

A Study of Social Skills Development in Newcomer, Bilingual Kindergarten Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the development of social skills in newcomer bilingual kindergarten students in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. It explores how these children develop social skills through interactions with their teachers, identifies barriers and facilitators in their development, and proposes ways to enhance educational settings to better support their social growth. The research addresses a central question: How do bilingual newcomer kindergarten-age children develop social skills? Sub-questions examine the factors that facilitate or hinder their social skills development in educational settings and how these environments can better support their social growth.

Employing a qualitative phenomenological methodology, data were collected through interviews with teachers and parents of bilingual newcomer kindergarten-age children, supplemented by classroom observations. Thematic analysis of parent and teacher interviews revealed several challenges affecting the social skills development of these children, including the impact of limited English proficiency, negative emotions they might experience, the difficulties faced by newcomer parents in providing adequate support, cultural differences that hinder smooth integration, and the lack of sufficient preparedness in educational settings to support their social skills development. Additionally, the findings highlight the support available to bilingual newcomer children, the strategies educators use to nurture social skills, the importance of family engagement, and the role of cultural sensitivity in promoting inclusivity in education. Classroom observations were used to assess how these findings align with real-world practices.

The study's findings offer valuable insights into how schools and educators can more effectively support the social development of bilingual newcomer kindergarten students. By fostering inclusivity, enhancing family engagement, and promoting cultural awareness, educational institutions can create more supportive environments that enable these students to thrive socially.

Keywords: Social skills development, newcomers, bilingual, play-based learning, kindergarten students, immigrant, kindergarten teachers, newcomer bilingual parents, phenomenology.

General Summary

This dissertation explores the development of social skills in bilingual newcomer kindergarten students in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The study examines how these children develop social skills through interactions with teachers and identifies barriers and facilitators in their social skills development. The central question focuses on how bilingual newcomer kindergarten children develop social skills, with sub-questions addressing the factors that help or hinder this development and how educational settings can better support them.

Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were gathered through interviews with teachers and parents, along with classroom observations. Findings revealed challenges such as limited English proficiency, negative emotions, newcomer parents' difficulties in providing support, cultural differences, and schools' lack of preparedness to aid social skills development. Educators' strategies, family engagement, and cultural sensitivity were identified as key facilitators in promoting social growth.

The study offers recommendations for schools and educators to enhance the social development of bilingual newcomer students by fostering inclusivity, engaging families, and promoting cultural awareness within the educational environment.

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Dedication

I wish to dedicate my work to the dedicated teachers who tirelessly work to illuminate the future for others, serving as a true source of inspiration

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Current Project

This study examined the development of social skills in newcomer bilingual kindergarten students within Newfoundland and Labrador, the easternmost province of Canada situated in the country's Atlantic region. This study's population is newcomer bilingual kindergarten-age children population, representing the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population. In 2011, immigrants accounted for 20.6% of Canada's population, and recent federal government data show a continuous influx, with 70,500 newcomers arriving in the first three months of 2021, compared to just over 69,000 in 2020 (Canadian Citizenship & Immigration Resource Center, 2021). Canada's immigration rate is expected to increase considerably by 2050 due to declining birth rates and an aging population (Statistics Canada, 2021).

This study's participants come from diverse backgrounds, and since English is the official language of the province but is not their mother tongue, they are categorized as English language learners. This study defines bilingual learners as young children who are learning English as their second language while using their mother tongue at home. They belong to families that primarily speak their home language, which is often considered a minority language within the broader society. The dominant language used in the community and official institutions, such as childcare and educational systems, differs from

their first language. Typically, these children acquire the dominant language when attending childcare or kindergarten (Hopp et al., 2019).

Social skills, defined as "a person's ability to interact, maintain, and build relationships with others" (Kasture & Bhalerao, 2014, p. 1913), are essential for overall development in social, educational, and professional domains (Ryan & Edge, 2012). Establishing these skills in the early years lays the foundation for strong social competence later in life (Zahl, 2013).

However, most research on social skills development in young children has primarily focused on high-risk populations such as children with developmental delays or disabilities (e.g., Ben-Itzhak et al., 2019; Caplan et al., 2019; McCollow & Hoffman, 2019; Mpella et al., 2019) with little emphasis on examining the social skills development of young newcomer bilingual children.

Given this gap in the literature, it is essential for research to adequately address the needs of newcomer bilingual kindergarten children. This study specifically delves into the development of social skills within this population. The study acknowledges that newcomer bilingual children may face greater challenges in building relationships, as factors such as limited fluency in English, the dominant language unfamiliarity with host country's cultural and educational setting significantly impacts their social interactions. Their diverse backgrounds, culture and language can also impact their social interactions. Therefore, this research investigates the challenges newcomer bilingual kindergarten children encounter when interacting with peers and educators in educational settings.

Background of the Study

Creswell (2012) posited that "researchers have a personal history that situates them as inquirers" (p. 51), underscoring the importance of one's background in shaping their research interests, such as in my case. My own personal history provides valuable insights into my motivation for pursuing this study. Firstly, as an immigrant and a bilingual individual raising a bilingual child, my journey has been characterized by a mix of enriching experiences and formidable challenges. As a newcomer, these challenges have contained linguistic, academic, and cultural dimensions that have impacted my life. Alongside to my experience as a newcomer bilingual mother, I have a greater understanding of the unique difficulties bilingual individuals encounter when forming connections and developing social skills within a specific cultural milieu. In particular, this realization forms the foundational rationale behind my research interest in developing social skills among newcomer bilingual children.

Another convincing reason for my interest in this study is my prior academic endeavours, in which I explored related themes. In my first master's thesis (Sohrabi, 2012), I employed a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effect of group games on the social skills development of elementary school students in Iran. The integration of twelve weeks of group games into the school curriculum revealed that the experimental group exhibited significant improvements in communication and cooperation skills compared to the control group. Building upon these findings, I argued for the increased incorporation of group games as a pedagogical strategy within educational programs (Sohrabi, 2019). Subsequently,

my second master's thesis (Sohrabi, 2020), centred on the social skills development of bilingual preschool-age children. The research highlighted that language limitations and negative emotions, such as frustration and hesitation, were key factors contributing to the exclusion of bilingual children from social interactions. These challenges inhibited them from effectively engaging with their peers (Sohrabi & Maich, 2021). Given this academic background, my doctoral studies naturally gravitated towards exploring how newcomer bilingual kindergarten students develop social skills and the multifaceted barriers and difficulties they encounter in this process. To accomplish this, I embarked on a research journey within the public school system in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.

My personal background, enriched by experiences as an immigrant and bilingual individual, combined with my prior academic research, has propelled me to delve into the complex terrain of social skills development among newcomer bilingual kindergarten students. This research journey is a testament to my commitment to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by this unique demographic and is a culmination of my academic and personal growth as an inquirer in the field of social skills development.

Problem Statement

Social skills are related to behaviours that enable individuals to adequately satisfy the demands of interpersonal relationships (Marinho-Casanova & Leiner, 2017). These skills are crucial tools that are used to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationships (Tocknell, 2015). The development of social skills has a vital role in achieving optimal growth in social, educational, and professional areas (Arnold et al., 2012; Ryan & Edge, 2012). Such

essential skill development begins in childhood during interactions with others, building a foundation for the social skills needed in adulthood (Halle et al., 2014; Zahl, 2013). On the other hand, such delays in the development of social skills are an important contributor to later difficulties such as problems in building childhood friendships (Zahl, 2013).

Importantly, social skills development can be an area of concern among newcomer bilingual children's development, as this group of children might not be fluent in the dominant language, which is considered a significant factor in any relationship (Riojas-Cortez & Bustos Flores, 2009). Also, such engagements for linguistically diverse children add to their more bicultural awareness through their socialization. These factors can impact the social interactions and social skills development of this group of children (Genesee, 2008). Hence, newcomer bilingual children's social skills development needs more attention, as a lack of development in this set of skills has been shown to have highly consequential effects on their lives (Glogowska et al., 2006).

Despite the significant role social skills development may play in individuals' lives in contributing to the betterment of one's life in their early years (Gottfried & Polikoff, 2015; Jones et al., 2015), research has found that some children still enter school without the social skills needed to succeed at school (Ng et al., 2018). This alarming research finding needs to be addressed to aid in building quality education for young children (Maich et al., 2018; Penney et al., 2019). However, there is a dearth of research on newcomer bilingual children, specifically during this developmental period (Booth et al., 2007; Pentimonti et al., 2016; Takanishi, 2004). While research has explored the development of young children's

social skills, most studies have focused on what are considered high-risk child populations (e.g., Ben-Itzhak et al., 2019; Caplan et al., 2019; McCollow & Hoffman, 2019; Mpella, et al., 2019). According to Ștefan and Miclea (2012), an important priority for future research is to study what happens in the social skills development of young bilingual children. To address the lack of research in this area, research was conducted that focused on social skills development in newcomer bilingual kindergarteners.

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study is to investigate the development of social skills in newcomer bilingual kindergarten students. The first objective entails research that delves into how kindergarten-age children who are newcomers and bilingual develop their social skills while interacting with their teachers in educational settings. The second objective of the study is to explore the barriers and facilitating factors that newcomer bilingual kindergarten-age children encountered when communicating with their educators.

Research Questions

This study explored the following question and subquestions:

How do bilingual kindergarten-age children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills?

a) How are societal and educational settings prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children?

b) What barriers do these bilingual newcomer children experience in their social skills development?

c) Ideally, how can societal and educational settings support the social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children?

Significance of the Study

The development of social skills is pivotal to generating positive outcomes for mental health and wellbeing throughout childhood and into later life (Moore, 2006; Sosna & Mastergeorge, 2005). Considering the importance of social skills development in individuals' lives, social skills development at a universal level within educational settings has gained increased attention (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). One group that might need support in their social skills development is newcomer bilingual children. Because of newcomer bilingual children's limitations in the dominant language, this group of children might experience challenges in communicating with others, and they are at risk for developing difficulties regarding social skills (Genesee, 2008). Language is a significant factor in communication, and bilingual individuals sometimes experience problems speaking the dominant language. These children might not be fluent in the dominant language; they might pronounce words slightly differently, use uncommon words, and construct sentences in different ways. All these issues result from learning a second language, which can affect individual interactions (Genesee, 2008). Considering the unique situation of newcomer bilingual children and the importance of the early years of education in laying a foundation for lifelong learning, skills development and productively participating in a society

(Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2002), it is imperative that research initiatives explore what happens in the social skills development of this group of children as well as pedagogical strategies to facilitate social skills development in newcomer bilingual children (Langeloo et al., 2019).

Moreover, this research study has focused on kindergarten-age bilingual learners and their social skills. This population was chosen due to the limited number of studies focusing on social skills development within this culturally diverse group, as well as the increasing newcomer population in Canada. Such significant growth is notable in Newfoundland and Labrador, as it is the least diverse Canadian province, yet the immigrant population is expected to increase considerably (Statistic Canada, 2022). Statistics show that between July 2021 and June 2022, the immigration population rate to Newfoundland and Labrador tripled in comparison to the same period in previous years (Statistic Canada, 2022). As the population of Newfoundland has been characterized as less diverse, addressing the needs of this province's new population demands a concentrated focus on how teachers in classrooms are prepared. In particular, focus is needed on how the classroom environment aids in the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children.

The significance of this period of time in social skills development is pivotal. As Marmot et al. (2010) stated, childhood is the best time for teaching adaptive behaviours and developing children's skills. It is widely recognized that kindergarten and schools are crucial arenas of socialization (Marmot et al., 2010). It is believed that efforts towards accomplishment in education must be seen from a life course perspective, where cooperation

between child care givers, kindergartens, elementary schools and secondary education is essential for children to have healthy social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development. Within the various levels of education, the early years of education play the most significant role since it is the starting point of cooperation and sets the foundation for the following stages (Kasture & Bhalerao, 2014; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Also, children's cognitive and developmental growth, including social skills development, occur at a rapid speed during the first years of their lives (Kasture & Bhalerao, 2014). Therefore, this period of a child's educational life needs more support through the development of children's social skills development. Considering the above factors, it is essential to explore the social skills development educational journey of newcomer bilingual children to ensure the needs of this population are being met.

Theoretical Perspective

Amongst many others, Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory informs this field of childhood learning. The constructivism approach emerged at the end of the twentieth century (Gredler, 1997; Prawat, 1995). Vygotsky saw how the pairing of social and cognitive development is essential for children's development (Langeloo et al., 2019). Vygotsky suggested that learning is primarily a social process, and the social context of learning is vital (Vygotsky, 1980). He emphasized that individual learning and development are influenced by the culture in which the individual lives alongside the interactions they participate in and observe within their society (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Considering these interactive factors, the educational context and such social interactions have an

influence on student learning (Hromek & Roffey, 2009; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). In line with Vygotsky's theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory captures the impact of the environment and the interrelationship of different processes on children's learning and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecological systems theory is presented as a theory of human development in which everything is seen as interrelated and human knowledge and development are bounded by the society, culture, and history that one experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Perspectives from social ecological theory understand that children do not grow up in isolation; they are affected by environmental factors such as a country's economy, policy, culture, and faith, which Bronfenbrenner refers to as the "microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Burke, 2012). The interrelationship with family and friends affects children's learning as part of the microsystem. Larger ecosystems such as neighbourhoods, communities, and social networks also impact children's learning. Within the broader social environment, the macrosystem includes factors such as faith, ethnicity, economy, education system, and cultural values that indirectly influence a child's social competence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Interrelationships with family and friends impact children's learning with the microsystem alongside the larger exosystem, which is comprised of a child's neighbourhood, community and social network, all of which may have a lasting impact on children's learning. Wider social instruction can be experienced by the child through the macrosystem, which may encompass elements such as faith, ethnicity, the economy, the

education system as well as the cultural values that may indirectly impact a child's social competence (Burke, 2019).

The Canadian kindergarten approach to learning is play based (Ackerman & Barnett, 2005; Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Play-based learning refers to learning while at play, and it unifies play and educational pedagogy (Danniels & Pyle, 2018; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Vygotsky valued play as an important learning opportunity for children (Burke, 2019). According to Vygotsky, learning and development are shaped through the co-construction of meaning, scaffolding aids, and guiding participation in cultural activities, such as play (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). The Vygotskian philosophy establishes that play influences not just self-regulation but the underlying skills necessary for later life such as social skills development. Therefore, play provides a motivating context in which children practice social skills with each other in a natural way. Children form imaginary situations, create explicit roles, and explore multiple themes through play, and children often practice their most mature social skills in play (Gredler, 1997; Prawat, 1995). For example, imaginative play allows children to experience various issues and explore contexts that allow them to improve their performance and increase their engagement. Play and imagination bring children to a state in which they can reach beyond the concrete world of the here and now. Places, times, and scenarios are not bound by the play space during play (Burke, 2019). In addition, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory supports the development of interrelationships within friend groups as a significant source of learning engagement in the microsystem. A person who is an active player may influence or be influenced by people

and their surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Children must use social skills to negotiate, build relationships, and describe their roles through play (Leong et al., 2002). Vygotsky believed children imitate the behavior of their social contacts in life and construct rules as they play, assuming different roles (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Vygotskian thought about play emphasizes the following: 1) the interrelated nature of learning and play, 2) the variable and active roles that adults can adopt during children's play, and 3) how play may contribute to and foster children's social, emotional, physical, academic and cognitive development in a holistic and mutually supportive manner (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019).

By considering the importance of the classroom's social context and the role of play in children's learning, educators can use play as a framework in their classrooms, provide learning opportunities, and facilitate children's learning and development (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Lev Vygotsky saw play as one of the first steps toward extending children's linguistic capabilities (Stagnitti et al., 2016). It may be said that language is the first and most crucial way of verbally representing the life we see around us (Hromek & Roffey, 2009; Stagnitti et al., 2016). According to Vygotsky, language is a social tool that has social origins, arises through interaction with others and leads to social interaction. Language acts as the primary tool for mediating between the elementary mental functions (perception, attention, memory) and the higher skills (consciousness, meaning, intentionality), that is, between stimulus and response. Language scripts create a helpful schema that mediates between thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, thus regulating human social behaviour (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Children learn the language of their community in a social context where they both hear and

participate in language interactions (Vygotsky, 1980). Children not only respond to words but also to context, body language and facial expressions to comprehend a situation.

Additionally, Vygotsky believed children imitate the behaviour of their social contacts in life and construct rules as they play, assuming different roles (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017), which can be an essential source of social and emotional development (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada., n.d.; Cousins & Cunnah, 2017). Play provides a well-framed situation whereby children can practice, learn and develop their skills (Stagnitti et al., 2016). It is believed that through play, children expand their conceptual abilities, knowledge of the world, and abstract thought; in this sense, play can be considered a leading activity that guides children's development (Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

Vygotsky developed our understanding of how children learn through his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, an area of potential learning that a child might reach through social interaction and help from adults and more knowledgeable peers (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). According to Vygotsky (1980), the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is conceptualized as the "distance" or gap between what an individual can achieve independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of a more competent person, such as a teacher or a knowledgeable peer (Vygotsky, 1978). While this "distance" is measurable and dynamic, changing over time as the individual develops, it can also be thought of as a metaphorical zone that represents the potential for learning and growth in a given developmental stage. Scaffolding, as related to Vygotskian theory, plays a crucial role within this framework. It refers to the structured and intentional support

provided by others, enabling individuals to bridge this gap in their ZPD and move toward independent mastery.

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When considering this model in an educational and care setting, the primary proximal process is the interaction among children and their educators. Educators with a clear identification of what a child can do and what a child can do with help can scaffold children's learning and development (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Educators who adopt social constructivism perspectives not only observe children exploring and discovering but also facilitate their learning and development by adopting practices and policies. Educators can use various methods to facilitate children's language, academic, cognitive and skills development (Schwartz et al., 2016). Educators can mediate an experience by scaffolding words and resources around the child and challenge them. For example, they might guide children 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 (Schwartz et al., 2016). Scripts, hints, explanations, models, and role-plays are other examples of strategies that educators can use to scaffold the development of thought concepts and behaviours and assist the process of integration into a framework of internal meaning (Schwartz et al., 2016). The extent to which educators are able to adjust the learning opportunities to individual specific characteristics, or their needs and abilities, is crucial in promoting children's development of their language, academic,

cognitive, and social skills (Langeloo et al., 2019). In particular, both the quantity and quality of interactions contribute to children's development (Zheng et al., 2021).

Context of the Study

This study was conducted in Canada's easternmost province, Newfoundland and Labrador, which is located within the Atlantic region of the country. Data for this research were collected from schools within the province. The primary mission of school is to support parents, families, and communities in fostering the best possible future for their children (Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Department of Education, 2023 September 5th). In Newfoundland and Labrador, children typically start kindergarten at the age of five. Kindergarten in this province serves as the foundational year of formal education for young children. These programs usually run for the full school year, starting in September and ending in June (Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Department of Education, 2023 September 5th). The educational approach employed in Newfoundland and Labrador for kindergarten is centered around play-based learning, enabling children to acquire knowledge through hands-on activities, exploration, and play activities (Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Department of Education, 2023 September 5th). This pedagogical approach yields cognitive, social, physical, and developmental benefits for children (Bodrova & Leong, 2010). Play-based pedagogy fosters an environment in which children explore, recognize, communicate, take risks, and construct meaning through play (Bodrova & Leong, 2010). In essence, play-based learning encompasses educational activities that occur within a play-

oriented setting, where children learn by actively engaging with objects in their surroundings (Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Department of Education, 2023 September 5th).

The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education outlines its kindergarten curriculum as a framework designed to support early learning in literacy, numeracy, and social skills, laying the foundation for future educational success (Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Department of Education, 2023, September 5th). According to the department, the curriculum also emphasizes activities that foster creativity, promote physical development, and encourage meaningful social interaction.

Definition of Key Terms

Within the literature, there are diverse definitions of key terms of the study, such as social skills development, bilingual individuals, and newcomers. This part aims to ensure conceptual clarity and precision in the discourse. To this end, a comprehensive explanation of these key terminologies, presented in an orderly manner, is organized alphabetically for enhanced comprehension and scholarly rigour.

Bilingual: In this study, bilingual learners are defined as young children who are learning English as a second language while using their mother tongues at home. These children live in families that speak the home language, which is a minority language in that society. The dominant language is the language used in the community and official institutions such as child care or educational systems (Hopp et al., 2019).

Kindergarten students: In Newfoundland and Labrador, a child who is five years old has the option to attend kindergarten before the first grade. Kindergarten is not compulsory in this province, but it is available as a full-day program in public schools. It is worth noting that there is a maximum class size of 20 students for kindergarten (Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada. Department of Education, 2023, May 16th).

Dominant language: The dominant language is the majority language spoken within the community and is also the language employed by official institutions like childcare and educational systems. In the case of this study, which is conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador, English is the dominant language.

Newcomers: The term "newcomer" encompasses individuals who were born in a foreign country and have recently relocated to a host country (Oikonomidou et al., 2019). This term encompasses a range of individuals, including immigrants, refugees, and undocumented migrants (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). These individuals have moved to their new country, either willingly or under pressure, for various reasons, such as seeking improved economic opportunities, reuniting with family members, or due to political factors (Brown et al., 2020). Newcomers are often categorized as newcomers until they adapt to the culture and language of the host country (Oikonomidou et al., 2019).

Play-based learning: Play-based learning refers to learning while at play, and it unifies play and educational pedagogy (Danniels & Pyle, 2018; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Play-based learning focuses on children's interests and abilities through engaging in developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

Social skills development: Social skills are a set of learned behaviours (Ng et al., 2018; Tersì & Matsouka, 2020) consisting of both verbal and nonverbal behaviours (Hajovsky et al., 2021) that facilitate the initiation and maintenance of a positive social relationship (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Hromek & Roffey, 2009; Jones et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2018). Social skills development involves not only acquiring knowledge and skills but also changing or developing values, beliefs, attitudes, and everyday behaviours (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). They are also sensitive, responsive and adaptive to the situation, as behaviours considered appropriate for one situation might not be appropriate for another. Social skills are often situationally specific, so in addition to having certain skills, children should also know when to apply them (Hajovsky et al., 2021).

Summary

This chapter introduces the concept of the study. It outlines the background of the research and identifies the problem, purpose, significance of the study, research questions, and theoretical framework of the study. The key words of this study are also defined in this chapter. The dissertation has the following additional chapters: a review of the literature, methodology, findings, discussion 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 factors related to social skills development, bilingual newcomers, and kindergarten with an emphasis on play-based learning. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology used for the 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 educators and parents and the results from observing participants. In Chapter 5, the study's overall qualitative findings 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 the findings. The recommendations and conclusions are presented in the fifth chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Despite the recognized significance of social skills development in individuals' lives, particularly during the early years (Gottfried & Polikoff, 2015; Jones et al., 2015), research indicates that some children start their formal schooling without the social skills needed to succeed (Ng et al., 2018). This challenge is further compounded for newcomer bilingual children, who may face additional hurdles, such as unfamiliarity with the host country's culture and a less developed command of the dominant language, which may serve as the primary mode of communication (Sosna & Mastergeorge, 2005). Various factors contribute to this issue, some of which could be addressed within early education and care settings. However, it is evident that these settings may currently lack the readiness to provide adequate opportunities for children to practice and develop their social skills (Le et al., 2019).

While research has explored the development of young children's social skills, most studies have focused on high-risk childhood populations, such as children with autism spectrum disorder who are challenged in social skills development. Few studies have focused on the development of social skills in young, newcomer bilingual children. According to Ștefan and Mică (2012) and Pentimonti et al. (2016), studying the social skills development of such young bilingual children is an important priority for future research. Newcomer bilingual children experience communication challenges because of their language limitations. These language limitations can imbue children with negative feelings, such as frustration and hesitation in their relationships with others and can inhibit

them from interacting with others (Sohrabi & Maich, 2021). Such barriers raise concerns about if and to what extent newcomer bilingual kindergarten students develop appropriate social skills and what barriers and facilitating factors exist in their social skills development.

This chapter is structured into three primary sections: First, social skills development, which examines the various definitions of social skills. This section delves into the significance of social skills development in an individual's life and the potential negative consequences of underdeveloped social skills. Subsequently, it explores the critical period for social skills development and factors that influence this phase. Lastly, it presents methods and interventions for teaching and enhancing social skills. Second, bilingual newcomers, with an explanation of who in the Canadian population are considered newcomers and bilingual individuals; this section provides a brief overview of the challenges faced by this group in their host country. These challenges span various aspects of life and educational settings and include barriers to parental involvement in their children's education. Included in this section is a discussion about three distinct types of practices and policy implementations that can aid bilingual newcomer children in educational settings. These include educational practices and policies, culture-based practices and policies, and strategies for enhancing parental involvement. Third, kindergarten and play-based learning commences with an introduction to the kindergarten curriculum in Newfoundland and Labrador. This section explores the concept of play-based learning as an underlying pedagogy in the context of Canadian kindergarten in Newfoundland and Labrador. Different types of play and approaches within educational

settings and their role in children's learning are subsequently presented. The section proceeds to explain the role of play in social skills development and identifies the key influential factors in play-based learning. Additionally, the section discusses assessment tools used in this context.

This organization of the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the topics covered, offering insights into social skills development, newcomers, and play-based learning in kindergarten settings.

Social Skills

Traditionally, social and emotional learning were considered suitable only for those who had experienced a crisis or had been identified as having a significant difficulty or disability. This learning delivery or provision typically took the form of individual counseling, group therapy, or social skills training to address the needs of a vulnerable minority. This paradigm is now shifting with the implementation of more inclusive pedagogies that support social skills development at a universal level within education. However, there will always be students who benefit from additional support and teaching (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

According to Tersi and Matsouka (2020), there is no single definition of social skills, primarily because of the diverse range of related characteristics, abilities, and behaviours as well as the complexity of the behavioural and environmental interaction necessary for the acquisition and performance of social skills. There are numerous existing definitions of social skills, but most agree that social skills fundamentally encompass an array of learned

behaviors (Ng et al., 2018; Tersi & Matsouka, 2020). These behaviors encompass both verbal aspects, such as the expression of greetings or conveying of kind sentiments towards others, and nonverbal facets, including smiles and gestures, as elucidated by Hajovsky et al. (2021). The overarching purpose of these behaviors is to facilitate the initiation and sustenance of positive social relationships (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Hromek & Roffey, 2009; Jones et al., 2015; Wu et al. 2018).

It is imperative to recognize that the significance of social skills transcends mere individual well-being. These skills are integral to the cultivation of healthy relationships and the nurturing of compassionate communities (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Moreover, social skills are dynamic, adapting to the nuances of varied situations. Behaviors deemed appropriate in one context may not hold the same relevance in another. This contextual sensitivity underscores the importance of children not only possessing these skills but also developing the discernment to apply them judiciously. For instance, the act of cooperation may be actively encouraged and highly beneficial during collaborative group projects, yet it may not find resonance or appropriateness in the context of an end-of-year achievement test (Hajovsky et al., 2021).

The multifaceted nature of social skills extends their influence beyond mere interpersonal dynamics. These skills play a pivotal role in fostering peer acceptance, nurturing friendships (Chow et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2018), facilitating adaptation to the school environment (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2018), and equipping individuals with the capacity to navigate the complex demands of their social surroundings (Jones et al.,

2015; Ng et al., 2018). Social skills development encompasses not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also entails the evolution of values, beliefs, attitudes, and everyday behaviors, signifying a holistic transformation process (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). In essence, the significance of social skills transcends the individual, contributing to the foundation of robust and compassionate social ecosystems, including within schools and kindergarten classrooms.

Significance of Social Skills Development in Individuals' Lives

Social skills development plays a crucial role in individuals' lives. Extensive research has demonstrated that social skills development is essential for young children's well-being (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Maich et al., 2018; Tersi & Matsouka, 2020; Young et al., 2021). Researchers suggest that well-being includes mental, physical, and social aspects (Tersi & Matsouka, 2020). Higher-level social skills can reduce subjective stress (Hromek & Roffey, 2009), increase positive feelings and opinions about oneself (Laguna et al., 2020), improve coping abilities, limit drug and alcohol addiction, mediate aggression (Hromek & Roffey, 2009), and increase feelings of well-being.

Research has indicated that, in conjunction with cognitive competence (e.g., reading, writing, and critical thinking skills), social skills (e.g., communication skills, cooperation) is a significant predictor of children's academic achievement (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). The centrality of this argument suggests that social skills might not make children smarter, but they can help children relate and work better with educators and other children who are motivated to learn and, as a consequence, promote academic engagement (Ng et al., 2018).

Thus, interpersonal relationships developed via social skills are critical academic enablers for children in schools (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Ng et al., 2018). Children with higher levels of interpersonal skills appear to build better relationships with their educators, which can foster greater involvement in the classroom, contribute to more secure feelings to explore the classroom, and initiate more positive feelings in early education and care settings, which directly influences academic achievement (Ng et al., 2018).

Social skills are also essential in developing and maintaining successful relationships with peers (Ng et al., 2018). Researchers have documented that some of the most socially significant outcomes for children and youth include peer acceptance (Bodovski et al., 2021; Ng et al., 2018), as children's peer relations in educational settings predict educational success (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Research has indicated that having a higher number of friends leads to more positive school perceptions and advanced academic performance, whereas children who experience peer rejection are at risk of lower academic performance, higher school avoidance, and negative school perceptions (Van Rhijn et al., 2019).

Negative Outcomes of Having Less-Developed Social Skills. Having lesser-developed social skills means that children are less capable of building relationships with others, managing their emotions, displaying self-control and engaging in the social context (Ng et al., 2018). The challenge is two-fold, as it requires the acquisition of social skills and the additional ability to use these skills appropriately. Some children do not have adequate knowledge about a specific social skill, while some children possess the knowledge but do not perform in desired circumstances and thus show they have performance deficits (Ng et

al., 2018). To show fluency, in addition to recognizing the appropriate skills and behaviours, children must demonstrate flexibility and know when and how to apply these learned skills (Hajovsky et al., 2021).

Research has shown that the failure to acquire social skills poses many identified risks in children's futures, such as unfavourable school outcomes (Aksoy & Baran, 2020; Ng et al., 2018); peer rejection (Ng et al., 2018; Van Rhijn et al., 2019); social isolation due to poor interactions and an inability to form social relationships (Aksoy & Baran, 2020; Ng et al., 2018; Van Rhijn et al., 2019); myriad critical issues such as crime involvement, drug abuse, and depression; and destructive and negative actions such as aggression and antisocial behaviours (Aksoy & Baran, 2020; Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Clearly, social skills development plays a significant role in individuals' lives.

Jones et al.'s (2015) groundbreaking study showed how key outcomes of late adolescence and early adulthood were predicted by children's educators according to their ratings of the children's social skills development. The authors used the link between social competence measured in kindergarten and outcomes measured 13 to 19 years later in essential sectors of education, employment, criminal justice, substance use, and mental health domains. Overall, the results indicated statistically significant and unique associations between teacher-assessed social skills and outcomes in all domains examined. These findings demonstrated that early support for the development of social skills is critical.

Golden Period of Time in Social Skills Development. The early years of life are considered the most vulnerable period in children's lives; however, as a result of the rapid

development in all areas, such as mental and physical development, it may be considered a golden period. This golden period of time is significant in social skills development (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Several studies suggest that children's social skills development in the early years lays the foundation for the development of more advanced social skills in later life, greater career achievement in the future (Hagan-Burke et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2015; Van Rhijn et al., 2019), long-term academic success (Hagan-Burke et al., 2016), and the ability to build successful relationships in their personal and social life (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Van Rhijn et al., 2019).

Attention to children's social skills at an early age aids in the early identification of any difficulties present in social skills development, and as a result early interventions can be implemented to improve lagging social skills (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Interventions and investments during the early years have a higher rate of return than interventions at a later stage of life (Broekhuizen et al., 2016). If social skills deficits in early childhood do not receive adequate support, they can impact various aspects of individuals' lives in the future, as discussed above.

Influential Factors in Social Skills Development during the Early Years of Life

Social skills, such as cooperation, taking turns, and communication, are mainly practiced through social interaction (Washington-Nortey et al., 2020). During the first several years of life, most children's dominant social interaction circle includes interaction with family members and with educators and peers in early education and care settings

(Bodovski et al., 2021; Hajovsky et al., 2021; Penney et al., 2019). The pivotal roles played by these factors are elaborated upon in the following section.

Family. Social skills development begins with infant-parent interactions (Bodovski et al., 2021; Hajovsky et al., 2021). Most children initially learn social skills from family members like parents, older siblings, and extended family members (Ng et al., 2018; Washington-Nortey et al., 2020). Besides individual differences, parents and families' situations affect children's social skills development. Previous studies have shown that family expectations or family cultural expectations (Penney et al., 2019), the family's economic situation (Hagan-Burke et al., 2016), parental education (Hagan-Burke et al., 2016), and parental awareness about the importance of the early years in children's development (Le et al., 2019) may contribute to children's social skills development. Economically disadvantaged families and families with low parental education are more likely to face challenges in children's social skills development (Hagan-Burke et al., 2016). Vitiello's study suggests that different kinds of family relationships can contribute to children's social skills and how close relationships with parents or caregivers at home can support children in forming close relationships with educators at school (Vitiello et al., 2022).

Despite the vital role of the family in children's social skills development, nowadays, both parents work outside the home environment, which leads to many children going to childcare at a very young age. As a result, social skills development cannot be associated

only with the children's family circle, as part of the responsibility of children's socialization is transferred to early education and care settings (Aksoy & Baran, 2020).

Early Childhood Education. While families are primary care deliverers, research indicates that the most potent influence on children's development outside the family is their attendance in quality early childhood education (Penney et al., 2019). Early childhood education is defined as regulated early learning for children prior to kindergarten, delivered by professional educators within a specific curriculum framework for children under 5 years old (Penney et al., 2019; Young et al., 2020). Research determining the extent of the role that the early education and care settings play in children's social skills development is challenging because children's social skills development is a product of both early education and care settings and non-early education and care settings (Downey & Von Hippel, 2019). As most children enter childcare, they are introduced to interactive learning scenarios that help in appropriately building relationships with peers and educators (Wu et al., 2018). Importantly, childcare settings are the second most frequent environment in which children spend time, with the quality of the programs offered playing a significant role in children's developmental outcomes (Downey & Von Hippel, 2019; Penney et al., 2019).

Quality early childhood education requires learning environment aspects such as small group instruction, low staff-to-children ratios, adherence to health and safety policies, highly trained staff, explicit curriculum frameworks and well-planned physical environments (Young et al., 2021). Quality early childhood education programming has been associated with learning positive behaviors, such as self-regulation and social skills

(Young et al., 2021). Studies also reveal that quality programming can mediate adverse risk factors for children (Penney et al., 2019), predict children's school readiness (Penney et al., 2019), increase children's early academic skills (Broekhuizen et al., 2016), enhance children's social-emotional development (Broekhuizen et al., 2016), reduce children's behaviour problems (Broekhuizen et al., 2016), increase the learning of positive behaviours such as self-regulation and social skills (Downey & Von Hippel, 2019), contribute to better transitions to kindergarten, and allow children to adapt more positively to school settings than children with no early childhood education experience (Broekhuizen et al., 2016).

The preschool period is considered critical to identifying and reducing social skills deficits (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Downey & Von Hippel, 2019; Penney et al., 2019). Quality early childhood education can aid young children and their families in receiving effective interventions earlier in life (Penney et al., 2019) and can help identify any developmental concerns in the early years (Penney et al., 2019).

Kindergarten. Kindergarten is a critical time in children's social skills development as it is the transition from the less-formal setting of preschool into elementary school, which is a more formal setting. School transition is accompanied by many changes in children's social relationships and day-to-day routines (Broekhuizen et al., 2016). Children during this developmental period tend to move to more formal settings and attend classrooms with new peers and educators. They also have to navigate a new social world within schools where they are the youngest children in attendance and require more autonomous functioning to get through the school day. Moreover, children's experiences in classrooms require an

increased academic focus and higher teacher expectations for their behavioral skills (e.g., resolving interpersonal conflicts and sitting attentively for a longer time) with less teacher support (Broekhuizen et al., 2016). These substantial changes may lead to more social pressures with reorganizing children's routines. As a result, kindergarten is a sensitive period during which young children are more susceptible to new environmental experiences and influences (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Chow et al., 2021).

Experiencing an emotionally supportive and well-organized classroom in the preschool year is essential to preparing children for these transition-related challenges (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2018). Likewise, having a high-quality environment in kindergarten may be equally necessary to maintaining previously acquired social skills and extending them to a new setting (Broekhuizen et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2018). Moreover, the transition into kindergarten is likely to be a challenging experience for most children, and a high-quality education environment and educators' awareness about the importance of these years in children's social skills development are critical during this year (Broekhuizen et al., 2016).

Teaching Social Skills in the Early Years of Children's Lives. Social skills, like reading or math skills, progress through developmental stages, starting from being nonexistent and gradually moving toward an emerging state, proficient, and finally accomplished. During children's development, some of their social skills will be relatively strong, while others will be relatively weak or infrequently used (Ng et al., 2018). Considering the importance of the several first years of life in social skills development and

the significant role early education and care settings play in children's social skills development, educators need to be familiar with methods of teaching and enhancing social skills and use them to support children's social skills development (Tersi & Matsouka, 2020).

Until the late 1960s, the dominant teaching paradigm was characterized by information transfer from educators to learners, which benefited learners through instructional technologies such as books, lectures, and articles. Although this teaching method is still common in some educational settings, pedagogy has moved the way we understand how children learn onto a broader understanding of teaching and learning processes (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). It is now understood that effective teaching in the early years of education requires a combination of less-structured instruction, sensitive and warm interactions, responsive feedback, and verbal engagement in a classroom environment (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012).

Nowadays, educators are more aware of the significance of social skills development in children's lives, and the enhancement of children's social skills has gained more attention in early education and care settings; however, much more can be done to facilitate children's social skills development (Tersi & Matsouka, 2020). There is agreement that enhancing children's social skills development requires developmentally appropriate practices. Some early childhood practitioners assert that, for developmental reasons, teacher-led, explicit curriculum lessons are not appropriate for enhancing young children's social skills development (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Pedagogy for social skills development requires

an approach that fosters child-centered instruction, interaction, discussion, and reflection on previous experiences alongside building new knowledge and skills in early learners and not just reading a textbook or being told what to do by someone with authority (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Social skills development can be supported by experience-based learning tools like play. Play creates a forum for developing skill sets, attitudes, and values that build resilience, maintain well-being (Hromek & Roffey, 2009; Sohrabi, 2019) and facilitate social skills development through interaction, observation, modelling, imitating, experiencing, testing and receiving feedback (Tersi & Matsouka, 2020).

Teaching through Play. Early education and care settings can typically intervene in social skills development with prevention, early intervention, or treatment programs. Play is a method that can be used at all three levels (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012). Play-based learning can create a more appropriate forum for children's social skills development than the traditional learning approach, which is mainly guided by educators (Tersi & Matsouka, 2020). Play provides children with opportunities to practice a social dialogue in which they must hold joint attention, set common goals, jointly plan, negotiate, problem-solve, role play, demonstrate self-control, and activate emotional knowledge (Le et al., 2019). Thus, studies have shown that children who engage in play more frequently have more developed social skills and fewer disruptive behaviours than children who engage in play less frequently (Le et al., 2019). A groundbreaking study that compared the social skills development and emotional wellbeing of children who had attended a highly academically oriented preschool with children who had attended a preschool with less emphasis on

academic achievements and less-structured activities revealed that children who attended preschools with a highly academic environment showed decreased social skills development with internalizing problem behaviors, including greater anxiety, lower self-esteem, and poorer attitudes toward school than children who had been enrolled in a less academically oriented preschool (Le et al., 2019).

The power of using play to teach social skills lies in the interactional situation created through play activities (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Play-based learning provides the potential for learning through social interaction, connectedness, meaningful participation, cooperation, and collaboration and possesses many possibilities that encourage children's social skills development (Hromek & Roffey, 2009; Terssi & Matsouka, 2020). Play allows children to practice different social roles, learn social rules, and develop social skills (Terssi & Matsouka, 2020). Creating an environment in which children can engage in social networking is essential for social skills development (Aksoy & Baran, 2020; Terssi & Matsouka, 2020). While children experience processes such as observing, trying, distinguishing, and repeating during play, they also can learn a range of social skills such as experiencing different feelings, finding a solution applicable to a problem, trying new things, coping with anger, adapting to new conditions, and fulfilling the responsibilities given to them, all while experiencing them in person (Aksoy & Baran, 2020). No matter the objective, every face-to-face play opportunity provides a social experience in which players must use self-regulation and social skills to play successfully with others (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

Play is fun for children and, therefore, highly motivating. The natural affiliation between children, play, and the desire to have fun with others makes play an ideal vehicle for teaching social skills (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Play as a learning tool provides essential contributions to meeting young children's needs for having fun, moving, and learning. Fun and humour stimulate creativity as the brain moves from a cognitive, rule-bound state to a more positive and relaxed state where the whole body is engaged in problem-solving (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Positive emotions play a role in broadening people's capacity to learn. Positive emotions enhance optimistic thinking, which leads to more creative problem-solving capacities (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Positive emotions reduce stress and encourage both emotional and physical resilience (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Experiencing positive emotions generated through having fun together is a bonding experience and increases the sense of belonging to a group (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

Tersi and Matsouka (2020) examined the effect of a 4-week play-based activity program on the development of social skills in children (4–6 years) during break times in the kindergarten schoolyard. The findings of this study showed that implementing a play-based activity program positively impacted children's social skills. Aksoy and Baran (2020) also compared the social skills development of kindergarten children who participated in play-based social skills training with another group with no intervention. This study concluded that the social skills of children participating in play-based social skills training were significantly higher than those of children in the control group in the areas of communication, adaptation, self-control, and prosocial behaviours.

Intervention. Teaching through play is considered an appropriate approach for teaching and enhancing social skills development of most children (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Le et al., 2019; Tersi & Matsouka, 2020). However, some children might struggle in some areas and need additional support to enhance or develop social skills, so educators can use interventions to support children's social skills development (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). After identifying areas of social skills that need additional support, appropriate interventions or teaching methods should be found to help children develop their social skills. It is unlikely that a single intervention will be effective for all children who need support to develop their social skills because the needs of people vary, and certain interventions might work better for specific situations and needs (Ellis & Almeida, 2014). Some of these methods are discussed below.

Adult-mediated Approach. In adult-mediated interventions, an adult (e.g., educator, parent, or therapist) leads, teaches, and reinforces social skills interventions. The goal is that children, after learning social skills, will generalize and apply the skills to peers and use them in social situations (Ellis & Almeida 2014). This group of interventions is more appropriate for the beginning of social skills development with teaching in which intense instruction is needed. These methods are also suitable for complex subjects and when protecting a person's dignity is required, such as with issues related to sex or hygiene (Ellis & Almeida 2014; McKinnon & Krempa, 2002). The adult-mediated approach increases the frequency of practicing target skills by creating opportunities for them and receiving immediate feedback and reinforcement (McKinnon & Krempa, 2002). However, one of the

downsides of this group of interventions is that adult dependency might arise, and children might find problems in generalizing the learned skills in interactions with peers (Ellis & Almeida, 2014).

Peer-mediated Approach. Peer-mediated interventions are recommended to help children practice and improve various skills, including social skills (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). This approach has been one of the most effective strategies in establishing a foundation for the teaching and progression of social skills (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Peer-mediated interventions represent an educational approach in which peers are provided with training and support from educators to act as intervention agents, facilitate behavioural interventions and instructional programs, and collaborate in social interactions with peers who are less socially competent (McKinnon & Krempa, 2002; Van Rhijn et al., 2019). In this approach, the educator stays at a distance and intervenes when it is needed (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; McKinnon & Krempa, 2002). In this method, children actively participate in social interactions (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Peer-mediated interventions have greater generalizability, and there is an increased chance that the target children will use the learned social skills in other social settings (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Choosing appropriate peers is essential in this method. Older peers, peers with age-appropriate social skills and language development, and peers who are interested in helping others and reliably respond to directions are found to be more helpful in this method (Ellis & Almeida, 2014). Also, having same-gender peers facilitates the teaching of appropriate gender skills (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; McKinnon & Krempa, 2002).

Reinforcement. Reinforcement techniques stimulate children to increase occurrences of the target social skills (Ng et al., 2018). This method works for almost all children, especially those who are not strongly motivated to engage in certain social skills (Ellis & Almeida 2014). Reinforcement can strengthen behaviour through different types of rewards such as social rewards (e.g., high fives, notes sent home to parents, educators' verbal praise), material rewards (e.g., stickers, tokens to exchange for food or something favourable), or privilege-based rewards (e.g., extra break time, games, parties, computer time) (Laguna et al., 2020; Ellis & Almeida, 2014). Also, group rewards for all children in the class who can receive a reward when meeting a specific expectation are an excellent way to keep all children excited about meeting expectations (Hajovsky et al., 2021). Reinforcement is better to be given immediately after the occurrence of target skills or behaviours. Also, they should be specific to an action, as this way the child understands that the reinforcers are related to the act. Reinforcers should also be given more frequently at the beginning to let the children know what behaviour is expected and gradually fade as social reinforcement builds on itself (Hajovsky et al., 2021).

Visual Support. Visuals such as pictures, written words, photographs, or commercially available icons can be used to facilitate teaching social skills to children (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Visuals are appropriate for all children but are especially beneficial for those with language impairments or who are learning a language (Ellis & Almeida, 2014). They can help in transferring and structuring a message and help children focus better on a target skill or behaviour (Van Rhijn et al., 2019). Visuals should

be used when some pre-taught meanings and expectations are introduced and the correct response has been taught; for example, the meaning of colour codes (e.g., red: hello, yellow: goodbye) should be taught before using them (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; Van Rhijn et al., 2019).

Social Stories (TM). (TM) is a trademarked intervention developed by Carol Gray. Social Stories are brief stories that describe what happened in a social situation and what children are expected to do in similar cases (Ellis & Almeida, 2014). Or they may be about complex social concepts and directions for successful and appropriate responses during those situations. The goal is to help the target child understand social situations, expectations, social cues, and social rules that anyone might encounter through interactions in everyday life (Aksoy & Baran, 2020). They are usually individualized and implemented one on one to meet individual needs but can be implemented through a small group or the entire class when several children have the same needs (Ellis & Almeida, 2014). A small group is more effective when targeting specific skill sets for younger children. The entire class can also be used to teach classroom routines and procedures, and this method works better for more mature children (Aksoy & Baran, 2020). Usually, the social story is read several times before implementing and practicing the skill described (Ellis & Almeida, 2014). Educators can develop discussion through or after reading the story by asking questions and engaging children in discussion to deepen their understanding (Aksoy & Baran, 2020; Ellis & Almeida, 2014).

Social Stories are an appropriate method for teaching social skills as they are engaging and interesting for children. Children may learn the set social skills through imitating and modeling the skills explained in the story (Aksoy & Baran, 2020; Ellis & Almeida, 2014). In one study, Aksoy and Baran (2020), through a pretest-post-test and experimental design, examined the social skills of kindergarten children who participated in storytelling-based social skills training and a control group with no intervention. Their study concluded that the social skills of children participating in storytelling-based social skills training were at a significantly higher level than those of children in the control group.

Video Modelling. This group of interventions uses video as a tool to teach social skills, allowing learners to observe and imitate them. Video modelling is more appropriate for children with solid imitation abilities (Hajovsky et al., 2021; McKinnon & Krempa, 2002) and those who are interested in videos (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; McKinnon & Krempa, 2002). Video modelling can be used as a preliminary step for teaching skills, and children should watch the video several times before introducing and practicing the demonstrated skills (McKinnon & Krempa, 2002). Video modelling can be followed by opportunities such as discussion and roleplay activities to create opportunities for children to increase their knowledge and practice the demonstrated skills for meeting socially desired expectations (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; Hajovsky et al., 2021). Educators can use commercially available videos or make their own videos and show themselves in them. They can also show some errors in the behaviour in the video and discuss them in the classroom (McKinnon & Krempa, 2002).

In some cases, a single intervention might not help meet children's needs, and several interventions and follow-up activities might need to be applied to achieve the goals. Follow-up activities such as roleplay, discussion, and drawing can help children engage in learning processes, increase children's insight into the skills and practice them through interpersonal relationships (Ellis & Almeida, 2014; McKinnon & Krempa, 2002).

Bilingual Newcomers

Recent changes in Western societies, such as globalization and immigration along with civil wars, natural disasters, and political turmoil, have contributed to an increase in the number of young newcomers in attendance in educational and care settings (Hopp et al., 2019; Langeloo et al., 2019; Moinolmolki et al., 2016; Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). Canada's newcomer population has likewise flourished. The immigrant population in Canada is expected to increase considerably in the near future; even in provinces that currently have lower levels of diversity like Newfoundland and Labrador, the immigrant population is expected to increase significantly (Statistics Canada's projections, 2022). Almost 50% of Canada's population will be either first-generation or second-generation immigrants by 2036 (Statistics Canada's projections, 2022). First-generation refers to immigrants that have recently arrived; those born in the host country to at least one immigrant parent are described as second-generation (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

Immigrants are considered newcomers until they adjust to the culture and language of a host country. The term “newcomer” refers to any foreign-born individual who has recently arrived in a host country (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). The terms “immigrant”,

“refugee”, and “undocumented” all fall under the umbrella of newcomer (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). A refugee is a person who has been forced to flee their home country due to fear of persecution, violence, or conflict. This may be based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees seek safety and protection in another country, often through resettlement programs (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). A large degree of variability exists in the length of time associated with the term newcomer, as the chronological time frame ranges from 1 to 10 years (Langeloo et al., 2019; Oikonomidou et al., 2019). For example, Oikonomidou et al. (2019) suggest that those who have been in the host country for ten years or less are considered newcomers, while Cain (2018) views this time as one year or less.

Newcomers bring their cultures, customs, religions, and languages with them (Langeloo et al., 2019; Oikonomidou et al., 2019). They have moved from their countries of origin voluntarily or involuntarily and for various reasons, for example, to improve their economic opportunities, to reunify families, or for political considerations (Brown et al., 2020). Understanding these matters can help schools anticipate and plan for the challenges some students may bring with them to school (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). Newcomers to Canada are primarily immigrants and then refugees. Immigrants choose to leave their homeland for specific reasons, for example, to continue their education in a better university, while refugees come for protection from war, persecution, or other insecurities (Li et al., 2016). Unlike most immigrants, refugees tend to leave their homes involuntarily (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Moinolmolki et al., 2016).

The majority of newcomers are bilingual or multilingual. Bilingual children refer to those who speak a language at home that is different from the dominant language and who often start learning the dominant language systematically when they enter early education and care settings (Langeloo et al., 2019). Bilinguals have significant individual differences in language skills, though it has often been argued that bilingual children have lower language skills in the dominant language (Langeloo et al., 2019).

Newcomers' Challenges in a Host Country. Newcomer children can experience challenges in the host country that are related to their life situations before and after immigration and how and to what extent their host country is prepared to meet their needs (Hopp et al., 2019). Understanding the challenges that newcomers experience can help in preparing a plan tailored to their specific situations and needs (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). These challenges are presented in the following sections.

Challenges in Life. Newcomers face challenges in a new country that can affect or impact their well-being and school success. One of the main struggles newcomers face is adapting to the host country's new language and culture, which is an ongoing process of adapting, adjusting and accepting a new language and unfamiliar culture (Li et al., 2016; Moinolmolki et al., 2016) that can be stressful for children (Moinolmolki et al., 2016). Social integration is instrumental in newcomers' psychological well-being; however, newcomers might experience isolation from their native-born peers (Kaufmann, 2021; Moinolmolki et al., 2016). Newcomers report actively seeking out multicultural friendships to learn about other cultures and benefit from a diverse social network (Moinolmolki et al.,

2016). However, they also report having challenges in establishing friendships with domestic youth as they might have different interests and perspectives because of differences in lifestyle and culture (Moinolmolki et al., 2016). Moreover, newcomers are more likely to experience discrimination based on race, class, religion, language, status in the country, and so forth than their native-born friends (Kaufmann, 2021; Oikonomidou et al., 2019), which has been shown to be related to low self-esteem and an increased risk of dropping out of school (Kaufmann, 2021).

Newcomer children may not receive sufficient parental support due to various reasons. For instance, some newcomer parents work long hours during the day, resulting in some children being at home without adult supervision (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). Also, newcomer children have a higher poverty rate than native-born children. Low income refers to insufficient access to common amenities and opportunities, food insecurity and crowded housing conditions as well as vulnerability to and difficulty in coping with stressors, including medical and mental health problems (Moinolmolki et al., 2016). Furthermore, if newcomer children learn to cope in the new environment faster than their parents, they may find themselves performing adult functions in their families (e.g., as language translators and as agents in economic transactions), which can lead to stress and role friction (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

Challenges in Early Education and Care Settings. In addition to the challenges newcomers face in their lives, which can impact their life, early education and care settings may not always be well-prepared to meet their specific needs. Canadian educators tend to be

white, middle-class, female and monolingual, which is not in sync with the recent demographic changes in these societies. Despite a significant increase in the number of immigrants in Canada, the representation of diversity among educators does not align with the diversity among students (Kaufmann, 2021). Moreover, since English and French are recognized as Canada's official languages, bilingual programs in languages other than English or French are rare, especially in provinces with smaller newcomer populations such as Newfoundland and Labrador. It is frequently assumed that because educators do not speak multiple languages and the dominant language may be the only one represented in their classrooms, there are no options other than using the national language as the exclusive language of instruction, and in some cases using other languages is not allowed (Cummins, 2017). To reject a child's language in school is to reject a central part of their identity. This implicit rejection of the student's identity may undermine their confidence and reduce the likelihood that they will actively participate in classroom instruction (Cummins, 2017, 2019).

Although scholars have been concerned with the schooling of newcomer children residing within Western countries for decades, there is still a lag between scholars' recommendations based on their research and the practices within the field. Today, many educators and school professionals have minimal knowledge of the lives of their newcomer learners outside of school and their cultural background (Garcia et al., 2022; Moinolmolki et al., 2016). Also, there is a low likelihood of incorporating pedagogical approaches that reflect diversity, which prevents schools from providing support for their English language

learners (Cummins, 2017; Moinolmolki et al., 2016). Moreover, most schools in Canada, especially in provinces with smaller newcomer populations such as Newfoundland and Labrador, have insufficient support for newcomer children with educational gaps (Li et al., 2016). For example, there is an insufficient number of translators to facilitate communication (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Langeloo et al., 2019) and specialized English as a second language educators across Canada, including in Newfoundland and Labrador (Li et al., 2016).

Barriers to Newcomer Parents' Involvement in Their Children's Education.

Despite the importance of newcomer parents' involvement in their children's education and the emphasis on their academic achievement, newcomer parents were reported to be passive in connecting with educators regarding their children's schooling (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li et al., 2016). Some factors have contributed to this lack of parental involvement. On the one hand, parents reported that their social and academic integration experiences are often hampered by experiences of otherness and marginalization attributable to visible and invisible elements of their identities, which reduce their willingness to get involved (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). On the other hand, some newcomer parents are less involved in their children's education than native-born parents as they perceive that they face more significant barriers to involvement in their children's education than native-born parents. Some of these barriers include parental lack of proficiency with the English language and insufficient knowledge about the host public education system (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li et al., 2016; Soutullo et al., 2016); newcomer parents' own experiences with schools, cultural

and religious values, and the reasons they left their country of origin (Adelman & Taylor, 2015); financial issues and having to work multiple low-paying jobs (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Li et al., 2016); discrimination and the challenges of parenting children in an unfamiliar environment (Li et al., 2016); challenges in adjusting to a new culture and accessing community resources (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009); being busy with English learning or their education (Li et al., 2016); and isolation from other parents (Li et al., 2016).

Practices and Policies. Considering the challenges that exist in the lives of newcomer children, research has shown the benefit of organizations undergoing self-evaluation, realize that they might unwittingly perpetuate an alienating environment, and take steps to ensure that newcomer youth and their families feel respected and accepted (Garcia et al., 2022; Soutullo et al., 2016). By adopting such strategies, they can facilitate newcomers' adjustment and create a welcoming space for all children and their parents (Schwartz et al., 2016). These strategies are discussed in the following part.

Educational Practices and Policies. With growing diversity in the student population, increasing staff diversity can promote culturally relevant service provision (Kaufmann, 2021). Also, in linguistically diverse contexts, educators must be educated to accommodate differences as much as possible in the learning of all students, including language minority students (Li et al., 2016). When working with newcomers, educators should teach through a multilingual lens to support the whole child. They should develop effective educator-child relationships and teach in a way that engages their interests and abilities and motivates them to actively engage in learning. Educators should position

students from linguistically diverse and marginalized communities as powerful learners who are capable of generating knowledge and insights rather than as passive recipients of knowledge (Cummins, 2017, 2019).

One of the most potent ways of acknowledging newcomer students' identities and teaching the whole child is to affirm the value of their home languages (Cummins, 2017, 2019). Even though most educators assume that only the dominant language is appropriate for use in schools serving culturally and linguistically diverse students, an increasing number of educators have recently begun to explore ways in which children's home languages can contribute to their learning and help newcomer students adjust to educational settings in a new country (Cummins, 2017). Translanguaging, which is defined as the practice of encouraging children to use their home language alongside the dominant language, is a concept that emphasizes students' funds of knowledge (Cummins, 2017, 2019; Langeloo et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2021). There are many methods for making students' languages visible and audible within the school; for example, each day, newcomer students can introduce a word or phrase from their home language into the classroom and explain its meaning (Cummins, 2017). Also, dual language project work, that use both dominant language and home language of newcomer students, prevents students with limited English skills from not being active in the classroom and they can use their full cognitive capacities in carrying out projects (Cummins, 2017). Adding a play element to activities gives children more control over the activity as they are treated as knowledgeable actors in interacting with others. Also, through play, children are more motivated and

interested in communicating with others and using the new language (Langeloo et al., 2019). A collection of books in various languages and multilingual books written by students can be included in the school's library. Also, encouraging bilingual students to use the Internet can help them access first-language resources relevant to their schoolwork in English (Cummins, 2017).

Educators should also use strategies to stimulate children to use their developing language abilities in conversations with others. Strategies such as responding positively when children speak different languages, encouraging conversation, using different materials to boost interaction, and asking questions (Zheng et al., 2021) can enhance newcomers' confidence in using new languages. Nonverbal communication, using visual items, having predictable and consistent classroom routines, facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice can make it easier for newcomer children to understand what is happening in classrooms (Cain, 2018; Langeloo et al., 2019). Interaction with same-language peers can be a resource for understanding and participating in classroom activities as well (Langeloo et al., 2019).

Culture-based Practices and Policies. Culture and language are intertwined; they evolve and influence one another (Brown et al., 2020). Educators need to adopt culture-based practices in classrooms with a diverse population. Culture-based practices focus on understanding children's diverse home cultures. This understanding requires educators to respect and value children's home cultures and adopt strategies to encourage newcomers to draw on their home cultures and languages in classroom activities (Zheng et al., 2021). For

example, educators can integrate newcomers' cultures into their curriculum (Zheng et al., 2021) by using multicultural items, such as newcomers' cultural and linguistic resources in classroom activities and homework (e.g., the music and rhythms of different cultures) (Li et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2021) and celebrating newcomers' cultural events.

Also, assignments that engage with familiar cultural references and resources help parents stay informed about their children's schoolwork (Li et al., 2016). Educators can involve newcomer parents and create opportunities for them to share their cultures and traditions as part of the curriculum (Li et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2021). Through these kinds of practices, educators can build sustainable relationships with newcomer families and their children. In turn, this can help educators and families collaboratively support children's home language and dominant language development and cultural learning (Zheng et al., 2021).

Parental Involvement Practices and Policies. When considering the importance of newcomer parents' involvement in their children's education in forming a mediated space for newcomer children and their families, it is essential for educational institutions to find creative ways to work with all families (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li et al., 2016). Early education and care settings should improve translation services when communicating with parents who are learning the dominant language (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Kaufmann, 2021). However, in situations without the aid of translators, educators must employ strategies such as speaking slowly and clearly, using visual aids, and providing additional time to ensure understanding (Li et al., 2016).

Educators often promote the interaction of newcomer students by employing strategies such as a buddy system and peer tutoring, which may be conducive to newcomer parent engagement (Li et al., 2016). The challenges of understanding school notices, culture, and practices could be lessened by pairing newcomer parents with each other or with a local "*buddy*" parent (Li et al., 2016). Some parent meetings can be scheduled outside of the school and in the afternoon when newcomer parents are not on the job (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li et al., 2016). Home visits may help educators better understand students' families and support systems, including those who can provide supervision, interpret for the family, assist with homework, and offer children guidance (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009). Helping parents identify community resources that enrich children's development and improve family outcomes can also be helpful. As many newcomers are not familiar with the host country's educational system and have limited English skills, they end up segregated in closed communities, and educators should connect them with local resources, including educational, health, cultural, and social services (e.g., family English language classes, health clinics, and vocational training) that enhance family well-being, support children's learning, and build parental capacities to contribute to their children's schools (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009).

Kindergarten in Newfoundland and Labrador

A five-year-old child may be enrolled in kindergarten before starting grade one. Kindergarten is not mandatory in Newfoundland and Labrador and is offered as a full-day program in public schools throughout the province. There is a class size limit of 20 students

for Kindergarten (Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada. Department of Education, 2023, May 16).

Newfoundland and Labrador kindergartens are designed to enable the comprehensive development of young children in cognitive, socioemotional, physical, spiritual, and moral growth (Newfoundland & Labrador. Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, 2023). The main idea is that each child differs from another and has different needs concerning their development and abilities. This viewpoint emphasizes that one approach might satisfy only some while in a kindergarten setting. The curriculum guide advocates for using a developmentally appropriate instructional strategy to help meet the diverse needs of young children in kindergarten classrooms. Therefore, according to Newfoundland & Labrador's Department of Education & Early Childhood Development (2023), play-based teaching and learning is considered one of the core methods for providing early childhood education in Newfoundland and Labrador. The integration of all-day kindergarten in 2016 also emphasized the need to include play-based learning when implementing curriculum content. This approach acknowledges that during this stage in life, children learn most effectively through active, creative play that awakens their innate curiosity. Play-based learning nurtures academic competencies by promoting social and emotional growth through exploratory and experimental learning in a non-threatening environment.

In essence, Newfoundland and Labrador's kindergarten program recognizes the individuality of each child and employs developmentally appropriate strategies, particularly play-based learning, to ensure a holistic and tailored approach to early childhood education.

Preparing for Kindergarten. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador currently offers the KinderStart program, which the provincial government recommends as a means for children to develop essential socio-emotional skills before beginning kindergarten. The aim is to equip children with the skills needed to ease their kindergarten transition. The KinderStart program consists of visits by the child and their family throughout the school year before the child starts kindergarten (Newfoundland & Labrador. Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, 2019). These visits vary from four sessions or more depending on the school, with each session lasting two and a half hours, resulting in ten hours of preparation for pre-kindergarten children to familiarize themselves with the behavioural expectations in the kindergarten classroom. During the KinderStart sessions, children are engaged in play-based learning, which supports the development of self-regulation, empathy, and emotional growth (Newfoundland & Labrador. Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, 2019).

Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in KinderStart sessions to reinforce learning at home and support their children's development. The main objective of incorporating play into the KinderStart program and educating parents about its benefits, particularly in developing socialization skills, is to prevent the emergence of challenging behaviours that may arise due to a lack of self-regulation skills in children (Newfoundland & Labrador. Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, 2019).

Before entering kindergarten, children also have the opportunity to attend either a child care or pre-K program. Newfoundland and Labrador took the lead in making child care more affordable for families by making regulated child care more affordable starting in

January 2021. This has happened through the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, which has resulted in a continual reduction in the daily cost of regulated child care, extending through 2023 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023, October 4).

In addition, the Federal-Provincial Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan seeks to broaden access to regulated child care by introducing the Pre-K program, which was officially announced in May 2022. The Pre-K program is designed to create more spaces and is part of a comprehensive strategy with the overarching goal of full implementation by 2025–26 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023, October 4). This program explicitly addresses parents' challenges in securing childcare for their preschool-aged children. Beyond increasing accessibility, the plan also aims to enhance affordability, inclusivity, and the quality of childcare programs in Newfoundland and Labrador. This holistic approach is poised to contribute significantly to the well-being of families in the province. This trend helps more children access childcare in Newfoundland and Labrador (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023, October 4).

Play-based Learning in Canadian Kindergartens. Since the early 2000s, play-based learning has been recommended in early education curricula across several countries, including Canada, Sweden, China, the United Arab Emirates, and New Zealand (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Play-based learning refers to learning while at play, and it unifies play and educational pedagogy (Danniels & Pyle, 2018; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Play-based learning focuses on children's interests and abilities through engaging and developmentally appropriate learning experiences (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Viewing children as active

participants in their learning allows educators to move beyond expectations about what children should learn and focus on what they are learning (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, n.d.).

Play is children's natural response to their surroundings (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Play is the primary occupation of children during the early years of their lives, and it should be free-flowing and engaging for children (Burke, 2019). Burke (2019) believes "the best way for all young learners to learn is through play" (p. 7). Play is fun for children and highly motivating, making it an ideal learning vehicle. It also responds to each child's unique learning style and capitalizes on their innate curiosity and creativity (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Play can offer children a variety of ways to learn. Children discover, create, improvise, and extend their learning as they manipulate objects, act out roles, and experiment with various materials. This can be achieved by embedding child-centered learning, open-ended inquiry, and hands-on experiences in play to facilitate children's learning and development. Children learn effectively through play due to the interactional nature of playing activities. Children learn through play by imitating the behaviour and actions of others (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). This allows children to construct, challenge, and expand their understanding by connecting to prior experiences, opening the door to new learning (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, n.d.; Pieng & Okamoto, 2020; Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

Play facilitates children's academic and developmental learning; for example, play can facilitate language and literacy growth (Burke, 2019; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, n.d.; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Imaginative, interactive, and collaborative play situations and scenarios are ideal to help children develop their language skills. Play

provides a safe and engaging situation where children can practice and use language through relationships with others. When children engage in play, they can develop language in a situation that suits their needs, as learning a language is not just about the technical aspects; social and cultural communication are also vital in language learning (Burke, 2019). During play, children use more complex forms of language, a more extensive vocabulary, and longer utterances than they might in another context. In this way, play contributes to children's literacy development (Burke, 2019).

Play in early education facilitates developmental and academic learning. Developmental learning facilitates children's social skills, self-regulation abilities, creativity, problem-solving, and general cognitive, intellectual, cultural, and physical development (Burke, 2019; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, n.d.; Danniels & Pyle, 2018). These areas are critical to children's development (Burke, 2019) and affect children's health and well-being (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, n.d.). Academic learning facilitates learning in subjects such as literacy and mathematics (Danniels & Pyle, 2018), enabling children to investigate, ask questions, engage in critical thinking, and enhance their cognitive development (Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

Types of Play in Educational Settings and Their Role in Children's Learning.

There is not an exact category for play in educational settings. While some emphasize the content of play, distinguishing between functional, symbolic, and rule-governed play, others focus on play behaviour types, such as physical, object (involving purpose-made toys) and pretend play (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). A widespread focus on categorizing play is on

the play participants, the degree and nature of child and adult involvement in play (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019) and the degree to which each has control over the play activity (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Child and adult participation in play may be visualized as a multi-dimensional continuum from child-directed play to teacher-directed play. At one end is situated child-directed play (also known as free, child-initiated or child-led play). This is an unstructured form of play that allows children to develop different play activities by themselves with unlimited choice and flexibility. Children can direct their play with voluntary participation, no predetermined instructional aim and no adult intrusion (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Keung & Cheung, 2019).

Teacher-directed play (also called adult-led, non-play, or structured play) falls at the other end (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). Teacher-directed play has an accepted instructional purpose (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019), is intentionally planned, and has some level of adult involvement to extend additional learning opportunities within the play itself (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). During in-between child-directed play and teacher-directed play, adult roles may range from parallel players, teammates, mentors and guides to mostly supervising outsiders (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019).

The use of teacher-directed and mutually directed play activities in which educators take an active role in the play, such as by leading pre-designed games, collaborating with students, and intervening in child-directed play, tends to be promoted to support academic learning and incorporate learning targets and cognitive abilities (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Child-directed play has been highlighted as an essential endeavour for children's

developmental learning such as their social and emotional competencies (e.g., communication, leading and following rules, resolving conflicts, and supporting the emotional well-being of others) (Danniels & Pyle, 2018).

Play-Based Learning Approaches. When educators lead learning, it is often based on specific predetermined curricular learning goals, and educators have a significant role in reaching those goals (Pyle et al., 2018). Still, there are different approaches to implementing play in daily programs based on educators' personal beliefs about the purpose of play and the conception of their role during children's play (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Moreover, play-based learning has been recommended as a curricular approach in several national education contexts, but there is no agreement on its definition; there is simply an agreement that the combination of play and children's education lies at the core of play-based learning. Such definitional ambiguity makes play-based learning a potentially difficult concept for educators to translate into their professional practice (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). Another factor that increases the ambiguity of play-based learning is that most educators are not adequately prepared to implement it, as they have limited knowledge, training, qualifications, and comprehension of play-based learning as a concept. Educators' limited familiarity with the complexity and diversity of play in some cases led to situations in which there was repetitive instructional formats and the narrowing of class activities to child-directed or teacher-directed play only (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019).

Challenges in play-based practices can lead to the implementation of two approaches in play-based learning. The first approach focuses on cognitive development

and students' academic learning through teacher-directed play learning opportunities that require more direct guidance and follow a structured instructional plan. This group of educators creates many opportunities for children to develop academic learning, such as reading and mathematics (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Cousins & Cunnah, 2017). The second approach emphasizes areas of developmental learning, such as social skills development, to help children be active citizens with a strong sense of identity and self-esteem to help them control their lives (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Cousins & Cunnah, 2017). This group of educators tends to primarily use children-directed play in classrooms, which provides children with ample opportunities to develop their oral language and social skills through interaction with others (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Cousins & Cunnah, 2017).

Balanced Approach. Most learning in the early years occurs in relationships with others in contexts in which children interact and collaborate with adults and other children (Nutbrown, 2018). Educational settings are the first social context outside of the family for most children, so educational settings often play a significant role in whole-child development, and they should not limit their practices to one aspect of child development (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017). For developing the whole child, an integrated approach to learning that addresses both developmental and academic learning is recommended (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017; Danniels & Pyle, 2018; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). For example, it is widely believed that the first years of life are essential for social skills development. Despite differences between people, children typically socially develop at an amazing pace during

the first years of their lives (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017). There is also evidence that most social-emotional difficulties are rooted in these early years (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017). Considering this research, educators who focus more on academic learning might unintentionally prevent whole-child development, while educators who put more emphasis on developmental learning may prevent academic learning and whole-child development (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017).

A balanced approach that uses various play types can facilitate whole-child development. Using teacher-directed and mutually directed play promotes academic learning and cognitive development, and child-directed play has been associated with children's developmental learning (Danniels & Pyle, 2018). Educators, by providing a range of play types and taking on various roles, can facilitate children's developmental and academic learning through engaging and developmentally appropriate practices (Cousins & Cunnah, 2017; Danniels & Pyle, 2018; Stagnitti et al., 2016).

Play and Social Skills Development. There is a connection between children's social skills development and their well-being and cognitive growth. According to Moyles (2012), play can help children develop empathy, curiosity, cooperation, sharing, and a belief in creating positive change, shaping them into responsible future citizens. Additionally, Miller and Almon (2009) emphasize that play is an essential factor for stress relief for children, especially in the face of academic pressure. Play helps children prevent increases in anger and aggression.

Powell et al. (2006) also explain that play can be an effective intervention tool for children with challenging behaviors, such as aggression, self-injury, and withdrawal. They recommended that play helps these children develop friendship skills, understand and express emotions, empathize, resolve conflicts, and build self-management skills. Using engaging teaching materials and techniques, such as stories, puppets, simple games, pictures, role-play, dramatic play, and art activities, can facilitate socio-emotional skills development in children with challenging behaviors.

Additionally, a natural experiment conducted by Pelletier and Fesseha (2019) indicates that children who attended full-day kindergartens in Ontario demonstrated better self-regulation skills than those in half-day kindergarten. As a result, these children were less likely to be diagnosed with special education needs in later grades. When teachers and early childhood educators provided opportunities for playful interactions, it contributes to the development of self-regulation skills. Play allows children to see events from different perspectives, inhibit certain behaviors, and practice new roles through playing in peer interaction, promoting self-regulation skills.

The report by the Alliance for Childhood (2018) recommended adult supervision to prevent negative behaviours and ensure that the positive effects of play develop into lasting adaptive behaviour patterns, such as good self-regulation and empathy towards others. In conclusion, the literature suggests that play offers socioemotional benefits to children. Play provides an outlet for emotions and experiences that children may struggle to express otherwise. This experiential learning through play helps children make sense of their world and emotions and facilitates their holistic development.

Influential Factors in Play-based Learning.

Many factors can enhance the implementation of a play-based learning approach, such as equipment, play tools, class sizes, educator-to-children ratio, and appropriate space for implementing play activities (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Pyle et al., 2018), such as access to outdoor space that can be more appropriate for child-directed play and having indoor space appropriate for more structured activities and teacher-directed play (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). However, as discussed below, some factors play a more significant role in learning through play.

Educators' Role in Play-Based Learning. One of the most crucial factors in implementing a play-based approach is educators' knowledge, skills, and experience in implementing play-based learning, choosing appropriate play according to children's needs and knowing when and how to interfere in children's play (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Taylor & Boyer, 2020). The role of educators in play-based activities may change according to the type of play and children's needs (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). For example, to scaffold children's learning and assess the current level of children's academic and developmental learning, educators need to observe children's developmental needs (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). Allowing children to direct their play and create their own rules while playing offers an authentic view of their thinking and creates an excellent assessment opportunity (Burke, 2019). However, educators sometimes need to purposefully integrate and direct learning within children's play activities by actively participating in the play (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019). Teacher-directed play involves educators being

deliberate and purposeful in creating play-based learning opportunities, as when children are playing, children are learning (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). During teacher-directed play, the educator can engage in a variety of practices to scaffold learning within children's play activities, such as by providing comments and questions; becoming an active co-player; leading games and activities that address curricular content in a playful manner (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019); encouraging the development of the play to expand its ideas and prompt the children to contribute as much as possible (Burke, 2019); and intentionally planning and creating challenging, dynamic activities through play-based learning to create learning opportunities for children (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019).

Educators must consider four essential factors regarding teacher-directed learning opportunities through play. First, the academic content intended to be learned needs to be part of the logistics of the activity or game. Secondly, the experience needs to be presented so children can understand. Thirdly, the content and activity must stimulate children's prior knowledge and aid in continuous learning. Lastly, the content and activity must appropriately fit individuals' learning needs (Taylor & Boyer, 2020). Using both child-directed and teacher-directed play for assessing and scaffolding children's academic and developmental learning as well as knowing when and how to integrate play into the program and intervene in children's play requires educators' knowledge, experience and skills, which are all crucial to the play-based learning approach (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019).

Parental Involvement in Play-based Learning. Parental involvement is another significant contributor to children's learning and the implementation of play-based

pedagogy. However, in some cases, parents need to gain knowledge about play-based pedagogy, as perceptions of play as a waste of time instead of a platform for rich learning opportunities are barriers to implementing play-based learning (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Keung & Cheung, 2019). Many parents focus on school achievement and preparedness from the beginning of their children's education and are unwilling to acknowledge the value of play in their children's educational activities (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Burke, 2019; Keung & Cheung, 2019).

Educators can enhance parents' understanding and support of play-based learning by increasing opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's education (Keung & Cheung, 2019). In their study, Keung and Cheung (2019) explored educators' perceptions of the factors contributing to play-based learning development. This study's data come from a questionnaire completed by kindergarten teachers and in-depth interviews with them. Findings of this study showed that parents' understanding of play-based learning and its appropriateness for children's learning can be enhanced by their involvement in children's education by increasing parent-child interaction and fostering communication between educators and parents. This understanding, in turn, increases their cooperation in their children's education, which is essential for children's development. When parents are more involved in their children's education, they are more likely to support their children's learning. Also, according to this study's data, educators considered parental involvement as an essential factor in successfully implementing a play-based curriculum. Parents' involvement positively affects educators' enactment of a play-based curriculum, as when

parents are involved in their children's education, they can share their feedback on play-based activities and, in this way, improve the curriculum.

Summary

This chapter reviewed three key research areas: social skills development, bilingual newcomers, and kindergarten while emphasizing play-based learning. These three areas are intricately interconnected, and their interdependence should be recognized when evaluating the social skills development of newcomer bilingual kindergarten students.

The section on social skills development began with exploring various definitions of social skills development and its significance in individuals' lives and the adverse consequences of underdeveloped social skills. Then, it examined the critical phase of social skills development during the first few years of life and highlighted the influential factors, including family and early childhood education. Furthermore, various methods and interventions for teaching and enhancing social skills are addressed. While there is a lack of a universal definition of social skills due to the diversity in individuals' characteristics and the complexity of their environmental interactions, there is an agreement that social skills are a set of learned behaviours. Given the importance of social skills development, particularly during the early years, and the role of early childhood education, studying social skills development in the early years of children's lives is significant.

The newcomers section provided an overview of newcomer bilingual individuals, discussing the challenges they face in various aspects of their life, including in educational

settings, as well as the barriers hindering parental involvement in their children's education. We then delved into different types of policy implementations that can be employed to support these children in educational settings. These sections encompassed educational policies and practices, culture-based strategies, and policies promoting parental involvement. Understanding the challenges newcomers face in their host country enhances our understanding of their unique situations, while familiarity with relevant practices and policies enables the development of more effective strategies to assist the development of this growing young population.

Finally, the section on kindergarten and play-based learning in Canadian kindergarten began with an introduction to Canadian kindergarten. It subsequently explored definitions and descriptions of play-based learning as viewed by researchers, covering different forms of play-based learning and the key facilitators of this approach. As Newfoundland and Labrador's kindergarten curriculum emphasizes play-based learning, understanding this approach is essential to appreciate its role in kindergarten classrooms.

This study's primary focus is exploring social skills development in newcomer bilingual kindergarten students. This chapter has laid the foundation for comprehending social skills, identifying newcomer bilingual individuals, and recognizing the significance of play-based learning in Newfoundland and Labrador's kindergartens. Chapter 3 will provide an in-depth discussion of this study's research design and data collection process.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter delves into the methodology used in this research study, which is focused on understanding how newcomer bilingual kindergarten students in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills and the challenges they face when communicating with teachers in the educational context. To guide this research, a detailed set of research questions and sub-questions were developed: How do newcomer bilingual kindergarten children in Newfoundland and Labrador develop social skills? a) How are societal and educational settings prepared to support their social skills development? b) What barriers do these children encounter in developing their social skills? c) How can societal and educational settings best support their social skills development?

This chapter describes the research design, including the chosen research paradigm, approach, and methodology. It also discusses the data collection and analysis methods, ensuring that research objectives are met. Data collection methods used include interviews and observation tailored to capture social skills development in newcomer bilingual kindergarten students. Additionally, the procedures for data analysis are included, explaining how collected data were processed, interpreted, and validated. Furthermore, ethical considerations and the steps taken to obtain ethics clearance are described. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology employed in the current research, setting the stage for the upcoming chapters that delve into this study's findings.

Paradigm of the Study

Paradigms play a central role in the research process. They influence how researchers view things and act as guides in their research methods. A paradigm is described as a foundational framework comprising shared beliefs and assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that help researchers observe a particular subject. The selection of a paradigm is an essential issue in research, as this act will affect subsequent decisions on the methodology, methods, and research design. Thus, understanding research paradigms is essential to ensuring that the research methodology adopted does not conflict with the research objective and priority.

Within the realm of research paradigms, several prominent ones are well known, including positivism, post-positivism, critical perspectives (including feminism and critical race), constructivism (in an interpretive context), and participatory approaches (in a postmodern context). Each paradigm embodies distinct ontological, epistemological, and methodological stances (Leavy, 2017; Lincoln et al., 2011). Ontology addresses what the researcher perceives to be true about reality; researchers or individuals who are acknowledging that different paradigms may have varying views on the nature of reality and they concede that different paradigms may have divergent views on the nature of reality as either wholly objective, essentially subjective, or socially contrived. Epistemology spells out how researchers describe knowledge and its processes for construction or validation, which pinpoints whether the means of knowledge was discovered, created, or interpreted. The methodology affects the actual method and choice of approach that will be employed in conducting research, while paradigms largely tend either to be qualitative or quantitative

methods. Each paradigm provides a set of values and assumptions driving the research process. For example, positivism focuses on how facts can be measured and are essentially quantitative (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leavy, 2017). Constructivism or interpretivism prioritizes understanding subjective experiences through qualitative research methods, claiming that reality is socially constructed (Leavy, 2017). Critical theory includes critical perspectives such as feminism and race studies, which investigate social inequalities and systemic injustices through qualitative inquiry. Critical theory aims to challenge and transform established social structures (Leavy, 2017).

This study is aligned with the qualitative constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, which accentuates the social construction of reality and the active role of the researcher in knowledge generation. In this paradigm, reality is not regarded as a fixed, objective entity, simply awaiting discovery; instead, it is perceived that reality is a socially constructed phenomenon that is shaped by human interactions, cultural contexts, and individual experiences. It is recognized that diverse individuals and groups may construct different realities based on their unique perspectives and backgrounds (Leavy, 2017). From a constructivist epistemological standpoint, reality is socially constructed and can be understood better by exploring the implicit, for example, experience-based, knowledge of individuals (Meyer, 2015). Thus, the researcher's influence on the generated knowledge is acknowledged. Within this paradigm, the researcher is not a passive observer but an active participant. The researcher's background, beliefs, and experiences are necessary for knowledge construction (Leavy, 2017). The researcher aims to constructively uncover,

explore, understand, and describe specific phenomena. Importantly, this paradigm embraces the acceptance that multiple realities exist. It recognizes that various individuals and communities may hold unique interpretations of reality, all influenced by different social and cultural contexts (Leavy, 2017). From the ontological perspective, reality is context and socially relative; therefore, many realities can exist simultaneously (Leavy, 2017). If our reality is constructed, then, too, our knowledge is derived from social interactions. Individuals hold them in their minds, but the epistemological notion of reality and meanings is not individual but a negotiation of meaning among people (Spencer et al., 2014).

The constructivist paradigm rooted in participants' viewpoints is suitable when the research wants to explore participants' perceptions of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study adopts the constructivist paradigm, employing qualitative data collection methods. The researcher has a pivotal role in this method, with their experiences shaping the inquiry (Wahyuni, 2012).

Furthermore, the constructivist approach aligns with my epistemological belief that, as I think, knowledge is constructed rather than the existence of a fixed reality (Stake, 1995). Through this constructivist lens, it can be deduced that individuals bring their diverse backgrounds, assumptions, and experiences into the ongoing construction of reality within their broader social context through social interactions (Wahyuni, 2012). Constructivism motivates collaboration between the researcher and participants (Crabtree, 1999). It enables participants to express their thoughts and understanding about reality. Consequently, the current research represents inherent values and possesses a subjective nature.

In defending the research paradigm, the appropriateness of a qualitative study as an appropriate approach for the present study is apparent. The following section delves into the approach chosen for the research.

Overview of the Qualitative Approach

A research approach guides the research process (Leavy, 2017; Punch & Oancea, 2014). According to Leavy (2017), the three main research approaches are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative research emphasizes objectivity, control, and measurement (Leavy, 2017), while qualitative research takes a broad approach to understanding social phenomena. Mixed methods research combines aspects of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Given this study's research topic and questions, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate. Qualitative studies do not predetermine the hypothesis and involve researchers as observers of natural events (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative research is rooted in an interpretive, humanistic, and naturalistic philosophy, aiming to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours, and interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It studies individuals, things, and events in natural settings (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) stress that qualitative research emphasizes exploration, discovery, and description, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomena being studied. Qualitative research places the researcher within the context of the participants, with the aim of making sense of phenomena based on the meanings individuals attribute to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Various qualitative approaches can sometimes create challenges in choosing the appropriate form. This complexity stems partly from differing assumptions about, as above noted, the nature of reality (ontology), the process of knowledge acquisition (epistemology), and the role of values in knowledge production (axiology) inherent in various research approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In quantitative research, ontology traditionally suggests that universal truths can be understood through the study of relationships between constructs and the use of probabilistic methods. While early perspectives emphasized objectivity and control, contemporary approaches acknowledge the influence of context and complexity in interpreting quantitative findings. In contrast, qualitative research views reality as subjective and contextual, asserting that understanding experiences requires considering their unique contexts (Leavy, 2017).

Multiple interpretations or realities exist for any given phenomenon (Spencer et al., 2014).

Epistemology, which examines how we acquire knowledge of reality and the relationship between the researcher and the world, differs between quantitative and qualitative research. In qualitative research, knowledge is actively constructed by the researcher and the participant as they mutually influence each other. Researchers using the qualitative approach assume that reality is socially constructed. There is no single reality; instead, multiple realities or interpretations of a single event exist (Leavy, 2017).

Non-numerical data are essential for comprehensively understanding and addressing the research questions in qualitative studies (Spencer et al., 2014). In qualitative research,

data primarily come from real-life settings and participants' experiences, with minimal researcher interference and the researcher serving as the primary instrument (Biklen & Bogdan, 1998). In qualitative research, the focus is on words and their meanings rather than numerical data. Researchers aim to capture data from participants' perspectives in their natural settings to better understand the phenomenon (Bryman, 2012).

Methodology

Research is a systematic process aimed at collecting and analyzing information to enhance our understanding of a specific topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Methodology serves as a guide, outlining the various steps involved in this process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Punch and Oancea (2014) highlight that methodology forms the foundation of research, providing a conceptual framework that directs how data are gathered and analyzed. Bryman (2012) adds that methodology defines the structure for conducting research and analyzing data. For this project, a social constructionist paradigm was adopted, with phenomenology as the guiding methodology. This approach focuses on studying phenomena in their natural environments while observing behaviors, interactions, and conversations to gain a deeper understanding of the subject (Meyer, 2015).

According to Peoples (2020), phenomenology is one notable qualitative research approach concerned with the exploration of lived experiences of individuals across a population to identify and understand any phenomena as experienced by those who have lived through them. This is attained through inviting participants to describe experiences and, concurrently, analyzing the meaning attributed to a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth,

2018). In phenomenology, a phenomenon encompasses anything that appears as a lived experience, representing the world as perceived by individuals and within which they have unique experiences (Persaud, 2016). Phenomenology is a suitable choice when little is known about a phenomenon, as it aids in describing and enhancing the understanding of its meaning as described by those who have lived through the experience (Peoples, 2020). Phenomenologists aim to discover and describe individuals' experiences as lived through their senses and interactions with their contexts, acknowledging that each person has a unique experience of the same phenomenon due to varying perceptions, meanings, and contexts (Peoples, 2020).

The primary goal of phenomenological inquiry is to conduct a comprehensive exploration in which the researcher strives to cultivate an understanding of a phenomenon (Peoples, 2020). The key term in phenomenological research is “describe”.

Phenomenological researchers seek to provide the most accurate description possible of the phenomenon, one that is free from preconceived notions and faithful to the facts (Becker & Schad, 2022). Welman and Kruger (1999) explain that phenomenologists are primarily concerned with comprehending social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of those directly involved. In essence, phenomenology is an investigative approach aiming to depict the core nature of a phenomenon by delving into the firsthand experiences of those who have encountered it (Becker & Schad, 2022).

By exploring lived experiences, phenomenological researchers aim to gain insights into human interactions and relationships, providing a nuanced understanding of humanity.

Phenomenological methods allow researchers to examine lived experiences and aim to reveal preconceived consciousness, enabling a natural perspective to fully emerge (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Furthermore, phenomenology enables researchers to acknowledge their roles and biases, prompting them to bracket or suspend their experiences to capture the participants' lifeworlds (Dahlberg et al., 2008). In essence, phenomenology allows researchers to delve deeply into subjects, potentially yielding a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. In conducting my research, I was mindful of the need to bracket my personal experiences and biases to maintain the integrity of the study. As a researcher with a background in both education and being an immigrant, I recognized that my prior knowledge and experience could shape how I interpreted the social and cultural contexts of my participants. To minimize this influence, I consciously set aside my own assumptions and reflections, creating a mental space where I could focus solely on the participants' lifeworlds. By doing this, I aimed to engage with their perspectives in a way that was true to their experiences, allowing for a deeper and more accurate understanding of the phenomena under study. This approach was essential in ensuring that the findings of my research were grounded in the participants' realities, not colored by my own views or prior knowledge.

Becker and Schad (2022) observe that phenomenology is, for that matter, significant in education research since the educational context is complex and cannot be reduced to observable data. It hence helps the researcher gain insight into the experiences of educators and students, which may very well be difficult to understand due to the various influences.

The phenomenological research processes of understanding allow the researcher to actually comprehend the subjects' intentions and essence for a better understanding. It also seeks to capture nuances pertaining to individuals' experiences within complex educational systems. Through such understanding of the experience of both educators and students, researchers can promote better learning environments for the benefit of those with a close affinity to education.

Phenomenology is indeed an appropriate methodological choice for this study, as it aligns with its central aim: to explore and understand the lived experiences of newcomer bilingual kindergarten children, their teachers, and their parents. Peoples (2020) defines phenomenology as a research approach that seeks to answer the question, "What is it like to experience a certain phenomenon?" This study embraces this definition by focusing on the lived experiences of its participants, particularly their encounters with social skills development within the context of early childhood education.

The phenomenon under examination is the experience of social skills development in newcomer bilingual kindergarten children within their educational and social environments. This study investigates not only the challenges and interactions these children face but also the perspectives and meanings attributed to these experiences by teachers and parents. This approach is consistent with the goal of identifying the "essence" of the phenomenon, as outlined by Peoples (2020), and emphasizes participants' emotions, meanings, and lived realities.

The study's methodological approach aligns with Peoples' (2020) emphasis on exploring experiences rather than merely collecting opinions or perspectives. However, it also integrates contextual factors highlighted by the theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory informs the study by emphasizing the role of social interactions, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Development in the development of social skills. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory adds depth by situating these experiences within broader environmental systems, such as family, school, and community.

While Peoples (2020) emphasizes the subjective essence of experiences, the inclusion of theoretical frameworks in this study provides a structured lens through which to interpret participants' lived realities. This combination ensures that the study not only captures the participants' experiences but also connects them to the sociocultural and environmental contexts that shape them. Thus, the methodology and theoretical framework work in tandem to provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Phenomenology is the most suitable approach for this research because it focuses on understanding and describing individuals' lived experiences in their purest form (Becker, 2022). Unlike other research methodologies that prioritize generalizability or causal relationships, phenomenology emphasizes the subjective realities of individuals, aiming to uncover the essence of their experiences from their own perspectives (Peoples, 2020). This makes it particularly effective for exploring phenomena that are deeply personal, complex, and context-dependent.

In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the social skills development of newcomer bilingual kindergarten children within the educational settings of Newfoundland and Labrador. Using a phenomenological approach allowed me to delve into the lived experiences of the children, their teachers, and their parents, uncovering how these stakeholders perceive and interpret the process of social skills development. Rather than imposing preconceived frameworks or assumptions, I sought to illuminate their lifeworlds, remaining attentive to the meanings they attribute to their experiences.

This approach is particularly well-suited for exploring complex, personal phenomena like social skills development. It enables researchers to investigate not only the "what" of the experience but also the "how" and "why" as perceived by participants ((Becker & Schad, 2022). For instance, phenomenology facilitates a deeper understanding of how language barriers or cultural transitions influence children's ability to engage socially and how educators and parents perceive and respond to these challenges. Other methodologies, such as quantitative research, may offer valuable insights into patterns or cultural contexts but may lack the depth and nuanced understanding provided by phenomenological inquiry.

Ultimately, phenomenology enabled me to capture the unique and multifaceted experiences of this specific population within their educational environment. By focusing on the perspectives of those most intimately involved, this approach not only contributes to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon but also provides insights that can inform practices and policies to better support newcomer bilingual children and their social integration in education.

Data Collection

Qualitative research draws on a variety of resources to further deepen the participants' perceptions from multiple sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Baxter and Jack (2008) purport that each source is a different piece of the puzzle; each piece plays its role in developing the researcher's idea of the phenomenon. Putting the pieces together yields a deeper meaning of the phenomenon and strengthens the validity of the findings. In data collection, various qualitative research strategies are employed, such as studying interviews, observations, document records, archival records, and physical artifacts. In collecting data, most qualitative methods involve interviews, observations, and document analysis. However, every research study selects its resources to collect data based on measures that better address the research questions. As Peoples (2020) pointed out, for phenomenology alone, "data are often generated through interviews." The remaining data collection methods include in-depth follow-up interviews, focus groups, field notes, journaling, and audio and video recordings. This study employed a data collection methodology based on interviews with parents and teachers, follow-up interviews, and observation. The following are brief descriptions of each of the methods applied in the current study.

Semi-structured Interviews and Follow-up Interviews. As stated, interviews are a frequently adopted and heavily utilized research practice nowadays. Punch and Oancea (2014) mentioned that interviewing is an appropriate data collection mechanism in qualitative research for studying individuals' thinking processes, and it can be used to explain different scenarios, meanings and reality construction. It is considered one of the

best methods for explaining the experiences of participants. In phenomenology, interviews and follow-up interviews are the primary sources of data. Semi-structured interviews would be carried out with parents and teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their concerns and perspectives.

Interviews can range in style from highly structured formats with predetermined questions and responses to unstructured formats that allow participants to share their experiences more freely (Bryman, 2012). Many qualitative research studies employing interviews adopt a middle-ground approach, known as semi-structured interviews, which balance structured and unstructured elements (Bryman, 2012). These semi-structured interviews typically feature a mix of predetermined questions and open-ended prompts, providing flexibility for deeper exploration (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This approach is particularly advantageous when the researcher is well-versed in the explored issue and can respond to the evolving perspectives of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given the researcher's status as a newcomer bilingual parent with several years of experience within the educational system, semi-structured interviews were chosen to guide the interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize that to get meaningful data, proper questions must be crafted; thus, some of the issues of concern are inquiry into experiences, opinions, feelings, knowledge, sensory experience, and demographic information. Hence, Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) also reiterate the importance of developing the interview questions based on the research objectives. Drawing from the literature and considering the

research questions, this study's interview questions with parents (Appendix A) and teachers (Appendix B) were meticulously developed.

As outlined by Bryman (2012), qualitative interviews represent natural conversations between the interviewee and interviewer, characterized by their convenience for the participants. Unlike quantitative interviews, qualitative interviews incorporate open-ended questions, allowing the in-depth exploration of specific issues (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Punch and Oancea (2014) describe unstructured interviews as comprehensive explorations of interviewees' experiences and interpretations in their terms. Successful data collection in semi-structured interviews hinges on attentive listening, prompting, and feedback and the ability to address sensitive issues (Punch & Oancea, 2014). The semi-structured format encourages informants and researchers to jointly construct meanings and sustain the conversation (Bryman, 2012).

It is paramount to recognize the interviewee's perspective during the interview process. Interviewers may alter the interview's direction and pose additional questions to elicit rich and detailed responses from the interviewee (Bryman, 2012). Bryman (2012) points out that questions need not strictly adhere to the sequence outlined in the interview guide; interviewers can ask follow-up questions based on the interviewees' responses and arrange follow-up interviews to address any data gaps, misunderstandings, missing information, or uncertainties (Peoples, 2020). Moreover, the interviewer always digresses from the main topic into questions that facilitate insights into the research subject. In this way, interviewees may feel comfortable and provide more objective information. In that

regard, as an interviewer, the researcher made interviewees comfortable by creating an environment in which they were comfortable sharing information. For example, during the interviews, the researcher avoided rigidly sticking to the same pre-set questions; instead, follow-up questions to clarify the intended meanings of interviewees' statements were administered where necessary. In addition, interviewees were encouraged to seek clarification whenever they found any aspects unclear.

To initiate the interview process, the researcher reached out to teachers and parents who had expressed their willingness to participate in the interviews. Seven kindergarten teachers and eight parents of newcomer bilingual kindergarten children were interviewed. Individualized emails or messages were sent to schedule interviews at their convenience, along with the interview consent form tailored for parents (Appendix C) and teachers (Appendix D). Teachers and parents were requested to return the informed consent form before the interviews. The parent interviews were held face to face at Memorial University. However, scheduling interviews with teachers during the day was difficult, as they were usually at school, where the researcher could not conduct interviews. Therefore, teacher interviews were conducted online using a Zoom link. Each interview session lasted for less than an hour and was audio-recorded with the interviewees' consent.

Non-participant Observation. The other data source in this study was observing teachers and newcomer bilingual children during their daily activities and in the classroom and school environments. This process involved systematically recording observations on a data sheet and writing field notes to capture the behaviour and communication of bilingual

newcomer kindergarten students. Structured notes were taken by documenting information in predefined categories or sections (Creswell & Poth, 2018), while field notes consisted of detailed, open-ended observations, descriptions, and reflections (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Taking field notes entails writing detailed observations, descriptions, and reflections in an open-ended format (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Classrooms were selected for observations based on the presence of newcomer bilingual children and the willingness of teachers, children, and their parents to participate. Observations were conducted during the winter and spring of 2024 in two urban schools, with prior permission obtained from each school for data collection. In addition, informed consent was collected from teachers and parents of newcomer bilingual children before starting the observations.

According to Bryman (2012), observation methods can be categorized into four dimensions: a) covert versus overt observation, b) non-participant versus participant observation, c) systematic versus unsystematic observation, d) observation in natural versus artificial settings (e.g., laboratory environments) and self-observation versus observing others. In this study, overt observations were employed. This involves the researcher being transparent about their presence and goals in the field, ensuring that all participants, or their parents or guardians in the case of minors, are fully informed about the research activities. This approach helps to avoid ethical issues such as deceit or inadequate informed consent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, non-participant observation was employed to reduce potential bias or influence. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), non-participant observation involves observing and recording events without directly engaging with the

subjects. This method allows for direct observation of the phenomenon being studied, providing insights from firsthand experience rather than relying on information gathered through interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

During the observation process, the main focus was on identifying verbal and non-verbal communication cues between teachers and bilingual newcomer children to evaluate how these interactions either promote or hinder the development of social skills. Throughout the observations, field notes were taken. As Creswell and Poth (2018) outlined, whether covert or overt, observational data collection entails more than mere presence; a systematic approach must involve notetaking about various aspects, such as who is involved, the location, the dynamics, and the reasons behind the observed interactions. Consequently, detailed field notes were maintained to record behaviours, events, and other relevant features during the observations. Moreover, close attention was paid to the school and classroom environments to assess their readiness for effectively accommodating newcomer bilingual children.

A datasheet featuring indicators for each social skills development area was developed for this study to facilitate data collection during the observations (Appendix E). The sheet included space for anecdotal notes and the frequency of each observed behaviour, following criteria outlined by LeBlanc et al. (2016). Selected indicators were drawn from the Socially Savvy Checklists (Ellis & Almeida, 2014), which assess social skills development in preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school students. Ellis and Almeida's (2014) ratings are based on a two-week observation of children in natural settings like classrooms

or playgrounds, and they are intended for use by educators, parents, or those who are familiar with children's social functioning. This structured notetaking chart guided the data collection process in this study, as it emphasizes behaviours typical for children in this age group. The subsequent section describes the data analysis procedures.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), data analysis serves as the means to address research questions effectively. Data analysis is pivotal in qualitative research, which involves comprehending and interpreting experiences and perceptions to unearth meaning within specific circumstances and contexts (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Qualitative research has the propensity to yield substantial volumes of data in a relatively short time frame, and this abundance of data can pose a challenge. Bryman (2012) characterizes qualitative data as an attractive nuisance due to its richness but also its complexity in navigating analytical pathways. Qualitative researchers often amass extensive data through various collection methods such as interviews and observations. In this study, data from interviews underwent thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The observational data were structured based on the criteria established by LeBlanc et al. (2016) as elaborated upon in subsequent sections.

Analyzing Interview Data. Analysis of interview data in this study was conducted using the Dedoose software platform (Dedoose, 2023) following Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis phases (2006), which aim at identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. The thematic analysis aims to reveal significant points and patterns in the data

(Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). It includes six sequential steps: 1) becoming familiar with the data, 2) developing initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining themes, and 6) reporting on the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After interviews with parents and teachers, the first step was transcribing the interviews and carefully reading through them multiple times to better understand the content. This helped the researcher focus on the participants' words and reduced bias risk (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

In the subsequent step, a codebook (Appendix F) for parent and teacher interviews was developed according to the literature, and relevant text passages were coded. A *code* is defined as a word or short phrase that symbolically represents a portion of data (Saldaña, 2015). Initially, a codebook with pre-established codes was used to analyze the data. These codes were systematically applied to relevant data; however, the coding process did not just follow the codebook. While the analysis began with an initial codebook, new codes were added as fresh insights emerged during the coding process; therefore, a combination of approaches was used. The researcher set aside analytical preconceptions during coding to avoid bias (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although coding began with predefined codes, making it initially deductive, new codes emerged as fresh insights developed through the analysis. Therefore, the approach used was a blend of both inductive and deductive methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The third step involved identifying recurring patterns and then organizing codes into themes based on the data alone, independent of theory or research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The following phase included a detailed analysis by grouping similar codes.

The fourth phase comprised a review of themes, identifying weaker ones with insufficient data or too much diversity. Similar themes were merged, leading to the fifth phase, where the most relevant themes were selected and integrated into the final main themes. These were renamed and defined, and the last phase involved identifying the essence of each theme, supported by descriptive text and crucial quotes from interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Analyzing Observational Data. The observations of bilingual children and their interactions with teachers were grounded in the study's research questions, which aimed to explore verbal and non-verbal communication cues between teachers and newcomer bilingual children. The focus was on evaluating how these interactions either facilitated or impeded the development of social skills, along with observations of the educational environment.

A dedicated data sheet was developed for the observation process. Selected indicators on this data sheet were derived from the *Socially Savvy Checklists* (Ellis & Almeida, 2014), which assess social skills development in children. The data sheet developed for this study was aligned with the research questions to facilitate understanding of social skills development in newcomer bilingual children. Silverman (2013) stresses that data collection and interpretation should directly address the study's research questions. Notable quotes were recorded during classroom observations and integrated into the findings to enhance the clarity of the results.

The data from observations were analyzed to determine whether they support and confirm the themes that emerged from the parent and teacher interviews. In qualitative research, using observations to assess whether the data supports themes that emerged from interviews is an accepted strategy for enhancing the validity of the findings. This process, called methodological triangulation, involves cross-referencing different data types to see if they converge on similar themes or insights (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), combining interviews with observational data helps verify the consistency of findings across different data sources. Observations allow researchers to witness firsthand behaviours and interactions, which can reinforce or challenge themes identified in the interview data.

Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasize that thematic analysis can benefit from multiple data sources, including observations, to ensure that identified themes are well-supported. This cross-validation of data confirms patterns. Also, it adds depth to understanding how themes manifest in real-world settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By using observations to assess whether they align with the interview themes, researchers ensure that the analysis is grounded in both reported experiences and observed behaviors, which can create a more reliable understanding of the studied phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

In reporting the study's results, participants' words were used to convey their views' richness, depth, and complexity. Presenting participants' quotes in this way helps readers engage directly with the data, draw their own conclusions, and gain deeper understandings into the context. Additionally, significant attention was devoted to assessing the school and

classroom environments and their preparedness for effectively accommodating newcomer bilingual children.

Ethics

Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize the importance of seeking and securing permission from institutional review boards. They further elucidate that the primary objective is to furnish evidence to the review board, demonstrating that the study design adheres to the guidelines for ethical research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The entire process of receiving clearance for this study is presented in Table 3.1. In the first step, ethical clearance was secured from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) on June 28, 2023 through a delegated application process (Appendix G).

Subsequently, the application was sent to the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD). In my initial proposal, interviews were scheduled after observation. The intention was to recruit parents for interviews through school channels. However, due to an absence of communication from the NELSD over nearly four months, despite follow-ups, an amendment was submitted to facilitate parent interviews prior to the observational phase. Ethics clearance for this modification was provided on October 27, 2023 (Appendix H). In the amendment, the plan was changed to share recruitment letters (Appendix I) and seek participants for interviews on social media, including the Iranian Moms NL group on Telegram and the Iranians in Newfoundland group on Facebook and local venues, including the Association for New Canadians, Memorial University's Childcare Centre, and Burton's Pond Buildings or Family Residence (Including Baltimore

Court, Cabot Court, Cartier Court, Gilbert Court, and Guy Court). These locations were selected considering the high number of international families that visit them.

After six months without communication from the NLSD, another amendment was submitted to do teacher interviews before the observational phase. The plan was modified to involve recruiting teachers from Memorial University's Faculty of Education. The amendment specified that interviews could be conducted online via a Zoom link or in person. The clearance was received in this regard on December 18, 2023 (Appendix J). Subsequently, an email was sent to the Faculty of Education to distribute the recruitment letters for finding participants. Additionally, hard copies of the recruitment letters were placed in the main hall of the Faculty of Education. No participants were found at this stage through the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. Also, the application to the NLESD was reviewed and the research was approved on February 2, 2024 (Appendix K). After receiving NLESD clearance, the recruitment letters (Appendix) were emailed to all schools in St John's, Newfoundland and Labrador that have kindergarten class, to find participants for teacher interviews.

Also, the process of identifying participants with the specified characteristics for observation was started. This step involved reaching out to schools with a substantial immigrant population, where details about the research such as the study's purpose and the targeted participants were shared. Then, three schools responded, and an online meeting was arranged with the principals of these schools, English as a second language teachers and the vice principals of these schools. Finally, two of the schools accepted to participate.

Afterward, recruitment letters for children observation (Appendix L) and teacher observation (Appendix M) and consent forms (Appendix N and O) were distributed to schools willing to participate, and the involvement of participants was facilitated by the principals. Information about the study was shared with kindergarten teachers and parents, accompanied by the distribution of consent forms for both teachers and parents. Given the involvement of minors, parental permission was collected for all children to participate in the study.

Table 3.1

Steps to Obtain Research Clearance

	Steps in ethics clearance for research	Approval Date	Source
1	Ethical clearance from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)	June 28, 2023	Memorial University
2	Ethics clearance for amendment for parent interviews prior to the observational phase	October 27, 2023	Memorial University
3	Ethics clearance for amendment for teacher interviews before the observational phase.	December 18, 2023	Memorial University
4	NLESD clearance	February 2, 2024	NLESD

Population and Sampling

The study took place in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, the easternmost province in the Atlantic region. The study targeted newcomer bilingual kindergarten students, their parents, and kindergarten teachers, with specific criteria for participation: (a) participants were kindergarteners, (b) they were bilingual newcomers, and English was not their first language, excluding bilingual children who were not immigrants, such as those

who speak English and French, who could not be participants of this study, and (c) all children, according to their parents, were typically developing.

Table 3.2

Criteria for Selecting the Study's Participants

Number	Criterion
1	The participants were kindergarteners.
2	The participants were bilingual newcomer children, and English was not their first language.
3	Bilingual children who were not immigrants, such as those who spoke English and French, could not be participants of this study.
4	The participants were typically developing according to their parents.

Patton (2008) highlights various sampling strategies in qualitative research, advocating for a purposeful sampling approach. This study benefited from purposeful sampling, focusing on information-rich key participants, including bilingual newcomer kindergarteners, newcomer parents, and kindergarten teachers. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that purposeful sampling aligns individuals and sites with the study's central phenomenon. This strategy involves selecting specific sites or people with defining characteristics to foster a nuanced understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In qualitative research, particularly phenomenology, where in-depth exploration within a specific setting is prioritized over breadth, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend small sample sizes, typically ranging between 5 and 25 participants, though they note that some studies may have even fewer participants if saturation is reached earlier. For parent

interviews, the recruitment letters were shared and participants were approached for interviews on social media, including the Iranian Moms NL group in the Telegram, social media, and local venues, including the Association for New Canadians, Memorial University's Childcare Centre, and Burton's Pond Buildings or Family Residence (Including Baltimore Court, Cabot Court, Cartier Court, Gilbert Court, and Guy Court). These locations were considered in the selection process considering the high number of international families that visit them. Eleven parents initially indicated their willingness to participate in interviews, but, ultimately, only eight participated. One of them could not participate as she could not communicate nor understand English. Another participant, a full-time graduate student, withdrew due to other commitments. Another withdrew and, due to other commitments, could not respond with a time to my follow-ups for scheduling the interview within the timeframe of the study. Also, there were several attempts to recruit and schedule the teachers' interviews, and general information about the study, such as its purpose, participant characteristics, and the recruitment letter (Appendix P), were emailed several times to the NLESD for the teacher interviews. Ultimately, seven teachers agreed to participate. Individual emails were sent to these participants for consent and to schedule interview meetings.

For the observation, general information was first sent to the St. John's schools. Three schools replied, and a meeting was arranged to discuss the possibility of conducting research in the schools. Two schools agreed to participate, and among the four kindergarten teachers within these two schools, two teachers, one in each school, expressed

willingness to participate in observation. Parent consent forms were distributed among these two teachers' newcomer students. Eight parents, five in one class and three in another class, consented that their children could participate in the observation. In addition to observing interactions between teachers and children, the classrooms of these three teachers, the schools' gyms, music classes, and the hallways of the schools, served as observation sites. Data were collected on how these environments were designed to address the needs of newcomer bilingual children.

The data collection process was extended until saturation was reached in each of these three phases. Saturation, in this context, signifies that no novel or additional information emerged, indicating that a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter had been gained through the collected data. According to Creswell and Poth, (2018) the saturation point in data collection refers to the stage at which new data no longer offer additional or unique insights or information related to the research questions. At this point, researchers have gathered enough data to thoroughly explore and understand the phenomenon under investigation, and further data collection is unlikely to contribute significantly to the study's findings.

Time Frame of the Study

The parent interviews were conducted in October and November 2023, spanning a total duration of three hundred and three minutes. Refer to Table 3.3 for a detailed breakdown.

Table 3.3
Interviews with Parents

	Pseudonym	Date of Interview	Duration of Interview	Location
1	Sarah	October 31, 2023	45 Minutes	Memorial University
2	Kate	November 1, 2023	30 Minutes	Memorial University
3	Merry	November 7, 2023	40 Minutes	Memorial University
4	Fatima	November 8, 2023	45 Minutes	Memorial University
5	Linda	November 10, 2023	30 Minutes	Memorial University
6	Daniel	November 14, 2023	34 Minutes	Memorial University
7	Rosie	November 20, 2023	47 Minutes	Memorial University
8	Benjamin	November 22, 2023	32 Minutes	Memorial University
Total duration of interviews			303 Minutes	

The teacher interviews were conducted in February and March 2024, spanning a total duration of two hundred and twenty-three minutes. Refer to Table 3.4 for a detailed breakdown.

Table 3.4
Interviews with Teachers

	Pseudonym	Date of Interview	Length of interview	Location
1	Jennifer	Feb10, 2024	25 Minutes	Online via Zoom
2	Sue	Feb 14, 2024	35 Minutes	Online via Zoom

3	Willow	Feb 22, 2024	43 Minutes	Online via Zoom
4	Laura	Feb 26, 2024	30 Minutes	Online via Zoom
5	Karen	Feb 26, 2024	38 Minutes	Online via Zoom
6	Emily	February 26, 2024	35 Minutes	Online via Zoom
7	Elizabeth	Mar 10, 2024	27 Minutes	Online via Zoom
Total duration of interviews			233 Minutes	

Observations spanned a period of six weeks, occurring between March 18 and April 25, 2024, totaling 29 days. Each participant underwent observation for almost 22 hours and in a different capacity including in classrooms, music class, gym, recess, lunch time, and outdoor play. My regular attendance at the school, up to five times a week from 9 am to 3 pm, amounted to a cumulative total of 174 hours. Refer to Table 3.5 for a detailed breakdown. The teachers who were observed were different from those who were interviewed.

Table 3.5
Observation

Teacher's Pseudonym	Student's Pseudonym	Dates of Attendance	Location	Hours of Attendance and Observation in Each Teacher's Classroom
Mr. Ryan	1 Sina	March 18-April 12	First Elementary School	111 Hours
	2 Sofya	March 18-April 12	First Elementary School	

	3	Hanah	March 18- April 12	First Elementary School	
	4	Isaac	March 18- April 12	First Elementary School	
	5	Ryan	March 18- April 12	First Elementary School	
Ms. Abbott	6	Zoha	15- 25 April	Second Elementary School	67 Hours
	7	Saba	15- 25 April	Second Elementary School	
	8	Arya	15- 25 April	Second Elementary School	

Validity of the Study

The importance of validity and credibility in qualitative studies has been recognized throughout the literature (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Cohen et al. (2011) believe that validity is the touchstone for all research types. In quantitative research, the researcher and participant are independent, while qualitative research involves active collaboration, which mutually influences the knowledge construction. Instead of attempting to eliminate bias, which is intrinsic to this interactive process, qualitative researchers aim to enhance the trustworthiness of findings through various methods, such as considering how reliability and validity serve as crucial foundations for achieving rigour in research (Bashir et al., 2008). The subsequent section offers a concise exploration of the

strategies employed to establish credibility, reliability, and transferability in the context of the present study.

Internal Validity or Credibility. A primary method for increasing the strength of qualitative studies is having diverse data sources, which is known as triangulation (Yin, 2012), and this method played a crucial role in this study. Triangulation is a strategy for ensuring validity and reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation involves systematically examining data from different sources to derive themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) elaborate, multiple data sources involve comparing and cross-checking data gathered through observations at different times or locations or interview data obtained from individuals with diverse perspectives. Different methods bring distinct biases and strengths, allowing them to complement each other and enabling researchers to check the consistency of findings from varied perspectives (Yin, 2012).

This study's data were obtained from interviews with parents and teachers and observations to validate findings by cross-checking information from different sources (Golafshani, 2003). Overall, the interviews involved seven teachers and eight parents, and observations were conducted in the classrooms of two teachers with eight student participants at different times and in different schools. This approach allowed for cross-checking and aligning parents' and teachers' perceptions of social skills development in newcomer bilingual children. Cross-checking in this study helped the researcher confirm themes or findings using multiple sources and methods. This was done to ensure the research results' accuracy, reliability, and validity by comparing different sources or

conducting additional checks to validate the findings. Cross-checking helps researchers detect errors, inconsistencies, or biases and strengthens the overall credibility of their work.

Methodological triangulation enhances the credibility and depth of research by integrating data from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents. Presenting analyses simultaneously allows for cross-validation of findings, uncovering connections and patterns that may not emerge when methods are analyzed separately. This approach provides a richer, contextually grounded understanding of the phenomenon by situating participants' lived experiences within broader patterns. It also highlights the complexities of the phenomenon, strengthens rigor, and ensures a more comprehensive and trustworthy analysis.

External Validity or Transferability. External validity refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be generalized to other contexts (Rodriguez, 1999). While external validity is commonly related to quantitative research and its capacity to represent entire populations through sampling processes, qualitative studies, by nature, indicate a lower degree of transferability due to their contextual dependency (Yin, 2012). However, Rodriguez (1999) argues that issues related to generalizability are similar in both qualitative and quantitative research, as they both aim to establish the truth and articulate findings applicable to populations beyond the study's immediate context.

Criticism of qualitative studies often revolves around their perceived lack of generalizability due to small sample sizes, making it seemingly illogical to extend results to broader populations facing similar issues (Bryman, 2012). While qualitative research may

not straightforwardly engage in the same type of generalization as quantitative studies, it offers ways to demonstrate the value of data and analysis beyond the specific phenomenon under investigation (Bryman, 2012; Punch & Oancea, 2014).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the responsibility for transferability lies more with those seeking to apply findings elsewhere than with the researcher. To facilitate transferability, employing rich, thick descriptions is a strategic approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This involves presenting a comprehensive and authentic portrayal by providing detailed accounts of the setting, participants, and study themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Denzin (1989) characterizes thick descriptions as deep, dense, and detailed accounts that form the cornerstone of qualitative research. Miles et al. (2014) emphasized that thick description enables readers to assess potential transferability and applicability to their contexts. In this study, a detailed description of the setting, interview and observation participants, and the emerging themes was given. This commitment to thick description was evident in the precise data analysis, direct quotes from interview participants, and detailed field notes from observations. A clear description of the study elements was presented to create clarity, allowing readers to decide about the applicability of findings to other situations under similar conditions (Patton, 2008).

Another potential barrier to the transferability of research findings is researcher bias. Shah (2019) emphasizes the significance of addressing every detail in the study design stage to prevent bias while acknowledging that bias can emerge at any phase of the research process. In this study, efforts were undertaken to minimize researcher bias and enhance the

transferability of the study. The researcher's awareness of their own biases and assumptions, along with how their background could impact the study, contributes to the study's transferability. Reflexivity ensures that the researcher acknowledges their role in analyzing data and interpreting findings (Miles et al., 2014).

Regarding my background, which might influence the study, it is important to note that the researcher has an educational background and work experience in the field of education. She holds a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in education from Iran and pursued a second master's degree in education in Canada. She has several years of work experience in schools in Iran but has not worked in any Canadian schools. Additionally, as a bilingual immigrant mother, she has been engaged in raising a bilingual child.

Content Validity. Content validation requires that the instruments used by the researcher thoroughly and fairly cover the items proposed by the research problem (Golafshani, 2003; Miles et al., 2014). The instruments employed in this study were observation and interviews with parents and teachers. The data sheet for observations and interview questions was thoughtfully designed, as explained in the source of evidence sections in more detail, to help understand the phenomena being studied.

Transparency or Dependability. In qualitative research, reliability involves employing diverse strategies. An audit trail was used for transparency in every aspect of the study's data collection and analysis process, offering a comprehensible explanation for each decision made. An audit trail within the research context systematically documents the entire research journey, from the initial stages of data collection to the analysis. For the audit trail,

the researcher aimed to provide a thorough explanation of all research processes to help readers gain an understanding of the researcher's process. This comprehensive record acts as a guide for other researchers or reviewers to use to navigate and comprehend the research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). The thorough documentation of all research processes contributes to validity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018) and increases dependability and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The audit trail is integrated into a study's methodology section to document the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

An informal peer examination was employed to enhance the reliability of the research. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined, peer examination involves exposing one's work to a colleague, who checks this work in an analytic session. The purpose is to delve into aspects of the inquiry that remain implicit in the researcher's mind. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) highlight that peer examination is a collaborative process within a graduate student's dissertation committee, where each member provides valuable feedback on the study. In this research, the supervisor conducted a peer examination by reviewing the coding of some transcripts and codebooks to ensure the students used the same codes consistently and that both used the same code for the same pieces of data.

Summary

This chapter presents a thorough overview of the study's methodology. It begins with exploring the chosen research paradigm, approach, and methodology, all of which are geared toward addressing the research questions. The research approach and paradigm selection position the study within a qualitative constructivist paradigm, acknowledging the

socially constructed nature of reality and the existence of multiple realities in constructivism. Particular emphasis is given to the qualitative nature of the study, underscoring its appropriateness for delving into participants' perspectives on the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children. The justification for adopting a qualitative phenomenology design aligned with the constructivist paradigm is provided, considering it the most suitable approach for comprehending participants' viewpoints.

The chapter then delves into the details of the data collection and analysis techniques used. Primary data collection methods for this study included semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations, with a comprehensive explanation of the data analysis techniques employed. The study was conducted in English schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, involving participants comprised of newcomer bilingual kindergarten children, kindergarten teachers, and newcomer bilingual parents. Various strategies implemented to ensure the study's trustworthiness are discussed in detail within this chapter.

The subsequent chapter will present the findings related to the research questions, exploring: how do bilingual kindergarten-age children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills?

- a) How are societal and educational settings prepared to support the social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children?
- b) What barriers do these bilingual newcomer children experience in their social skills development?
- c) Ideally, how can societal and educational settings support the social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children?

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter explains the findings from an in-depth exploration of the social skills development of bilingual newcomer kindergarten children in Newfoundland and Labrador. The aim is to explore the barriers and challenges these children encounter in interpersonal communication. The chapter begins with a description of the demographic characteristics of participants engaged in the observation, followed by an overview of the learning environments observed in the kindergarten classrooms. Then, the demographic characteristics of the teachers who participated in the interviews are presented. Following this, the emergent themes derived from these interviews are explained. Next, the demographic characteristics of the parents who participated in the interviews are presented. Subsequently, the emergent themes from these interviews are also explained.

Moreover, data from observations is combined with data from interviews to assess whether the observations support the interview findings. A detailed explanation follows, demonstrating the results and discussions from different sources. The presentation gives an understanding of the multifaceted experiences of bilingual newcomer kindergarten children as they interact with their peers and educators in the landscape of the urban school environment.

The chapter ended with a brief yet comprehensive summary of the fundamental findings. This sequence ensures clarity and coherence, allowing us to navigate the findings. Subsequently, in the forthcoming discussion chapter (Chapter 5), findings are combined with the literature, and interpretations of bilingual newcomer children's social skills

development are presented in relation to the historical background. Hence, the research questions will be answered through more advanced conceptual and theoretical reasoning.

Demographic Characteristics of the Observation Participants

After contacting school principals and confirming their acceptance to distribute the recruitment letters to their teachers and then to students who met the study's criteria, two teachers from two schools agreed to allow me to observe their classrooms. Eight parents of newcomer bilingual students in these two classes consented to allow me to observe their children: five students in one class and three in another. The observations took place in March and April 2024. The demographic characteristics of the participating teachers in observation are presented below. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Observation Participant 1 - Mr. Ryan. Part of the observation was conducted in Mr. Ryan's class. Mr. Ryan is originally from St. John's, Canada, has accumulated two years of teaching experience, and holds a bachelor's degree and master's degree in Education.

Observation Participant 2 - Ms. Abbott. Part of the observation was conducted in Mrs. Abbott's class. Ms. Abbott is originally from St. John's, Canada, has accumulated ten years of teaching experience, and holds a bachelor's degree in Education.

Table 4. 1

Research Participant Observation (Teacher)

Pseudonym	Gender	Education	Country of origin	Years of teaching experience
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1	Mr. Ryan	Male	Bachelor's and master's degree in Education	St. John's, Canada	2 years
2	Ms. Abbott	Female	Bachelor's degree in Education	St. John's, Canada	10 years

The demographic characteristics of the participating newcomer bilingual kindergarten students are presented below. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Students from Mr. Ryan's Class:

Observation Participant 3 - Sina. He is a 6-year-old from Iran, and his first language is Farsi.

Observation Participant 4 - Sofya. She is a 6-year-old from Pakistan, and her first language is Urdu.

Observation Participant 5 - Hanah. She is a 5-year-old from Bangladesh, and her first language is Bangla.

Observation Participant 6 - Iss. He is a 5-year-old from Saudi Arabia, and his first language is Arabic.

Observation Participant 7 – Roman. He is a 5-year-old from Nepal, and his first language is Indo.

Students from Ms. Abbott's class:

Observation Participant 8 - Zoha. She is a 6-year-old from Jordan, and her first language is Arabic.

Observation Participant 9 - Saba. She is a 5-year-old from Afghanistan, and her first language is Ozbek and Dari.

Observation Participant 10 - Arya. He is a 6-year-old from Sudan, and his first language is Arabic.

Table 4.2

Research Participants (Students)

Teacher's Pseudonym		Student's Pseudonym	Age	Country of Origin	First language
Mr. Ryan	1	Sina	6	Iran	Farsi
	2	Sofya	6	Pakistan	Urdu
	3	Hanah	5	Bangladesh	Bangla
	4	Isaac	5	Saudi Arabia	Arabic
	5	Roman	5	Nepal	Indo
Ms. Abbott	6	Zoha	6	Jourdan	Arabic
	7	Saba	5	Afghanistan	Ozbek and Dari
	8	Arya	6	Sudan	Arabic

Learning Environments. Observations of Kindergarten Classrooms for Newcomer Bilingual Children. This description provides a clear picture of the school and classroom environments, highlighting how the physical setup of schools and classrooms are designed

to be inclusive and supportive of newcomer bilingual students, fostering a sense of belonging and cultural appreciation.

Mr. Ryan's class had 18 students, and Ms. Abbott's class had 24 students, with half of the students in each class being immigrants, including some newcomers. In Mr. Ryan's class, there were three octagon tables where students worked in groups. Each table was labelled with words like "Kind and Respect," "Love and Help," and "Share." In Ms. Abbott's class, four U-shaped tables allowed students to work in small groups while still being able to see other teams. Sometimes, the tables were connected to form a large circle, enabling the whole class to see each other. In both classes, students often sat on the floor for certain activities, and seating arrangements were adjusted based on the activity's needs.

The teacher's desk in each classroom was at the front, allowing the teachers easy access to all students and enabling free movement around the room. In addition to blackboards, the classrooms were equipped with smartboards. Both classrooms had designated areas for different activities, such as reading areas, house areas with multicultural toys (including dolls with various skin tones, eye colours, and hair colours representing different nationalities), block areas, and arts and crafts corners. The classes' materials were organized with labelled bins and shelves, making it easy for students to find materials.

Both schools and teachers tried accommodating newcomer students' cultural practices and traditions. For example, both schools' hallways had decorations for Haftseen related to the Iranian New Year, Ramadan decorations, and Easter decorations. Ms. Abbott's school had a large frame displaying all international students, their countries of origin, and

their first languages. Mr. Ryan's school's entrance had a large frame with "Welcome" written in different languages. The gym in Mr. Ryan's school was adorned with flags from various countries, and on the wall were pictures of children with different skin tones and eye colours.

In both classrooms, the walls were decorated with colourful posters. A large bulletin board featured student artwork and cultural displays, such as traditional crafts and holiday decorations related to Canadian culture. For instance, in Ms. Abbott's class, there were three sets of decorations related to Easter, even though Easter had passed, and there were no decorations about other countries. During the observation period, Ms. Abbott's class displayed no cultural items or decorations related to other countries; however, Mr. Ryan's class had artwork related to Ramadan, and he mentioned an upcoming event related to Indian culture.

Demographic Characteristics of the Interview Participants (Teachers)

On February 5, 2024, recruitment letters were emailed to school principals for this study, and they were asked to share them with the kindergarten teachers. These letters contained my contact information, enabling interested teachers to express their willingness to participate in an interview. A total of seven teachers indicated their interest. The interviews took place online using a Zoom link, and all sessions were audio-recorded. The demographic characteristics of the participating teachers are presented below. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Interview Participant 1 - Ms. Jennifer. [The first interview was conducted with Jennifer. She is originally from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Jennifer has accumulated two years of teaching experience and holds a bachelor's degree in Education (B.ED.) and a master's degree in Language and Literacy.

Interview Participant 2 - Ms. Sue. She is originally from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Sue has accumulated twenty-five years of teaching experience and holds a B.ED.

Interview Participant 3 - Ms. Willow. She is originally from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. Willow has accumulated twenty-five years of teaching experience and holds a B.ED.

Interview Participant 4 - Ms. Laura. Laura is a domestic of St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada and has twenty-nine years of teaching experience. She holds a B.ED. and a Master of Literacy.

Interview Participant 5 - Ms. Karen. Karen is originally from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada and has twenty-eight years of teaching experience. She holds a B.ED. (French Immersion) and a Master of Education specializing in Special Education.

Interview Participant 6 - Ms. Emily. Emily is from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada and has ten years of teaching experience. She holds a B.ED. (Primary

Elementary), a Graduate Diploma in Educational Technology, and a Master of Education (Educational Technology).

Interview Participant 1 - Ms. Elizabeth. Elizabeth is an immigrant teacher. She is not from Canada and has ten years of teaching experience. She earned a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and another in English Language Arts.

Table 4. 3

Research Participants (Teacher)

	Pseudonym	Gender	Education	Country and Province of Origin	Years of Teaching Experience
1	Jennifer	Female	-Bachelor of Education -Master of Language and Literacy	Canada, St. John's	2 years
2	Sue	Female	-Bachelor of Education	Canada, St. John's	25 years
3	Willow	Female	-Bachelor of Education (Primary- elementary) -Master of Literacy	Canada, St. John's	12 years
4	Laura	Female	Primary Education (K-3). -Bachelor of Education -Master of Literacy	Canada, St. John's	29 years
5	Karen	Female	-Bachelor of Education (French Immersion) -Master of Education (Special Education)	Canada, St. John's	28 years
6	Emily	Female	-Bachelor of Education (Primary elementary) -Graduate diploma (Educational Technology) -Master of Education (Educational Technology)	Canada, St. John's	10 years

7	Elizabeth	Female	-Bachelor of Early childhood Education - Bachelor of English Language Arts	An African Nation	10 years
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Results from Teachers' Interviews and Observation

Five themes emerged from the thematic analysis of teachers' interviews. The first theme, *Teachers' Insights on Social Skills Development: Strategies and Practices*, explores interviewees' perspectives on nurturing social skills in all kindergarten students both newcomer bilingual and domestic students and students facing challenges in this area. The second theme, *Challenges and Strategies for Supporting Social Interaction in Bilingual Newcomer Students*, focuses on barriers in social interactions for bilingual newcomer children in educational settings. The third theme, *Engaging Newcomer Families: Facilitating School Involvement for Newcomer Parents*, delves into barriers and strategies for engaging newcomer parents in their children's education. The fourth theme, *Celebrating Diversity: Enhancing Educational Experiences for All Students*, underscores the importance of cultural awareness and inclusivity in enriching the educational experience for diverse students. Finally, *Equipped for Diversity: Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations*, examines how educational settings equip teachers to support the social development of bilingual newcomer children. Findings from observation contribute to themes from interviews to show whether they support the findings.

Teachers' Insights on Social Skills Development: Strategies and Practices. This theme explores the interviewees' viewpoints on social skills development and the methods they adopted to support social skills in kindergarteners and students who struggle in certain

areas of social skills development. Interviewees mentioned that social skills development gained more attention after the COVID-19 pandemic. They are now putting more effort into incorporating social skills development programs into teaching than before. This change stems from the realization that students are struggling with social skills development in various areas following the COVID-19 pandemic. As Sue said:

Four years ago, COVID hit, and since we returned to the classroom, I have found the amount of social emotional learning that I've had to interweave every aspect of the classroom has been astronomical. Every aspect. I'm doing more parenting than ever before because the children are not equipped for these things when they come to school. I spend time on literacy and math. But is that the main focus? Nope. It is their social, emotional wellbeing throughout the day every day and almost in every activity.

The interviewees also mentioned that they dedicate significant time to supporting students' social skills development at the beginning of the educational year. They emphasize the importance of teaching students social skills to manage their emotions, solve problems, and have positive interactions with others, considering it crucial for students' overall growth and success. As Emily said:

Right from September, especially in kindergarten, we spend the majority of our day, especially in the fall, concentrating on social emotional learning, which is where they develop those social skills. So, we get very little done in the aspect of academic achievement because we spend mostly on routines, how to talk with their friends,

how to solve problems, teaching them directly in the beginning, so now we can get to the point in the winter where they're doing it on their own.

Additionally, interviewees recognized the impact of children's early social experiences on their social skills development and school readiness. They noted that students' anxiety levels at the beginning of the school year can vary based on their previous social interactions outside of school; for instance, children who attend childcare displayed lower anxiety levels. Interviewees also mentioned that positive interactions with siblings contribute positively to children's social skills development.

Teaching Methods. The interviewees discussed strategies they use in their classes to help students develop their social skills. The strategies interviewees spoke about include modelling, puppet plays, role-playing, cooperative games, and turn-taking exercises to foster social interaction, problem-solving, and empathy among students. The interviewees also emphasized the importance of creating a supportive classroom environment where students can learn to communicate, share, and collaborate effectively. Additionally, they highlighted the significance of literature and reading books, routines, and structured activities in promoting social skills development. Interviewees also mentioned considering social skills development throughout the day, such as working on turn-taking skills while teaching literacy. As Sue said:

We focus on using manners, because instead of just taking things, can I have a turn, can I play with you, there's all kinds of cooperative games. Like, simple things, like it might be an alphabet match, upper and lower case, but, okay, you're in charge of

the uppercase ones. Can you find the lowercase ones? You can't do it? Okay, let's switch.

Karen also spoke about teaching social skills through everyday activities and real interactions. She said:

Well, there's direct teaching or direct modeling. The children are coming often without the experiences or without the skills necessary to interact with others, using their words, using their actions. There's not necessarily one of every item for a child, for example, scissors or glue sticks. I don't have one for every single child or student. They have to share. So, learning how to ask for the glue stick, how to say thank you, learning how to wait their turn, learning how to go find the glue stick and bring it over to their table or wherever they're working on. So that I think also promotes social interaction and using language and showing concern for your friends and helping your friends out.

It was observed that teachers paid close attention to children's social skills development through various activities throughout daily activities to teach social skills, such as turn-taking, greeting, and maintaining social distance. These methods were seamlessly integrated into their routines, ensuring that social skills development was a consistent part of the classroom experience. For example, when Ahmed and a classmate were arguing over a toy, Mrs. Abbott intervened and explained the importance of taking turns, ensuring that each child had a chance to play with the toy.

Moreover, all students adhered to classroom group behaviors, such as following verbal directions and keeping toys in their designated locations. This adherence indicated a well-established routine and set of rules within the class that the students were familiar with. For instance, each day both classes began with morning greetings, during which the helper of the day was chosen, and this helper knew exactly what tasks to perform. Additionally, when students were instructed to line up to wash their hands, they did so promptly, demonstrating their awareness and understanding of the classroom rules and routines. This consistency in following established protocols highlighted the effectiveness of the teachers' methods in promoting social skills and maintaining order in the classroom. When some students did not obey the rules, teachers reminded them and asked them to follow the instructions.

Sue also mentioned that social skills are best taught and practiced in real-life situations, not in isolation, using methods like social stories, role-playing, and modeling. She emphasized, "I don't find social skills do any good for any child if you do it in isolation. Like, you cannot teach a child how to wait their turn by counting to five; you've got to have it right there in a real-life situation." Another interviewee discussed implementing zones of regulation in her class, stating, "I use the zones of regulation. When you feel frustrated, you are in the red zone, and you go there and express your feelings." They also highlighted the importance of teaching social skills through play.

Play-based Learning. Play was seen as essential for learning and social skills development. Interviewees emphasized play-based learning, allowing students to explore,

choose activities, and engage in structured and unstructured play. The data cover various aspects of classroom activities integrated into play-based activities in kindergarten settings. All interviewees mentioned that they use a mix of structured play (teacher-led activities) and free play (child-led activities) in their routines to meet individual students' needs, considering their interests, readiness, and curriculum outcomes. The amount of time and structure in the daily schedule devoted to free play or structured playtime varies among teachers. For example, Emily's daily schedule includes literacy and math activities in the morning, followed by playtime, snacks, more math activities, lunch, and additional playtime. In the afternoon, she incorporates structured play focused on specific concepts or skills and free play. As she explained:

In the morning, usually, especially if we don't have gym or music, is when I'll do the literacy type because the freshest in the morning and same with the math. So, the literacy type would be, and really in kindergarten it's all literacy based, even the social studies, the health, all the curriculums, you know, science. But, the actual literacy base, like the language arts piece, I would say, usually in the morning for an hour and a half. Then we have snacks, and then the math is usually for an hour. And so, they'll have play time for 15 minutes in between, and then usually we'll do a math activity, and then it is lunch, and then they have play time again during the lunch break. After the lunch, then we'll usually have a silent reading, a read to self, so that's a literacy-based thing as well. We'll do some activity in the afternoon, and then it's another play time, like usually outside, depending on the weather. So then, the

playtime piece is 15 minutes to half an hour. So, play time is 45 minutes throughout the day, maybe, or actually maybe even closer to an hour. And then the literacy piece is about an hour and a half, the math is an hour. The literacy piece might even be, I would say, two hours. And if you included that into the language arts and stuff, it's even more.

Karen divided her class hours as below:

Free play would be, when they come in the morning, our doors open at 8:10. So for any child who was here before the class day begins, which is 8:30. That is free play. So, the first 20 minutes of class time free play then would be from 8:30 to about 8:50. The first 20 minutes of the instructional day is free play. As well, they get another 15 minutes after snack, so 10:30 to 10:45. And then half of their lunch period, so from 12:10 to 12:30, 12:35 is also free play. And after lunchtime, play could be indoors, or it could be in the gym, or it could be outdoors.

During the observation, it was noted that both teachers used a variety of play-based teaching strategies, though there were differences in their methods. Mr. Ryan prioritized structured, teacher-led activities, which often restricted opportunities for peer interaction among students. Activities were primarily teacher-led. He also relied more on educational screen time, such as read-aloud book videos, instead of reading aloud himself. Typically, he asked students to sit on the floor and watch an educational video, followed by a discussion and questions to deepen their understanding. However, during the observation, he occasionally created less-structured activities, such as small group activities, to encourage

students to work together in class. During recess and afternoons, Mr. Ryan usually took the students outside to the schoolyard for free play. During this time, he mostly monitored the children's activities and intervened only when necessary. In contrast to these outdoor sessions, classroom activities predominantly involved interactions between the teacher and individual students rather than among the students themselves. Through Mr. Ryan's guidance, children were encouraged to learn the social rules necessary for working and playing together. However, the lack of designed activities to facilitate peer social contact hindered the development of appropriate social interaction skills among the children. This focus on teacher-led activities limited their opportunities to interact and collaborate with each other in a meaningful way. In contrast, Mrs. Abbott utilized a wider range of play-based activities, integrating free play into class activities alongside structured play. She used less video content, preferring methods like puppet shows, reading books, and using blocks and cards to create learning opportunities.

All interviewees mentioned that outdoor playtime is a crucial part of the kindergarten schedule, providing opportunities for physical activity, exploration, and social interaction. Observational data confirmed this interview finding, as during the observation students had outdoor playtime every day except for one day when the weather was not appropriate for outdoor activities and the students in Mr. Ryan class did not have outdoor playtime that day. Interviewees also emphasized using structured activities for social skills development, such as morning greetings, feeling songs, and talking circles where children could express their feelings. For example, Sue described a scenario where children practiced resolving conflicts by expressing how actions made them feel and finding solutions.

In both classes, morning greetings were observed every day. Teachers called out students' names, and everyone exchanged good morning wishes. Each day, a student was chosen as a helper to discuss the weather, the day of the week, and the month. During music classes, children had circle time, where they sat in a circle and passed around a stuffed toy. Each child would hold the stuffed toy and have a chance to speak about a chosen topic. For example, one day they spoke about how they felt and why they had that feeling, and on another day, they discussed what makes them happy or sad. If a child did not want to speak, they could pass the toy to another student without speaking.

Strategies for Supporting Students Facing Challenges in Some Areas of Social Skills. In addition to the teaching methods mentioned by interviewees for enhancing children's social skills development, participants also discussed strategies for helping students who struggle in certain areas of social skills. As Emily mentioned, “schools monitor students' social progress during the fall semester. If there are students who struggle in some area of social skills development, they provide extra support.” Emily mentioned that collaboration with guidance counselors is a method she uses in her class to support social skills development in students who need extra support. As she said: “sometimes I'll ask the guidance counselor to come in and do a lesson”. The other strategies mentioned include using positive reinforcement, behaviour modifications, social stories, modelling, repetition of target skills, role-playing, communication with parents of students who need extra support, involving parents to help improve social skills, and integrating these students into groups that have some students who have an appropriate level of social skills and are easy to interact with. As Emily explained:

I do have some students who, because of behaviour reasons, they don't seem to make friends like other children are making friends. So, there's times I'll group them with someone I think that would be a good friend to them, I usually let them free play. I don't often tell them who they have to play with, but if we're doing a group project or something, I try to buddy them up with someone I think would be a good friend to them.

During the observation, it was noted that Mrs. Abbott had a student, Zoha, who faced challenges integrating into social activities. Zoha often chose to play alone during free play or group activities, preferring solitary activities such as drawing or creating artwork. She would sit quietly at a table, deeply focused on her task, while the other children engaged in collaborative games or group discussions. Despite her limited English proficiency, Zoha's drawings often reflected her creativity and emotions, serving as her primary mode of expression.

Mrs. Abbott demonstrated a supportive approach to fostering Zoha's social integration without pressuring her. She regularly engaged Zoha in conversations about her artwork, creating a sense of connection and validating her efforts. For example, when Zoha was using scissors to cut shapes for her artwork, Mrs. Abbott encouraged a nearby classmate to assist her, fostering a moment of collaboration and interaction. On another occasion, Mrs. Abbott noticed Zoha had completed a drawing and used it as an opportunity to facilitate peer interaction. She showed the drawing to a classmate, praising Zoha's creativity, and encouraged Zoha to explain her artwork to the classmate. Recognizing Zoha's limited

English skills, Mrs. Abbott provided scaffolding, such as offering simple phrases and prompting questions, to help Zoha communicate. These intentional but gentle strategies created opportunities for Zoha to connect with her peers, gradually building her confidence in social interactions while respecting her individual pace and comfort level.

Challenges and Strategies for Supporting Social Interaction in Bilingual

Newcomer Students. This theme delves into the barriers that bilingual newcomer children encounter in social interactions within educational settings. Interviews underscored the challenges these children face when interacting and communicating with others at school. Also, to assist them in overcoming these challenges teachers have implemented strategies, which are discussed below.

Language Limitations and Strategies for Newcomer Inclusion. Most newcomer students are learning English as a second language and given that English is the official language of schools in this province, newcomer bilingual children face challenges in communicating with others. Regarding available support, there were varied responses. Most interviewees mentioned there was limited availability of translators and English as an additional language (EAL) services in kindergarten and some students do not receive any services until grade one, leading to minimal support for students who do not speak English. As Laura said:

I had either six or seven newcomers last year, and I think out of those ones, one was able to speak some English, but in kindergarten, we didn't receive any service at all. So they started receiving service in grade one. This EAL teacher tries to take them

out in one half hours every seven-day cycle. So, a seven-day cycle, we have five days in a week, that carries over. If you have a snow day, or a P.D. day, or something's missed, that can lead into two weeks. So, there's insufficient instruction. So, basically, like, I'm getting a new child tomorrow from the Philippines, and who can't speak English, according to Dad. I was emailing Dad back and forth. So, this new child probably will not receive any services at all, and if they do, maybe as the year goes on.

Also, Sue said:

There are no translators. I do have a little boy from Ukraine in my class now. And when he came to the class because he was coming from another school, a translator came that day. That was it. We don't have enough support. I mean, very, very thin. It's because most of our support is being used to service children who have severe, severe cognitive and medical delay. Yes. That's where it's used first.

However, another teacher mentioned that there is available support. As Emily said:

We were really lucky. We do have a lot of support in our school currently as we are getting quite a few new families, which we haven't been getting in quite some time. So, we do have this support currently of someone from the Association of New Canadians who's fantastic, and she can translate in different languages. We have two EAL instructors in our building, one full-time and one part-time. And even though they can't speak the language of the newcomers, they come with a variety of skills that they use to help us, kind of bring down those barriers and help communicate

with the families. And even when our contact from the Association with New Canadians leaves us, she's only an email away and, we know, she wants to keep the lines of communication open. So right now, I have to say, yes, we do have support. There's never enough, but the ones we do have are fantastic.

During the observation in two schools, I did not see any available support such as English as a second language (ESL) teachers or translators to assist in the engagement of newcomer students in class activities. For instance, there was an incident in Mr. Ryan's class where a new student who could not speak English at all appeared to feel bored and distressed and was occasionally crying. At one point, the student even attempted to leave the classroom. Mr. Ryan had to physically hold the door shut and call for assistance. The person who came to help was the vice principal of the school rather than an ESL teacher or translator who could have provided more appropriate support to help the student engage in class activities.

In addition to available support, teachers mentioned different methods that they use to communicate with bilingual newcomer children. Educators employ visual aids, such as pictures, visual schedules, and real objects, to facilitate communication with newcomer children whose English language skills are not well-developed. Videos with subtitles in different languages were other things that interviewees used. Technology like Google Translate is utilized to bridge language barriers. As Sue mentioned, "I use Google Translate to translate when I feel like I'm not being understood. I then switch it to the child's domestic language and have them speak into my phone so we can clarify things."

Participants also pointed to the use of gestures, body language, and actions as other methods for communication. As Karen mentioned, "to put on your jacket, I'll show my jacket. I'll use actions to demonstrate putting on the jacket." Interviewees also emphasized involving students who speak the same language to aid in translation, encouraging peer interactions, and creating a welcoming environment. Karen further explained,

If there are other children here in the building who speak the same language, I will try to encourage them to come and speak to the child in my class who may speak the same language. They probably know each other, and that usually helps if they're feeling a little sad or need a little pick-me-up.

Findings from the observations also showed that teachers frequently used various forms of nonverbal communication, such as high fives, hands waves, smiles, thumbs up, and gestures like holding up a hand as a sign to stop, to facilitate communication with bilingual newcomer children, and bilingual newcomer children used these gestures as well. For example, one day, Arya brought a box of cookies and placed it on Mrs. Abbott's desk. When Mrs. Abbott came to the class, she asked who brought the cookies. The students pointed to Arya, who then raised his hand. Mrs. Abbott, using both speech and body language, asked if the cookies were for her or for the whole class. She pointed to herself and then gestured to the entire class. Arya showed Mrs. Abbott to indicate that the cookies were for Mrs. Abbott. Both teachers also established routines in their classrooms, such as specific locations for items and schedules for classroom rules. For example, there were designated areas for water

bottles, outdoor shoes, and coats. These routines helped newcomer children find their way and understand the classroom organization over time.

Negative Feelings that Newcomer Bilingual Children Experience. According to the interviewees, another challenge that hinders newcomer bilingual children from interacting with others is negative emotions. Newcomer children may experience negative feelings due to their unfamiliarity with the culture and language of the host country. As Emily said: “They're trying to tell you something, but you don't understand or they don't understand me, and the frustration can definitely hit there for sure.” Also, Willow said:

I've had a little girl in my class, I've never been to a place where I can't speak to people, so I don't know the feeling, but she comes in, and she would be really frustrated, and I'm sure it's scary. There will be a lot of feelings to it, and there's some days she just wants to go home. And I understand that. I'm sure sitting in a classroom, listening to a language you don't understand, and trying to take part, and trying to make friends, and that's a lot for kids.

During the observation, it was not noted that the teacher encouraged newcomer bilingual children to use or introduce their home language at school.

The interviewees discussed strategies and practices they employed to overcome their negative feelings and support newcomer students in adjusting to their new environment and building connections. One of these strategies was encouraging students to work in groups,

pairing them with helpful and welcoming peers, and fostering friendships to ease integration. As Laura explained:

I get them involved in groups here. For example, when I'm setting them up at a little table, like my little friend who is coming in tomorrow, I have him sitting at a table with some stronger students who are very personable and helpful. Last year, when I had all those newcomers, there were two little girls who were so helpful, welcoming, and warm. They would take the newcomer under their wing and incorporate them into their activities until they made a few more friends, and they would play with them at lunchtime.

Participants also mentioned using positive reinforcement, positive language, providing hugs, and expressing value and support to make students feel welcome and valued. As Sue said:

I definitely talk to them and let them know that they're wanted and so happy to see them. Always greeting them happily in the morning. Wow! You're here! Yay! You're so valued. Giving them special jobs to do in the classroom. Also, they get hugs. Are you blue, sad? Yes. Do you want a hug? Okay, they get hugs. And letting them know, I don't want you to be sad. How can I help to make you feel happy? And we love you here. We want you here. You're so smart. Things like this.

It was observed that newcomer bilingual children sometimes experience negative emotions due to their inability to communicate effectively with others because of their

limited English language skills. For instance, Zoha frequently remained by herself, even when other children were playing together or participating in group activities designed by the teacher. She did not interact with the other children and rarely spoke with anyone in the class, spending most of her time alone. The teacher employed a variety of methods to support the children. For example, Mrs. Abbott paid attention to and encouraged Zoha when she saw her artwork.

Encouraging newcomer bilingual children to speak in their own language and teach the class words from their language was another strategy that interviewees used to show acceptance and to help avoid shyness in speaking their first language. As Sue said:

You make our hearts happy when you speak for us because sometimes there's shyness and hesitation about speaking in a different language. We count in Russian all the time. We say different things in Russian. All this for this little boy. And even in the morning when we say good morning, we ask our newcomer student to say good morning in his language and the children say it back in Russian sometimes.

During the observation, it was not noted that the teacher encouraged newcomer bilingual children to use or introduce their home language at school.

Participants also emphasize the importance of kindness, being attentive to others' needs and offering assistance even before it is explicitly requested. This can reflect qualities such as empathy, generosity, and a proactive approach to helping others. As Karen said:

I try to smile as much as I can. I try to give them what I think they might need, whether they have it or not. If they need crayons, I'll give them some crayons and then they might realize, "oh, I need crayons" and they'll get their own crayons out of their backpack. Outside, I can help them with doing up their jackets.

Moreover, interviewees mentioned that they tried to facilitate interaction between newcomer bilingual children who speak the same language. This is done by encouraging students from different classes but with the same language and background to communicate and support each other, especially when they seem sad or need emotional support. As Karen said:

If there's other children here in the building who speak the same language, I will try to encourage them sometimes to come and speak to the child in my class that may speak the same language, and they probably know each other. And that usually helps them if they look like they're feeling a little sad or need a little pick me up.

A method observed in both classes was the encouragement of peer interaction among students who shared the same home language. Although some students had limited English skills, they were not as isolated as others. For instance, in Mrs. Abbott's class, another student who spoke the same language as Arya spent a significant amount of time with Arya. This peer interaction helped reduce feelings of isolation and allowed the students to communicate more comfortably. This helped the newcomer bilingual students to use their home language, and this created opportunities for these newcomer bilingual children to be less isolated despite their limited English proficiency.

Engaging Newcomer Families. Facilitating School Involvement for Newcomer Parents. This theme delves into the findings from interviews regarding barriers to newcomer parents' involvement in their children's education as well as the strategies that teachers and educational settings have adopted to support such involvement. The data revealed a shared understanding among parents of the importance of children's skills development alongside academic growth in kindergarten. However, according to interviewees, some families have different priorities. Some parents emphasize broader skills like social-emotional development, creativity, and social interaction, seeing them as vital for their child's future success. As Sarah mentioned: *"I believe it's more important for my child to learn how to get along with others and build friendships. Those skills will help them navigate life and school."* Others are initially more focused on academic achievement, particularly in literacy and math. As Fatima told; *"I want my child to learn to read and write as quickly as possible because that's the foundation for their future education."* Regardless of parents' priorities, their involvement in their children's education can significantly support their achievement. There's a recognition that newcomer parent involvement varies widely among families, with some being highly engaged and others less so. This can depend on factors such as language proficiency, unfamiliarity with the educational system, and individual circumstances.

Language Barriers: Strategies for Newcomer Parent Involvement. According to interviewees, one of the main barriers to newcomer parents' involvement in their children's schooling is their language limitations, which inhibit them from participating. Educators express empathy and understanding towards the challenges faced by newcomer parents due to language barriers, and they strive to create inclusive and welcoming environments to

facilitate parental involvement in their children's education. Educators employ various communication strategies to engage parents effectively. One of these strategies is sending newsletters and regular emails, which are translated into different languages to ensure that all parents receive important information in their domestic language. Additionally, arranging phone calls and face-to-face meetings are other methods used to involve parents in their children's schooling. Interviewees believe that face-to-face communication is easier than phone call conversations with newcomer parents, and they try to arrange more face-to-face meetings for them. As Willow said:

Sometimes face to face is kind of a little easier than phone. I find phone conversations really difficult with newcomer families. I love phone conversations, but I do find the phone is difficult because you probably miss a lot of those things. So, I try to talk to the families in person outside the school, like when they're here for pickup time and those types of things.

Also, according to interviewees, one of the main tools educators use to communicate with newcomer parents who are learning English is translation tools like Google Translate, especially for written communication like emails. However, there are challenges associated with using translation tools, as they may not always accurately convey the intended message. This can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication, especially when discussing sensitive issues or concerns. One of the interviewees shared experiences of misunderstanding when a parent emailed her about some concerns about using Google Translate, but the translation did not accurately represent her intention. As Willow said:

Once a parent emailed that her daughter was saying there was an issue with someone in the classroom, and she (the mother) emailed, if I (the teacher) wasn't going to do anything, she was going to go to the authorities. And I was like, oh, I don't know what that means. But again, I think it was more of a translation issue. Actually, she said if there were still problems in the classroom, she was going to go to the principal, not the authorities, or how I hear the word authorities. I was thinking, like the police or the school board and that type of thing. And I think that's more the issue because sometimes there is a misunderstanding.

Also, participants mentioned that they contact the Association of New Canadians (ANC) for various activities, such as parent-teacher interviews and to provide additional support to parents, especially those facing language barriers or other challenges. These organizations help bridge communication gaps and assist parents in navigating school-related matters. As Laura said:

Usually they (the EAL teacher) will get someone from the association to come and have a translator there. So, say for parent teacher interviews, we will have the meeting when they can set up a time to have a translator in. It's a challenge for someone that doesn't have any English at all, so I'll either contact the Association for the Canadians myself, or I contact our EAL teacher who contacts them for me.

Interviewees also highlighted the importance of having a supportive community within families, especially for parents from diverse cultural backgrounds. As Jennifer mentioned, "I try to connect families with families as well if they have the same language

and are close to the same address." When there's a sense of community support among families from similar backgrounds, some parents with sufficient English proficiency can assist others. Additionally, older students also help with translation when needed, as Karen mentioned.

I know some older children in our school, grades six and seven, who are so kind, and they are willing to do some translation for us. Now, of course, we would never have them involved in anything that might be private or confidential, but, for example, on Friday, we had KinderStart, so there was no kindergarten. On Friday, one of the kindergarteners who is my new student, and his family has very limited English, came to the school. So, I called on my grade seven friend who speaks the same language. And he was able to call home and speak with the father and explain to him about no school and it was KinderStart and what all that was. And then was able to translate for us that Dad was coming and picking up our friend, which he did. So, I've used older students.

Laura suggested that if families from the same country were in the same school, they could create a support network and ease the transition for newcomers. As she said:

I'll just take Ukraine as an example. So, if there were more Ukrainians at a particular school, parents would be able to get together as a small community on their own for support within that school. If that were the case, maybe there could be some kind of social network for the parents. And that could assist them that way. And then you

don't draw on the resources within the school itself so that people within the community could also help. And help them adapt to our culture as well.

Interviewees also emphasized the significance of clear communication with parents. They make efforts to bridge language gaps and ensure parents understand important information by using strategies such as speaking slowly, using body language, and incorporating visuals in their communication to facilitate better understanding. As Willow said:

I tend to speak very fast, as a lot of Newfoundlanders do, but I do try to keep that in mind, especially when I'm talking to the newcomer parents. I use some body language when I am talking to parents. I try to keep that in mind to slow down a little bit. I often like to show parents the students' work, instead of just talking about it. I'll point, I'll let them have a look at it and try to show them that way what I'm referring to.

Unfamiliarity with New Educational Settings: Educators' Support for Parent

Involvement. Another barrier to parent involvement can arise from parents' unfamiliarity with the educational settings of a new country, as they may have had different experiences in previous educational settings. However, interviewees stated that, despite this challenge, newcomer parents highly value their children's academic progress and are generally satisfied with the support provided by the school. As Sue said:

I have found that most newcomer parents tend to be very happy with what we are doing here. They're very open and willing to do whatever I suggest, or they're very pleased with how their child is doing. They've been very happy that their child is thriving, whether it be academically or just happy. I guess in the end, that's the best thing, to have your child happy and wanting to go to school.

To support newcomer parents with this barrier, interviewees emphasize giving support and explaining events and expectations clearly in advance. They also stress the importance of maintaining open communication with parents to address any misunderstandings or concerns. Additionally, they encourage parents to be patient and give themselves and their children time to adjust. As Sue said:

I think just being upfront and explaining what the expectations are here and showing the progress that their children have made in all of the areas that we do cover. Just letting them know that as their English language develops, that we'll be able to see more and more of what they know. Just letting them know to be patient. Like, we will give the children all of the support that they need and the work that they want. I know lots of families that come from different countries will love the extra homework and the extra, extra stuff at home because they want to do well. But I try to make it clear that I don't want them doing work all of the time at home. It's important for them to be able to have fun and go out and socialize with new friends, when they can.

Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that they have tried to engage parents in school activities and provide them with information in their preferred language, aiming for a positive experience for both parents and students. As Karen mentioned:

I try to get them ready beforehand for the events that's coming up. And send them emails in their own language that explains what's going on. And if they have any questions, they can come back to me, and I explain to them what to expect.

Beyond the Classroom: Addressing Barriers to Newcomer Families' Lives.

Another obstacle that can hinder the involvement of newcomer parents in their children's schooling is the challenges they face in their daily lives. Newcomer parents often encounter difficulties in establishing a new life in the host country, which can limit their ability to participate in their children's education. When it comes to understanding the struggles faced by newcomer families outside of school, educators hold varying opinions. Some educators have limited knowledge about these aspects, and some believe that knowing about students' and parents' lives outside of school is not important. As Laura said:

I know very little about their outside life. Yeah, unless I get, like, the little fellow who celebrated Ramadan, and if I reach out to parents and say, just wondering, I know you come from here, is there anything you'd like to share with us, anything you'd like to contribute about your culture or your heritage or that kind of thing? I don't think it's essential, but it is nice to know sometimes about their after-school activities.

However, some educators believe this information is helpful. They mentioned how knowing about students' backgrounds helps educators interact with them more effectively, understand their behaviours, and provide appropriate support. Building relationships with parents and encouraging them to share information enhances the overall educational experience and promotes inclusivity in schools. As Sue said:

I think, for any child, if you know of something in their background or that is currently going on, it is so helpful to how you interact with that child on a given day, or if the child is showing, exhibiting some behaviours you haven't seen before, oh, their mom just had surgery, or this happened to them and for some reason it's coming up in the dreams at night, or things like this. It's extremely helpful. It's important for me to know. I find, this child doesn't have a snow suit. Is there any way I can help? So I've had that in the past, too, where I found out that certain students didn't have the basic needs. So then I'm able to either set them up with where they can get their basic needs, or a few of us go and get some of the things to provide to them.

However, this group of educators highlight that there is a recognition of boundaries regarding confidential information and cultural sensitivity in handling personal details. Elizabeth said some parents share information about their life, but they are not familiar with the concept of confidentiality. As she mentioned:

Unfortunately, some of them do not understand that there is some confidential information. If they let me know, for example, his child has a certain disease and he wanted her to keep it a secret. We cannot do that. You're violating the code of ethics.

Because you are not only protecting one child, you're protecting all the children. So, some of them, when they give you part of their life, they have to know your job description and your boundaries, like there are boundaries. For example, parents who are using punitive behavior guidance to their children. This is not something part of your life. I would help them and let them know that this is not allowed, this would end up with your child being taken away from you. So, this is something if they told someone else, who was not going to understand their culture, would be an immediate threat to them.

According to the data, when educators and school staff understand that a newcomer family needs support, they usually help them directly or refer immigrant families who need extra support to the ESL teacher. The ESL teacher can then connect them with community support resources such as local community centers, newcomer institutions, and associations like the ANC. As Willow said:

Our ESL teacher really does a good job with that, and our administration does as well. And I know, like, our admin and our ESL teacher has a good connection with the ANC as well, so personally, I don't feel like I do a whole lot of that. I'm more focused on the kids, and if I notice that there is a need, I would reach out to our ESL teacher, but I find I don't tend to do much background work for that.

Some educators also mentioned that they try to connect families with longer-term immigrants for advice and support, sharing information about services like food banks,

after-school programs, and local events and directing them to relevant community organizations. As Elizabeth said:

I haven't done that, but I guess in a way, in terms of connecting them with community support, other immigrants in the community who may have been here longer because we had that at my old school, places to go in terms of, if they hadn't had jobs yet, tell them where the food bank was, sometimes about after-school programs that were free for children to connect with after school. I tell them, the park is just here, things like that, or if I knew something fun was coming up, like Mount Pearl Days and Frosty's Big Birthday, I will let them know and things like that.

Celebrating Diversity: Enhancing Educational Experiences for All Students.

This theme highlights the importance of cultural awareness, inclusivity, and collaboration in creating a positive and enriching educational experience for students from diverse backgrounds. Educators acknowledge challenges in understanding cultural nuances. As Emily said:

There are going to be challenges with it. Feeling like you can never get to them or you're never good enough. You're never able to offer them enough for what they need, and that goes not just for them, but for all the students in the class. There's just so many of them with different needs, and it's impossible to get to every single one. You want to at least try, but there are definitely some challenges for sure.

Regardless of these challenges, educators try to pay attention to cultural diversity. Interviewees spoke about ways they show their attention to cultural diversity and integrate the culture of newcomer students into their classrooms. They mentioned that one of the ways of giving attention to those of diverse cultures is by celebrating the diverse cultural traditions of their students, such as learning about cultural holidays like Ramadan, Diwali and Christmas. As Elizabeth said:

We add activities that include their cultural traditions. Sometimes we add, we have celebrations like, for example, for newcomers, Ramadan is coming up and this is very important to them. So, we would add, like, lanterns. We would do activities like coloring the moon. We would have some music from their culture. And that's recognizing Ramadan for them. When Hanukkah comes, we do the same. When the new Chinese year comes, we do the same.

The interviewees also emphasize mutual learning regarding diverse cultures. Jennifer mentioned that she learns from students about their cultures and involves them in teaching classmates and staff about their traditions. She also encourages students to correct any misunderstandings, fostering a close relationship and a positive learning experience. As she said:

The beauty of my school is that it is very diverse. So, everybody's just kind of used to it. They're kind of, they know that we're new to it. I've told them right from the beginning, if I say something that's wrong about your culture, please correct me because I need to learn, too, and I can't learn if you don't help me learn, and they do,

they're totally comfortable. In order for them to be comfortable, I think that they have to have a really close relationship with the teacher to be able to correct them, because I tell them, all the time, I make mistakes, I don't care if you correct me. I need you to correct me, and this is the best thing when people feel comfortable with each other, and I think lots of misunderstandings can be solved. Yes, I try to learn from them as much as they learn from me. Honestly, being, like, a new teacher, I didn't know much about many of the other cultures that I would be experiencing. Last year, when I started my work, and the students, some of the older students whose English was quite developed, I said, okay, Ramadan's coming up, like, I need you guys to tell me about it. So, they told me, they taught me everything,

Interviewees also spoke about incorporating elements of students' familiar culture and traditions into the classroom environment. This includes adding books, magazines, and other materials in their own language as well as including songs and music that represent their cultural background. The goal is to create a sense of belonging and familiarity for students to help them feel more comfortable and connected to new settings. As Elizabeth mentioned:

Addition of their familiar stuff in the classroom, like adding some familiar parts of their culture, traditions in the classroom. We can have books, magazines. We can cook for a simple meal that they have from their culture. If it has simple ingredients, we can. Sometimes we add songs and music from their culture. All of this helps them to feel belonging to the environment.

Also, interviewees highlighted the efforts made in the classroom setting to embrace diversity and cultural exchange. They described how students from different backgrounds, such as Ukrainians and Libyans, are actively involved in teaching their language and cultural phrases to others. The focus is on adding diversity to the daily routine by incorporating simple words and phrases from various languages, fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment where cultural differences are celebrated and respected. As Laura said:

So, then we had, like, Ukrainians, teaching us how to say hello and goodbye in Ukrainian, the little guy from Libya trying to teach us his language. So, in our little morning routine, each day we would try to add a little something else, especially like the simpler words for, like, good morning, goodbye, hello, or a little phrase like I love you.

Also, Willow said they have a cultural fair in March at their school where families are invited to participate, performances are held, and various cultural aspects are showcased. The school's efforts are focused on celebrating diversity, fostering inclusivity, and recognizing the differences among students and their backgrounds. As Willow said: "Our school also has a cultural fair, which is really fabulous. We do that in March and our ELA teacher got that all planned out and families are invited in and we have performances."

Interviewees also stressed the importance of being aware and sensitive to cultural differences among students, such as understanding dietary restrictions that stem from the culture and religious beliefs of some newcomer students. As Willow said:

I think I've been in this school for about nine years. And I have definitely learned a lot since then. I remember the first year here not really realizing children with different dietary needs, like our Muslim students, didn't eat pork, but I didn't realize it was like gelatin and all those things were a part of pork, just my own ignorance, I guess. So, I remember bringing in Rice Krispie Cookies one day as a snack at Halloween. And one little kid said, I can't eat that. And I was so sad. I was like, I didn't realize. And I guess I've been just trying to do better with those types of things. I do still provide snacks at different occasions for the families, but I do always email the parents and say, if there's a dietary restriction, please let me know. And I often, like, will tell them what I'm having. It's usually, like, something I know that all the children can have, whether it's a religious dietary restriction or a health restriction type thing.

During the observation, part of the focus was on how the teachers paid attention to the cultures of bilingual newcomer children. It was noted that there were differences between the two teachers' approaches to cultural differences. Mr. Ryan's approach to integrating and respecting diverse cultures created a more inclusive and understanding classroom environment than Mrs. Abbott's approach. First, Mr. Ryan had more items related to different cultures in his classroom compared to Mrs. Abbott. For example, Mr. Ryan decorated his classroom with crafts made by students for various cultural events such as Ramadan, Nowruz, and Easter. In contrast, Mrs. Abbott's classroom only displayed artwork related to Easter, with no items representing other cultural events.

Mr. Ryan also placed significant emphasis on multicultural events and actively incorporated them into his classroom activities. He frequently discussed cultural events relevant to his newcomer students' backgrounds. For instance, he once spoke about an Indian cultural event and played a video about it. Additionally, during a joint session with another kindergarten class in that school, he invited a parent to speak about Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, and showed a video about the celebration.

Moreover, Mr. Ryan also dedicated time to discussing cultural differences to foster better communication and understanding within the classroom. He was mindful of cultural differences in his interactions with students. For example, when a new student who did not speak English touched another student, Hannah, making her uncomfortable, Mr. Ryan used Google Translate to explain to the new student that touching others might not be acceptable in this culture. He also explained to Hannah that the new student was unfamiliar with these cultural norms and likely wanted to be friends. Nothing was observed in Mrs. Abbott's class that indicated attention to cultural diversity in her classroom activities. For instance, there were no items or materials in the classroom that reflected the cultural backgrounds of immigrant students. During my observations, I did not notice any activities or discussions that acknowledged or celebrated cultural diversity, nor were there any cultural activities specifically related to other countries. This absence suggests a missed opportunity to create an inclusive learning environment that values and incorporates the diverse cultural identities of the students.

Equipped for Diversity: Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations.

This theme explores how educational settings are prepared to support the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children. Interviewees mentioned encountering challenges while working with bilingual newcomer children. The population of newcomers has seen a sudden increase in recent years, causing teachers to feel unsure about how to effectively help these children integrate into the classroom, especially considering the linguistic and cultural barriers they face. For instance, an interviewee expressed her struggle in adapting to this growing diversity. Karen said: “As an English-speaking Newfoundlander, this has always been my home. I want to share this with them, and I want it to be positive, and I want to help them, but I don't always know how to help.” Also, another barrier is that educators might not be well prepared to work with this growing population. As Karen said: “I teach kindergarten from my experience last year and this year. I also hear from other teachers how difficult it is.”

Considering this situation, participants spoke about available in-service training for enhancing teachers' readiness for working with a diverse population of children with diverse needs. Participants mentioned that post-secondary education provided a foundation. The availability of in-service training and professional development is acknowledged, though opportunities for attending such training may be limited. As Emily said:

There's lots of in-service training out there, but, like, as you can appreciate, finding time to do it. So, the board will initiate some specific professional development seminars and in-service training for us, but we only get a few of those a year, and it's

very specific. It could be in how to use a new program. There's not a whole lot of it really.

More than in-service training programs, participants highlighted interactions with colleagues and observing other teachers' practices, especially practical experiences, as having contributed significantly to their learning and growth as educators. As Jennifer said:

I learned a lot from our teachers that I saw, but I think the most learning is actually doing the job, actually being in there, observing how students react to what you're doing. Every student's different, so it's really difficult to base it up just on one teacher that maybe helped me become a teacher.

Another factor mentioned is the ratio of students per teacher. According to the interviewees, the teacher-to-student ratios vary depending on school policies, ranging from 1 to 30 students per teacher. Teachers mentioned that the ratio increases as the students' age increases. As Elizabeth said, "I currently just have 11 students right now. I had a few students leave, but that's very low." However, Willow mentioned, "In my school, it could be anywhere from 20 to 30 for one teacher." Increasing the number of students, especially with a more diverse population, can be a challenge for teachers. In the two observed classes, Mr. Ryan's class had 18 students, 9 of whom were newcomer bilingual students. In Mrs. Abbott's class, there were 24 students, 13 of whom were newcomer bilingual students.

Also, interviewees believe diversity among educators can help better prepare for working with the newcomer population. Having teachers who speak multiple languages and understand different cultures was seen as highly beneficial, as it can help improve

communication with students from diverse backgrounds and avoid misunderstandings about cultural issues. As Jennifer said:

I think having a more diverse population of teachers can be helpful. They are a really huge help to us as teachers. We actually have one of our English language teachers from Ukraine. So, I learn a lot from her, I ask her lots of questions. She tells me a lot about the traditions and maybe why a student might be behaving a certain way, because it is how their school was. So, I've learned lots and lots from her. Having the diversity on your staff, someone that's actually from another country, she can explain things about the country's culture before you make a mistake is super helpful.

The interviewees highlight that, even more important than diversity among teachers is the need for teachers to be open-minded, welcoming to new students, and culturally aware. As Emily said, “If there was more diversity among educators, that's good, but even just being open—it's just your personality. If you are open to learning and welcoming new students, I think that's more of the important part.” Willow also added, “I think just being culturally aware, too. Sometimes when we're not from a giant town, having compassion and empathy really helps.”

Demographic Characteristics of the Interview Participants (Parents)

The recruitment letters distributed for this study in October 2023 included a section with contact information, encouraging willing parents to reach out and express their interest in participating in an interview. Eleven parents indicated their willingness to participate in interviews, but, ultimately, only eight followed through with their initial requests. One

parent withdrew due to a busy schedule, another did not respond to schedule the interview, and one withdrew because of an inability to communicate in English. In total, eight parents participated in interviews.

The interviews were conducted in an office within the Faculty of Education, with all sessions being audio recorded. Below, the demographic characteristics of participating parents are presented, with pseudonyms assigned to maintain confidentiality. Furthermore, the confidentiality of the participants is enhanced by altering their ages and other specific information. For instance, when a participant shared that they immigrated to Canada last week, this detail was changed to a more general timeframe, specifying within the last six months. Or, all participants in their fourth decade of life, for example, those who are 38, fall within the age range of 30. This adjustment is aimed at preventing the identification of individuals while maintaining the research data's integrity. Children's English language proficiency was estimated by their parents, and no evaluation was conducted.

Interview Participant 1 - Ms. Sarah. The first interview was with Sarah from Iran, a 40-year-old woman pursuing her Ph.D. at Memorial University. She immigrated to Canada with her daughter within the last six months. Sarah's daughter is bilingual in Farsi and possesses a basic understanding of English. Sarah assesses her daughter's English proficiency at a beginner level, noting that her child had some exposure to the English language through childcare in Iran.

Interview Participant 2 - Ms. Kate. The second interview was with Kate, who is originally from Iran. Kate is 30 years old and immigrated to Canada in 2019. She holds a

master's degree. She is a mother to two boys. Regarding her son, Kate indicates that he possesses a good level of proficiency in English, though not at the level of a domestic English speaker. Her son is bilingual and able to communicate in Farsi and English.

Interview Participant 3 - Ms. Merry. The third interview was with Merry, a mother from Pakistan. She is 30 years old and has a girl. She immigrated to Canada in 2022 and has a master's degree. Regarding her daughter's language proficiency, Merry notes that her child is at a good level in English. The languages her daughter can speak include Urdu and English. Merry mentions that her daughter attended childcare and school in their home country, where English was a mandatory subject. Consequently, her daughter initiated her English language learning journey in that educational context.

Interview Participant 4 - Ms. Fatima. The fourth interview was conducted with Fatima from Bangladesh. Fatima, a 30-year-old mother, has a daughter. Having been in Canada for almost two years, Fatima holds a master's degree. Regarding her daughter's language abilities, Fatima reports that her daughter's Bengali and English language skills are almost good. Although her daughter did not take English language classes in their home country, she started learning English through childcare upon arriving in Canada.

Interview Participant 5 - Ms. Linda. The fifth interview was with Linda, a mother from Afghanistan. She is a 40-year-old mother with three children: one boy and two girls, with one of her daughters currently in kindergarten. Linda holds a bachelor's degree and has been in Canada for about two years. Regarding her daughter's language proficiency, Linda notes that her daughter's English and Uzbek language skills is almost good. Although her

daughter has not attended formal English classes, she has developed her English language skills by watching cartoons in English and accompanying her mother to language school before starting her kindergarten.

Interview Participant 6 - Mr. Daniel. The sixth interview features Daniel, from India. He is a 30-year-old father to a boy. He holds a master's degree and has been in Canada for approximately a year. Regarding his son's language proficiency, Daniel mentions that the child is at a very beginner level in English and primarily communicates in Konkani, his mother tongue. Daniel believed that attending childcare before kindergarten has contributed positively to his son's language development.

Interview Participant 7 - Ms. Rosie. The seventh interview involved Rosie, a mother from Sri Lanka. At 30 years old, Rosie is a mother to two girls and a boy, with one of her daughters currently in kindergarten. Rosie holds a master's degree and immigrated to Canada approximately three years ago. In terms of her child's language proficiency, Rosie notes that the child's English level below average. She can also speak in Sinhala, which is her mother tongue. Rosie mentions that participating in childcare before starting kindergarten has significantly contributed to her language development.

Interview Participant 8 - Mr. Benjamin. The eighth interview featured Benjamin from Nigeria. He immigrated to Canada almost two years ago. He has a master's degree. Benjamin has a daughter. He believes his daughter is below average in English and communicates in Yoruba at home. He notes that his daughter attended childcare before kindergarten, which has significantly contributed to her English language development.

Table 4.4
Interviewed Parents

	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education	Country of origin	Number of children	English proficiency of children	Language s child can speak	Duration of being in Canada
1	Sarah	Female	40	Ph.D.	Iran	1 girl	Beginner	Farsi & English	6 months
2	Kate	Female	30	Master	Iran	2 boys	Good	Farsi & English	4 years
3	Merry	Female	30	Master	Pakistan	1 girl	Good	Urdu & English	Almost 2 years
4	Fatima	female	30	Master	Bangladesh	1 girl	Almost good	Bengali & English	Almost 2 years
5	Linda	Female	40	Bachelor	Afghanistan	2 girls & 1 boy	Almost good	Uzbek & English	Almost 2 years
6	Daniel	Male	30	Master	India	1 boy	Very beginner	Konkani & English	About 1 year
7	Rosie	Female	30	Master	Sri Lanka	2 girls & 1 boy	almost good	Sinhala & English	Almost 3 years
8	Benjamin	Male	—	Master	Nigeria	1 girl	Almost good	Yoruba & English	Almost 2 years

Results from Parental Interviews

Four themes emerged through applying thematic analysis to the data collected from parents' interviews. The initial theme, titled *Language Barriers on Newcomer Bilingual Children's Educational Experience and Skills Development Cause Negative Impacts*, delves into how limitations in English proficiency affect the experiences of these children. The second theme, named *Personal Challenges Negatively Affect Parental Support in Children's Learning and Development*, focuses on barriers hindering newcomer parents from supporting their children's learning and development, and this theme is divided into three sub-themes that each discuss one of the main challenges that parents pointed out. The third

theme, named *The Representation of Newcomer Students' Culture and the Challenges of Cultural Diversity in Educational Settings*, explores how educational institutions address cultural diversity. The final theme, titled *Various Perspectives Regarding Available Support for Newcomer Bilingual Students*, investigates the support provided in educational settings for newcomer bilingual children and their parents.

Language Barriers around Newcomer Bilingual Children's Educational Experience and Skills Development Cause Negative Impacts. This theme revolves around the impact of language barriers on the educational experience of newcomer bilingual children in English-speaking educational environments. The reported language limitations posed challenges for newcomer bilingual children, including difficulties in communication, forming friendships, and experiencing negative emotions, as mentioned by their parents. Additionally, parents shared practical challenges and strategies employed to support their children's language development.

A primary concern is communication difficulties. Parents participating in the study emphasized that their children faced challenges in communication with teachers and classmates due to their limited proficiency in English. As Linda said:

When she started school here, the most challenging thing was that, as teachers speak English so fast, she couldn't understand what her teacher say, or talk about that, and sometimes she wanted to communicate with her teacher, but her teacher can't understand what she's saying. And it's challenging for her.

Participants also expressed that their children's language limitations led to negative feelings, including loneliness and isolation. These children's language limitations posed challenges in forming friendships and participating in social activities. As a result, parents expressed concerns about their children's active involvement in various classroom activities, such as reading stories, learning the alphabet, and understanding instructions. This restricted engagement collectively contributes to a sense of exclusion that these children feel within the educational environment. As Sarah mentioned:

It's very hard for me, because my daughter feels isolated. She told me that she has no friends in school, and she is just painting and drawing in the school. And I asked her, why do you put this much time on them, and she said that I'm alone and I have to draw every day. She brings 10 or 12 paintings every day, and it shows how much she's alone in the school. And she's trying to engage in something by herself.

A parent involved in the study expressed her daughter's feelings of loneliness through an example. She mentioned how her daughter created imaginative stories about school friendships, and she believed it is a sign of her loneliness. As Sarah mentioned:

My daughter really likes to have a friend. It's a very sad situation, and I feel so sad in this situation as well. She tried to give me some imaginary story. For example, she tells some stories about her school, and she says at the school she plays with a girl whose name is that. I know that she made all of them up, and it shows that she is alone and loves to have friends. These kinds of stories weren't the things that she did

six months ago, when we were in my country, and she had friends. But now she is making up stories in her mind that she has friends in her school. It can be a sign of loneliness.

During the observation, it was noted that language limitations negatively affected the communication of newcomer bilingual students. For example, in Mrs. Abbott's class, Arya mostly played and spent time with a classmate who shared the same mother tongue, and they spoke in their first language. Conversely, Zoha often was alone, and she was doing artwork by herself during free play, and when there was a group activity she was not involved. It was also observed that newcomer bilingual children sometimes had challenges in understanding their teacher because of their language limitation. For instance, once Mrs. Abbott was teaching a pattern and asked the children to stand in different positions: one student would put their hands on their head, another would sit down, and another would stand up with straight hands. This pattern was repeated. She then asked the students to guess what the position of the next student would be in this sequence, and the children joined in one by one to follow the pattern. During this pattern activity, Arya and Zoha struggled to understand the instructions. Mrs. Abbott noticed this and would repeat instructions and use body language to explain this pattern for them one more time when it was their turn, but again it was not successful. Mrs. Abbott then asked them to observe their classmates first before guessing the pattern, using visual cues to aid their comprehension.

The language limitations of newcomer bilingual children lead to practical challenges, including difficulties in seeking help for basic needs. These challenges contribute to an

overall struggle, highlighting the broader impact of language barriers on daily life. As Benjamin said:

One of the interesting points I just pulled out last week was: he was feeling sick because of the cold weather; and I was thinking why he's getting sick every time. So, then I realized even he put on jacket, but he [don't] know how to wear a jacket zip. So he knows, but what he is, either he's lazy or whatever, he's not [pick] it up. Then I inform his teacher that he's not wearing the winter jackets properly while it's snowing outside. Yeah, she said, she thinks he may be feeling hot, but he's not. He's just feeling it hard to put up a new jacket because it's a new jacket, and he don't know how to zip it up. And, yeah, it's just small things, and he found it difficult, whereas his class teacher found it like he's feeling hot. So that's why he's not wearing it with his zips on. Yeah, even the small things are important, you know. He was feeling very cold.

Also, Sarah mentioned: “Yesterday, she told me that when they went to the playground, she needed to go to the bathroom, but she couldn't tell her teacher, and she said that she was uncomfortable for an hour.”

Regarding these barriers, participants underscored a deficiency in support from the school system, emphasizing the need for more resources and initiatives to address newcomer bilingual children's language challenges. Some parents, in order to assist their children in improving their English skills, have implemented some strategies, such as watching English

cartoons together at home, to create a language-learning environment within the familiar setting of the home. As Sarah mentioned: “I want to help her to improve her English, for example, I watch cartoons in English to help her to learn English.”

Personal Challenges Negatively Affect Parental Support in Children's Learning and Development. This theme describes the barriers that impede newcomer parents from actively participating and supporting their children in kindergarten, hindering the development of their social skills. These barriers are intertwined with the personal lives of immigrant parents after they arrived in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. These challenges encompass various aspects, including language limitations, financial strain, unfamiliarity with the educational system, cultural adjustments, and the absence of external support systems and physical and mental health issues. These challenges contributed to difficulties in engaging with their children's educational journey and social skills development.

Language Limitations. One of the barriers that parents identified as hindering their involvement in their children's school activities is their own English language limitations. Participants shared concerns about their proficiency in the English language, considering it a challenge to actively engage with the school due to this communication issue. Even parents who believed their language skills were at an appropriate level mentioned facing barriers related to their accents. As Merry mentioned:

The language is also a barrier because sometimes I can speak a little bit, but sometimes when I speak, my accent is not like those [Native English speakers]. I'm not understanding their accent, and at the same time they are not understanding mine, so this is the problem also.

Language limitations are perceived as a significant obstacle to effective communication and participation in school-related events.

Financial Strain. The second barrier highlighted by participants was financial strain. After immigrating, some parents find it challenging to support their child's education and skills development due to financial challenges. According to the participants, these financial issues are rooted in various factors. Firstly, many parents that participated in the study face challenges in getting their educational credentials acknowledged in Canada, making it hard for them to find an appropriate job and get suitable employment opportunities. The process of changing credentials, going through training, and obtaining additional education to meet Canadian standards poses significant challenges for some. In some cases, they may need to work in lower-paying jobs while they work towards meeting the requirements in Canada. This whole process makes it difficult for them to be as involved in their child's development as they would like. As Benjamin said:

My skills have been transferred easily. For me, it was not so difficult, whereas my wife was working in the finance sector, and when she started applying for jobs, there was no job available because, here, you need a proper [Canadian] degree to be an

office assistant. Even though she has a capability to manage the office or front desk, she has to go through the proper training, and so that was a bit difficult. She has a finance background, so for her to transfer her skills, she has to spend another \$1000 to \$3000 just for transferring the skills, which we have not done it yet because it's a huge money for now. So, we just waited for it, and she has to write all the exams. So that was bit big challenge, it's a big challenge at the initial.

Additionally, some participants shared that their financial difficulties are connected to being here alone, without their spouses. This makes some parents single parents, and they have to work long hours to deal with financial problems. The long work commitments, in turn, create challenges for these parents to allocate sufficient time and energy to actively participate in various aspects of their children's educational journey and skill enhancement. As Merry described:

There was one meeting, I remember, when they started their school, like a meeting of parents. But I unfortunately didn't attend because I was at work. And my husband wasn't with me at that time, and still he's back home in my country. So I didn't attend that meeting.

Regardless of the reason behind financial issues, in many cases financial challenges prompt parents to work longer hours during the day. As Daniel described “I was pretty engaged with my child back home because of time. I had enough time there.”

Also, Merry said:

I was pretty engaged with my child back home in my hometown, and here I'm not doing any like help. That is because of my routine. I'm doing work, I'm doing studies, so that's reason. Like, I'm feeling regretful when I don't have much time to spend with my child and I'm not reading with her at night, when I back from my work, I'm not able to spend time with her. I'm so much frustrated throughout the whole long day and juggling with different kinds of situations. I don't have enough time, time for my kid, and I'm regretful for that. We don't have enough time to read together. We don't have enough time to watch television together, even I'm not making enough food for her.

Long hours of working result in parents spending less time with their children compared to what they did in their hometown.

Adapting to the Culture and Educational System. The third challenge that limited parent involvement in their children's education was unfamiliarity with the educational system. Participants pointed out that not being familiar with the educational system of the host country serves as a barrier. They acknowledged that it takes time to adapt to the new system, recognizing the significance of this period for successful integration. This unfamiliarity with the educational system stands out as a challenge that requires time and effort to overcome. As Benjamin Said:

So that's the thing. So yeah, yeah, I didn't know there was a there was a system like that. So I was blind, completely blind about the system here. So then, when I spoke

with this teacher, then she sent me everything, but luckily we were able to make sure before the cutoff date so he was able to go for his trip.

Participants also talk about the considerable time it takes to get used to the new country's culture, systems and lifestyle. As Merry mentioned: "I'm in challenging states still. I'm not aware of the culture. I'm not aware of these things. I'm struggling with this." This initial transition period comes with its own challenges, like getting a driver's license and finding a job. Adjusting to these aspects of life in a new country requires time, effort, and overcoming specific hurdles that might affect parents' involvement in their children's education. As Rosie said:

We are not native. So when it comes to immigrants, we are starting a new life in another country, we are starting from zero. So we don't have, we don't have a transportation system, we don't know anything about this country's culture because it's a new place, new setting.

Social isolation and limited support systems were another barrier mentioned by participants. Not having extended family support puts some parents in a situation where they have to deal with numerous challenges on their own, leading to feelings of social isolation. Participants highlight the importance of external support systems to help them navigate these difficulties. As Linda said:

When we lived in our country, because we have lots of support; and we can receive lots of support from our family, the grandparents, my sibling or my husband's

siblings. If we need any help, they support us, but here because we do not have any family here and we are alone. If I need any help, I should manage it somehow.

Some participants spoke about the health implications of their situation after immigration. Some parents found balancing daily chores, taking care of children, and job duties a constant struggle. Some participants mentioned that they feel guilty about not spending enough time with their children due to work demands, not having extended family support and other life stresses. Also, these stressful lifestyles and lack of time for self-care contributed to health concerns among parents. In some cases, mental and physical well-being was reported to be compromised due to the challenges faced. These situations affected their family relationships and involvement in their child's education and skills development. As Fatima said:

Immigrant people, they're suffering a different issue, a lot of issues. So with all that stress, it's really difficult to concentrate or really difficult to lead a happy life. Kind of thing like fighting, being stressful, that means, like, we are not happy. Like, it's not kind of a serious fighting, but since having stress, like, with the things, what happening waiting for PR [permanent residency], the lifestyle and everything, so it's kind of stressful for the parents. We know we well prepared to face the challenges, but when in real we are just going through them. That's really stressful.

Also, Rosie said:

Because our life is so busy, and at the end of the day we feel very tired because we are always going here and there. I have three kids, so I have, like, triple work to do. So that might end up with financial problems, like, and also family problems. Maybe because we don't have much time to interact, to talk and discuss about the plans that we are gonna take in the future or anything like that. Yeah, and those types of things. I would say and health problems, maybe. Maybe we might get sick, we might fall sick, maybe physically, mentally and everything is, I think, it is attacking all the areas.

All these factors can affect how much time and energy parents might have to be involved in their children's education and skills development.

The Representation of Newcomer Students' Culture and the Challenges of Cultural Diversity in Educational Settings. This theme explores the varied experiences of newcomer families regarding the acknowledgment and integration of their cultural backgrounds within the school environment. The data provide insights into both positive instances of cultural recognition and challenges stemming from cultural differences.

Participants recognized the importance of acknowledging and integrating diverse cultures within the educational setting. They shared instances where educators actively include cultural elements of different countries in classroom activities. Notable examples include celebrating festivals such as Ramadan, Diwali, or the Festival of Lights. This

highlights a positive trend towards fostering cultural awareness and appreciation within the school environment. As Daniel mentioned:

I heard that they celebrate Ramadan. Yeah, they decorate their, like, their halls and stuff for Ramadan and they call some people if they want to, like volunteers, if they want to decorate with them. So, it is a sort of unity. They want to show that we aware of your culture and your religious belief.

Also, as Benjamin said:

I guess one of the aspects what he, so we recently had a, like, yesterday and day before. So, there was a Diwali. So, Diwali is a festival of lights, and yeah that was. So even though he don't remember any of the Diwali or what we had previously, because he was small. So, he came back, and when I calling and wishing everyone, or we were getting a call, so, all those things. Then he told in the class we had done something. So then I realized I went back to Twitter and see, as usually they post some of the photos on Twitter, and there was a post on the Diwali post from his teacher saying they did some activity on Diwali. So, they made lamps, and they made a tree.

During the observation, it was noted that Mr. Ryan paid close attention to cultural diversity and represented different cultures in his class. Three cultural events from Iran, India, and Canada were presented. Students' artwork related to Easter and Nowruz was displayed, and a parent was invited to speak about Nowruz and show a video. Mr. Ryan also

played a video about an Indian event and discussed it with the students. In contrast, Mrs. Abbott paid less attention to cultural diversity. Despite having students from various countries, there were no activities or visual material representing their cultures during the observation period; there was only Easter-related artwork. In both schools' hallways, elements of other cultures were observed. At Mrs. Abbott's school, there was a large world map displaying pictures of international students from each country, highlighting cultural diversity. At the entrance doors of both schools, there was a display with "Welcome" written in different languages. Additionally, the hallways featured artwork related to various cultural events such as Nowruz and Easter, showcasing the schools' commitment to celebrating cultural diversity.

Also, some participants highlighted translating emails in multiple languages as an effort to present multiculturalism and reflect a conscious initiative to cultivate an inclusive environment. This approach emphasizes embracing linguistic diversity and fostering a sense of belonging for individuals with varied cultural backgrounds. As Daniel said: "One thing I note is that when they email us, this email is translated in many languages like Arabic, Hindi, and I guess maybe in Persian or something because I don't understand all the languages, but there are two, three translations of the same message."

Participants positively perceive teachers who actively seek to understand and incorporate cultural practices. Examples, such as inquiring about greetings in Bengali or celebrating festivals like Ramadan, are viewed as commendable efforts towards fostering

positive engagement with cultural differences and creating a sense of unity and respect for diverse backgrounds.

Despite positive efforts, some participants spoke about challenges that arise due to some educators' lack of cultural awareness. Instances were noted where educators lacked awareness of a specific country, as seen in an educator's inquiry about reading Arabic from a parent whose first language was not Arabic. Participants expressed feelings of cultural underrepresentation at school. As Sarah said:

They have a newsletter, and this newsletter is published in Arabic and English. But there's no Persian there, and they ask me if you know Arabic, and I said no, I cannot. My daughter is, I think, the only person in that class who is from Iran. However, I believe they should try to create an inclusive environment for all, not just a special group.

Participants express concerns about potential misunderstandings arising from cultural differences. Examples include hesitation about touching children in specific social situations and challenges in adapting to the rules and expectations of the Canadian education system. As Sarah said:

I am so careful about cultural differences. Yeah, because I'm so scared of misunderstanding because of cultural differences. One time I went to the playground with my daughter, and one of the kids was falling, and I grabbed her and then I said apology to his father, but he told me it's OK and thank you. I thought it might not be

okay to touch the kids even in this situation, even though in my country it is okay to touch a kid in this situation, but I was not sure about it here. I'm so careful because I don't want to do something that causes misunderstandings. My daughter is the same. And she is so careful.

Fatima also said:

Especially about education. When I was, I tried to sit with her to learn the letter and the things, I really get mad and say to her why you wouldn't be able to do that? You need, and you should do that. So that's kind of behavior. Yeah. So it's my problem. I know I shouldn't behave like this; I know it's my problem. But in our culture, it's called as disciplined to their kids. But here it's kind of a crime, right?

Participants highlighted that challenges and misunderstandings can arise due to cultural differences and a lack of familiarity with a culture. These factors can create difficulties when navigating and interacting within diverse cultural contexts.

Various Perspectives Regarding Available Support for Newcomer Bilingual Students. This theme collectively highlights the complex experiences of newcomer bilingual children and their families, including both positive and challenging aspects of their interactions with the educational system. Issues that need to be addressed are related to the main strategies adapted for communication and accessible support, and the educator demographic must be diversified to create an environment that better reflects the cultural richness of the student population.

One aspect that participants brought to attention is about the main communication strategies used by schools. Parents said email is the primary means of interaction used by the schools. As Sarah said: “They are actively communicating via email, and they send me email and let me know about her situation, and also the teacher encouraged me in the first days that I went there to communicate with her by email.”

Kate also said: “You know the most important way that we can communicate with teachers is email. We should email them whatever we want, or what is our concern.”

According to participants, in educational settings, the school newsletter is another method used for sharing information with parents. While some parents value the school newsletters, others perceive them as less efficient in promoting effective communication. As Sarah said: “Yeah, also I think a school’s newsletter, even though I don't put that much on it, yeah, that's another way of communication between parents and the education system.”

Parents appreciate email and newsletter communication, but some highlight the need for more personal interactions, such as face-to-face meetings. Parents believe they cannot express everything via email, and it might be easier to have more face-to-face meetings. As Kati said: “.... maybe we were more comfortable that we go and talk in person, than you know, email as it doesn't say how we feel. In person your body language can tell the teacher how I feel.”

Limitations in the methods of communication used and school policy lead to educators having minimal information about the students' and their families' personal

lives and backgrounds. Benjamin, in response to the interviewee's question "How much do your child educators know about your personal life," said: "Zero. Because we never spoke anything about it, so she doesn't know anything about us." Also, Fatima said:

Nobody has asked me, like, how many other kids do you have at home? Are you a single parent or anything like that? Are you married or are you living with your spouse? Nothing. Nothing has been asked from me, so they didn't get any personal information or family information from me. They just got the names of the people who do the pickups from the school and drop offs from the school, like who will be dropping off the child, who will be picking up the child from school? Yeah, things like that. Just, only that they don't know much about our family.

However, parents want educators to know more about their family situations, believing it could lead to better understanding and support. According to Fatima:

I would think, yeah, 100% it would be because now if she knows that I am, I am a busy mom and I have, now I have this, this responsibilities to, and I have so many work, like if they, if she know at least that my child has two other siblings that would be more than enough, so she knows that it's a busy home.

Benjamin also said:

So, if she know more about our background, or how the things are, it would be nice. Yeah, it's a nice if she knows a little bit more about us or how the things like. If you need a support with any of the aspects so that would be great.

Moreover, considering participants' concerns about their children's struggles in understanding and communicating in a predominantly English-speaking environment, parents spoke about the support that their children received regarding their language development and engaging in class activities. Participants brought diverse experiences regarding receiving support from teachers for facilitating communication with children whose English language abilities are not fully developed. Some parents mentioned that their children's teachers employ effective strategies, such as speaking slowly, using repetition, using visuals, and using facial expressions and body language to enhance communication with the students. As Fatima said: “the teacher is trying to give out the language with pictures, images, body languages, facial expressions and all the stuff.”

Conversely, others shared instances where educators might not sufficiently facilitate language learning and support communication with language learners, instead relying on the child to adapt their language independently. As Sarah said:

I've heard from some other immigrants that there are some facilities, but for my daughter, we have nothing. They mainly let them [children] be in the environment and want them to learn a new language by themselves. And it's not that much satisfying because my daughter thinks that she is out of the supporting group.

Also, the findings indicate varied experiences among participants regarding the support received from the school concerning their children's language limitations. Several parents expressed satisfaction with the support they received in this regard, pointing to instances of English as a second language (ESL) teachers and extra support for their children. Linda said:

Yes, they have ESL teacher at school. As I asked my daughter how to learn English or how to learn English so fast, she said that during school time, some days, another teacher called me and learned me how to read or show me how to recognize the alphabet, and I think it helps her to learn English and English better and helping her to speak better.

On the other hand, some participants bring attention to the lack of language-supporting resources, such as translators and ESL teachers, to help children's English language development. Benjamin said:

The teacher told there is no translator or a language supporter in the school, and he may be the only one, so they won't be getting anything. So she informed me we had to contact back to the school board so that we can get aligned him to the school board school translator, where they have someone else.

During the observation, none of the classes receive support from ESL teachers or translators. But both teachers employed various strategies to facilitate communication with newcomer bilingual children, whose English language was not adequately developed. Mr.

Ryan relied more on technology, using Google Translate whenever he felt the newcomer bilingual students could not understand him. However, Mr. Abbott used other methods, such as gestures, speaking slowly, and using body language to aid communication. For instance, when he asked students to line up and Arya did not understand, he touched Arya to get his attention, pointed to the line, and asked him to join it. When Arya spoke in his mother tongue to his friend, Mr. Ryan placed a finger on his lips to signal for silence.

Despite efforts by parents to engage as translators or volunteers, they face obstacles due to school policies, which impact their children's comfort in the learning environment. As Sarah mentioned:

I wanted to go to school some time to work as a translator. You know, because it's about my daughter. But they did not let me do that. I completely understand that it's a policy. But that's an option, and I think policies can change according to the situation. When they do not have a translator, they can look for volunteers and think about alternatives that can help students to feel more comfort in school.

Additionally, some parents expressed uncertainty about the available support. They noted the importance of receiving more information about school activities and educational strategies. As Kate said:

I don't know whether they have the, you know translator in our language. I don't think that they have this one, just maybe they emotionally they come and talk nicely

to kids that you don't know the English or something like that. But no, he doesn't have received any extra support.

Moreover, all participants spoke about a lack of diversity among educators and expressed that educators are mainly female, white, and Canadian. Benjamin said: “I can say all of them are Newfoundlanders or if I can say in a race, it's all white.” Also, Linda said: “Based on my experience of my three children, most of the teachers are from here are Canadian teachers, and most of them are female.”

Also, participants reflected on the potential advantages of having a more diverse population of educators. As Daniel said:

It would be very helpful, like, if all of us are equally able to apply to schools, and we can teach Canadian kids and Canadians can teach our kids. Like the need is to be inclusive, yeah, like all the races and all the gender should be included in the school system. So children don't notice that they are different, like they will see all of us at the same place. Yes. So, I guess they won't have any questions regarding the race, ethnicity and stuff like that, yeah.

Benjamin said:

I don't see any diverse people. So maybe if school board can give a little bit of preferences, like even may not be, I don't. I don't feel having any, any black community or other Asian or any other things. So there has to be diverse so that even

kids should feel like he should not tomorrow if he grown up, he should not feel like, I'm the only one different here. So, if even the different teachers are there, they should feel OK even they are different here, when we are different, even other kids will feel the difference, right? So, I guess yeah, it's too early for him to or his classmates to know those. But yeah, it's always good to have them because if they see other colours around them, like in teachers and all, so they feel it more comfortable, right?

As Fatima said:

Canada is a like, it's, it's with lots of cultural diverse, and it's like lots of cultures living here. So, as it's a culture diversified country, I would say it's better to have people with other races as well in the school education system. Yeah, if there are people from like, if there are non-Canadians, non-natives working in those fields, it might be beneficial because they also can talk about their culture, and they can also share it. Because like some native people, they don't know much about other cultures, other people's celebrations and restrictions and stuff like that. So, I think it's better to have different people involved in the system, they can share all that, and it would be nice. Yeah. I think it's better to have like non-natives as well in the system. It's better to have, but the thing is it's not happening.

According to interviewees, diversity in the educator population can help represent different cultural backgrounds, improve the understanding of challenges encountered by students from various cultures, and integrate diverse perspectives into the curriculum.

Summary

This chapter presented findings from interviews with parents of newcomer bilingual children, their teachers, and classroom observations. Some of the parents interviewed had children in the classes of the teachers who were also interviewed, but not all parents had children in those teachers' classes. Initially, the demographic characteristics of the observed participants are outlined. Subsequently, the learning environments of the kindergarten classrooms for newcomer bilingual children are described. Next, the demographic characteristics of the interview participants are detailed. Following this, the themes that emerged from the interviews are introduced, with participant quotations included throughout to clarify the findings. Observational data are presented through the lens of the interview themes, providing a comprehensive view of the findings from different perspectives. This approach helps to solidify and triangulate the results, ensuring a more robust understanding of the experiences and strategies involved in supporting newcomer bilingual children.

Chapter 5

This chapter delves into the research findings and addresses relevant literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social skills development of bilingual kindergarten-age children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The discussion centered on the main research question: How do bilingual kindergarten-age children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills? It also explores the following sub-questions: a) How are societal and educational settings prepared to support the social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children? b) What barriers do these bilingual newcomer children experience in their social skills development? c) Ideally, how can societal and educational settings better support the social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children?

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the learning environment in the classrooms observed and presents the findings from interviews with parents and teachers. Thematic analysis of parent interviews identified four key themes: the negative impact of language barriers on bilingual children's social skills development, the personal challenges that hinder newcomer parents' ability to support their children, the handling of cultural differences and diversity by educational institutions, and the support available to newcomer bilingual children and their families. Similarly, thematic analysis of teacher interviews revealed five key themes: strategies for nurturing social skills, barriers faced by bilingual newcomer children, the importance of engaging newcomer families, the role of cultural awareness and inclusivity in education, and how teachers are equipped to support the social development of

diverse students. Classroom observations were also integrated to assess the alignment of these findings with real-world practices.

The chapter delves into several key points that emerged as crucial areas for discussion. The first section, "Barriers Bilingual Newcomer Children Experience in Their Social Interactions and Social Skills Development," presents the barriers that bilingual newcomer kindergarten-age children face in their social interactions and social skills development within educational settings, addressing the literature about the themes that emerged from the data collection. The second section, "From Barriers to Bridges: Current Practices and Future Strategies for Newcomer Bilingual Children's Social Skills Development," focuses on how educational settings address these challenges. It highlights current practices for supporting the social skills development of bilingual newcomer children and offers literature-backed recommendations for improving this support. Lastly, the section titled "Strengthening Connections between Key Individuals Who Aid Bilingual Newcomer Children's Development" identifies key individuals who play a significant role in facilitating the social skills development of these children, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and effective communication among stakeholders.

By addressing these areas and discussing the main findings of this research in the context of existing literature, this chapter compares the results of the study as presented in Chapter 4 with those presented in the literature to determine whether the literature supports these findings or presents different outcomes. It highlights the main challenges and available

supports and suggests potential improvements for enhancing the support of social skills development in educational settings for bilingual newcomer children in three main areas.

Barriers Bilingual Newcomer Children Experience in Their Social Interactions and Social Skills Development

One of the main findings of this study is that newcomer bilingual children face challenges in their social skills development due to their unique circumstances after immigration. This group faces barriers that hinder their social interaction and, consequently, affect their social skills development. These barriers are presented and discussed through the literature in detail below.

English Language Limitations and Social Skills Development. This study's findings provided evidence that proficiency in the dominant language of the host country is a significant factor in the development of social skills in newcomer bilingual children. Language is a critical factor for communication, yet bilingual individuals sometimes struggle with speaking the majority language. These children might not be fluent, might pronounce words differently, might use uncommon words, or might construct sentences in unusual ways. These issues, resulting from learning a second language, can affect interactions between bilingual people and others (Genesee, 2008). Language is the first and most crucial method for communication (Hromek & Roffey, 2009; Stagnitti et al., 2016). According to Vygotsky, language is a social tool with social origins, arising through interaction with others and leading to further social interaction (Vygotsky, 1980). Language connects basic mental functions (like perception, attention, and memory) with higher skills

(such as awareness, meaning, and intention), helping to control human social behavior (Hromek & Roffey, 2009). Children learn the language of their community in a social context, where they both hear and participate in language interactions (Vygotsky, 1980). This process creates language scripts that mediate between thoughts, feelings, and behavior, supporting language's importance in social development (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

Social skills development occurs through interaction with others (Chen & Rubin, 2011; Halle et al., 2014), and language is crucial for building relationships (Riojas-Cortez & Bustos Flores, 2009). When study participants could not understand their peers and teachers due to language limitations, they could not communicate appropriately. This situation makes English language limitations a significant barrier in forming relationships. Moreover, the feedback domestic English-speaking children received from newcomer bilingual children influenced their willingness to communicate. For example, during classroom observations, it was noted that native English-speaking children often initiated conversations with newcomer bilingual children. However, as observed, when these interactions were met with hesitation, silence, or nonverbal cues indicating discomfort, domestic English-speaking children began to withdraw from further attempts at communication and they became reluctant to try again. This reluctance can lead to loneliness and exclusion for newcomer bilingual children, an issue compounded by their English language limitations—even if this is not intended by their peers (Sohrabi & Maich, 2021).

Negative Feelings. According to the findings of this study, besides the language barrier, another barrier in the social interaction and social skills development of newcomer

bilingual children is negative feelings resulting from communication challenges. This challenge is well-documented in the literature, highlighting its impact on children's social integration and academic success (Sohrabi & Maich, 2021; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). When children are unable to express themselves or understand their peers, they often experience negative feelings such as frustration, anxiety, and isolation (Cummins, 2000; Sohrabi & Maich, 2021). These negative emotions can hinder their ability to fully participate in classroom activities and form meaningful relationships, which are crucial for their overall development (Sohrabi & Maich, 2021).

One significant reason newcomer bilingual children might experience negative feelings is their language limitations. These limitations can make them hesitant to interact with others. This can lead to feelings of loneliness and exclusion, which can negatively impact their social skills development. Language barriers, a lack of communication, and feelings of isolation can hinder these children's ability to form relationships. When they struggle to understand or communicate effectively, they often feel isolated and excluded, which can further deepen their loneliness and even affect their self-esteem (Shablack & Lindquist, 2019). Social skills development, which occurs through interaction with others (Chen & Rubin, 2011; Halle et al., 2014), is hindered when children are reluctant to engage with their peers and teachers. Children who struggle with the dominant language may also find it difficult to express their emotions, leading to misunderstandings and social interaction difficulties, which can cause further frustration and emotional distress among children (Shablack & Lindquist, 2019). Also, newcomer children can experience negative emotions

due to unfamiliarity with the culture of the host country, leading to frustration, hesitation, insecurity, and difficulties in their relationships (Sohrabi & Maich, 2021).

This study's findings revealed that bilingual newcomer children might experience negative emotions such as frustration, hesitation, and loneliness, rooted in their limited proficiency in the dominant language and the communication barriers they face as a result. The current study's finding supports Dawson and Williams' (2008) research, which found that bilingual children with limited language proficiency are more likely to experience negative emotions and behavioral problems, such as preferring to be alone. Dawson and Williams (2008) conducted a longitudinal analysis on the impact of language status as an acculturative stressor on internalizing and externalizing behaviors among newcomer children, tracking these behaviors from school entry through the third grade. They found that language status significantly influences the psychological adjustment of newcomer children. Those who faced language barriers exhibited higher levels of internalizing behaviors (such as anxiety and depression) and externalizing behaviours. The current study underscores the importance of addressing language barriers to support the mental health and behavioral adjustment of newcomer children in school settings.

Cultural Differences and Navigating New Demands. The current study's findings indicate that newcomer bilingual children face another barrier in interacting with others and developing social skills, which is their unfamiliarity with the culture of the host country. According to the literature, one of the main struggles newcomers face is adapting to the host country's new language and culture, which is an ongoing process of adapting, adjusting, and

accepting a new language and unfamiliar culture (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li et al., 2016; Moinolmolki et al., 2016) that can be stressful for children (Moinolmolki et al., 2016).

Vygotsky (1980) suggested that children's development cannot be understood in isolation from the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which it occurs. Therefore, the use of verbal or nonverbal communication elements is influenced by socio-cultural and linguistic environments. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory asserts that human development is interrelated and influenced by the context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to this theory, children do not develop in isolation; they are affected by various environmental factors such as culture, economy, policy, and faith. Bronfenbrenner categorizes these factors into microsystems, exosystems, and macrosystems, with culture (as part of the macrosystem) indirectly shaping children's social competence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Each culture has rules that determine what is appropriate regarding the use of communication signs, and children typically learn these rules implicitly throughout their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Buckley, 2012). For example, cultural differences exist in how smiling is used and what it means in different cultures. Also, there are differences in cultures regarding which gestures are considered appropriate (Buckley, 2012). This understanding is particularly relevant for bilingual learners, as their communication skills development differs significantly from native-born children's.

The interconnection between language, culture, and social skills development is evident. Language use in a society conveys its culture (Nelson, 2003). As Cervantes (2002) believes, bilingualism is equivalent to biculturalism. Social skills acquisition is part of the

cultural knowledge gained through daily interactions within the home and community (Riojas-Cortez & Bustos Flores, 2009). Van Rhijn et al. (2019) emphasized that culture influences social skills development. During socialization, children develop an understanding of the culture of their society and learn to respond to others and events according to this cultural framework (Riojas-Cortez & Bustos Flores, 2009). In addition to learning two languages, bilingual children must adjust to the languages of two different cultures, each with its own perspectives on social behavior (Halle et al., 2014). Riojas-Cortez and Bustos Flores (2009) assert that linguistically diverse children often become bicultural through socialization, and neglecting this experience within the educational process adversely affects their academic achievements.

Obstacles Faced by Newcomer Parents and the Resulting Support Gaps for Their Children. According to this study's findings, another barrier that newcomer bilingual children face in developing social skills is the need for more support from their parents. Family plays a vital role in children's social skills development, as this process begins with infant-parent interactions (Bodovski et al., 2021; Hajovsky et al., 2021). Most children initially learn social skills from family members, including parents (Ng et al., 2018; Washington-Nortey et al., 2020). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory also suggests that the interrelationship with family affects children's learning as part of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Chen, 2011; Darling, 2007).

Despite the family's role in children's development, newcomer parents often face challenges that hinder their involvement. This study's findings highlighted that newcomer

families face challenges such as limited fluency in the dominant language and accents, unfamiliarity with the host country's culture and educational system, lack of support from extended family members, and financial difficulties. As Hopp et al. (2019) noted, newcomers experience difficulties in the host country related to their life situations before and after immigration and the extent to which their host country is prepared to meet their needs. This study's findings show that newcomer families encounter challenges such as language barriers, unfamiliarity with the host country's culture and educational system, and the demands of building a new life. These challenges can impede newcomer parents' ability to effectively support their children's development.

Sosna and Mastergeorge (2005) also believed that unfamiliarity with the host country's culture and limited proficiency in the dominant language affect newcomer parents' ability to support their children's development. Cultural differences in parenting styles and expectations about parental involvement can also create barriers. Tobin et al. (2013) observed that some newcomer parents come from cultural backgrounds where direct involvement in schooling is less emphasized. This led to misunderstandings between parents and educators about their level of involvement with educators.

Additionally, unfamiliarity with the educational system in the host country can affect newcomer parents' involvement with their children's schooling. Newcomer parents may feel less confident in supporting their children's academic work, which can impact their involvement (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). Limited access to resources such as transportation and flexible work schedules can prevent newcomer parents from participating in school

events or parent-teacher meetings (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Furthermore, many newcomer parents are employed in low-income jobs, requiring them to work long hours. As a result, children may see their parents less frequently, limiting the parents' active role in their children's development (Aksoy & Baran, 2020). Newcomer families might need time to create an established economic situation in the host country. Economically disadvantaged families are more likely to face challenges in their children's social skills development (Hagan-Burke et al., 2016). The family's economic situation can also influence children's social skills development (Hagan-Burke et al., 2016).

Inadequate Preparedness of Schools for a Growing Newcomer Population.

Despite efforts to support newcomer bilingual children's social skills development, this study's findings indicate that educational settings might not yet be well prepared to meet the needs of this group of children in educational settings. Over the past several years, the population of newcomers has increased dramatically in this province, which has historically been less diverse than others (Canadian Citizenship & Immigration Resource Center, 2021). This sudden increase has placed educational institutions in a situation where they may not be adequately prepared to support this new, diverse population. The findings indicate a lack of adequate facilitators such as translators and ESL teachers to meet the needs of this growing population. Additionally, teachers may not be sufficiently prepared, as their education or professional development sessions might not effectively enhance their readiness to work with this growing population. Teachers interviewed mentioned that they often rely on

learning from their own experiences and observing what other teachers do in similar situations.

The important role of educational settings as sources of interaction and scaffolding children's learning is evident in Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning (1980). This theory emphasizes that children's social-emotional skills development is influenced by their interactions with others. Under Vygotsky's model, the actions of teachers 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. Thus, teachers' awareness of how to work with newcomer bilingual children to facilitate their development is crucial.

These findings align with previous studies. According to Hopkins et al. (2013), many teachers feel inadequately prepared to address the specific needs of newcomer bilingual and multilingual students. The study highlighted that professional development programs often do not cover sufficient content related to cultural competency and second language acquisition, leaving teachers poorly equipped to support newcomer bilingual children effectively. Additionally, Menken and Kleyn (2010) found that many schools do not have enough ESL teachers tailored to the diverse needs of newcomer bilingual students. These programs are often underfunded and lack the specialized curriculum required to meet the linguistic and academic needs of these students.

Riojas-Cortez and Bustos Flores (2009) noted that, while the importance of effective practices and environments for all children is widely acknowledged, priority in educational

settings is often given to the domestic culture and language. Educators may not recognize children's cultural knowledge, creating misconceptions about school readiness. According to Castro et al. (2011), an environment that is supportive for all children is one where educators carefully maintain cultural continuity between home and the classroom setting, allowing children to 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, can help bilingual learners develop a sense of belonging within the group.

Starting relationships with bilingual children involves paying attention to the background and culture of immigrant bilingual children while using cultural elements that relate to their background in the classroom.. García and Kleifgen (2010) argue that many educational settings fail to provide an environment that acknowledges and integrates the cultural backgrounds and languages of newcomer bilingual children, leading to a sense of isolation and negatively impacting the students' academic performance and social integration.

Moreover, despite efforts by educational institutions to support newcomer parents, such as by connecting them with agencies like the ANC, findings indicate that schools often have limited information about the lives and family situations of newcomer bilingual children. This gap in understanding can hinder the effectiveness of support programs (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008).

From Barriers to Bridges: Current Practices and Future Strategies for Newcomer Bilingual Children's Social Skills Development.

Despite the existence of barriers to social skills development for newcomer bilingual children, efforts have been made to create a welcoming educational setting that addresses their needs. However, much work remains to enhance the educational environment and support newcomer bilingual children's social integration and social skills development. This study highlights several key facilitating factors and additional strategies that require attention and improvement to better support this group of children. The discussion below focuses on these facilitating factors and strategies, emphasizing areas that need further attention and development.

Enhancing and Expanding Support for Newcomer Bilingual Students'

Language Barriers. This study's findings showed that, regarding the language barriers that newcomer bilingual children face (especially at the beginning of their education), educators employed various methods to teach and enhance this group of children's social interactions. Teachers used diverse strategies to engage newcomer bilingual children who are learning English. For example, they used gestures, body language, speaking slowly, repeating words as needed and visuals, technology such as Google translate to facilitate communication with newcomer bilingual children. According to García and Kleifgen (2018), non-verbal communication can significantly aid in bridging language gaps and facilitating understanding. Furthermore, this study's findings show that technology is essential in supporting these students. Tools such as Google Translate are commonly used to assist in

transferring intention and overcoming language barriers, enabling communication and aiding in the learning process. Incorporating technology in education, especially for newcomer bilingual students, has enhanced learning outcomes. For example, digital tools can provide interactive and engaging ways for children to practice social interactions and language skills (Chen et al., 2016; Van Lieshout, 2015). Additionally, teachers created inclusive classroom environments that encourage peer interactions, promoting social skills development through collaborative activities and group work. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), creating an inclusive environment can enrich social interaction among students and improve their educational experiences and learning outcomes.

While teachers appear keenly aware of the importance of social interaction for newcomer bilingual children learning English and employ various methods to support them, much more can be done in the future as the province adjusts to the presence of increased newcomers and growing provincial diversity. One way to better support the social inclusion of these students is by helping them develop their English language skills more rapidly. The findings of this study indicate that the recent surge in the newcomer population has placed educational settings and educators in a challenging position, as they are often unprepared to meet the needs of this growing demographic. A notable gap in available support is evident, particularly regarding insufficient numbers of ESL teachers and translators in schools.

The findings of this study highlight the need for policy adjustments in Newfoundland and Labrador to address the challenges arising from the recent increase in the newcomer population. To effectively meet the diverse needs of newcomer students, educational settings

and educators must be equipped with appropriate resources, training, and support. Educators should receive ongoing professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy, trauma-informed teaching, and strategies for supporting bilingual and multilingual learners. As Gay (2010) and Hammond (2015) highlighted, such training can enable teachers to better understand and respond to the unique challenges faced by newcomer students.

Expanding English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs is essential to accommodate the growing number of newcomer students. This expansion should include hiring more EAL specialists, offering tailored language support, and providing resources to address language barriers for both students and their families, as suggested by Cummins (2000). Alongside this, schools should establish programs that support newcomer families, such as orientation sessions on the Canadian educational system, cultural bridging initiatives to aid adaptation, and language classes for parents to facilitate communication and engagement. This is in line with the recommendations of Guo and Maitra (2020). Recruiting staff who speak the languages of the newcomer population can further improve communication and foster a welcoming environment for students and their families, as noted by Banks (2016).

The curriculum should be reviewed and adapted to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives, ensuring that newcomer students see their identities represented and valued in their learning experiences. As Banks (2016) also mentioned, integrating cultural diversity in the curriculum is vital for fostering an inclusive educational environment. In addition, recognizing the stress and trauma that many newcomer families may face, policies should

mandate access to mental health professionals and counselors trained in supporting refugee and immigrant populations, as emphasized by Fazel et al. (2012). Schools should also collaborate with local organizations, immigrant-serving agencies, and cultural associations to create a network of support that extends beyond the classroom, ensuring that newcomer families have access to essential resources and services, as discussed by Guo and Maitra (2020).

Also, the province should establish mechanisms to regularly assess the effectiveness of its policies and programs designed for newcomer students. Feedback should be actively used to refine and adjust these initiatives to meet evolving needs. These policy adjustments align with Newfoundland and Labrador's commitment to inclusive education and will ensure that educators and schools are better prepared to support the growing newcomer population, fostering a more equitable and supportive educational environment, as noted in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's 2020 policy guidelines.

Menken and Kleyn (2010) previously reported that many schools need more ESL resources tailored to the diverse needs of newcomer bilingual students, with programs often being underfunded and needing specialized curricula. This issue persists, as highlighted by the current study, which identifies an inadequate number of ESL teachers and translators in provincial schools, resulting in a lack of support for the increasing number of newcomer bilingual students.

This finding aligns with a substantial body of literature emphasizing the necessity for more ESL programs and translators in Canadian schools to support the growing number of newcomer bilingual students. Research consistently highlights the challenges these students face in adapting to new educational environments and underscores the importance of linguistic support for their academic and social success (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2019; Gérin-Lajoie, 2012; Guo, 2011). For instance, Crocker and Dibbon (2008), Gérin-Lajoie (2012), and Guo (2011) discuss the critical role of diversity and language support in Canadian classrooms, noting that inadequate ESL services can hinder the educational experiences of newcomer bilingual students. Guo (2011) further points out that immigrant parents, particularly those from Muslim backgrounds, advocate for improved linguistic and cultural support in schools to ensure the successful integration of their children.

In addition to highlighting the necessity for more ESL programs and translators, this study's findings emphasize that educators often need to prepare to meet the needs of bilingual students. This aligns with Fontenelle-Tereshchuk (2019), who explored teachers' insights into their experiences in diverse classrooms in Alberta, revealing a significant need for professional development in handling linguistic diversity. Moreover, Crocker and Dibbon (2008) provided a comprehensive overview of teacher education in Canada, suggesting that many educators need more training to support newcomer bilingual students effectively. They advocate for systemic changes to include more robust ESL training in teacher education programs. Despite the varied methods employed by teachers, there is an

ongoing need for professional development to equip educators with the skills necessary to support bilingual children effectively. Research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlights the critical role of continuous professional learning in enhancing instructional practices and improving student outcomes. This is especially important for teachers working with diverse student populations, including bilingual newcomer children. For instance, Tomlinson (2014) suggests training teachers in differentiated instruction, which focuses on adapting teaching strategies to meet the varied needs of individual students. For bilingual newcomers, this approach can involve using visual aids, adjusting assignments, and allowing extra time for tasks, enabling teachers to address the diverse language proficiency levels and learning styles present in the classroom.

As these studies collectively point to a gap in the current educational system in Canada regarding support for newcomer bilingual students, they advocate for increased resources and training to meet these students' needs. Addressing this gap is essential for providing better support for this population.

Fostering Positivity: Strategies to Help Newcomer Bilingual Children Overcome Negative Feelings. The study's findings showed that negative feelings are considered one of the main barriers newcomer bilingual children experience when they cannot communicate effectively with others. However, teachers recognize these challenges and employ various strategies to support these students. Providing attention, positive feedback, and patience are widely used strategies. These approaches foster a supportive classroom environment, helping children to take risks and practice their new language without fear of judgment.

Providing attention, positive feedback, and exhibiting patience are commonly used approaches (August & Shanahan, 2006; Sohrabi & Maich, 2021); positive reinforcement and patience can create a supportive classroom environment that encourages children to take risks and practice their new language skills without fear of judgment (Collier, 1995; Sohrabi & Maich, 2021). The other strategy was to use the students' home language in the classroom. The literature supports this approach. Allowing students to use their first language can facilitate a smoother transition to the new language and help maintain their cultural identity (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

While teachers already employ valuable strategies to support newcomer bilingual children, research suggests other strategies that could further enhance these efforts. Teachers can integrate bilingual resources or aides to provide instruction and support in the student's home language. Learning and using some essential words from the first language of these children to start a relationship is a method that educators can use. This approach aids in comprehension and validates the students' linguistic backgrounds, promoting a sense of belonging (Genesee et al., 2005). Chang et al. (2007) state that educators using the children's home language in classroom settings is a significant way to create a close relationship between bilingual children and educators and peers. They also state that educators' use of bilingual children's home language can reduce the likelihood of being a victim of peer aggression.

Encouraging peer support is another effective strategy. Pairing newcomer bilingual children with bilingual peers or "buddies" can provide social and academic support. Peer

mentoring programs, which is a supportive relationship where individuals with similar experiences or roles guide and learn from each other, fostering mutual growth and knowledge-sharing, have been found to boost confidence and facilitate language learning by providing models for social interaction and language use (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). These strategies, supported by research, can help prevent the negative feelings experienced by these children and promote their social and academic success. Implementing these methods can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomer bilingual children and facilitate their overall development and integration.

Creating Welcoming Classrooms by Addressing Cultural Barriers for Bilingual Students. According to this study's findings, one of the primary barriers to the social interaction of bilingual children is their unfamiliarity with the host country's culture and existing cultural differences. Until these children adapt to the host country's culture, teachers can implement strategies to support them during this transition to prevent negative experiences. Nieto (2009) suggests that educators should consider the culture of multicultural education to effectively affirm diversity in the classroom. According to Nieto (2009) multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning that values diversity by incorporating perspectives, histories, and contributions of various cultural groups into the curriculum, fostering equity, inclusion, and respect for all students. By doing so, they can create inclusive and equitable learning environments that address the specific needs of newcomer students. By adopting these strategies, schools can create a more supportive and inclusive environment for bilingual children, helping them dismantle cultural barriers and thrive both socially and academically.

Some strategies identified in this study include paying special attention to the cultures of newcomer bilingual students and celebrating special events. According to Cervantes (2002), educators must be aware of the cultural and background differences of bilingual students to better support them. These efforts help bilingual students feel more comfortable and accepted. It was also observed that some teachers made art crafts related to cultural events of bilingual children and decorated the classroom accordingly. Chen (2011) emphasizes that a crucial aspect of building relationships with bilingual children is acknowledging their background and culture, which can be done by incorporating cultural elements related to their heritage into classroom activities. Additionally, schools have involved the parents of newcomer bilingual students by inviting them to speak about their cultural events. This behaviour fosters a sense of community and respect for diverse backgrounds. Epstein (2011) highlights the importance of engaging families and communities in the educational process and provides practical strategies for building effective partnerships. These programs can help develop strong school-family-community partnerships that support students' learning and development.

Further measures to support these students include incorporating culturally relevant materials and items related to the students' backgrounds, demonstrating attention and respect for their heritage. This practice, known as culturally responsive teaching, has been shown to improve engagement and academic performance among diverse student populations (Cummins & Early, 2011; Gay, 2010). By including books, music, and items from the

students' cultures, teachers can create a more inclusive classroom environment that celebrates diversity.

Moreover, the educational system can provide professional development opportunities focused on cultural competency, enabling teachers to better understand and meet the needs of bilingual students. Sleeter (2011) argues that professional development programs can enhance teachers' abilities to support culturally diverse students. Schools can also establish mentorship programs where older students or community members from similar cultural backgrounds offer guidance and support to newcomer students. Encouraging peer collaborations and group activities that promote cultural exchange can also enhance social interaction and mutual understanding among students (Sleeter, 2011).

Strengthening Connections between Those Who Have an Important Role in Aiding Bilingual Newcomer Children's Development.

The findings from this study highlight the significant role of various individuals, including educators, parents, and peers, in facilitating the development of social skills in bilingual newcomer children within educational settings. Recent research continues to emphasize the critical importance of these relationships in fostering social skills development (Chen, 2011; Li et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2023). According to Chen and Rubin (2011), relationships with others, including parents, caregivers, educators, and peers, are essential for social skills development in children. They argue that cultivating appropriate relationships with trusted individuals plays a pivotal role in this process.

One of the key individuals in the development of newcomer bilingual children is educators. They play a crucial role in facilitating social skills development and helping children navigate challenges and barriers, particularly at the beginning of their school attendance. This understanding aligns with the findings of Stuhlman and Pianta (2002), which demonstrated that the quality of relationships between educators and children is associated with children's emotional regulation, social skills development, and behavioral competence. They found that the quality of emotional support and classroom organization provided by educators was directly related to the development of social skills in newcomer bilingual children. Similarly, Chen (2011) believes that the quality of social interactions and relationships between children and educators greatly influences how children learn and develop social skills. Recent findings by Zheng et al. (2023) further indicated that the quality of interactions between children and educators is vital for social skills development.

However, the current study's findings indicate a need to better prepare educators to support the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children. Teachers participating in this study reported learning how to work with this population primarily through their experiences and by consulting with colleagues. This finding highlights the importance of professional development programs that offer targeted training in this area to better equip teachers in supporting this population. Professional development programs should include training on culturally responsive teaching practices and strategies for fostering inclusive classroom environments. These programs can enhance teachers' abilities to create supportive, engaging, and effective learning environments for newcomer bilingual children.

By doing so, educators can play a pivotal role in promoting the social skills development and overall well-being of these students. The literature also emphasizes the importance of professional development for preparing educators to work with bilingual newcomer children (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Sleeter, 2011). As Zheng et al. (2023) underscored, it is necessary for educators to be trained in working with newcomer bilingual students and creating supportive, culturally responsive environments that enhance the social-emotional learning of bilingual learners and other diverse student populations.

In addition to educators, parents play an important role in the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children. A study by Li et al. (2023) explored the impact of the home learning environment on children's social skills development, finding that family characteristics, parental beliefs and interests, and educational processes significantly contribute to children's social-emotional skills. This research highlights the importance of the home environment in children's development and suggests that parents should focus on creating a positive home learning environment to support their children's social-emotional growth.

Parental involvement in their children's schooling is essential, and cooperation between parents and educators can better help bilingual children adjust and facilitate their social skills development. Parents can help bridge the gap between bilingual children and their educators. This finding aligns with the results of Halle et al. (2014), who concluded that the parental role is foundational to the establishment of social-emotional well-being for all children, including bilingual children. Epstein (2011) emphasizes the importance of

engaging families and communities in the educational process, advocating for strategies that build strong school-family-community partnerships to support students' learning and development. Campbell (2006) notes a growing expectation for educators to facilitate partnerships between parents and educators to promote children's development.

However, the findings of this study showed that newcomer parents might face challenges in involving themselves in their children's schooling, such as language limitations and unfamiliarity with the educational system in the host country. Teachers who participated in the study highlighted several strategies utilized by educators to involve newcomer bilingual parents in their children's schooling. Some strategies they used include speaking slowly, using body language, and employing technology such as Google Translate to facilitate communication with newcomer parents whose English is not adequately developed. Additionally, participants mentioned connecting families with the Association of New Canadians when further assistance was needed. Despite these efforts, certain areas require more focused attention. For instance, as highlighted by this study's findings, increasing the availability of translators can significantly enhance communication between educators and newcomer parents.

The study revealed that educators often possess limited information about the life circumstances and backgrounds of newcomer bilingual families as highlighted by both parents and teachers who participated in this study. This gap can hinder the effectiveness of

support strategies. Familiarity with the life situations of these families can significantly enhance the support provided and increase parental involvement. According to Cervantes (2002), understanding the background and life situation of bilingual students is crucial for effective support. This includes gaining insight into their families' lives and challenges, which can inform more targeted and relevant assistance.

Findings from observations and interviews revealed that peers play a crucial role in the social skills development of bilingual newcomer children. Teachers reported using various strategies to support this development by engaging peers with stronger social skills to assist and guide the newcomer children. Children feel more comfortable with peers their own age and prefer to spend time with them. As the educational approach is play-based, children learn through playing with their peers and observing their actions and words. These findings support the results of a study by Fabes et al. (2006), which indicate that during the elementary school period, peer play is crucial. Higher levels of peer relationships predict higher levels of social skills development. Moreover, a study by Castro (2011) shows that a positive relationship between bilingual newcomer children and their English-speaking peers is correlated with increased English proficiency in bilingual newcomer children. Another study focused on evidence-based interventions for teaching social skills, particularly among children with autism spectrum disorder, reviewed various peer-mediated interventions that showed significant positive effects on social skills development. These interventions often involve structured peer interactions, which help children develop essential social competencies through modeled behavior and guided practice (Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

The findings of the current study support Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning (1980), which emphasizes the influence of social interactions on children's social skills development. Vygotsky posits that community plays a central role in children's development processes, with teachers, parents, and peers working together towards the common goal of developing children's skills. According to Vygotsky, with the help of adults or peers, children can grasp concepts and ideas that they cannot understand on their own.

Additionally, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interplay of various factors that influence the development of children. This theory suggests that a children's development is affected by multiple layers of environmental influences, each nested within the others, ranging from the immediate microsystem to the broader macrosystem. In the context of social skills development, the microsystem includes direct interactions with educators, parents, and peers, highlighting the importance of quality relationships and supportive interactions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Chen, 2011; Li et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2023). The mesosystem represents the interconnections between these microsystems, such as the cooperation between parents and educators, which can bridge gaps and provide a consistent support network for bilingual children (Halle et al., 2014). Finally, the macrosystem encompasses cultural values and societal norms, underscoring the need for culturally responsive educational environments that respect and integrate the backgrounds of bilingual children, as suggested by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and reinforced by Bandura's social learning theory.

Limitations

Every research study has limitations that affect its findings and interpretations. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) emphasized that researchers must explicitly acknowledge the potential limitations of their studies. The following limitations are identified in this study, and their potential impacts on the findings are subsequently discussed below.

The study population was limited to newcomer bilingual kindergarten-age children, resulting in a small sample size that cannot be generalized to other grade levels or elementary schools beyond the NLESD. However, this limitation is consistent with the nature of qualitative research, which prioritizes rich, deep exploration over broad generalization (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research aims to provide detailed insights rather than broad generalizations, and the methods employed in this study offer a framework for replication. Future researchers can replicate the study with larger groups and different age ranges to generate more generalizable results to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon across various contexts (Patton, 2015).

One of the primary data collection methods used in this study was interviews with teachers and parents of newcomer bilingual children. This approach, while effective for gaining in-depth insights, may also present limitations. Participants might have felt uncomfortable with expressing negative opinions face to face or on screen, potentially leading to biased or less-candid responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Although the study employed multiple data collection methods, this limitation could have affected the accuracy of the findings. For future research, incorporating anonymous surveys or using third-party interviewers could

address this issue, encouraging more honest responses and enhancing the reliability of the results (Maxwell, 2012). Also, no data were collected from children themselves, so claims made about children's internal states (e.g., emotions) are based on parents', teachers', and the researcher's observations.

Additionally, this study may not capture the long-term development of social skills in newcomer bilingual children. Short-term observations can miss important developmental milestones and changes. For example, initial struggles in social integration might be followed by significant progress over time, which a short-term study might not capture. Moreover, the study may not fully reflect how the participants and their parents adjust to their new situations over time. A longitudinal study could provide a more comprehensive overview of how various facilitating factors contribute to the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children. This type of study would track changes and growth over an extended period, offering insights into the progression and impact of these factors over time. As Bornstein et al. (2012) emphasize, children's social and emotional skills evolve gradually and are best understood through long-term observation. Winsler, Burchinal, and Tien (2014) also highlight that early social challenges often improve as bilingual children become more proficient and familiar with their surroundings. Rogoff (2003) further notes that sociocultural factors play a critical role, with longer studies revealing how children adjust and form relationships in new environments.

Finally, the cultural and regional context of the study may limit the generalizability of the findings. The experiences and challenges faced by newcomer bilingual children in one

region or community may differ significantly from those in another. For instance, research by Zhou and Lee (2008) highlights how regional differences in educational policies and community resources can affect the experiences of immigrant children, suggesting that findings from one context may not fully apply to others. Also, a study by Schachner et al. (2014) underscores the importance of conducting research across diverse geographical and cultural settings to capture a broader range of experiences and challenges faced by bilingual children. Therefore, similar studies should be conducted in diverse geographical and cultural settings to better understand the factors influencing social skills development in different contexts. By acknowledging these limitations, future research can build on this study's findings and address these gaps, leading to more robust and generalizable conclusions.

Recommendations

This study has laid a foundation for future research to explore the development of social skills in newcomer bilingual children within educational settings. However, several areas remain unexplored due to the constraints of this study. Given that this study focused on kindergarten-aged children, replicating it in other grades could provide valuable insights. Studying older children could reveal different social dynamics and developmental stages that are crucial for understanding the broader picture of social skills development across age groups.

Employing different methodologies, such as quantitative approaches, could yield a more comprehensive understanding of social skills development. For instance, comparing social skills development between domestic English speakers and newcomer bilingual

children could offer detailed insights into the processes underlying their social skills development. Quantitative studies can provide statistical data to support findings, adding robustness to research. A longitudinal study could also be beneficial, as noted above. Investigating how newcomer bilingual children and their parents adapt to a new culture over time and how their social skills evolve would provide a dynamic view of their development. This type of study would track changes and growth over an extended period, offering insights into long-term outcomes and the effectiveness of various support strategies. Moreover, examining the impact of specific interventions or educational programs designed to support these children could provide practical insights. By identifying which programs are most effective, educators and policymakers can better allocate resources and design curricula that meet the needs of bilingual children.

Future research could explore the role of parental involvement and community support in enhancing social integration and skills development. Understanding how parents and communities contribute to the social development of bilingual children can help in designing comprehensive support systems that include family and community engagement. Also, exploring the perspectives of educators and parents in various educational settings, such as urban versus rural schools, could reveal diverse challenges and strategies used to support newcomer bilingual children. Different settings may present unique obstacles and opportunities, and understanding these can help tailor interventions to specific contexts.

Evaluating the effectiveness of professional development programs for educators working with bilingual students could provide valuable insights for improving educational practices and policies. Training educators in culturally responsive pedagogy, ESL strategies,

and inclusive classroom practices is crucial for supporting bilingual children effectively. Investigating how technology can support social skills development is another promising area. Digital tools and platforms can facilitate language learning, social interaction, and cultural integration, offering innovative solutions to support bilingual children.

Furthermore, the data sources in this study were limited to observations and interviews, focusing on gaining in-depth insights from the perspectives of teachers and parents as well as providing an observational angle. However, this study did not analyze policies or legislation related to this topic. Future research could expand on this by examining relevant policies and legislation to provide a broader context and understanding of how institutional frameworks influence the development of social skills in newcomer bilingual children.

Finally, comparing the experiences of newcomer bilingual children in different countries could provide useful insights. Cross-cultural or culture-specific studies can each identify universal challenges and effective strategies that can be adapted across various contexts, contributing to a global understanding of bilingual education. These recommendations can expand the scope of research on the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children, ultimately contributing to more effective support systems and educational strategies for this growing population.

Conclusion

This study explored the social skills development of newcomer bilingual kindergarten-aged children. A qualitative phenomenological approach was used to answer

the research questions, including: How do bilingual kindergarten-aged children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills? a) How are societal and educational settings prepared to support the social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children? b) What barriers do these bilingual newcomer children encounter in their social skills development? c) How can societal and educational settings ideally better support the social skills development of these bilingual newcomer children? Data were collected through non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents of newcomer bilingual children.

The findings build on previous research by confirming that the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children can differ slightly from that of domestic English speaker children due to their unique situations. Key factors influencing the social skills development of newcomer bilingual children include English language limitations, negative feelings, unfamiliarity with the host country's culture, and reduced family support. Despite these barriers, educational settings have made efforts to support these children by using tools such as Google Translate and body language to facilitate communication. However, much more can be done to create an ideal educational environment that supports the social skills development of these children.

This study's findings indicate that teachers, peers, and parents, through their interactions with bilingual children, can significantly enhance their social skills development. Teachers can employ various methods to bridge the gap between bilingual children and their peers and educators, while parents can play a crucial role in assisting educators in this effort.

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Appendix A

Potential Parent Interview Questions

- What skills and knowledge do you think educational settings should teach your child?
- What is your priority as a parent for your child to learn?
- Why do you think this priority is more important?
- How much have you been engaged in your child education in Canada? Did you engage in your child education more in your country?
- Have you ever experienced any challenges at school regarding your involvement in your child's schooling? Have you ever felt passive or not really involved in connecting with educators regarding your child's schooling? Please explain.
- Have you ever experienced challenges in communicating with your child's educator(s) because of unfamiliarity with the public education system here? Can you please provide some examples?
- What support from your child's school have you received in this regard? How was your experience?
- Have you ever experienced any challenges in communication with your child's educators because of your English language limitation? Please explain.
- Do your child educators try to use some strategies to facilitate communication with you (If yes, please provide some example)
- Except for what educational settings have done, have you experienced any other challenges in your life in the host country that affected your involvement in your child's schooling? What are those barriers?
- How much do your child's educators know about you and your child's life situation outside of school? How do they know about it? Have you ever wished they knew more?
- Has your child ever experienced any challenges or difficulties in classroom activities or at school? Please explain.
- Has your child ever experienced any challenges in communication or engagement in classroom activities because of her English language limitation? Please explain.
- Has your child ever received any additional support at school? For example, is there a sufficient number of translators to facilitate communication or specialized English as a second language educators? (If yes, please tell me more. If not, why not?)
- Do your child's educators use some instructional options besides using the national language to communicate and engage your child in the classroom activities while your child's second language was not developed well? Please explain.

- Do you think your child's educators pay attention to your cultural background and try to bring it to the class in everyday activities? 'how? If not, why do you think it happens?
- Have you or your child ever behaved in a way that is normal in your point of view, but does seem okay in the school setting? What do you think explains your views or what are the reasons behind these misunderstandings?
- What patterns have you observed in your child's educators regarding their race, gender, ethnicity, etc.? Do you think if there were a more diverse population, that they would better understand diversity among students? Please explain.
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix B

Potential Educator Interview Questions

- Are your class activities mainly child-centred, teacher -ed, free-play, or structured-play activities? Please explain the reasons behind your choices.
- How much of your class time is devoted to structured activities with the focus on academic achievement such as literacy and math? How much of your class time is devoted to free play? Why do you divide your time in this way?
- Do you think some parents have some priorities in their child's education? For example, do they have more concern about their child's academic achievement or skills development? Please explain.
- How much is the ratio of students to teacher in each class?
- What strategies do you use in your class to support the social skills development of your students? Could you please explain more.
- Have you ever used some strategies for students who struggle in some areas of social skills development? Please explain.
- How much do you think post-secondary institutions and in-service training help you to enhance your knowledge and experience in the area of children's social skills development? Could you please tell me more about those programs.
- Does your school have sufficient support for newcomer children with educational (academic and skills development) gaps? For example, is there a sufficient number of translators to facilitate communication with newcomers or specialized English as a second language educators? Please explain.
- What instructional options besides the national language do you use to communicate and engage newcomers whose second language is not developed well, in classroom activities?
- One of the barriers for newcomers is that they experience negative feeling such as frustration and hesitation that inhabit them from interacting with others. What strategies have you adopted to help newcomers feel more positively?
- Do you try to consider cultural differences of your newcomer students in your everyday practices? Please explain how.
- Have you ever tried to bring the culture of your newcomer students into your class? What have you done?
- Have ever cultural differences caused any challenges, misunderstandings, or different expectations amongst students in your class? Please explain.
- Do you think if educators were more diverse, they would be even better able to understand diversity in their students? Please explain.
- How much do you try to engage your newcomers' parents in their children's education? What strategies have you used to engage them in their children's schooling?
- What factors do you think have affected newcomer parents' involvement in their child schooling?

- What strategies have you adopted to support parents and children regarding the challenges you mentioned?
- What strategies have your school provided to support communication with newcomers' parents, whose second language might not have developed adequately yet?
- What strategies do you use to support communication with newcomers' parents, whose second language might not have developed adequately yet?
- What strategies do you use to communicate with newcomers' parents who have different backgrounds and expectations about the educational system?
- How much do you know about the lives of your newcomer learners outside of school?
- Do you think is it essential to know about it? Why?
- Have you ever tried to connect immigrant parents with community organizations to support their settlement in Canada and reduce their life burden?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix C

Consent Form for Parent Interview

Informed Consent Form

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

Title: A Study Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students

Researcher:

Tayebeh Sohrabi

Ph.D. 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

Committee Members:

Dr. Anne Burke

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Dr. Xuemei Li

Hickman Building | 3056

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

xuemeil@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled, **“A Study of Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students.”**

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 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 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.

Introduction

The researcher, Tayebbeh Sohrabi, is a Ph.D. of Education student, at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The long-term goal of this project is to understand how social skills develop in kindergarteners who are immigrants and English is not their first language. Also gain awareness about the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer bilingual kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teachers and peers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what happens in the development of newcomer bilingual kindergarteners' social skills. In other words, it intends to examine how bilingual kindergarteners develop social skills in the process of communication with others in the kindergarten. I will also study the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teacher and peers.

The following research questions will guide this study:

How do bilingual kindergarten-aged children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills?

- a. How are societal and educational settings prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?
- b. What barriers do these bilingual, newcomer children experience in their social skills development?
- c. Ideally, how can societal and educational settings be prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children.

To answer these questions, your role is of utmost importance. Hence, you are invited to participate in this research study to assist us in reaching the goals mentioned above.

What You Will Do

If you agree to be part of this research, you will be asked to:

1- There is an interview and probably follow up interviews that you will be asked to answer. 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.

Any follow up interview questions are not part of a new interview, but will be used to address misunderstandings, gaps in data, missing information, or unclear information, after the transcript review is reviewed.

Time Required

The interview is expected to last approximately one hour. And the follow up interviews will be less than 15 minutes. The interview data will be audio-recorded.

Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All of the information gathered from you will be discarded and not used if decided to withdraw. By August 30th, 2023, data collection will be finished, and the analysis will start. Hence, your data will not be removed if asked afterwards.

Possible Benefits

a) Benefits for the Participants

This study will increase awareness about barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners experience in social skills development. Also, it helps to enhance social skills development of newcomer bilingual children.

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 newcomer bilingual kindergarteners, as there is not lots of studies in this field. Also, as the number of newcomers has increased dramatically in Canada, particularly in St. John's. This study will examine the barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners face in social skills developments to find ways to improve their lives. Reaching this purpose has lots of benefits for society as the whole, since having well-developed and mature people will affect all communities and nations.

Possible Risks

Even though known risks for this study are minimal, interviewing parents about their children's social development may carry psychological, emotional, or social risks. However, the researcher will do her best to prevent any possible risk. Some strategies will be used to mitigate this risk include;

-If you refuse to participate or decide to withdraw during the research, you certainly can do that.

If you feel nervous during the interview, the researcher can arrange another day for interview.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the data pseudonyms will be used instead of real names.

Confidentiality

All the information gathered will be treated confidentially. Data will be password-protected on a password-protected flash memory. None of the data will have any identifiable information except pseudonyms, so it will not be possible for anyone to identify the participants.

Anonymity

There can be some limits to anonymity. For example, you may be identifiable to informed readers based on what you say, especially if direct quotes are reported.

However, every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. To ensure anonymity in the publication of any data collected in this research project, participants' names will not be used, nor will the published findings have any identifiable personal information.

Storage of Data

The digital data will be stored on a flash memory and will be password protected which will be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisor and committee members. 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 summarized collective form which is from all participants. A pseudonym will be used in place of participants' name, and all identifying information will be removed from the research report.

Sharing of Results with Participants

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 this address is optional. You may contact the researcher by email (see the beginning of this form) at any time to obtain copies of articles that have been published.

The thesis will be publicly accessible via Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, at <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>.

Questions

You are welcome to ask questions at any time, before, during, and after the participation.

If you have any questions, you can contact the researcher or her supervisor through the below email addresses:

Tayebeh Sohrabi: Tsohrabi@mun.ca

Dr. Kimberly Maich: kmaich@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 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

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 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 30th, 2023, 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

Signature _____ Date _____

Email (optional / if you wish to be contacted about publications of the study):

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 D

Consent Form for Educator Interview

Informed Consent Form

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

Title: A Study Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students

Researcher:

Tayebeh Sohrabi

Ph.D. of Education Student

Faculty of Education Memorial University

Phone: 709-689-2239

Email: tsohrabi@mun.ca

Supervisor:

Dr. Kimberly Maich

Hickman Building | 3056

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Committee Members:

Dr. Anne Burke

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Dr. Xuemei Li

Hickman Building | 3056

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

xuemeil@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled, **“A Study of Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students.”**

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 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 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.

Introduction

The researcher, Tayebbeh Sohrabi, is a Ph.D. of Education student, at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The long-term goal of this project is to understand how social skills develop in kindergarteners who are immigrants and English is not their first language. Also gain awareness about the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer bilingual kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teachers and peers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what happens in the development of newcomer bilingual kindergarteners' social skills. In other words, it intends to examine how bilingual kindergarteners develop social skills in the process of communication with others in the kindergarten. I will also study the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teacher and peers.

The following research questions will guide this study:

How do bilingual kindergarten-aged children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills?

- a. How are societal and educational settings prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?
- b. What barriers do these bilingual, newcomer children experience in their social skills development?
- c. Ideally, how can societal and educational settings be prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?

To answer these questions, your role is of utmost importance. Hence, you are invited to participate in this research study to assist us in reaching the goals mentioned above.

What You Will Do

If you agree to be part of this research, you will be asked to:

There is an interview and probably follow up interviews that you will be asked to answer. 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.

Follow up interview is not a new interview. It will be used in this study to address any gap in data, misunderstanding, missing information, unclear information, which refer to transcript review.

You can have the interview either in person at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University, or online using Zoom. The interviews will be recorded as audio, and if you opt for an online interview, you can turn off your camera.

For information on Zoom's privacy policy, you can find it here: [Privacy](#) | [Zoom](#)

Time Required

The interview is expected to last approximately one hour. And the follow up interviews will be less than 15 minutes. The interview data will be audio-recorded.

Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All of the information gathered from you will be discarded and not used if decided to withdraw. By February 30th, 2024, data collection will be finished, and the analysis will start. Hence, your data will not be removed if asked afterwards.

Possible Benefits

a) Benefits for the Participants

This study will increase educators' awareness about differences between students. Then this awareness can help Educators to design a more inclusive program for their class. Also increase educators' awareness about barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners 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 newcomer bilingual kindergarteners, as there is not lots of studies in this field. Also, as the number of newcomers has increased dramatically in Canada, particularly in St. This study will examine the barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners face in social skills developments to find ways to improve their lives. Reaching this purpose has lots of benefits for society as the whole, since having more well-developed and mature people will affect all communities and nations.

Possible Risks

Even though known risks for this study are minimal, interviewing you about your work may carry psychological/emotional or social risks.

However, the researcher will do her best to prevent any possible risk. Some strategies will be used to mitigate this risk include;

- If you refuse to participate or decide to withdraw during the research, you certainly can do that.

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Sharing of Results with Participants

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 this address is optional. You may contact the researcher by email (see the beginning of this form) at any time to obtain copies of articles that have been published.

The thesis will be publicly accessible via Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, at <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>.

Questions

You are welcome to ask questions at any time, before, during, and after the participation. If you have any questions, you can contact the researcher or her supervisor through the below email addresses:

Tayebeh Sohrabi: Tsohrabi@mun.ca

Kimberly Maich: kmaich@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 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

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 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 February 30th, 2024, 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

Signature _____ Date _____

Email (optional / if they wish to be contacted about publications of the study):

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

Data Sheet for Observation

Observation Checklist

Research Question: How do bilingual kindergarten-aged children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills?

Skill	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Nonverbal Social Language	Reciprocates nonverbal interactions (e.g., high five, wave, thumbs-up, fist bump, smile)		
	Initiates nonverbal interactions (e.g., high five, wave, thumbs-up, fist bump, smile) with appropriate adults and peers		
	Identifies basic actions without words (e.g., charades)		
	Follows basic gestures and nonverbal cues (e.g., stop when person holds up hand, comes when person motions with hand)		
	Modifies own behavior based on the body language, actions, or eye gaze of others		

Skill	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Classroom/ Group Behavior	Follows schedule and classroom rules (including playground rules)		
	Follows verbal directions as part of classroom routines or activities (e.g., get materials, put away lunch)		
	Recognizes belongings of own, others, and group		
	Keeps toys/materials in designed locations		
	Responds to teacher by looking or coming when directly or indirectly cues		
	Respond to indirect cueing (e.g., "Where are your friends?" when child need to line up)		
	Help others, both spontaneously and when asked		
	Remains in place in a group unit called by teacher (e.g., staying in seat until called to line up)		

	Prepares for activities by locating area/materials (e.g., chair, coat)		
	Follows directions during novel activities		
	Stays in place when walking in line and maintains pace with group		
	Repeats words/ actions from a song, book, or play activity		
	Asks permission to use others' possessions		
	Attends to small-group, teacher-led, hands-on activity for ten minutes		
	Sits quietly in circle for ten minutes		
	Attends to small-group, teacher-led listening activity for ten minutes		
	Passes items to peers (e.g., passing out materials, taking turns looking at a shared object and passing to next person)		

Skill	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Social Language	Respond to greeting/partings		
	Follows directions involving named adults or peers		
	Initiates greeting/partings		

	Addresses peers by name		
	Answers social questions		
	Asks social questions		
	Requests attention		
	Gains listener attention appropriately		
	Responds to initiations from others		
	Answers questions about ongoing activities		
	Makes reciprocal comments		
	Directs body and eyes toward social partner when speaking		
	Directs body and eyes toward social partner when listening		
	Speaks using polite phrases (e.g., "Please," "Thank you," "Sorry," "Excuse me," "You are welcome")		
	Seeks to repair or clarify breakdown in social interactions		

	Uses contextually appropriate language/introduces topic		
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Skill	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Social Play	Engages in social interactive games (e.g., Peek-a-Boo, tickling game)		
	Play parallel for five to ten minutes, close to peers		
	Shares toys/materials (e.g., allows others to play with materials, gives materials when asked)		
	Plays cooperatively (gives and takes directions from peer) for five to ten minutes (e.g., blocks, trucks, LEGOs)		
	Takes turns as part of structured game and sustains attention until completion of the game		
	Stop action when requested by peer		
	Ends structured play/game with peer appropriately		
	Trade toys/materials (e.g., participates in negotiation to swap paint colors during the art project)		

	Invite peer to play in a preferred activity		
	Approaches peers and appropriately joins in the ongoing activity		
	Accepts invitation to play in an activity of peer's choice		
	Remains appropriately engaged during unstructured times (e.g., moves to new activity once completes first; engages in age-appropriate play)		
	Follows changes in play ideas of others and sustains the changes during open-ended play (e.g., changes in play schema/scenario)		

Skill	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Social/ Emotional	Give simple explanation for the emotional state of self and others (e.g., happy, sad) when asked		
	Shows empathy toward others (e.g., says, "Are you okay?" to peer who falls on playground; hugs a peer who is crying)		
	Expresses negative emotions without exhibiting challenging behaviors		

	Expresses appropriate level of enthusiasm about the actions or belongings of others		
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Skill	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Self-Regulation	Appropriately handles denied requests		
	Raised hand and waits to be called before speaking		
	Demonstrates flexibility when preferred activities are interrupted		
	Responds to feedbacks/ correction without exhibiting challenging behaviors		
	Responds to mistakes made by self or others without exhibiting challenging behaviors		
	Demonstrates awareness of own and other's space (e.g., not stepping on other's feet when walking in a line, not crowding a person during a Circle Time, keeping an arm's distance when interacting with others)		

	Modifies behavior in response to feedback		
	Advocates for oneself (e.g., “I did not get one.” “I can’t see.” “Please move.” “Stop.”) without exhibiting challenging behaviors (e.g., bullying, teasing, aggression)		
	Asks for help during novel or challenging activities		
	Waits for help, for a requested item, or when directed to for up to one minute without exhibiting challenging behaviors		
	Use conversational voice level and tone when speaking		

Ellis, J. T., & Almeida, C. (2014)

a) How are societal and educational settings prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?

	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
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1	Developing various areas that enhance interaction between children (e.g., dramatic play area for role play, block area that facilitate children interaction when they build something)		
2	Designing activities that facilitate social contact between peers to develop the capacity to interact appropriately with one another		
3	Activities in the classroom should provide kindergarten children with an opportunity to express their personal opinions and ideas, taking on more responsibility, and expressing oneself creatively.		
4	Through teacher's guidance and facilitation, children are encouraged to take appropriate risks and learn the important social rules of working and playing together.		

5	Classroom activities are designed in a way that encourage active participation (Young children learn best through active participation and experience when they are helped, allowed, and encouraged to follow an interest and construct a plan to learn more)		
6	Attention to body language, including gestures, touch, personal space, and eye contact; their various meaning in different cultures. Teachers spend time to learn and discuss key areas of difference, particularly those that may lead to significant misunderstanding.		
7	Value the diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds of all students. Considering cultural differences in relationship (relationship between adult and kids, male and female), food, dress codes, symbols, etc.		
8	Strong relationships between students and teachers		

9	Strong relationships between families, and schools; and collaboration between parents and teachers in the child's development. When the social and emotional needs of the kindergarten child are acknowledged and supported both at home and at school, the child's overall development benefits (e.g., providing parent sessions, modelling ways parents can help their child)		
10	Promote the use and development of students' home languages at school.		
11	Allocate appropriate resources to support integration of bilingual, newcomer students in the educational settings and support newcomers to work independently (e.g. set up a computer centre with appropriate software or websites bookmarked, set up a listening centre with books and tapes that can be used by ESL students and others, provide alternate resources at a lower language level that address topics studied in the content areas, provide alternate activities that can engage the student when assigned class work is beyond the student's current instructional level)		
12	Creating a welcoming and supportive environment (for example, posting visual images that represent all students in the school, honouring the various cultural and faith celebrations within the school, recruiting bilingual volunteers, promoting ESL professional development opportunities, giving students access to books that reflect their cultures and identities)		

13	Embracing the cultural diversity in the school; (e.g., have multicultural events, displays and opportunities for parents to share their culture and knowledge)		
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Completely Kindergarten: Kindergarten Curriculum Guide – Interim Edition. (n.d.).

b) What barriers do these bilingual, newcomer children experience in their social skills development?

c) Ideally, how can societal and educational settings support the social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?

	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
1	Providing opportunity for personal reflections		
2	Value the diverse linguistic, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds of all students.		
3	Promote the use and development of students' home languages		
4	Program with an asset orientation that values newcomers' cultures, experiences and knowledge		

5	Newcomer students have diverse backgrounds and needs, which depends on previous experiences, their level of literacy in English and in their home language (or language of wider communication), their immigration status, and their home living status. To ensure students feel welcomed into the school community, schools should address each student's individual situation, seek understanding of their home country and culture, and provide support when and where students need it.		
6	Supportive teacher-student relationship to help newcomers feel a greater sense of belonging at school		
7	Involvement of bilingual, newcomer parents in their children education and develop a connection according to their situation		
8	Encourage students on all sides of an issue to express disagreement over ideas or beliefs in a respectful manner		
9	Schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and controlled-substance use		
10	observe student performance to change instruction while it is happening and provide feedback and support that allows the student to self-assess performance		
11	Allocate appropriate resources		

12	Purposeful grouping for instruction, and varying between homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings, depending on students' literacy and language skills		
13	Educators are prepared to work with bilingual, newcomer students		

-*Completely Kindergarten: Kindergarten Curriculum Guide – Interim Edition.* (n.d.)

-U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2016)

Examples of Teachers Skill for Communicating with Bilingual, Newcomer Students	Indicators	Anecdotal Note	Event Recording
Nonverbal Social Language	Reciprocates nonverbal interactions (e.g., high five, wave, thumbs-up, fist bump, smile)		
	Initiates nonverbal interactions (e.g., high five, wave, thumbs-up, fist bump, smile)		
	Develop basic actions without words (e.g., charades)		

	Use basic gestures and nonverbal cues (e.g., stop when person holds up hand, comes when person motions with hand)		
	Use body language, actions, or eye gaze of others		
	Use indirect cueing (e.g., “Where are your friends?” when child need to line up)		
Having Routines	Providing schedule and classroom rules (including playground rules)		
	Providing verbal directions as part of classroom routines or activities (e.g., get materials, put away lunch)		
	Designing specific locations for toys/materials		

Ellis, J. T., & Almeida, C. (2014).

References

Ellis, J. T., & Almeida, C. (2014). *Socially savvy: An assessment and curriculum guide for young children*. Different Roads to Learning, Incorporated, DRI Books, Incorporated.

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at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf>

Appendix F

Codebook

Code book	Interview Questions for Parent	Literature
Educators' diversity	Do you think if there were a more diverse population, it could help to understand diversity among students? Please explain.	In western society, educators tend to be white, middle-class, female and monolingual, which is not in sync with the recent demographic changes in these societies (Kaufmann, 2021)
Cultural differences	<p>Have you or your child ever behave in a way that is normal in your point of view, but not for school? What do you think explain your views or what are the reasons behind this misunderstandings?</p> <p>Have cultural differences caused challenges or misunderstandings between you or your child with her educators? Please explain.</p>	

Attention to cultural diversity	<p>Do you think your child's educators pay attention to your cultural background and try to bring it to the class in everyday activities?</p> <p>'How? If not, why do you think it happens?</p>	
Language limitation	<p>Have your ever experienced any challenges in communication with your child's educators because of your English language limitation? Please explain.</p> <p>Have your child ever experienced any challenges in communication or engagement in classroom activities because of her English language limitation? Please explain.</p>	<p>English and French are recognized as Canada's official languages, and therefore bilingual programs in languages other than English or French are rare, especially in provinces with less newcomer's population such as Newfoundland and Labrador. It is frequently assumed that because educators do not speak the multiple languages that may be represented in their classrooms, there are no instructional options other than using the national language as the exclusive language of instruction and using other languages is not allowed (Cummins, 2017).</p>
Educators' readiness	<p>Do your child's educators use some instructional options besides using the national language to communicate and engage your child in the classroom activities while your child's second language was not developed well? Please explain.</p>	

<p>-Unfamiliarity with culture</p> <p>-Unfamiliarity with life situation</p>	<p>How much do your child's educators know about you and your child's life situation outside of school? How they know about it? Have you ever wished they knew more?</p>	<p>Although scholars have been concerned with the schooling of newcomer children residing within Western countries for decades, there is still a lag between scholars' recommendations based on their research and the practices within the field. Today, many educators and school professionals have minimal knowledge of the lives of their newcomer learners outside of school and their cultural background (Garcia et al., 2022; Moinolmolki et al., 2016).</p>
<p>Lack of pedagogical approaches</p>	<p>Does your child school incorporate pedagogical approaches that reflect diversity (your cultural background) to provide support for your child? Please explain.</p>	<p>There is a low likelihood of incorporating pedagogical approaches that reflect diversity, which prevents schools from providing support for their English language learners (Cummins, 2017; Moinolmolki et al., 2016).</p>

insufficient support	Has your child ever received any support to progress in her education? For example, is there a sufficient number of translators to facilitate communication or specialized English as a second language educators?	Most schools in Canada, especially in provinces with smaller newcomer populations such as Newfoundland and Labrador, have insufficient support for newcomer children with educational gaps (Li et al., 2016). For example, there is an insufficient number of translators to facilitate communication (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Langeloo et al., 2019) and specialized English as a second language educators across Canada, including in Newfoundland and Labrador (Li et al., 2016).
parental involvement(school) parental involvement (life)	Have you ever experienced challenges in communicating with your child educators because of your lack of proficiency with the English language and insufficient knowledge about the host public education system in here?	There are some barriers to parental involvement. On the one hand, parents reported that their social and academic integration experiences are often hampered by experiences of otherness and marginalization attributable to

	<p>What support from your child's school have you received in this regard?</p> <p>How was your experience?</p>	<p>visible and invisible elements of their identities, which reduce their willingness to get involved (Oikonomidou et al., 2019)</p> <p>Some newcomer parents are less involved in their children's education than native-born parents as they perceive that they face more significant barriers to involvement in their children's education than native-born parents. Some of these barriers include parents' lack of proficiency with the English language and insufficient knowledge about the host public education system (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Li et al., 2016; Soutullo et al., 2016)</p>
	<p>Do your child educators try to use some strategies to facilitate communication with you? (If yes, please provide some example)</p>	

Newcomers' background	<p>How much have you been engaged in your child education in Canada? Did you engage in your child education more in your country?</p> <p>Are there any barriers in your life in Canada that, if they did not exist, you could be more involved in your child's education? What are those barriers?</p> <p>Have you ever experienced any challenges at school regarding your involvement in your child's schooling? Have you ever felt passive or not really involved in connecting with educators regarding your children's schooling? Please explain.</p>	Newcomer parents' own experiences with schools, cultural and religious values, and the reasons they left their country of origin (Adelman & Taylor, 2015);
Barriers in life	Except for what educational settings have done, have you experienced any other challenges in your life in the host country that affected your involvement in your child's schooling?	Financial issues and having to work multiple low-paying jobs (Adelman & Taylor, 2015; Li et al., 2016); discrimination and the challenges of parenting children in an unfamiliar environment (Li et al., 2016); challenges in adjusting to a new culture and accessing community resources (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009); being busy with English learning or their education (Li et al., 2016); and isolation from other parents (Li et al., 2016).

Unfamiliarity with play-based learning	<p>What skills and knowledge do you think educational settings should teach your child?</p> <p>What is your priority as a parent for your child to learn?</p> <p>Why do you think this priority is more important?</p>	<p>Many parents focus on school achievement and school preparedness from the beginning of their children's education, relatedly as unwilling to acknowledge the value of play in their children's educational activities (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019; Burke, 2019; Keung & Cheung, 2019)</p>
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Appendix G

Clearance from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research(ICEHR)



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:	20231660-ED
Approval Period:	June 28, 2023 – June 30, 2024
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Kimberly Maich Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>A Study of Social Skills Development in Newcomer, Bilingual Kindergarten Students</i>

June 28, 2023

Mrs. Tayebbeh Sohrabi
Faculty of Education
Memorial University

Dear Mrs. Sohrabi:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarifications 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 for one year*. 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. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award.

The *TCPS2* requires that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make additions and/or modifications, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical concerns, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before **June 30, 2024**. 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. All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the **Applications: Post-Review** link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

James Drover, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

JD/bc

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

Appendix H

Clearance for Modification: Interviewing Parents before Observation



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL, Canada A1C5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

ICEHR Number:	20231660-ED
Approval Period:	June 28, 2023 – June 30, 2024
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Kimberly Maich Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>A Study of Social Skills Development in Newcomer, Bilingual Kindergarten Students</i>
Amendment #:	01

October 27, 2023

Mrs. Tayebbeh Sohrabi
Faculty of Education
Memorial University

Dear Mrs. Sohrabi:

The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) has reviewed the proposed additions for the above referenced project, as outlined in your amendment request dated October 23, 2023. We are pleased to give approval to recruit parents of bilingual kindergarten newcomers, as described in your request, provided all other previously approved protocols are followed. However, **the recruitment letter must state that the interviews will be audio recorded.**

The *TCPSP2* requires that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents as last reviewed** by ICEHR. If you need to make any other additions and/or modifications during the conduct of the research, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical issues, before they may be implemented. Submit a *Personnel Change Form* to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an *Adverse Event Report* must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

Your ethics clearance for this project expires **June 30, 2024**, before which time you must submit an *Annual Update* to ICEHR, as required by the *TCPSP2*. 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 requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you need to provide an annual update with a brief final summary, and your file will be closed.

All post-approval *ICEHR event forms* noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage.

The Committee would like to thank you for the update on your proposal and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Alyson Byrne, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

AB/bc

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

Appendix I

Recruitment Letter for Parents Interview

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH: Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students

Parents of newcomer bilingual kindergarten students are invited to take part in a Ph.D. of Education student research project. For this project, the student researcher will ask you to take part in sessions to answer some questions in an interview and a follow up interview.

Research participation is voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw any time they wish. A follow up interview is not a new interview. It will be used in this study to address any gaps in data, misunderstandings, missing information, or unclear information.

Each interview is expected to take approximately one hour. The Interviews will be audio recorded.

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

Tayebeh Sohrabi

Ph.D. 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 J

Clearance for Modification: Interviewing Teachers before Observation

Interdisciplinary Committee on

Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

ICEHR # **20231660-ED**

Researcher Portal File #: **20231660**

Hello Mrs. Tayebbeh Sohrabi:

Thank you for your submission to ICEHR regarding the proposed change(s) to your project. Your request has been reviewed by the Vice-Chair, and while we appreciate the diligence with which it was prepared, there are a couple of issues that require modification and/or explanation before approval can be granted. Please address the following point(s) in your existing amendment request event form and/or supporting documents and resubmit your request for further consideration.

1. Section 1.6 of the request states, "I will share my recruitment letters and seek participants for interviews at the Faculty of Education Memorial University." Please clarify how you will share your recruitment letter with potential participants. Are you asking your colleagues directly or will if you ask the Faculty of Education to send the recruitment letter to students? If it is the latter, then your recruitment letter must state that participation is not a requirement of the Faculty of Education or the participant's academic program. Further, if you plan to ask colleagues or other potential participant pass along your recruitment letter to other potential participants then the letter should state, "If you know anyone who may be interested in participating in this study, please give them a copy of this information."
2. Section 1.6 explains that you may conduct interviews online via Zoom. As such, your consent form should be updated with this option and include a link to the Zoom privacy policy. Further, it is unclear if you will be video recording participants who are interviewed via Zoom. If so, you will need to include a checkbox to obtain permission from participants for video recording and the consent form must explain that they can turn off their camera if they do not wish to be video recorded.

The existing event form can now be found at the bottom of the file's "Events" Page. To access this page, click on the **Events: Requiring Attention** link on your portal homepage.

NOTE: Be sure to edit and resubmit the "*existing*" event form as instructed. **Do not** submit a new form.

Regards,
Bradley Cooper
Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, NL | A1C 5S7
Bruneau Centre for Research and Innovation | Room IIC 2010C
T: (709) 864-2561 |

www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr | <https://rpresources.mun.ca/>

This email and its contents may contain confidential and/or private information and is intended for the sole use of the addressee(s). If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this email. If you believe that you received this email in error please notify the original sender and immediately delete this email and all attachments. Except where properly supported with required and authorized documents, no legal or financial obligation will be incurred by Memorial University as a result of this communication.

Appendix K

Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD) Clearance



Superintendent of Schools: Terry Hall

Criminal Offence Declaration for Researchers

1. I Declare,

- a. I have **NO** convictions under the *Criminal Code of Canada* up to and including the date of this declaration for which a pardon has not been issued or granted under the *Criminal Records Act (Canada)*.
- b. I have **NO** charges pending under the *Criminal Code of Canada* up to and including the date of this declaration.

OR

2. I have the following convictions/charges for offences under the *Criminal Code of Canada* for which a pardon under the *Criminal Records Act (Canada)* has not been issued or granted.

List of Offences: _____

Signature of applicant: Tayebeh Sohrabi

Date: 2024-02-02



95 Elizabeth Avenue - St. John's, NL - A1B 1R6
Tel: (709) 758-2372 - Fax: (709) 758-2706
nlschools.ca x nlschoolsca

Appendix L

Recruitment Letter for Children's Observation

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH: Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students

Newcomer bilingual kindergarten students are asked to take part in a Ph.D. of Education student research project. For this project, the student researcher will observe kindergarten children without any interference in their classroom activities. Research participation is voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw any time they wish.

The observation will be conducted at school and is expected to take approximately two months from Mondays to Fridays, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm.

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

PhD Candidate

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 M

Recruitment Letter for Teacher's Observation

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH: Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students

Teachers of kindergarten are asked to take part in a Ph.D. of Education student research project. For this project, the student researcher will observe your interaction with newcomer bilingual kindergarten children in your class without any interference in classroom activities. Research participation is voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw any time they wish.

The observation is expected to take approximately two months from Mondays to Fridays, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

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

Tayebeh Sohrabi

PhD of Education Candidate

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 N

Consent Form Observing Children

Informed Consent Form

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

Title: A Study Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarteners

Researcher:

Tayebeh Sohrabi

Ph.D. 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

Committee Members:

Dr. Anne Burke

Hickman Building | 3056

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

amburke@mun.ca

Dr. Xuemei Li

Hickman Building | 3056

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

xuemeil@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled, **“A Study of Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergartener Students.”**

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 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 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.

Introduction

The researcher, Tayebbeh Sohrabi, is a Ph.D. of Education student, at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The long-term goal of this project is to understand how social skills develop in kindergarteners who are immigrants and English is not their first language. Also gain awareness about the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer bilingual kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teachers and peers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what happens in the development of newcomer bilingual kindergarteners' social skills. In other words, it intends to examine how bilingual kindergarteners develop social skills in the process of communication with their teachers in the kindergarten. I will also study the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teacher..

The following research questions will guide this study:

How do bilingual kindergarten-aged children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills?

- a. How are societal and educational settings prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?
- b. What barriers do these bilingual, newcomer children experience in their social skills development?
- c. Ideally, how can societal and educational settings be prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?

To answer these questions, your role is of utmost importance. Hence, you are invited to participate in this research study to assist us in reaching the goals mentioned above.

The criteria for participation in the current study will include the following: (a) the participants will be kindergarteners, (b) they will be bilingual newcomer children, and English will not be their first language. Bilingual children who are not immigrants, such as those who speak English and French, can not be participants of this study, and (c) all children will be typically developing according to their parents.

What You Will Do

If you agree your child to be part of this research, you will be asked to:

Let researchers attend in your child class to observe the routine activities of your child without interfering in any activities. The researcher will record structured notes on a data sheet and take field notes on their behavior and how they talk while they are in class.

The researcher will look for verbal and non-verbal communication signs between teachers and native-born English-language children with bilingual children to find out how and to what extent their relationship promotes or prevents social skills development.

You should NOT consent if you do not agree that the researcher observe your child in the class.

The researcher will only gather data from students who consented to participate in the study. The researcher will take field notes and fill out the datasheet just for the study's participants.

Time Required

The observation lasts about two months from Mondays to Fridays, from 9:00 am to 12:00.

Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All of the information gathered from your child will be discarded and not used; also the researcher will stop collecting data if you decide to withdraw if decided to withdraw. By November 30th, 2023, data collection will be finished, and the analysis will start. Hence, your data will not be removed if you request withdrawal after this point.

Possible Benefits

a) Benefits for the Participants

This study will increase awareness about barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners experience in social skills development. Also, it helps to enhance social skills development of newcomer bilingual children.

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 newcomer bilingual kindergarteners, as there is not lots of studies in this field. Also, as the number of newcomers has increased dramatically in Canada, particularly in St. This study will examine the barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners face in social skills developments to find ways to improve their lives. Reaching this purpose has lots of benefits for society as the whole, since having more well-developed and mature people will affect all communities and nations.

Possible Risks

Even though known risks for this study are minimal, as your child is familiar with the activities that they will do during the observation since they are part of the everyday activities, observing children in their classrooms may carry psychological, emotional, or social risks. However, the researcher will do her best to prevent any possible risk. Some strategies will be used to mitigate this risk include;

-If you refuse to allow your child to participate or decide to withdraw during the research, you certainly can do that.

If children are stressed during the research, the researcher can leave the class and come back another day.

To ensure confidentiality and protect the anonymity of the data, pseudonyms will be used instead of real names.

Should participation in this research cause any anxiety in spite of these assurances, you can contact below:

811, Doorways,

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/mentalhealth-committee/mentalhealth/counselling-options/>

24-hour Mental Health Crisis Line (709) 737-4668 or 1 (888) 737-4668 (Toll Free)

Bridge the App BridgethegApp.ca is your 'go-to' website for mental health information and connection to local supports and services. You can sign up for online programming, use tools, learn about services in your region and share your personal story of recovery with others. You can get started today.

Mobile Crisis Response Team 1 (888) 737-4668 (St. John's Region)

Crisis Text Line Text 'Talk' to 686868

Confidentiality

All the information gathered will be treated confidentially. Data will be password-protected on a password-protected flash memory. None of the data will have any identifiable information except pseudonyms, so it will not be possible for anyone to identify the participants.

Anonymity

Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. To ensure anonymity in the publication of any data collected in this research project, participants' names will not be used, nor will the published findings have any identifiable personal information.

Storage of Data

The digital data will be stored on a flash memory and will be password protected which will be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisor and committee members. 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 summarized collective form which is from all participants. A pseudonym will be used in

place of participants' name, and all identifying information will be removed from the research report.

Sharing of Results with Participants

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 this address is optional. You may contact the researcher by email (see the beginning of this form) at any time to obtain copies of articles that have been published.

The thesis will be publicly accessible via Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, at <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>.

Questions

You are welcome to ask questions at any time, before, during, and after the participation.

If you have any questions, you can contact the researcher or her supervisor through the below email addresses:

Tayebeh Sohrabi: Tsohrabi@mun.ca

Dr. Kimberly Maich: kmaich@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 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

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 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 November 30th, 2023, 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

Signature _____ Date _____

Email (optional / if they wish to be contacted about publications of the study):

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 O

Consent Form Observing Teacher

Informed Consent Form

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

Title: A Study Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students

Researcher:

Tayebeh Sohrabi

Ph.D. 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

Committee Members:

Dr. Anne Burke

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Faculty of Education

Memorial University

amburke@mun.ca

Dr. Xuemei Li

Hickman Building | 3056

Faculty of Education

Memorial University

xuemeil@mun.ca

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled, **“A Study of Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students.”**

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 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 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.

Introduction

The researcher, Tayebbeh Sohrabi, is a Ph.D. of Education student, at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The long-term goal of this project is to understand how social skills develop in kindergarteners who are immigrants and English is not their first language.

Also gain awareness about the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer bilingual kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teachers and peers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand what happens in the development of newcomer bilingual kindergarteners' social skills. In other words, it intends to examine how bilingual kindergarteners develop social skills in the process of communication with their teachers in the kindergarten. I will also study the barriers and facilitating factors that Newcomer kindergarteners experience when they communicate with their teacher.

The following research questions will guide this study:

How do bilingual kindergarten-aged children who are newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada develop social skills?

- a. How are societal and educational settings prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?
- b. What barriers do these bilingual, newcomer children experience in their social skills development?
- c. Ideally, how can societal and educational settings be prepared to support social skills development of these bilingual, newcomer children?

To answer these questions, your role is of utmost importance. Hence, you are invited to participate in this research study to assist us in reaching the goals mentioned above.

What You Will Do

If you agree to be part of this research, you will be asked to:

1- Let researchers attend in your class to observe the routine activities of your class without interfering in any activities. You should NOT consent if you do not agree that the researcher observe your child in the class.

Time Required

The observation will last two months from Mondays to Fridays, **from 9:00 am to 12:00.**

Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All of the information gathered from you will be discarded and not used

if decided to withdraw. By November 30th, 2023, data collection will be finished, and the analysis will start. Hence, your data will not be removed if asked afterwards.

Possible Benefits

a) Benefits for the Participants

This study will increase educators' awareness about differences between students. Then this awareness can help Educators to design a more inclusive program for their class. Also increase educators' awareness about barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners 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 newcomer bilingual kindergarteners, as there is not lots of studies in this field. Also, as the number of newcomers has increased dramatically in Canada, particularly in St. This study will examine the barriers and difficulties that newcomer bilingual kindergarteners face in social skills developments to find ways to improve their lives. Reaching this purpose has lots of benefits for society as a whole, since having more well-developed and mature people will affect all communities and nations.

Possible Risks

Even though known risks for this study are minimal, as you are familiar with the activities that you will do during the observation since they are part of the everyday activities, observing you while conducting your work and observing children in their classrooms may each carry psychological, emotional, or social risks. However, the researcher will do her best to prevent any possible risk. Some strategies will be used to mitigate this risk include;

-If you refuse to participate or decide to withdraw during the research, you certainly can do that.

If you or students are stressed during the research, the researcher can leave the class and come back another day.

Also, to ensure confidentiality and protect anonymity of the data, pseudonyms will be used instead of real names.

Should participation in this research cause any anxiety in spite of these assurances, you can contact below:

811, Doorways,

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/mentalhealth-committee/mentalhealth/counselling-options/>

24-hour Mental Health Crisis Line (709) 737-4668 or 1 (888) 737-4668 (Toll Free)

Bridge the App BridgethegApp.ca is your 'go-to' website for mental health information and connection to local supports and services. You can sign up for online programming, use tools, learn about services in your region and share your personal story of recovery with others. You can get started today.

Mobile Crisis Response Team 1 (888) 737-4668 (St. John's Region)

Crisis Text Line Text 'Talk' to 686868

Confidentiality

All the information gathered will be treated confidentially. Data will be password-protected on a password-protected flash memory. None of the data will have any identifiable information except pseudonyms, so it will not be possible for anyone to identify the participants.

Anonymity

Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity. To ensure anonymity in the publication of any data collected in this research project, participants' names will not be used, nor will the published findings have any identifiable personal information.

Storage of Data

The digital data will be stored on a flash memory and will be password protected which will be accessible only by the researcher and her supervisor and committee members. 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

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Sharing of Results with Participants

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 this address is optional. You may contact the researcher by email (see the beginning of this form) at any time to obtain copies of articles that have been published.

The thesis will be publicly accessible via Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II library, at <http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/search/collection/theses>.

Questions

You are welcome to ask questions at any time, before, during, and after the participation.

If you have any questions, you can contact the researcher or her supervisor through the below email addresses:

Tayebeh Sohrabi: Tsohrabi@mun.ca

Dr. Kimberly Maich: kmaich@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 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

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 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 November 30th, 2023, 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

Signature _____ Date _____

Email (optional / if you wish to be contacted about publications of the study):

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 P

Recruitment Letter for Teacher Interview

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH: Social Skills Development in Newcomer Bilingual Kindergarten Students

Teachers of kindergarten students are invited to take part in a Ph.D. of Education student research project. For this project, kindergarten teachers are asked to take part in sessions to answer some questions in an interview and follow up interview questions, if needed. Research participation is voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw any time they wish.

Each interview is expected to take approximately one hour, and interviews will be audio recorded. Follow up interviews are not new interviews but will be used in this study to address any gaps in data, misunderstandings, missing information, or unclear information.

Interviews can be done online via a Zoom meeting or in person. Participation is not a requirement of the Faculty of Education or the participant's academic program.

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

Tayebeh Sohrabi

P.h.D of Education Candidate

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.