a love of attending school and academics by placing a strong emphasis on early learning and school readiness. Another is Montessori, which is a child-centred approach where children have a lot of freedom to choose their own tasks and activities (OUR KIDS, Preschool education in Canada, n.d.). Play-based learning within the educational environment was introduced for the first time in 2014 (Bodrova & Leong, 2010). Play-based pedagogy is the context of the environment that children's early learning takes place in, where children explore, recognize, communicate, take risks and develop meaning through play (Bodrova & Leong, 2010). In other words, play-based learning refers to learning activities that occur in a play-based environment. Children learn by doing and interacting with actual objects in the environment (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2016).

Learning through play has recently been a major focus of leading researchers, including those who believe that play has a crucial role in early childhood development. Researchers have found that higher learning gains are made through the play-based approach, and educators have also evaluated play-based interventions as better suited to children's diverse needs (Vogt, Hauser, Stebler, Rechsteiner, & Urech, 2018).

Considering the significant role of play-based pedagogy in children's development, Newfoundland and Labrador's classrooms are designed around this approach. There are diverse learning areas, such as areas for dramatic play, block play, storytelling, art, and outside play. Materials are added to classrooms according to the

learners' interests and learning outcomes (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, n.d. c). Findings of research by Martlew, Stephen, and Ellis (2011) demonstrate that if we want academic learning to occur in the context of play, educators must be involved in the creation of a purposeful play-based environment and actively encourage children's learning through play.

2.9 Early Childhood Educator-Child Relationship

From the beginning of the educational pathway, children are now expected to learn more than in the past, which is making the responsibility of educators continuously more complex. Children start their educational pathways with varying readiness levels, and early childhood educators have to differentiate their instruction much more while still working to assist all children to meet developmental standards (Curby, Berke, Alfonso, Blake, DeMarie, DuPaul, Flores, Hess, Hawad, Lepor, & Subotnik, 2018; Bassok, Latham, & Rorem, 2016; Paro, et al., 2009). Some children need to learn more material. These factors make the responsibilities of early childhood educators much more challenging than before, all while they need to maintain close relationships with their young learners.

Children's childcare experiences are affected by their personal characteristics, their childcare settings, the relationship between children and their early childhood educators, and the dynamic nature of these factors over time (Yelverton & Mashburn, 2018). Because of importance and complication of this period some professional organizations that are concerned with the well-being and appropriateness of educational practices for young children recommend minimum standards for early education. Some

recommendations such as features of program designs that provide a comprehensive set of standards for early childcare programs such as features of program design, and infrastructure. One of these organizations is the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the United States (2005) that recommends a comprehensive set of standards for early childcare programs (Mashburn, Pianta, Hamre, Downer, Barbarin, Bryant, BurChinal, Early Howes, 2008). One of these standards is positive relationships between early childhood educators and children in childcare (NAEYC, 2005).

A close relationship refers to a warm relationship that includes open communication, positive affect between children and educators, and the exhibition of comfort in the students' ability to approach the educators (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Close relationships are considered supportive relationships that facilitate a positive attitude toward school, foster communication with educators allowing for greater involvement in the activities, and help establish a secure environment to explore one's surroundings (Birch & Ladd, 1997).

Child development, besides personal factors, is affected by the interaction between the child's inner psyche and the external environment (Lai, Chui, Lo, Jordan, & Chan, 2017). Childcare is the immediate social environment of children, and the safe and structured atmosphere it provides is intended to have a positive impact on children's social development. Caring relationships between children and their early childhood educators in childcare can provide a safe and secure environment for young students to explore their world (Brooks, 2006; Condly, 2006; cited in Lai, Chui, Lo, Jordan, & Chan, 2017).

Moreover, positive and close educator-child relationships are not only crucial to academic success, they are also significant to social and behavioural outcomes (Zulfiqar, LoCasale-Crouch, Sweeney, DeCoster, Rudasill, McGinnis, & Miller, 2018). Huston, Bobbitt, and Bentley (2015) noted that social skills development occurs through interactions with others, such as children's relationships with their mothers, early childhood educators, and peers. According to them, among these types of interactions, social interactions between young students and educators probably play the most significant role in the types of social behaviour learned in childcare settings.

Positive relationships between children and their educators are identified as an essential factor for both short-term and long-term academic and social outcomes (O'Connor & McCartney, 2007). Blair and McKinnon (2016) concluded that an immediate result of positive relationships between educators and children is success in early education. The amount of support children receive from their early childhood educators is considered the main factor in children's achievements in educational settings (Mashburn & Pianta, 2006). Close relationships between early childhood educators and preschool-age students have long-term effects. McCormick, O'Connor, Cappella, and McClowry (2013) found a positive link between early childhood educator-child closeness and first-grade math and reading achievement among minority students. Also, a study by Essex, Armstrong, Burk, Goldsmith, and Boyce (2011) highlighted the strong association between close relationships between educators and children in early education and the development of adolescent mental health symptoms as a long-term consequence of the educator-child relationship.

2.10 Summary

Existing literature suggests that the number of dual-language children at educational settings was once rare, but recent statistics verify that the number of children from an immigrant background for whom English is their second language has increased rapidly in the last few decades and could further rise in the near future. Because of their limitations in the dominant language, this group of children might experience some difficulties in communicating with others, and they are at risk for developing difficulties regarding social skills in the areas of communication, cooperation, emotional management, and problem behaviour. For dual-language young learners to develop appropriate social skills, they require some interventions. Therefore, childcare centres need to be responsive to the needs of dual-language students by offering interventions to support their social skills development. Early childhood educators could potentially deliver these interventions to young dual-language learners to support their social skills development in educational settings.

Adding to this, although much literature focuses on children experiencing difficulties, typically developing dual-language children have received little scholarly attention. Therefore, the focus of the present study is to examine how bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills in the process of communicating with others in childcare and how early childhood educators and their interactions with bilingual children influence the social development of this group of children. It will also examine the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual preschoolers experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators and peers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The questions that guided the present research include: How do bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills? How might early childhood educators and their interactions with bilingual children influence these children's social development? What barriers and facilitating factors do bilingual preschool-age children experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators and classmates? To answer these questions, a qualitative case study methodology was adopted. By using this methodology, I was able to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

The following chapter provides an overview of the techniques and procedures employed in collecting and analyzing data in the study. The first section of this chapter starts by discussing the chosen research design and methodology. After that, the data collection methods are described. Then, the setting and participants, time frame, and data analysis are explained. Finally, the validity and reliability of the study are discussed.

3.1 Qualitative Research

A research strategy is a general orientation within which research is conducted (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Qualitative and quantitative are two distinctive research strategies commonly applied in research (Creswell, 2012). According to the research topic and the generated research questions in this study, a qualitative research strategy, which is the most appropriate strategy for this study, was adopted. Biklen and Bogdan (1998) state that the primary source of data in qualitative research is actual settings without any interference and with the researcher as the instrument. Punch and Oancea

(2014, p.146) also argue that “qualitative research is, by and large, naturalistic, preferring to study people, things and events in their natural settings.” The natural setting in this study is the environment of one of the childcare centres in an urban area of Newfoundland and Labrador, where I was able to observe the participants, who are preschool-aged children, and their interactions with their early childhood educators in a setting that was chosen for the research participants. In qualitative strategies, more emphasis is placed on words rather than numbers in collecting and analyzing data, and researchers need to capture data from the perspective of participants in their natural setting to gain a general understanding of the issue or context (Bryman, 2012).

3.2 Descriptive Case Study Approach

Punch and Oancea (2014) posit that a methodology is the basic plan for conducting research and includes a conceptual framework for the procedures used for collecting and analyzing data. Bryman (2012) explains that a methodology refers to the structure that guides the *how-to* of conducting research and analyzing data. As noted above, a case study methodology was selected for this study. A case study, according to Doyle (2018), involves the up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a case to develop a thorough picture of a situation with clear contextual boundaries, for example, a classroom, a playground, or special education meetings. Punch and Oancea (2014) also provide additional details: “the case study aims to understand the case in-depth, and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context” (p.148). Baxter and Jack (2008) add that the case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study phenomena within their contexts.

There are several categories of case studies. Yin (2012) notes three types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory case studies. Firstly, exploratory case studies are used to explore cases in related data that are interesting to the researcher. In this case study type, prior fieldwork and small-scale data collection may be done before proposing the research questions and hypotheses. Such initial work helps prepare a framework for the study (Zainal, 2012). Secondly, a descriptive case study is used for describing cases that happen within the gathered data. It aims to describe the data as they are recorded. A descriptive case study is one that is focused and detailed, in which questions about a phenomenon are carefully articulated at the beginning of the research (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). Thirdly, explanatory case studies explore data both at a surface and an in-depth level to explain phenomena in the data. Then, according to the data, the researcher may form a theory and then test this theory (McDonough and McDonough, 1997, cited in Zainal, 2012). Furthermore, explanatory cases can also be used for causal studies, in which the investigation of very complex and multivariate cases is needed (Zainal, 2012). From these different categories of case studies, a descriptive case study was adopted for this research. As I had specific questions in mind before starting data collection, I designed a study to answer them. Also, the study aims to describe what is happening in the social skills development of immigrant dual-language children through the gathered data.

According to Creswell (2012), a case study is used when there is a cultural sharing group that has been together for some time and has developed shared values, beliefs, and language. Case studies are conducted with small groups to gain an understanding of a

larger issue. This study's cultural sharing group is narrowly framed and includes immigrant bilingual preschool-age children who have been together from the beginning of the preschool program, and have many characteristics in common, such as having a mother tongue different from the formal language, learning English as a second language, and having the same curriculum. All participants were dual-language learners; no one did *not* speak, and no one was learning three or more languages. They were immigrants from other countries, and they spoke a language other than English at home. They started to learn English only when they attended childcare. Some participants had only begun to attend childcare recently, so their English was not fluent yet, but others had participated in childcare for several years, and they spoke English fluently. Also, all participants were attending the same program at the same childcare, so they had the same curriculum.

This study explored how and to what extent the social skills of immigrant dual-language children who are learning English as a second language develop as a result of their relationships with their early childhood educators and native preschool-age children. In doing so, a qualitative methodology was adopted. I carried out a descriptive case study in a childcare in an urban area in Newfoundland and Labrador. I intended to gain awareness about the kinds of relationships that exist between early childhood educators with bilingual children to understand how these relationships affect the social skills development of this group of children. Also, I aimed to understand how bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills. I also sought to identify the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual preschool-age children experience when they

communicate with their early childhood educators and classmates. For this, I attended classes of preschool-aged children.

3.3 Sources of Evidence

One reason why case study design is associated with a qualitative approach is the frequent use of participant observation and unstructured interviewing in the collection of data to obtain in-depth information (Bryman, 2012). In this study, non-participant observations and semi-structured interviews were used for collecting data; hence, it clearly fits the description of a qualitative case study. As study and engagement in fieldwork can help to obtain rich, detailed data (Holt & Sparkes, 2001), it can also help understand group situations. Then, shared patterns of behaviour, norms, and thinking were documented. According to Doyle (2018), shared patterns establish customs, rules, and anticipation that characterize groups.

Each study needs to employ data collection resources to answer the proposed research questions. Case studies are often, but not necessarily always, based on different data sources, such as observation, interviews, and the analysis of documents (Meyer, 2015). Yin (2012) lists six common data sources: physical artifacts, archival records, documents, interviews, direct observations, and participant observation. First, physical artifacts, according to Yin (2012), include any physical evidence such as tools, artworks, notebooks, and computer output that can be a source of data about a person or a group of people. Second, archival records include service records, maps, charts, lists of names, survey data, and even personal records such as diaries that can be a good source of data in some studies (Yin, 2012). The third source of data, according to Yin (2012), is documents

such as letters, memoranda, agendas, study reports, or any other items that could be added to the database.

According to Yin (2012), observation can take one of two forms: direct observation and participant observation. Direct observation in a case study occurs when the investigator makes a site visit to gather data. Participant observation is a unique mode of observation in which the researcher may actually participate in the events being studied. Finally, the interview can take several forms, including open-ended, focused, and structured. In an open-ended interview, the researcher can ask for the informant's opinion about the case. This approach can serve to corroborate previously gathered data. In a focused interview, the respondent is interviewed for only a short time, and the questions asked can come from the case study protocol. Structured interviews are particularly useful in studies of neighborhoods where a formal survey is required (Yin, 2012). Two sources of evidence were used for this study: non-participant observation and open-ended interviews. Non-participant observation was chosen because I wanted to prevent any interference in the routine class activities and to see what was happening. Open-ended interviews were also used to gain deeper insights into the participants' points of view, which are described below.

3.3.1 Non-participant observation. The primary source of data in this study was observing early childhood educators and preschool-age children's daily activities and recording both structured observations on a data sheet and field notes on how they behave and talked while they were at childcare. According to Creswell (2012), field notes are created by the researcher to record behaviors, activities, events and other features of the

cases being observed. According to Flick (1998, cited in Doyle), observation is generally categorized along four different dimensions: a) covert vice versus overt observation, b) non-participant vice versus participant observation, c) systematic vice versus non-systematic observation, and d) observation in natural situations vice versus artificial situations (e.g., a laboratory) and self-observation vice versus observing others. More specifically, I used overt observation, which refers to the researcher being open about their intentions in the field and ensuring that all participants or, if they are children, their parents or guardians are aware of what is happening. This method also avoids problematic ethical issues such as deception or a lack of informed consent (Flick, 1998, cited in Doyle). Adding to this, I was a non-participant observer to avoid undue influence. Furthermore, the observation took place in a childcare in an urban area. During the observation, I looked for verbal and non-verbal communication signs between early childhood educators and bilingual children to find out how and to what extent their relationship promoted or prevented social skills development.

During the observation, I took field notes. As Marshall and Rossman (2006, cited in Doyle, 2018) assume, whether for covert or overt observation, observation involves more than just hanging out. A systematic method of observation and note-taking about what was happening, who was involved, where the interaction was taking place, how things were happening, and why the group seemed to be operating as it did, was completed.

Social skills include a variety of skills such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional management, emotional expression in a constructive manner, self-regulation, cooperation,

and communication (Chinekesh, Kamalian, Eltemasi, Chinekesh, & Alavi, 2014) that can develop through individuals' relationships. In this study, I developed a data sheet (see Appendix A) for the observations and looked for indicators of cooperation, communication, emotional management, and problematic behaviour. The table for data collection included the skills, indicators and event recordings, which recorded the frequency of each element. Some indicators show the development of these skills. In this study, I looked for signs selected from the *SSRS-T Form (Teacher Report -- Part II SSRS-T Form, n.d.)* and (*Kindergarten Social/Emotional Checklist, n.d.*) that assess social skills development in children. These tools are designed for educators to use to rate the social skills and problem behaviour of children in their classrooms. They were selected to frame the observation data collection form in this study, as they emphasize the behaviour that children of this age group are predicted to develop.

3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews with two early childhood educators were also used in this study to better understand their concerns and points of view. Punch and Oancea (2014) state that interviewing as a data collection tool in qualitative research is an appropriate method for exploring how people think and explain different situations and construct meaning and reality. According to these authors, it is one of the most appropriate methods to use to understand participants. Qualitative interviews, from the perspective of Bryman (2012), are natural conversations between the interviewee and interviewer that are convenient to the participants. Qualitative interviews, unlike quantitative interviews, include open-ended questions that allow the researcher to explore particular issues in depth (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

Punch and Oancea (2014) explain that “unstructured interviews are in-depth explorations of interviewees’ experiences and interpretations, in their terms” (p.185). Bryman (2012) suggests that in semi-structured interviews, the informant’s understanding of the issues in question is essential. This approach enables informants and researchers to construct meanings together and continue the conversation (Forsey, 2012). For this reason, I asked the interviewees to ask about anything not clear to them. Punch and Oancea (2014, p.185) state that appropriate data collection in semi-structured interviews depends on actively paying attention to silences, prompts, and feedback; asking questions; changing topics; and dealing with sensitive issues and confrontational moments.

The interviewee’s point of view is vital to the interviewer. Therefore, the interviewer may change the format of the interview and ask more questions about an issue to gain rich and detailed answers from the interviewee (Bryman, 2012). According to Bryman (2012), the questions asked in an interview do not need to follow the exact order described in the interview guide, and if the interviewer wants to ask follow-up questions on anything said by the interviewees, they can do that. Furthermore, researchers often veer off from the topic of discussion to ask questions that help understand the research topic. This can help interviewees relax and become more objective when providing information.

3.4 Setting and Participants

As a first step, approval from a childcare centre in an urban area of St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador was gained. Then, this study was reviewed by and received

ethics clearance from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) as part of a delegated application process (May 15, 2019) (see Appendix B). Afterward, recruitment letters for the parent (Appendix E) and early childhood educators (Appendix F) were sent to the childcare, and participants were recruited by the executive director of the childcare. The executive director, early childhood educators and parents of dual-language children were provided with further information about the study, and consent forms were given to the parents (Appendix C) and early childhood educators (Appendix D). After gathering the signed consent forms, the study began on July 22, 2019.

The sampling process and selection of units in case studies relates directly to the research questions, which provide guidelines for knowing what categories of people need to be selected to be a participant in the study (Bryman, 2012, p. 416). The standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are “information-rich” (Patton, 1990, cited in Creswell, 2012). Punch and Oancea (2014) argue, however, that the sampling strategy must fit with the other components of the research, as it is significant to ensuring that the participants are in line with the goals and research questions of the study. Moreover, in the case study number framework, the number of participants is limited, as a case study usually wants to explore a phenomenon in depth within a specific setting rather than widely (Meyer, 2015).

This study used a *purposeful* sampling strategy in the identification of research participants, focusing on information-rich key participants, including immigrant dual-language children and their early childhood educators. According to Creswell (2012),

purposeful sampling applies to both individuals and sites based on the places and people that can best help researchers to understand central phenomena. Among the qualitative sampling strategies that could be chosen according to the research problem and questions that could be answered in the studies, homogeneous sampling was determined to be a strong fit. In homogeneous sampling, researchers might select specific sites or people because they possess a similar trait or characteristic. In homogeneous sampling, researchers purposefully sample individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics (Creswell, 2012). My unit of study in this study was an urban-area childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador; even though most of the students were native English speakers, there were some immigrant bilingual preschool-age children too.

The criteria for participation in the current study included the following: (a) the participants were preschool-age children, and (b) they were immigrant dual-language children, and English was not their first language. Dual-language children who are not immigrants, such as those who speak English and French, could not be participants in this study, and (c) all children were typically developing. This study had five participants: two girls and three boys, who were immigrant dual-language preschool students.

3.5 Time Frame of the Study

Observations took place over a time frame of three weeks. I was at the childcare centre from July 22 until August 14, 2019 for a total of eighteen days. Each participant was observed for twenty-five hours. During this data collection, two early childhood educators were interviewed, and data from the observation and interviews were collected.

I attended the childcare regularly, up to five times a week or for one hundred and fifteen hours. Part of July 14, 2019 and the last days of the attendance were spent interviewing early childhood educators. The below table (Table 3.1) summarizes the time frame of this study.

Table 3.1:

Time Frame of the Study

	Date of Attendance	Hours of Observation
1	July 22	11 to 4
2	July 23	9 to 4
3	July 24	10 to 4
4	July 25	10 to 4:30
5	July 26	9 to 4
6	July 29	9 to 4:30
7	July 30	10 to 4
8	July 31	10 to 4:30
9	August 1	9 to 4:30

10	August 2	9 to 4
11	August 5	10 to 4:30
12	August 6	9:30 to 4
13	August 7	11 to 5
14	August 8	9:30 to 4
15	August 9	10 to 4
16	August 12	10 to 4
17	August 13	10 to 4:30
18	August 14	10 to 4

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis, which is central to credible qualitative research, describes the researcher’s understanding and interpreting of experiences and perceptions toward uncovering meaning in circumstances and contexts (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Qualitative research can rapidly generate large amounts of data. According to Miles (as quoted in Bryman, 2012), qualitative data is “an attractive nuisance” because of the “attractiveness of its richness but the difficulty of finding analytic paths through that

richness” (p. 565). When researchers use various data collection methods in qualitative methodology, such as interviews or observation, they can gather a great deal of data. In addition, there are *few* well-established and widely recognized “rules” for the analysis of qualitative data.

This study used thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), for analyzing data from interviews, and the framework of the observation was designed according to the criteria identified by LeBlanc, Raetz, Sellers, and Carr (2016), which are discussed in detail below.

3.6.1 Analyzing interview data. Analysis of data from the interviews followed Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis phases (2006). Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). The goal of thematic analysis is to identify significant issues and patterns in the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The thematic analysis includes six steps: firstly, become familiar with the data; secondly, generate initial codes; thirdly, search for themes; fourthly, review themes; fifthly, define themes; and, finally, report on the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step in this study after interviewing early childhood educators was reading and re-reading the transcripts of the interviews to get familiar with the texts. Becoming familiarized with documents is essential in order to focus on what participants said and to reduce the risk of any possible bias. In the next step, all appropriate passages of the text were coded. According to Saldaña (2015), a code “is a word or short phrase that symbolically is assigned a summative, silent, essence capturing, and evocating attribute

for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p.3). Even though the researcher can never be free from epistemological, theoretical, and normative commitments, during the coding process, the researcher’s analytical preconceptions are set aside, as the content is not created through a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Continuing, in the third step, I looked for recurring patterns throughout the text and organized the codes into themes. The patterns were identified based on the material itself regardless of any connection to theory or research questions. After that, the fourth phase began, and the themes were reviewed. I examined and searched for weaker themes that had either too little data to support them or were too diverse. Additionally, in this step, it became apparent what themes were similar enough to merge into bigger ones. Thus, the fifth phase began in which the most relevant themes were chosen and integrated into the final main themes. The last three main themes were renamed, and a clear definition of each of the themes was formulated. The last step, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is to “identify the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about” (p.92). Through the sixth phase, the three main themes were finalized by adding a descriptive text to each that retells what the early childhood educators expressed. The main points of this original descriptive text were then strengthened and underpinned by crucial quotes from the interviews.

Braun and Clarke (2006) also emphasize that themes may be identified on different levels, which they refer to as either latent or semantic. The semantic approach focuses on what is stated by the participants; it does not seek or intend to look further than the meaning of the answers given. In contrast, the latent approach permits

researchers to examine or identify underlying assumptions, conceptualizations or even ideologies. In the case of this study, a choice was made to make use of the semantic or explicit approach to summarize and interpret the patterns in semantic content.

3.6.2 Analysing observational data. The observations of the dual-language children were based on the study's research questions. The focus of the observations was on several aspects of social skills, including communication, cooperation, emotional management and problematic behaviours. The elements for each skill were taken from the Teacher Report -- Part II SSRS-T Form (n.d.) and the Kindergarten Social/Emotional Checklist (n.d.), and the framework of the observation was designed according to the criteria of LeBlanc, Raetz, Sellers, and Carr (2016).

It is important to iterate that data were selected and interpreted in terms of how they help understand the key concerns of the study, thereby facilitating the identification of how social skills development occurs for immigrant dual-language children (Silverman, 2013). Some quotes were recorded during classroom observations which are written through the findings to make them clearer. In reporting the results of the study, the words of participants are used as often as possible, as this relays the richness, depth and complexity of their views. Consequently, participants' quotes are used frequently. By presenting the participants' voices in this way, readers can engage directly with the data and draw their own conclusions, thereby gaining further insights into this context. The central concerns of the study have also served to assist in deciding how much data is enough as well as how much depth is needed in its analysis (Silverman, 2013).

3.7 The Validity of Case Study Research

Validity in qualitative research is a fundamental factor in active research and defines the worthiness of research. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) argue that validity is the touchstone of all types of research, and it is crucial to remain loyal to research traditions. I adhered to the principles of validity as much as possible. The criteria for validity in this study are described below.

3.7.1 Internal validity or credibility. In content validation, the instruments the researcher uses need to fairly and comprehensively cover the items the research problem proposes to cover (Golafshani, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study used observation and interviews as instruments. The observation form and interview questions were reasonably designed to address the aspects I wanted to understand deeply. Also, the findings of this research accurately explain the phenomena being researched. Adding to this, in ensuring internal validity, the events explained in this research can be sustained by the data collected. One of the unique strengths of case studies is that they can incorporate several different types of data collection sources, such as observations, interviews, and documents (Yin, 2012; Doyle, 2018). Various methods have different biases and strengths so they can complement each other; thus, researchers can check the consistency of the findings by looking at the issue from different angles (Lee & Lings, 2013; Yin, 2012). This study used interviews and observation as the sources of data to validate the findings of the study by checking and rechecking the data by comparing the outcomes from different data sources (Golafshani, 2003).

3.7.2 External validity. External validity refers to the generalization and transferability of a study's findings to other situations (Ghuri & Grønhaug, 2010). External validity or generalizability is usually associated with quantitative research, as they are related to how sampling procedures can be representative of a whole society. In qualitative studies, there is usually a low degree of transferability since they are more context-dependent (Yin, 2012). However, Rodriguez (1999) believes that in qualitative research, issues associated with validity and generalizability are mostly the same as those in quantitative research. Both aim to establish the truth of accounts and represent some reality outside the research itself. Also, they aim to present theory and findings that apply to a population wider than the people of the study.

Case study designs have been widely criticized for their lack of generalizability on the basis that the research findings are only for a small sample size, and it does not make sense to generalize the results to other situations or the entire population with a similar problem. This is because each situation is unique in terms of the community's background, language and culture (Bryman, 2012). However, according to Bryman (2012), there are ways of showing that the data and analysis from case studies can be valuable beyond the case in question. As Punch and Oancea (2014) argue, in qualitative research, the generalization process is not evident and straightforward. As generalization in qualitative study depends on the purpose of a particular research project, and in qualitative research, theory emerges out of data. Bryman (2012) states that in qualitative research, the crucial question is not whether the findings can be generalized but how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings. This view of generalization is called

theoretical generalization (Mitchell as cited in Bryman, 2012). Yin (2012) uses the term analytic generalization. The critical point is that, regardless of whether the generalization was derived from the conditions specified at the outset or uncovered at the conclusion of the case study, the generalization would be at a higher conceptual level than that of the specific case.

As mentioned previously, this study is a case study, and it is limited to a particular situation, and there is a small basis for transferring the findings to a larger population. However, to increase the transferability of the study, a thorough description of the context, participants, and research design was provided so that readers can make their own decision about the study's transferability.

3.8 Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability refers to the credibility or trustworthiness of research (Cohen et al., 2011). It is concerned with the consistency of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, if a study is reliable, it means that other researchers should be able to examine methods, procedures, choices and decisions made during the research project. Reliability is ensured by describing different factors in as much detail as possible, including the interviews and observation data. Such descriptive transparency is significant to showing others how and why conclusions were stated. Also, transparency is crucial to avoiding or minimizing the researcher's personal interests or views from potentially influencing the study (Denscombe, 2014). In addition, in interviews, early childhood educators were given a chance to add things they may not have mentioned during their interviews. At the end of the interview, both early childhood educators were asked if they

wanted to be sent a copy of the transcription. Both participants answered that they were interested in this. Therefore, the transcripts were sent to them, and they were approved by the participants after applying some changes.

According to Golafshani (2003), in qualitative research, the researcher can be considered as the scientific measurement tool, as opposed to questionnaires, for example, in quantitative research. In other words, for a researcher planning to do an interview, there are many aspects of his or her personality and background that could influence the outcome of the interview. These effects can reduce the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. As Hayes (2000) states, the researcher's academic background and epistemological affinities may unconsciously be communicated to the respondents through body language and tone of voice. In this case, I have a bachelor's and a master's degree in Education. Also, I am is a dual-language immigrant. This background may have affected the process of developing the interview questions. Thus, to reduce these effects, the interview questions were reviewed and discussed with my supervisor to highlight any possible biases.

Furthermore, to ensure the reliability and dependability of this study, all interviews were written and transcribed, and the findings were supplemented with observations. Thus, others can repeat my procedures.

3.9 Summary

This chapter detailed the procedures and data analysis techniques used to answer the research questions. In doing so, a qualitative methodology was adopted. The study design utilized several data collection methods in a case study format. This study used

open-ended interviews and non-participant observation as primary sources of data. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and reflexively coded. Coded data were explored to identify themes that emerged. Observations were done using a pre-developed rubric, and a number of occurrences of specific dual-language student behaviours related to social skills development was compiled and compared. Participants were preschool-age children and their early childhood educators in a childcare in an urban area of Newfoundland and Labrador. The observation lasted for three weeks, and two of the early childhood educators were interviewed. The following chapter presents the findings of this study regarding the research questions, which include: How do bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills? How might early childhood educators and their interactions with bilingual children lead to social development in this group of children? What are the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual preschool-age children experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators and classmates?

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter entails reporting research findings to describe the development of social skills in dual-language preschool-age children and barriers and difficulties this group of children face in communicating with others in an urban area childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador. My findings are reported in the following order: First, the demographic characteristics of the interview participants are presented. Then, the themes obtained from the interviews are presented. Next, the demographic characteristics of the observation participants are presented. Then, the results of the observation are presented and discussed. The chapter ends with a summary of the results.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Interview Participants

Two early childhood educators were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Both participated fully in the process, and neither of them withdrew. The names of the participants have been changed to ensure confidentiality. Sarah has been working as an early childhood educator for twelve years. She has been working in the childcare centre where the study took place for ten years. She worked for two years in a private childcare centre before starting her work at her current childcare. She has a level-two diploma in early childhood education. Mary has been working with children for 23 years and for 18 years in the present childcare. She has a level-two early childhood education diploma.

4.2 Results from the Interview

By applying a theoretical thematic analysis of the gathered material from the interviews, three final main themes were identified and formulated. The first theme was

given the name “creating a classroom of acceptance and care”. The second theme was named “early childhood educators, parents, and peers’ roles in enhancing skills development.” This theme was divided into four sub-themes: early childhood educators, parents, peers’ characteristics and play-based learning. The third and final theme received the name “communication hurdles.” All themes presented are structured retellings of the interviews and therefore constitute the first step of abstraction in the thesis. Subsequently, in the forthcoming discussion chapter (see Chapter 5), findings from these themes are combined with theory, and interpretations of dual-language children’s social skills development are presented in the historical background. Hence, the research questions will be answered through reasoning on a more advanced conceptual and theoretical level.

4.2.1 Creating a classroom of acceptance and care. This theme centres on creating a welcoming classroom that concentrates on the background, culture, and needs of all students by using multicultural resources and trying to develop a sense of home. Also, attention to the traditions and culture of all students is considered part of this theme.

Both respondents clearly expressed that the class needs to be prepared for all students, not only for native English speakers. Sarah emphasized the importance of treating all races equally, as she believes this is key to helping children develop social skills. She said that, “Everybody should be treated equal, and everybody should have equal play and equal friends and people to be careful of one another, no matter the colour of your skin, your religion or your culture.”

The design of the classroom space itself can give indirect messages to children, such as messages of care and acceptance from the involved early childhood educators. An

environment that is welcoming to all students should be created by enhancing the classroom space according to the culture and background of children from different parts of the world. Having some multicultural objects in the class, such as international music, books, pictures, and toys can indicate the acceptance of diversity across the globe and create a multicultural environment. Mary described:

We try to incorporate as much of their culture into our classroom as we can. We try to have books from their country and things in their language in the reading area and stuff like that. As much of their culture into our classroom as we can, so they feel more comfortable. We try to have as many multicultural objects, some books, something like this, in our classroom as we can from everybody's first language.

Furthermore, creating a sense of home in the class can help children feel more comfortable and indicate that early childhood educators are paying attention to the cultural needs of the children in the classroom. Some dual-language children can not speak English when they first enter the classroom space, which makes finding friends and connecting with others a longer task. As a result, according to Sarah, these children can experience negative feelings such as loneliness and insecurity. However, preparing the class by bringing these children's favourite objects, such as toys or pictures, can bring a sense of home and help these students feel positive. According to Sarah:

Sometimes actually we will ask parents to bring pictures from home. That is comforting to the children. They can see their families. I can say to them, "This is mommy; this is your daddy," in their language. I learned [the] words [myself].

And it can be very comforting to the child to know that we are acknowledging [their lives]. They [have a] home life, too.

Besides modifying the physical environment, giving attention to the traditions and culture of dual-language students can demonstrate early childhood educators' acknowledgment. Both participants mentioned that they try to incorporate the culture of international students into their class. For example, according to Mary, they have a multicultural day, when parents bring objects related to their culture with a description of those objects, and early childhood educators display all these objects. Or, as Mary mentioned:

We have had actual days [where] we invite families to come in and when family comes in and talk about their country and different celebrations that we don't celebrate here. So other children are not familiar with [those traditions]. What we do is we celebrate all of the traditions from everybody in our classroom.

Giving attention to the culture and background of dual-language children can show acceptance of these groups of children. According to participants, these supports help young, international students feel more comfortable.

4.2.2 Early childhood educators, parents, and peers' roles in enhancing skills development. This theme includes and describes how people and their interactions with dual-language children facilitate the adjustment of dual-language children in the new preschool situation and their communication and skills development. The theme is divided into three sub-themes. Firstly, the early childhood educator's role concerning the

strategies they use in the classroom is explored. The role of peers is discussed afterwards. Finally, how parents can facilitate children's adjustment in the new situation is presented.

4.2.2.1 Early childhood characteristics. The early childhood educator's role in the adjustment of dual-language children into the new situation and then their social skills development is significant. Adopting appropriate strategies can help build trust in dual-language children sooner, and then children will start to explore the environment of the class, thereby bridging the gap between children. The strategies mentioned by participants are described below.

The first step in building a relationship appears to be having awareness about students' backgrounds. The early childhood educators mentioned that the first thing they do is speak with the children's parents to gain an idea about their English fluency. As Sarah said, "Usually, when I have new children come to our classroom, I speak with the parents first to find out if they have any previous experience with English."

The next step in initiating a conversation and bridging the gap tends to be learning some essential words from other languages. Both respondents expressed that early childhood educators learning some critical words in different languages like *bathroom*, *hungry*, and *thirsty* is a primary step in bridging the gap. After learning these terms, early childhood educators use those words in English to teach their English equivalents. As Sarah mentioned:

Parents will teach me simple words and phrases to bridge the gap, and then I'll use all those words in English after. For example, a new child is from China, and her parents

have taught me the word for potty (toilet) in Chinese, so I will use the Chinese words and English words together to help them understand.

Besides learning essential words, both respondents underlined the necessity of focusing on using body language and gestures. Also, using visuals, schedules, pictures, and directions are other things that helped facilitate communication with dual-language children. As Sarah believes: “I sometimes think without physical language, you can show comfort and care, and children start to develop that relationship with you. So, we try to show them that we are here to support them in other ways.”

4.2.2.2 Play-based learning. According to the participants, a play-based approach is key in facilitating communication and developing social skills within a natural setting. According to Mary, there are various areas in the room, such as the reading area and the Lego area, that are set up for free-flow play. The play-based approach helps children feel more comfortable, as there are not any expected outcomes like having specific conversations about specific things, such as during a test. This gives the students an opportunity to explore, communicate and develop language and skills such as being together, demonstrating roles, and sharing more naturally. According to Mary, in the free-flow play approach, early childhood educators need to be sure that children are not always playing alone. If children play alone, early childhood educators tend to think it is because they have trouble in communication, then early childhood educators direct those children with the other children through different games such as turn-taking games.

Observation is a strategy that early childhood educators use to learn about children's development levels and determine if there are some skills that students are

struggling with, as children come to the class with various backgrounds and different levels of skills development. According to Sarah:

Early childhood educators do observation[s] in their classroom to discover child development, where they are, also to see if the children are playing side by side or, after a while, if they are engaging with the other children. If they are not, early childhood educators then realize they need to step in and play a role in bringing children together. Or, if they see that children are struggling in certain areas, then early childhood educators plan activities and curriculum around that area to try to enhance those skills. If they see children are advanced in that area, then they look at other places that they might need help with and try to focus on that.

Both early childhood educators mentioned that they always teach in a way that is done naturally through play to keep children from feeling uncomfortable and to try to encourage children to enjoy learning.

Moreover, early childhood educators need to adjust their methods and expectations according to the children's levels. According to Sarah, she arranges activities for children according to their interests. For example, if a child likes artwork, she will plan an art activity to engage that child and bring other children over to be together. In addition, early childhood educators need to adjust their expectations based on the children's level until they catch up with the language, or, when there are fixed expectations, early childhood educators try to pay attention to children's levels in those skills. According to Mary:

Your expectation is probably a bit different. Where there is a certain expectation, I am not asking a direct question to a child that I know can't answer me directly. I might ask in different ways, I might use gestures, and I might give them some of the words to try to help them along, but I am not going to expect them to be able to answer. Your expectation for the result is always a little bit different. But they do tend to catch up as soon as they start getting the language; it does tend to catch up.

4.2.2.3 Peers. The other group that has a significant role in the skills development of dual-language children is their peers. Children usually spend a lot of time with their peers. Also, Mary believes that most children are more comfortable with developing a relationship with someone their own age. So, the role of this group is explored in this part. Firstly, and more importantly, children can learn a lot through establishing connections with their peers. According to Mary, dual-language children can develop language and various skills more quickly and naturally in connection with their peers through play and by spending time with someone their own age. Also, relationships with peers help dual-language children feel more comfortable in new situations. Both early childhood educators mentioned that learning through play with peers is very fun for children and creates an enjoyable learning experience for them.

Furthermore, Mary mentioned that children learn from each other by looking at what other children are doing and through imitating each other. As Sarah said, "I find out most children follow on with directions very simply because they see other children doing it." Sometimes there is a same language speaker in the class who can facilitate

communication with dual-language students. Also, this helps the dual-language children make new friends and avoid possible loneliness until developing communication skills in English. According to Sarah:

Sometimes Canadian children might be hesitant to play with somebody that they can't talk to, as they do not know how to communicate with that child. But early childhood educators when bringing children together explain to Canadian children that this particular child doesn't understand the language, but she is interested in being friends with you. And ask them to be more patient, use more gestures, and ask their early childhood educator if they have difficulties in communication.

Also, Mary mentioned that she explains to native English speaker classmates, "It is okay to play with somebody that you may or may not be able to talk to, and it is okay to talk and try to use the words, even if the other child doesn't understand."

According to Sarah, she brings back memories and reflects on how that child might be feeling by asking questions such as *Do you remember how you felt when you moved here, when you did not know anybody?* According to Sarah, children show surprising resilience, and, after a while, native children talk to dual-language children, want to spend time with them and want to be friends with them. Furthermore, according to Mary, when children know about dual-language children, they are interested in knowing what country their family comes from or what languages their family uses. Talking about this and being open about it helps children relate to one another. But, during this time, if there are some children in the class that have the same home language, it can prevent loneliness in dual-language students.

4.2.2.4 Parents. Parents' cooperation with early childhood educators can facilitate children's adjustment to the new situation of preschool and social skills development.

According to Sarah, adult support is probably vital to bridging the gap between children sooner. Some of these kinds of help mentioned by interviewees are described below. The first step is helping early childhood educators gain a general idea about their child's language and skills development in various areas such as social and emotional skills. According to both interviewees, if a child can not speak English at all, their parents need to teach early childhood educators some essential words in their language to facilitate early childhood educator-child communication. Also, according to Sarah, when a task requires a detailed explanation, and it is not easy for the early childhood educator to explain it to a child that cannot understand English, they usually ask the parents to explain it to their child.

Furthermore, parents can play an active role in preschool events; in this way, their children can feel more secure. One such event is a multicultural day in which, according to Sarah, parents are invited to bring some objects that are rooted in their culture and introduce them to others and talk about their country. Adding to this, Mary explained that all the traditions of all children are celebrated in the childcare centre. If parents have an active role in such activities, they can help early childhood educators facilitate their programs and indicate their support and care. Also, they can give their child a sense of acceptance and pride.

4.2.3 Communication hurdles. Difficulties and barriers that bilingual preschool-age children experience in their communication and social skills development are

presented in this part. This part focuses on the barriers or difficulties that early childhood educators experience when interacting with the students and the challenges that influence children, such as frustration. The findings are mentioned below.

One of the things mentioned by both participants is spending more time with dual-language children, especially when they first meet them, to explain ideas, get them through the routine, help them become comfortable with transitioning to different parts of the room, and build strong friendships and connections with the other children. As dual-language children might need additional help such as directions, gestures, or visuals to help them say something, Sarah emphasized the importance of being patient. According to Sarah, early childhood educators need to show comfort and care until the children start to develop a relationship with them—sometimes without language. Therefore, early childhood educators need to spend as much time as possible showing their support and care and communicating until dual-language children start to develop relationships with others and get used to the routine.

The other difficulty mentioned by the interviewees is the negative emotions that dual-language children might experience, especially at the beginning of the school year. One of them is frustration. Mary believes that the most significant barrier is frustration, especially for younger children. According to her, children get frustrated if they cannot communicate with their peers. For instance, if dual-language children want a toy that someone has, and it could be difficult for others to understand what they want, this issue can cause them frustration. Furthermore, hesitation can be another significant barrier in the communication of children and making friends. On the one hand, according to Mary,

building strong friendships and connections with the other children takes longer for dual-language children because they are more hesitant to have conversations with others, as they do not have the same level of language skills. On the other hand, native English speakers might sometimes be hesitant to play with somebody they can not talk to. According to Mary:

“...they may be a little more hesitant to go and play if they don’t know if they can communicate with that child, and may be sitting next to, and may be trying to talk, but the other child is not going to respond because the other child doesn't know what they are saying”.

This hesitation can cause dual-language children to experience loneliness until they develop a relationship. Adding to this, according to Sarah, dual-language children might feel a little bit upset or insecure, especially when they are first introduced, as they do not know anyone, and they cannot communicate with others.

In sum, the participants cited negative feeling such as frustration, hesitation, feeling insecure, upset, loneliness, and spending more time for building relationship as the significant barriers in communication with dual-language children.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Observed Participants

Before reporting the findings, this section starts by explaining the demographic characteristics of the participants. Five bilingual children were observed. All of them participated fully in the process, and none of them withdrew. To ensure the anonymity of

the participants, their names have been changed. Moreover, all participants speak English as a second language and speak at home in their mother tongues.

Aryan is a 5-year-old boy from India. According to the early childhood educators, his English is fluent, and he has been attending English-language childcare since he was two years old. Vihaan is a five-year-old boy from Sri Lanka. His English, according to his early childhood educator, is good enough. The third participant is Adel, who is from Russia. He is five years old. His early childhood educator believes his English is almost at the same level as a native English speaker. Della, who is five years old, is from Germany. According to her early childhood educator, her English is intermediate, and she sometimes uses German words in her conversation, as she does not have enough English words to explain her ideas. The last observed participant is Amina. She is from Saudi Arabia. She is four years old. Her English, according to the early childhood educators, is at a beginner level, as her family immigrated to Canada only recently. The below table (Table 4.1) summarizes the participant demographics.

Table 4.1

Research Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Cultural Background	Age
Aryan	M	Indian	4
Vihaan	M	Sri Lanka	5
Adel	M	Russia	4
Della	F	Germany	4

Amina	F	Saudi Arabia	4
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4.4 Results from Observation

This subsection provides the results from the observation. The findings for each participant are presented separately.

4.4.1 Participant 1: Aryan. The below table shows a summary of the behaviour observed and its frequency. These elements are taken from the Teacher Report -- Part II SSRS-T Form (n.d.) and the Kindergarten Social/Emotional Checklist (n.d.), and the framework was designed according to the criteria indicated by LeBlanc, Raetz, Sellers, and Carr (2016).

The data from observing Ayana and the frequency of each behaviour are summarized in the following table (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2

Summary of the Data Collected from Observing Aryan

Skills	Indicators / Evidences	Event Recording
Problematic Behavior	• Emotional expression.	2
	• Interrupts conversations of other people.	0
	• Shows anxiety in a group of children.	0
	• Gets angry easily and rapidly.	0
	• Prefers to be alone.	1
Communication	• Communicates nonverbally with others (e.g., smile, wave, or other appropriate gestures).	5

	• Listens to others classmate when they are speaking.	4
	• Initiates conversations with other children.	8
	• Makes friends easily .	3
	• Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told.	2
	• Makes encouraging comments to others.	1
	• Says nice things about himself or herself when it is appropriate.	3
Emotional Management	• Practices saying “no” to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations.	8
	• Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by peers.	1
	• Controls temper in conflict situations with other children.	1
	• Develops skills to resolve conflict situations.	1
	• Develops appropriate skills to handle bullies.	1
	• Identifies appropriate methods to resolve conflict.	0
	• Stays calm with other children.	4
	• Asks questions about rules that may be unfair.	0
	• Gets along with peers who are different.	3
Cooperation	• Pays attention to peers’ ideas for group activities.	3
	• Cooperates with peers without prompting.	6
	• Volunteers for classroom tasks, for example, helping others, helping set up, cleaning up and passing out materials.	7
	• Joins ongoing group activities without being told.	5

4.4.1.1 Problematic behavior. According to Howse et al. (2003), problem behaviour refers to not being able to manage behaviours and emotions according to the expectations of society. Some external elements can indicate that someone has problematic behaviour, and the indicators this study adopted include emotional expression, which according to Keltner, Sauter, Tracy, and Cowen (2019) refers to patterns of behaviour that suggest sadness; interrupts conversations of other people; shows anxiety in a group of children; gets angry easily and rapidly; and prefers to be alone. Emotional expression was the factor that was observed more than the other elements, even though it did not happen more often.

There was not any evidence during the observation indicating that Aryan gets angry quickly. For instance, one of Aryan's classmates interrupted Aryan's conversation and interfered in his work, but Aryan stayed calm and tried to avoid him. In addition, when he is in a group of children, Aryan always looks calm. Also, he did not interrupt other people's conversations. He always listened to other people carefully and whenever he shared information, this happened at appropriate times.

During my observation, he played alone all day only on one day. That day, I observed that he did not seem happy. Both of his close friends were absent. For instance, while Aryan was playing with a doll, one of his classmates came and took his doll. It was apparent from Aryan's face that he was not happy about this, but he did not say anything and played with another toy. When his classmate finished with the first doll, Aryan played with it again.

4.4.1.2 Communication. According to Alanis (2011), communication is a skill of expression and the exchange of ideas and information, and this skill helps connect people. This study uses the following evidence or indicators for observing this skill: communicating nonverbally with others, listening to another classmate when they are speaking, initiating conversations with other children, finding friends easily, introducing herself or himself to new people without being told, and saying encouraging comments to others. Initiating conversations with other children was the factor observed most commonly with Aryan and saying encouraging comments to others was the factor observed least often.

Aryan communicated nonverbally. For instance, when early one of the early childhood educators asked him, “Do you want a snack?” he shook his head. He also listened to others when they spoke. Once, one of his classmates showed him a picture that she had drawn and explained what she wanted to draw next. He listened carefully and then asked her some questions. He also initiates conversations with others. When the early childhood educator injured her finger, Aryan asked her, “What happened?” and started a conversation.

Aryan usually spent time with two of his classmates, and they looked like close friends, though he was generally good at finding friends. For instance, once, when him and his two friends were playing, he asked a girl to join them. When I went to their class, he also came and asked me whether I know his name. I replied, “No.” Then, he introduced himself.

Aryan said nice things about others. For instance, when his early childhood educator cut a banana with one hand, Aryan told him, “You are strong”. Aryan also said nice things about himself. Once, when he was jumping, he said to one of his classmates, “Look at me and see how high I can jump.”

4.4.1.3 Emotional management. Emotional management is a consciousness, effortful, and thoughtful response to simulation (Blair & Raver, 2016). Some indicators that can be used to evaluate its development are: practicing saying “no” to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations, responding appropriately when pushed or hit by peers, controlling temper in conflict situations with other children, developing skills to resolve conflict situations, developing appropriate skills to handle bullies, identifying appropriate methods to resolve conflict, staying calm with other children, asking questions about rules that may be unfair, and getting along with peers who are different. Among them, saying “No” to protect himself was the most frequently observed behaviour, as opposed to identifying methods to resolve conflict and asking questions about unfair rules, which were not observed at all.

Aryan said “No” to protect himself whenever it was needed. For example, once, he was making a building with blocks when one of his classmates wanted to destroy his building and hit him. Aryan prevented him from doing so and told him, “No, stop. You are not allowed to do that.” He also responded appropriately when he was pushed or hit by others. For example, one of his classmates interrupted his play and then hit him. Aryan avoided him and told him, “I didn’t like your work.” He also controlled his temper in a conflict situation; for instance, once when Aryan was in the reading area, one of his

classmates pretended to take pictures. Aryan asked her to stop since she was disrupting his concentration, but she continued. Aryan asked her to stop again and told her calmly, “I didn’t like that.”

Aryan could handle bullying. When his classmate pushed the toys he was playing with, he covered the toys with his hand and told him in a loud voice “Stop!” Then, the early childhood educator heard his voice and helped him. Aryan stayed calm with other children. One time, one of Aryan's classmates threw something in Aryan’s milk. The early childhood educator saw that and spoke with that boy and asked him to apologize. Aryan told him, “That’s okay.”

Aryan always gets along with peers who are different. For instance, one of his classmates has some problems. Several times that student interrupted Aryan’s work or said inappropriate things, but Aryan always tried to be friends with him, and whenever he joined in activities that Aryan and his friends were doing, Aryan always welcomed him and shared the toys.

4.4.1.4 Cooperation. Cooperation is acting together in a coordinated way and having the same goals, enjoyment, activities, and relationships within social connections (Argyle, 2013). This study adopts these elements for observation, paying attention to peers’ ideas for group activities, cooperating with peers without prompting, volunteering for classroom tasks and joining ongoing group activities without being told. Among these factors, volunteering for classroom tasks was the most often observed, and paying attention to peers’ ideas was the element observed least often.

During the observation, Aryan paid attention to his classmates' ideas about group activities. For instance, when he discussed how to make a tower with blocks with his friends, he listened carefully and paid attention to others' ideas. Then, Aryan incorporated these ideas, which indicated he had paid attention. Aryan usually cooperated with his classmates in activities without being encouraged. For example, whenever it was clean-up time, he cooperated in cleaning up the class. He was also a volunteer helper in the classroom. For example, when the early childhood educator asked who could help her set up math materials, he volunteered. Aryan also helped in the classroom environment without being asked. For instance, when he finished his lunch, he threw out his garbage and brushed his teeth without being reminded to do so.

4.4.2 Participant 2. Vihaan. The below table (Table 4.3) is a summary of Vihaan's observed behaviours and their frequency.

Table 4.3

Summary of Data Collected from Observing Vihaan

Skills	Indicators/Evidence	Event Recording
Problematic Behavior	• Emotional expression.	1
	• Interrupts conversations of other people.	0
	• Shows anxiety in a group of children.	0
	• Gets angry easily and rapidly.	0
	• Prefers to be alone.	0
Communication	• Communicates nonverbally with others (e.g., smile, wave, or other appropriate gestures).	7

	• Listens to others classmate when they are speaking.	3
	• Initiates conversations with other children.	6
	• Makes friends easily.	3
	• Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told.	0
	• Makes encouraging comments to others.	1
	• Says nice things about himself or herself when it is appropriate.	1
Emotional Management	• Practices saying “no” to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations.	2
	• Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by peers.	2
	• Controls temper in conflict situations with other children.	3
	• Develops skills to resolve conflict situations.	1
	• Develops appropriate skills to handle bullies.	0
	• Identifies appropriate methods to resolve conflict.	1
	• Stays calm with other children.	4
	• Asks questions about rules that may be unfair.	0
	• Gets along with peers who are different.	3
Cooperation	• Pays attention to peers’ ideas for group activities.	4
	• Cooperates with peers without prompting.	2
	• Volunteers for classroom tasks, for example, helping others, helping set up, cleaning up and passing out materials.	3
	• Joins ongoing group activities without being told.	3

4.4.2.1 Problematic behaviour. The only problematic behaviour observed was with emotional expression, specifically, patterns of behaviour that suggest sadness. One day, Vihaan was not happy, and he did not eat his lunch. The early childhood educator asked him several times whether he wanted anything; he only shook his head to indicate he did not. He turned his head to the other side and did not look at his early childhood educator when he was speaking with him.

4.4.2.2 Communication. Among communication skills, communicating nonverbally was the most observed factor, while introducing himself to new people was not observed at all.

Vihaan communicated nonverbally. For example, in response to the early childhood educator asking him, “Do you want some more food?” he shook his head and responded, “No.” The second most observed skill was initiating a conversation with others. For instance, one day, he came and explained to his friends about the character of a book he had read, and, in this way, he initiated a conversation.

In addition, Vihaan sometimes listened to others when they spoke, but sometimes he did not. For instance, once his early childhood educator read a song from a book for children and then asked them to read with her. Vihaan did not know the song, but he listened with attention. On another hand, when his early childhood educator asked him, “If you are done with the marker, put it in the basket,” he did not pay attention and put it on the table. Vihaan found friends easily. He had two close friends, but his relationship with other classmates was good, and he joined other groups of activities quickly.

Vihaan said nice thing about himself. Once when his early childhood educator spoke about the benefits of meat and how it helps muscular growth, he showed his arm to his friends and said, “I have grown up muscles. I am strong.” He also said encouraging comments to others. For instance, his friend built a tower out of blocks, and he said to them, “How tall it is! Good job.”

4.4.2.3 Emotional management. The most observed skill in this area was staying calm with others. There was not any behaviour related to asking questions about unfair rules and skills with handling bullies.

Vihaan stays calm with others. One day, Vihaan had a cold, and he coughed. One of his classmates imitated his voice and then laughed. Vihaan smiled and did not pay attention to him. He also could say “No” to protect himself from an unsafe situation, as one of his classmates wanted to use his bottle of water. He said, “No, it’s mine. You are not allowed to use it.” Vihaan got along with peers who were mentally and physically different. While Vihaan was reading a book, one of his classmates, who has some problems, interrupted him. The early childhood educator asked, “Do you want to share?” and he replied, “Yes.”

Vihaan responded appropriately when he was pushed or hit. For example, when he stood in line to wash his hands, a boy hit him and wanted to take his turn, but he did not allow him to do so and said, “It’s my turn.” Vihaan developed skills to resolve conflict situations. One day, when two of his friends were arguing, he asked them to stop it and then changed the subject of the conversation to help resolve the situation. He controlled his temper in conflict situations. One day, when the children were playing hide-and-seek,

it was Vihaan's turn, but one of his classmates took his turn. He did not say anything, and only looked at the early childhood educator to let him know what was happening and waited until the early childhood educator said, “It is Vihaan’s turn.”

4.4.2.4 Cooperation. The most observed behaviour was paying attention to peers’ ideas in group activities. The least observed behavior was cooperation with peers without promoting.

Vihaan paid attention to peers’ ideas in group work. Once, for example, Vihaan and his classmates were playing with a car. They wanted it to have the highest speed and prevent it from falling by adjusting the angle of a slope. They changed the angle of the surface several times, all while consulting with each other. Vihaan listened to others carefully and gave some suggestions. He also cooperated with peers without being told. When one of his classmates was looking for something, Vihaan helped her find it. Vihaan was sometimes a volunteer for classroom tasks. For example, once, when all the students were in a line and wanted to leave the class, he volunteered to hold the door for all the students. Vihaan joined in group activities without requiring promotion. For instance, when his early childhood educator and some of his classmates sat around in a circle and began playing a group game, he joined them.

4.4.3 Participant 3: Adel. The below table (Table 4.4) summarizes the frequency of Adel's observed behaviour.

Table 4.4

Summary of Data Collected from Observing Adel

Skills	Indicators/Evidence	Event Recording
Problematic Behavior	• Emotional expression.	0
	• Interrupts conversations of other people.	2
	• Shows anxiety in a group of children.	0
	• Gets angry easily and rapidly.	0
	• Prefers to be alone.	0
Communication	• Communicates nonverbally with others (e.g., smile, wave, or other appropriate gestures).	6
	• Listens to others classmate when they are speaking.	3
	• Initiates conversations with other children.	8
	• Makes friends easily.	4
	• Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told.	3
	• Makes encouraging comments to others.	1
	• Says nice things about himself or herself when it is appropriate.	2
	• Practices saying “no” to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations.	2
Emotional Management	• Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by peers.	2
	• Controls temper in conflict situations with other children.	0
	• Develops skills to resolve conflict situations.	0
	• Develops appropriate skills to handle bullies.	0

	• Identifies appropriate methods to resolve conflict.	0
	• Stays calm with other children.	2
	• Asks questions about rules that may be unfair.	0
	• Gets along with peers who are different.	4
Cooperation	• Pays attention to peers' ideas for group activities.	4
	• Cooperates with peers without prompting.	2
	• Volunteers for classroom tasks, for example, helping others, helping set up, cleaning up and passing out materials.	3
	• Joins ongoing group activities without being told	2

4.4.3.1. Problematic behaviour. The only factor related to problematic behaviour observed was interrupting the conversations of other people. One example of this was, when a group of Adel's classmates were speaking about a movie they had seen, Adel came and interrupted their conversation and started talking about what he ate last night.

4.4.3.2 Communication. The most observed behaviour in this area was initiating conversations with other children. For example, a new student came to the class, and she asked, "Where is the bathroom?" Adel said, "Follow me," and then started a conversation with her. The least observed element was saying encouraging comments to others. One day, one of his classmates said a funny thing and tried to make him laugh. Adel told her, "You are funny." Adel also said a nice thing about himself. When one of his classmates attempted to lift a large object, he came up and said, "I can do that; I am strong." Adel

used nonverbal elements for communication. For instance, his early childhood educator asked him, “Have you brought your bottled water?” and he nodded his head to indicate yes.

Adel listened to other people carefully. For example, when an early childhood educator spoke about sunburns, how they happen, and what we can do to prevent them, Adel listened carefully. Furthermore, Adel found friends quickly. He played and spoke with all his classmates. In addition, Adel introduced himself to new people without promotion. For instance, when he saw me for the first time, he brought his bottled water and asked me, “What is written on it?” I replied, “Adel.” Then, he said, “I am Adel. What’s your name?” I introduced myself. Then, he asked, “What are you doing here?” I replied, “I am doing research.” Then he asked, “Are you a student?”

4.4.3.3 Emotional management. The most observed behaviour in this area was getting along with peers who are different. For example, Adel played and spoke with all the students. There was a child in the class that could not speak English, and she was frequently alone. Adel several times went and tried to talk with her and invited her to join him and his classmates. There were not any records for controlling temper in conflict situations, developing skills to resolve conflict situations, developing skills to handle bullies, or identifying methods to use to resolve conflict. During the observation, Adel did not have any conflict with anyone. Adding to this, there were no elements of asking questions about unfair rules. Although he asked a lot of questions about everything, he did not ask any questions about rules that may be unfair.

Adel could say “No” to protect himself. For example, while he was playing with a car, one of his classmates took the toy. He said, “No, do not do that; I was playing with it”, and his classmate brought it back. Moreover, Adel stayed calm with other children. He always had a smile and got along well with all of his classmates.

4.4.3.4 Cooperation. The skill that was observed more than the other skills in the area of cooperation was paying attention to peers’ ideas in group activities. For instance, when Adel was playing with a group of his friends, they consulted with each other to decide what they precisely wanted to do. He paid attention to others carefully. The other skill observed more than the others was volunteering for classroom tasks. For example, after a game, he helped clean up the mess.

The frequency of cooperating with peers without promotion and joining ongoing group activities without being told was equivalent. An example of cooperation with peers was observed when one of Adel’s classmates did not know how to turn on a toy. Adel showed her how to do so without being asked. Moreover, he joined ongoing activities. For example, a group of his classmates pretended they were shopping in a market, and he joined them.

4.4.4 Participant 4: Della. The data from observing Della and the frequency of each behaviour are summarised in the following table (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5

Summary of the Data Collected from Observing Della

Skills	Indicators/Evidence	Event Recording
Problematic Behavior	• Emotional expression.	2
	• Interrupts conversations of other people.	0
	• Shows anxiety in a group of children.	0
	• Gets angry easily and rapidly.	0
	• Prefers to be alone.	2
Communication	• Communicates nonverbally with others (e.g., smile, wave, or other appropriate gestures).	12
	• Listens to others classmate when they are speaking.	9
	• Initiates conversations with other children.	3
	• Makes friends easily.	3
	• Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told.	1
	• Makes encouraging comments to others.	1
	• Says nice things about himself or herself when it is appropriate.	0
	• Practices saying “no” to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations.	7
Emotional Management	• Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by peers.	0
	• Controls temper in conflict situations with other children.	3
	• Develops skills to resolve conflict situations.	0
	• Develops appropriate skills to handle bullies.	0

	• Identifies appropriate methods to resolve conflict.	0
	• Stays calm with other children.	4
	• Asks questions about rules that may be unfair.	1
	• Gets along with peers who are different.	4
Cooperation	• Pays attention to peers' ideas for group activities.	3
	• Cooperates with peers without prompting.	4
	• Volunteers for classroom tasks, for example, helping others, helping set up, cleaning up and passing out materials.	6
	• Joins ongoing group activities without being told.	8

4.4.4.1 Problematic behaviour. The behaviours observed in the area of problematic behaviour included preferring to be alone and emotional expression. One day, most of the children were playing in group activities. Della went to the sand area and looked at the children for a while from a distance. Then, she went and sat alone and looked at them. Then, Della went and played alone. In addition, her patterns of behaviour sometimes suggest sadness. For example, once, one of her classmates splashed water on her clothes while they were playing outside. This made her sad and uncomfortable, as her clothes were wet, but she did not say anything and went and sat alone.

4.4.4.2 Communication. The most observed skill was communicating nonverbally. When her early childhood educator asked her, "Do you want to go to the

washroom?” she nodded her head. She also listened to others when they spoke. One of her classmates explained to her what he had drawn. Della listened carefully and then asked him some questions. Furthermore, she said nice things to others. For example, she told the boy who explained about his painting, “It is beautiful.” But there was not any observed behaviour of her saying nice things about herself.

Della introduced herself to new people. For instance, when one of the early childhood educators from the other class came to her class, Della said, “Hello, I am Della.” The early childhood educator replied, “Hello” and hugged her. She also could make friends easily . For instance, once, one of her classmates asked another classmate to play with her, but she refused. Then, Della asked her, “Mary! What about playing with me?” Moreover, Della initiated a conversation with others. One day, while she and her classmates were eating lunch, she started a conversation and told them about her favourite cartoon. Then, the other classmates continued the conversation.

4.4.4.3 Emotional management. Della could say “No” to protect herself, and it was the most observed skill in the area of emotional management. For example, while Della and her friends were playing with some toys, a boy kicked the toys. Della said, “No, you need to clean up all the mess; you were not allowed to do that.” Adding to this, she stayed calm with other children. After a while, the boy who kicked the toys wanted to play with her. When her early childhood educator asked her, “Do you want him to play with you?”, Della replied, “Yes.”

Although Della sometimes could handle aggression appropriately, sometimes she could not. For example, once, a boy splashed some water on her clothes. This made her

sad, but she did not say anything and went and sat alone in a corner. On another day, the same boy had stared at her with anger, and Della did the same thing, continuing to stare at him until he stopped. Furthermore, Della could not respond appropriately when she was pushed or hit by peers. One day, a boy hit her. She looked at him for a while, but she did not say or do anything.

Della did not show conflict resolution skills, as whenever something happened to her that made her sad, she did not do anything. Della, however, did control her temper in conflict situations appropriately. For instance, while she was playing, a boy tried to interrupt her several times, but she did not pay attention and continued her work. After a while, Della went and spoke with him.

Della gets along with peers who are mentally and physically different. There was a boy in their class that other classmates did not like to play with, as he usually interrupted other children's work, but Della always accepted him in group activities. In addition, Della asked questions about rules that might be unfair. For example, one day, her early childhood educator read a book for students in the reading area, and all the students sat around her. Della sat beside her friend. The early childhood educator asked her to not sit so close to her classmate. Della asked, "Why?" and the early childhood educator replied, "It is respectful of other people's space." Della pointed to some of her classmates that were close to each other and said, "They are close to each other."

4.4.4.4 Cooperation. The most observed skill in the area of cooperation was joining ongoing group activities without being told to do so. For instance, one day, an early childhood educator and a group of children were playing a group game. Della stood

and looked at them for a while, then joined them. The second most observed skill was volunteering for classroom tasks. Della and her classmates pretend to play different people's roles. The early childhood educator asked one of the boys to play the role of a babysitter. Della brought a doll to him and said to him, "It can be your baby."

In addition, Della cooperated with her peers without promotion. For instance, Della and her peers played the role of family members. The children cooperated in preparing what they needed to play. Della mentioned, "I can make a space for the baby." Paying attention to her peers' ideas for group activities was the least observed skill. While an early childhood educator read a book for children, she asked some questions about the story. Della paid attention to her peers' ideas carefully.

4.4.5 Participant 5: Amina. The data from observing Amina and the frequency of each behaviour are summarised in the following table (4.6).

Table 4.6

Summary of the Data Collected from Observing Amina

Skills	Indicators/Evidence	Event Recording
Problematic Behavior	• Emotional expression.	1
	• Interrupts conversations of other people.	0
	• Shows anxiety in a group of children.	0
	• Gets angry easily and rapidly.	0
	• Prefers to be alone.	10
Communication	• Communicates nonverbally with others (e.g., smile, wave, or other appropriate	6

	gestures).	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens to others classmate when they are speaking. 0 • Initiates conversations with other children. 1 • Makes friends easily. 0 • Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told. 0 • Makes encouraging comments to others. 0 • Says nice things about himself or herself when it is appropriate. 0 	
Emotional Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices saying “no” to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations. 1 • Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by peers. 0 • Controls temper in conflict situations with other children. 0 • Develops skills to resolve conflict situations. 0 • Develops appropriate skills to handle bullies. 0 • Identifies appropriate methods to resolve conflict. 0 • Stays calm with other children. 0 • Asks questions about rules that may be unfair. 0 	
Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets along with peers who are different. 0 • Pays attention to peers’ ideas for group activities. 0 • Cooperates with peers without prompting. 1 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers for classroom tasks, for example, helping others, helping set up, cleaning up and passing out materials. 	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joins ongoing group activities without being told. 	2

4.4.5.1 Problematic behaviour. The most observed behaviour in the problematic behaviour area was preferring to be alone. Most of the time, Amina played alone. She sometimes stayed in a group of children, but she did not play or speak with them. Several times, she followed other classmates and wanted to play with them, but others did not accept her. Another observed behaviour in this area was emotional expression or patterns of behaviour that suggest sadness. Once, Amina fell and cried. The early childhood educator checked on her; it was not a severe incident, but it made her upset. It even made the early childhood educator concerned that she cried so severely.

4.4.5.2 Communication. Communicating nonverbally was the most observed behaviour in this area. Once, Amina's hands were dirty. She went and showed them to the early childhood educator. The early childhood educator asked her, "Do you want to wash your hands?" She nodded her head. Then, the early childhood educator helped her to wash her hands. Moreover, there were no elements of saying nice things about herself or other people and finding friends easily.

During the observation, she once tried to initiate a conversation, but it was not successful. One of her classmates was building something with blocks, and Amina went and said something to him. The boy did not reply, or he might not have understood what Amina told him. Then, the boy prevented her from playing with the blocks. Furthermore,

Amina did not listen to others when they spoke. One day, some children went to the back room, which was a storage area for the class where students were not allowed to go. Amina followed them. The early childhood educator noticed and went there and explained to the students why they are not allowed to go to that room. Amina did not listen to the early childhood educator, and while she was speaking, Amina looked around and then left that area. In addition, she did not introduce herself to new people. The first day I went to her class, she came and looked at me for a while. I said, "Hello", but she did not reply.

4.4.5.3 Emotional management. The only observed behaviour in this area was saying "No" to protect herself, as she did not have any conflict with her peers and mostly played alone. During the observation, several times, students took Amina's toys while she was playing with them, but she did not say anything and went to play with another toy. But one day, while Amina was playing with a doll, one of her classmates tried to take it. Amina did not give her that doll and told her classmate, "No, no, no."

4.4.5.4 Cooperation. Volunteering for classroom tasks was the most observed behaviour. Whenever an early childhood educator asked the students to clean up, Amina joined and helped to clean up the mess. Amina also cooperated with her classmates without prompting. One day, a piece of a toy was lost. The early childhood educator and several students looked for it. Amina joined them to help find it.

Moreover, Amina sometimes joined ongoing activities without being told, but sometimes she did not. One day, while all the children were sat around a table and waiting for lunch, one boy closed his eyes and pointed at one of the children and asked,

“Is this Jack?” Amina replied: “No,” and this game continued until lunch was ready. One day, it was the birthday of one of her classmates. All the girls told her “happy birthday” and hugged her, except for Amina.

Furthermore, Amina did not pay attention to her peers in group activities. Once, she and some of the girls were sat around a table. One of the girls pretended to take pictures. She asked the girls to smile. All the girls did that except for Amina. She asked Amina several times to smile, but Amina did not pay attention to her.

4.5 Summary

In this part, the results from the interviews and observations were reported. At first, the demographic characteristics of the early childhood educators that attended the interviews is presented. Then, themes that emerge from the findings of interviews are discussed. Afterward, the demographic characteristics of the participants observed were discussed. Afterward, the findings on each participant are presented separately regarding communication, problematic behaviour, emotional management, and cooperation. Some quotes from participants' observations were reported to help clarify the findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter discusses, interprets and combines theory from the literature review and findings from the thematic analysis and interviews to answer the research questions. As a reminder, the research questions are as follows: How do bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills? How might early childhood educators and their interactions with bilingual children lead to social development in this group of children? What are the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual preschool-age children experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators and classmates?

5.1 Language and Social Skills Development

The main aim of this study was to examine social skills development in immigrant dual-language preschool-age children. The analyzed data provided evidence that a significant factor in the development of social skills in immigrant dual-language children is proficiency in the English language. Social skills development occurs in the context of relationships with others (Chen & Rubin, 2011; Halle et al., 2014), and language is a significant factor in creating relationships. It seemed that when the study participants were not able to understand their peers because of language limitations they could not communicate appropriately; hence, language limitations can be a main barrier in developing a relationship. Moreover, the feedback native English speakers received from immigrant dual-language children influenced their willingness to communicate with them. When native English speakers frequently tried to interact with dual-language children whose English was not good enough, and they did not see signs of feedback from dual-language children to show they wanted to communicate, native English speakers

became reluctant to try again. This can cause loneliness and exclusion for dual-language children. This happens because of their English language limitations, not their race, appearance, or whatever causes them to be viewed as an *outsider*. This finding is consistent with the results of the study by Cervantes (2002). He argues that bilingualism is a challenge for social skills development, particularly when the child is learning the second language and their language is not fluent yet and when the home language is a minority language in the society and the children cannot use it for communication.

The findings of this study also indicated that dual-language children who were fluent in English showed a higher level of social skills development in communication, cooperation, emotional management and did not exclude, and they had good relationships with their peers. Furthermore, dual-language children with limited English fluency appear to have more problem behaviours such as preferring to be alone and issues with emotional expression. This finding strengthens the previous statement that language limitations were the main factor for exclusion, not other factors such as race, nationality, and appearance. Han (2010) found that dual-language children who were not proficient in the English language by the end of preschool and spoke only the home language, which is a minority language in the society, showed fewer interpersonal skills and more problem behaviours by the fifth grade. Whereas the findings of these studies demonstrate that language limitations are a barrier in social skills development in dual-language children, the results of the study by Han and Huang (2010) reveal that dual-language children tend to develop a higher level of social skills and lower levels of problem behaviours compared to English-speaking monolinguals.

Moreover, Vaughan van Hecke et al. (2007), in one of the few studies that examined outcomes during infancy and toddlerhood, concluded that language limitations do not play a substantial role in influencing problem behaviours at 30 months of age. It seems that part of the reason for the conflicting findings in these studies is due to the various methodologies used in these studies. Han and Huang's study is a longitudinal study that examined social-emotional development from kindergarten to fifth grade, while Vaughan van Hecke et al. also used a longitudinal methodology during infancy to toddlerhood. Furthermore, the population of these studies and the current study are different age groups.

5.2 Main Barriers in Social Skills Development

According to findings from the interviews, besides language, the main barriers and difficulties in the social skills development of immigrant dual-language children were feelings and reactions caused by not being able to communicate. As early childhood educators indicated in this study, when dual-language children cannot communicate with other people around them appropriately, they might experience frustration, hesitation, insecurity, upset, and loneliness, especially at the beginning of the attendance in childcare when the children are not familiar with the environment. The current study supports Dawson and William's (2008) study, which indicates that dual-language children with limited language proficiency were more likely to experience negative emotions, which causes more problem behaviours such as preferring to be alone.

5.3 Role of Individuals in Social Skills Development

The findings from this study indicate that the role of early childhood educators in facilitating social skills development in dual-language children and helping them deal with the challenges and barriers they face is significant, especially at the beginning of their attendance in childcare. Chen and Rubin (2011) believe that relationships with others, including but not limited to parents, caregivers, educators, and peers can facilitate social skills development in children. They also argue that having and developing appropriate relationships with trusted people during childhood facilitates and has a significant role in social skills development. Early childhood educators need to be aware of methods for working with immigrant dual-language children and to be patient with this group of children, as they might need to take more time to create high-quality relationships with dual-language children. Chen (2011) believes that the quality of social interaction and relationships between children and educators highly influences how children learn and develop social skills. One component of starting relationships with dual-language children is paying attention to the background and culture of the immigrant dual-language children, such as by using cultural elements that relate to their background in the classroom. As Cervantes (2002) believes, bilingualism is equivalent to biculturalism, and educators need to pay attention to the culture and background of bilingual students. These supports help dual-language students feel more comfortable. Also, the quality of classroom organization and arrangement was negatively related to dual-language learners' problematic behaviours (Stuhlman & Pianta, 2002). Using gestures and directions and learning some essential words from the first language of these children for starting a relationship are other possible methods that early childhood

educators can adopt. As Chang et al. (2007) state, the use of the child's home language by early childhood educators in childcare settings appears to be a significant way to create a close relationship between dual-language children with both early childhood educators and peers. They also state that the use of dual-language children's home language by early childhood educators can be a factor in reducing the likelihood of being a victim of peer aggression. Overall, educators need to be taught how to support this group of children. This is in line with the findings of the study by Stuhlman and Pianta (2002), which show that relationship quality between educators and children is associated with children's emotional regulation, social skills development, and behavioural competence. They found that the quality of emotional support and classroom organization provided by pre-kindergarten early childhood educators were related to the development of social skills in dual-language children.

According to the findings from interviews, it seems that cooperation between parents and early childhood educators can help dual-language children adjust to the situation and facilitate their social skills development. This is because parents can help early childhood educators bridge the gap between dual-language children and their early childhood educators and peers. This finding is in line with the results of the study by Halle et al. (2014), who conclude that the parental role is foundational to the establishment of social-emotional well-being for all children, including dual-language children, especially in current times. According to Campbell (2006), this issue leads to a growing expectation for early childhood educators to go beyond the current classroom activities. They are expected to facilitate partnerships between parents and educators to

promote children's development. According to the findings of this study, another group that plays a role in the social skills development of dual-language children is their peers. Children feel more comfortable with someone their own age and prefer to spend time with their peers. As the early childhood education approach is play-based, children learn through playing with their peers and by observing what they do and say. These findings support the results of a study by Fabes et al. (2006), which indicates that during the preschool period, children need to engage in play with peers. A higher level of peer relationships predicts a higher level of social skills development. Moreover, the findings of a study by Castro (2011) show that a positive relationship between dual-language children and their English-speaking peers is correlated to English proficiency in dual-language children's learning.

The findings of the current study support Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning (1980), since he provides an example of how children's social-emotional skills development can be influenced by their interactions with others. He believes community has a central role in children's development processes. Under Vygotsky's model, the actions of teachers, parents and peers as members of a community work in parallel towards the common goal of developing children's skills. Children can, with help from adults or their peers, grasp concepts and ideas they cannot understand on their own.

5.4 Limitations

Every research study has limitations that affect their findings and interpretations. In this study, there were some limitations, which will be discussed below in terms of their potential impact on the findings.

The population for the study was limited to immigrant bilingual preschoolers. Therefore, the population can be viewed as a small sample and cannot be generalized to the general public. In other words, as a qualitative research study, it is not possible to simplify the findings to the general population; however, through the methods implemented, it is hoped that replication of this study or one that is similar is possible. Future researchers should replicate the study with larger groups and different age groups so that the results can be generalized to the bilingual children in other settings, and this would also contribute to a better understanding of the case.

One of the data collection methods used in this study was interviews with early childhood educators, which could be considered as a limitation of this study, as participants could have been uncomfortable with expressing negative opinions face to face. Although the researcher adopted multiple data collection methods, this limitation may have affected the accuracy of the results.

5.5 Recommendations

As there is a lack of research on immigrant dual-language preschool-age children, I had to do an extensive search on this subject to find the necessary literature. Moreover, there is a lack of attention given to social skills development compared to other aspects of immigrant dual-language children's development, such as cognitive development. Halle et al. (2014) suggest that the focus of studies on dual-language children has been on the development of their language and cognitive abilities rather than on the development of their skills, including their social-emotional skills. However, the social skills development of dual-language children needs more attention with regard to the importance of these

skills in all aspects of life. Future research can focus on other aspects of social skills development in addition to the areas this study paid attention to.

One group of participants that can have a significant role in the social skills development of dual-language children is their parents. Future studies can specifically examine the role of this group and consider how cooperation between parents and early childhood educators can facilitate the social skills development of immigrant dual-language children. Moreover, the context in which dual-language children grow up plays a role in their social skills development. Future research could attempt to gather data on the various cultural, social, policy, and educational contexts in which dual-language children develop. This could help to understand the complexities of relationships between dual-language children's status and the social skills development of these children.

This study also, according to the methodology, provides some suggestions for further research. The present study used a qualitative case study methodology to examine social skills development in immigrant dual-language children. Therefore, a recommendation for new research is that some studies should employ different methods, such as quantitative methodologies. For example, a comparison of social skills development in native English speakers and immigrant dual-language children could be done to provide more details and a better understanding of the processes underlying the social-emotional development of dual-language children.

The findings of this study can provide some recommendations on how educators should pay attention to the needs of this growing population when they are preparing the classroom to try to create a multicultural environment and multicultural resources in their

class. Also, universities need to pay closer attention to this population and teach future educators how they can deal with the needs of this growing population.

5.6 Conclusion

This study investigated the social skills development of immigrant dual-language preschool-age children. As such, a qualitative case study methodology was adopted for this study to answer research questions, including: How do bilingual preschool-age children develop social skills? How might early childhood educators and their interactions with bilingual children lead to social development in this group of children? What are the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual preschool-age children experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators and classmates? Data in this study came from non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews with early childhood educators.

The findings build on previous research by confirming that a factor that could play a crucial role in the social skills development of immigrant dual-language children is their English language limitations, as opposed to their race, appearance, or anything else which leads them to be considered as an outsider. Those children who had a higher level of English proficiency showed a higher level of social skills development in the areas of cooperation, communication, and emotional management, and they also showed less problematic behaviour. The most significant barriers and difficulties that dual-language children face in social skills development are the negative emotions this group of children experience in their relationships with others, such as frustration and hesitation. Early childhood educators, peers and parents and their interaction with dual-language children

can facilitate social skills development in this group of children. Early childhood educators can use various methods to bridge the gap that exists between dual-language children and their peers and educators, and parents can play a crucial role in helping early childhood educators in this way.

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Appendix A

Data Sheet



Observation Checklist

Skills	Indicators/ Evidences	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Cooperation	Pays attention to peers' ideas for group activities.		
	Cooperates with peers without prompting.		
	Volunteers for classroom tasks, for example, helping others, helping set up, cleaning up and		

	passing out materials.		
	Joins ongoing group activities without being told.		

Skills	Indicators/ Evidences	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Emotional management	Practices saying “no” to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations.		
	Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by peers.		
	Controls temper in conflict situations with other children.		

	Develops skills to resolve conflict situations.		
	Develops appropriate skills to handle bullies.		
	Identifies appropriate methods to resolve conflict.		
	stays calm with other children		
	Asks questions about rules that may be unfair.		
	Gets along with peers who are different.		

Skills	Indicators/ Evidences	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Communi cation	Communicates nonverbally with others (e.g., smile, wave, or other appropriate gestures).		
	Listens to other classmate when they are speaking.		
	Initiates conversations with other children.		
	Makes friends easily.		
	Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told.		

	Makes encouraging comments to others.		
	Says nice things about himself or herself when it is appropriate.		

Skills	Indicators/ Evidences	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
ematic behavior	Emotional expression		
	Interrupts conversations of other people.		
	Shows anxiety in a group of children.		
	Gets angry easily and rapidly.		
	Prefers to be alone.		

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Appendix B

Certificate of Research Ethics Clearance for Human Participation Research



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	20193033-ED
Approval Period:	May 15, 2019 – May 31, 2020
Funding Source:	Not Funded
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Kimberly Maich Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>Case Study of Social Skills Development in Immigrant Dual Lingual Kindergarteners</i>

May 15, 2019

Mrs. Tayebeh Sohrabi
Faculty of Education
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mrs. Tayebeh:

Thank you for your correspondence of May 13, 2019 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to May 31, 2020. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before May 31, 2020. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. If you need to make changes during the project which may raise ethical concerns, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration prior to implementation. If funding is obtained subsequent to approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR before this clearance can be linked to your award.

All post-approval event forms noted above can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

for Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

KB/lw

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Kimberly Maich, Faculty of Education

Appendix C

Informed Consent form for Parents



Informed Consent Form Faculty of Education Memorial University

Title: A Case Study of Social Skills Development in Immigrant Dual Lingual Preschoolers

Student Researcher:

Tayebeh Sohrabi
Master of Education Student
Faculty of Education Memorial University
Phone: 709-689-2239
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Supervisor:

Dr Kimberly Maich
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kmaich@mun.ca

Your child is invited to take part in a research project entitled, “**A Case Study of Social Skills Development in Immigrant Dual Lingual Preschoolers.**”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your child participation will involve. It also describes

the right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish your child to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether your child to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you or your child, either now or in the future.

Note: Participation in the study is not a Childcare Centre requirement.

Introduction

The student researcher, Tayebeh Sohrabi, is a Master of Education student, at the Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what happens in the development of dual lingual preschoolers' social skills. In other words, it intends to examine how dual lingual preschoolers develop social skills in the process of communication with the early childhood educator in the preschool. It also intends to study the barriers and facilitating factors that dual lingual preschoolers experience when they communicate with their early childhood educator.

The following research questions will guide this study: (1) How do dual lingual preschoolers develop social skills? (2) How might early childhood educators and their interactions with dual lingual preschoolers lead to social skills development in immigrant children with dual-language? (3) What are the barriers and facilitating factors that dual lingual preschoolers experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators ?

Your child may help to answer these questions. Therefore, your child is invited to participate in this research study to assist this project in answering these research questions.

What Your Child Will Do

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research, it is important to understand that this student researcher in the observation room will observe the routine activities of your child without interfering in any activities. The research is about dual lingual preschoolers' social skills development in the field of cooperation, emotional management, and communication. The researcher will look for some indicators such as nonverbal communication signs (e.g., smile, wave), listening to others when they are speaking, introducing herself /himself to new people.

You should not consent if you do not agree to allow this student researcher to observe your child.

Time Required

The observation is expected to take approximately 30 sessions over two months.

Withdrawal from the Study

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw your child from participation in this study at any time by contacting me through the contact information provided in this form. All the information gathered from your child will be discarded and not used if you decided to withdraw. By August 2019, data collection will be completed, and the analysis will begin. After August 2019, it will not be possible to remove your child's data from this research.

Possible Benefits

a) Benefits for Participants

This study can help immigrant dual lingual preschoolers' social skills development by making clear what is happening in the process of social skills development of this group. Also, it increases awareness about barriers and difficulties that immigrant dual lingual preschoolers experience in social skills development.

b) Benefits for the Education Community

The long-term goal of this project is to build theory and knowledge about the social skills development in immigrant dual lingual preschoolers, as there are few studies in this field.

Also, as the number of immigrants has increased dramatically in Canada, particularly in St. John's, this study will examine the barriers and difficulties that immigrants dual lingual preschoolers face in social skills developments to find ways to improve their lives. Reaching this purpose would be beneficial for society as a whole since social skills affect how everyone lives in a community as children and adults.

Possible Risks

No known risks are identified. To ensure the confidentiality of these, data pseudonyms will be used instead of the real names of the children involved.

Confidentiality

All of the information gathered will be treated confidentially. Data will be stored on a password-protected memory stick and server behind a password-protected computer. Participants' names will be recorded only as pseudonyms.

Storage of Data

All digital data will be password-protected memory stick and will be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisor. The data collected will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity on Scholarly Research.

Reporting of Results

The data from this research project will be published and presented at scholarly conferences and in scholarly journals. In these reports, the data will be presented in a

summarized collective form which is from all participants. As above-noted, pseudonyms will be used in place of participants' names, and no identifying information will be included in research reports and presentations.

Also, the thesis will be publicly available at the QEII library and accessible online at <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>.

Sharing of Results with Participants

The researcher will provide parents/guardian with a copy of the research results, which will be tried to be written in the nonacademic language to be understandable for the majority. The researcher will give copies to the early childhood educator and will ask her to put them in the backpack of preschoolers. Also, the research articles produced as a result of this research project will be shared with you as a link to the journal through the email address that you will provide for future contact. This will allow the researcher to contact you in the future, although providing your email address is optional. You may contact the researcher by email at any time to obtain copies of articles that have been published or any presentations that have been given.

Questions

You are welcome to ask questions at any time, before, during, and after your child's participation.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to comply with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been

treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Consent

If you agree that your child participate in this study, please sign the consent form and return it to the teacher.

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what your child will be doing.
- You understand that your child is free to withdraw the participation in the study without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you or your child now or in the future.
- You understand that if your child chooses to end participation during data collection, any data collected from your child up to that point will be destroyed.
- You understand that by August 2019, data collection will be finished, and the analysis will start. Hence, your child's data will NOT be removed if asked. Afterwards.

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researcher from her professional responsibilities.

Your signature confirms:

I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered.

I agree my child to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my child's participation, that my child's participation is voluntary, and that she/he may end her/his participation.

Parent/Guardian's Name(s) and Signatures:

Email: _____

Note: Providing your email address is optional.

Child's Name

Researcher's Signature

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and given answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the

study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form for Early Childhood Educators



Informed Consent Form Faculty of Education Memorial University

Title: A Case Study of Social Skills Development in Immigrant Dual Lingual preschoolers

Researcher:

Tayebeh Sohrabi
Master of Education Student
Faculty of Education Memorial University
Phone: 709-689-2239
Email: tsohrabi@mun.ca

Supervisor:

Dr Kimberly Maich
Hickman Building | 3056
Faculty of Education
Memorial University
kmaich@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled, ” **A Case Study of Social Skills Development in Immigrant Dual Lingual Preschoolers**”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in

this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, either now or in the future.

Note: Participation in the study is not a requirement of the childcare/employment, and will not be reported to the director, or to other early childhood educators.

Introduction

The student researcher, Tayebbeh Sohrabi, is a Master of Education student, at the Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what happens in the development of dual lingual preschoolers' social skills. In other words, it intends to examine how dual lingual preschoolers develop social skills in the process of communication with the early childhood educator in the preschool. I will also study the barriers and facilitating factors that dual lingual preschoolers experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators.

The following research questions will guide this study: (1) How do dual lingual preschoolers develop social skills? (2) How might early childhood educators and their

interactions with dual lingual preschoolers lead to social skills development in immigrant children with dual-language? (3) What are the barriers and facilitating factors that dual lingual preschoolers experience when they communicate with their early childhood educators?

Your ideas might help to answer these questions. Therefore, you are invited to participate in this research study to assist this project in answering these research questions.

What You Will Do

If you agree to be part of this research, you will need to distribute and collect parental recruitment and consent documents of parents/children in their classes who fit the study criteria.

If you agree to be part of this research, it is important to understand that this student researcher will observe in the observation room to observe the routine activities of your class without interfering in any of these activities. The observation is about dual lingual preschoolers' social skills development in the field of cooperation, emotional management, and communication. The researcher would like to identify barriers and facilitating factors that exist in social skills development of dual lingual preschoolers regarding the relationship between dual lingual preschoolers and their early childhood educators. The researcher will look for some indicators such as resources that are used in the class, how the early childhood educator communicates with dual lingual preschoolers, and how early childhood educator individualizes instruction for students who are still learning English might not be good enough.

Also, there is an interview that you will be asked to answer. The interview will be done after the observations. If you agree, it could be done after school hours. The questions of interview are in line with the observation and the researcher would like to social skills development of dual lingual preschoolers. For instance, methods that early childhood educator use to communicate or work with preschoolers who are still learning English. The questions of the interview will not be used to identify the participants. However, you are free to skip any question that you do not wish to answer. You should not consent if you do not agree to allow this student researcher to observe your class or do an interview. If you agree to allow this student researcher to observe your class or do an interview please consent and indicate that which one you are interested in (observation, interview, or both).

Time Required

One or two interviews is expected, and each interview is expected to last approximately 20,30 minutes. The observation is expected to take approximately 30 sessions over two months

Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All the information gathered from you will be discarded and not used if decided to withdraw. By August 2019, data collection will be completed, and the analysis will begin. After August 2019, it will not be possible to remove your data from this research.

Possible Benefits

a) Benefits for the participants

This study will help early childhood educators to notice that there are some students that have different needs from native English speaker. Then this awareness can help early childhood educator to design a more appropriate program for their class. Also increase educator's awareness about barriers and difficulties that immigrant dual lingual preschoolers experience in social skills development

b) Benefits for the education community

The long-term goal of this project is to build theory and knowledge about the social skills development in immigrant dual lingual preschoolers, as there are few studies in this field. Also, as the number of immigrants has increased dramatically in Canada, particularly in St. John's, this study will examine the barriers and difficulties that immigrant dual lingual preschoolers face in social skills developments to find ways to improve their lives. Reaching this purpose would be beneficial for society as the whole since social skills affect how everyone lives in community as children and adults.

Possible risks

No known risks are identified. To ensure the confidentiality of these, data pseudonyms will be used instead of the real names of the participants involved.

Confidentiality

All the information gathered will be treated confidentially. Data will be stored on a password-protected memory stick and server behind a password-protected computer. Participants' names will be recorded only as pseudonyms.

Storage of Data

The digital data will be stored on flash memory and will be password protected which will be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisor. The data collected will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity on Scholarly Research.

Reporting of Results

The data from this research project will be published and presented at scholarly conferences and in scholarly journals. In these reports, the data will be presented in a summarized collective form which is from all participants. As above-noted, pseudonyms will be used in place of participants' names, and no identifying information will be included in research reports and presentations.

Also, the thesis will be publicly available at the QEII library and accessible online at <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>.

Sharing of Results with Participants

The researcher will provide you with a copy of the research results, which will be tried to be written in the nonacademic language to be understandable for the majority. Also, the research articles produced as a result of this research project will be shared with you as a

link to the journal through the email address that you will provide for future contact. This will allow the researcher to contact you in the future, although providing your email address is optional. You may contact the researcher by email at any time to obtain copies of articles that have been published or any presentations that have been given.

Questions

You are welcome to ask questions at any time, before, during, and after the participation. The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to comply with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Consent

If you agree to participate in this study, you need to sign the consent form

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw the participation in the study without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

- You understand that if you choose to end participation during data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be destroyed.
- You understand that by August 2019, data collection will be finished and the analysis will start. Hence, your data will NOT be removed if asked afterwards.

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

Your signature confirms:

I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions, and my questions have been answered.

I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

Participant

E:mail: _____

Note: Providing your email address is optional.

Researcher's Signature

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix E

Recruitment Letter for Children



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH:

**Social Skills Development in
Immigrant Dual Lingual Preschoolers**

Immigrant preschool-age children whose first language is not English are asked to take part in a Master of Education student research project. For this project, the student researcher will do observations of routine activities without any interference in their classroom activities. The observation is about dual lingual preschoolers' social skills development in the field of cooperation, emotional management, and communication. The researcher will be looking for some indicators such as nonverbally communication signs (e.g., smile, wave), listening to others when they are speaking, introducing herself or himself to new people.

Note: Participation in the study is not a requirement of the childcare/
program. Research participation is voluntary, and participants have the right
to withdraw any time they wish.

The observation will be conducted at Campus Childcare Inc and is expected
to take approximately 30 sessions over **two months**.

Thank you in advance for considering this request. For more information
about this study, or if you are interested in having your child take part in this
study, please contact:

Tayebeh Sohrabi
Master of Education Student
Faculty of Education, Memorial University
Phone: 709-689-2239
Email: tsohrabi@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix F

Recruitment Letter for Early childhood Educators



PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH: **Social Skills Development in Immigrant Dual Lingual Preschoolers**

Early childhood educators of preschoolers are asked to take part in a Master of Education student research project. For this project, the student researcher will do an observation of preschool children of your class without any interference in their classroom activities.

The observation is about dual lingual preschools' social skills development in the field of cooperation, emotional management, and communication. The researcher would like to identify barriers and facilitating factors that exist in social skills development of dual lingual preschoolers regarding the relationship between dual lingual preschoolers and their early childhood educators. The researcher will be looking for some indicators such as resources that are used in the class, how early childhood educators communicate with dual lingual preschoolers, and how early childhood educator individualize instruction for students who are still learning English might not be good enough. Also, early childhood educators of preschoolers are asked to take part in a session to answer some questions in an interview. In addition, early childhood educators need to distribute and collect parental

recruitment and consent documents of parents/children in their classes who fit the study criteria, if applicable.

Note: Participation in the study is not a requirement of the childcare/employment, and will not be reported to the director, or to other early childhood educators. Research participation is voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw any time they wish.

The observation will be conducted at Campus Childcare Inc and is expected to take approximately 30 sessions over **two months**. One or two interviews is expected, and each interview is expected to take approximately **20-30 minutes**. Also, it will be done after the school hours.

Thank you in advance for considering this request. For more information about this study, please contact:

Tayebeh Sohrabi
Master of Education Student
Faculty of Education, Memorial University
Phone: 709-689-2239
Email: tsohrabi@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr.chair@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.