

**SUPPORTING ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS:
TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Dedication

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explores the beliefs and practices of New Zealand early childhood teachers in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs). The focus of the study is on the analysis of early childhood teachers' beliefs about how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and how these beliefs influence the teachers' practices in early childhood education (ECE) settings.

The theoretical framework of this research draws on a range of sociocultural perspectives, including (i) the sociocultural positions initially defined by Lev Vygostky (1978), (ii) the notion of guided participation articulated by Barbara Rogoff (2003), (iii) theories of second language acquisition discussed by Lantolf and Thorne (2000), and by Krashen (1982, 1985), and (iv) acculturation as addressed by Berry (2001).

The main participants of this study were seven early childhood teachers and six Asian immigrant ELLs from two ECE centres. Four Asian parents participated in interviews to ascertain the parents' perspectives about their children's learning of English and their maintenance of home language. Research methods for the teachers included observations and semi-structured pre- and post-observation interviews. For each centre, observations were carried out over a six week period which enabled a series of snapshots of how the teachers supported the ELLs as they acquired English.

The findings were analysed using thematic analysis, and presented three themes: English dominance, social cultural adaptation, and guided participation. These themes impacted the learning experiences of the Asian immigrant ELLs and other children attending the ECE as well as the teaching approaches of the early childhood teachers. The findings revealed that there were dissonances between the teachers' beliefs and their practices, as well as variation between individual teachers' beliefs and practices. Because of a significant increase in the number of ELLs in New Zealand ECE centres, it is important for early childhood teachers to understand the emphasis upon sociocultural theories in the ECE curriculum, so that they can effectively apply these theories to their practices. This study will provide a basis from which to consider how early childhood teachers in New Zealand can

draw upon sociocultural perspectives to better support ELLs as they acquire English, while valuing and supporting their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

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List of Abbreviations

ECE: Early childhood education

ELL: English language learners

L2: Second language

NESB: Non-English speaking backgrounds

SCT-L2: Sociocultural Theory on Second Language Learning

SLA: Second language acquisition

ZPD: Zone of proximal development

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

New Zealand is increasingly becoming more diverse in language and culture as a result of immigration. This, in turn, increases the diversity in children's enrolment in early childhood education (ECE) settings. The increase in enrolments of immigrant children seems to have posed great challenges to early childhood education services when it comes to supporting children's second language acquisition. Young children's second language acquisition is not simply a static outcome, but an ongoing dynamic process in which each child develops along a unique continuum towards achieving English proficiency. During this process, the early childhood teachers' support is crucial to ensure successful English acquisition. However, there is complexity in providing support to English Language Learners (ELLs) as teachers may have their own beliefs with regard to English acquisition for immigrant ELLs and the teachers' beliefs may or may not be predictors of their practices.

Within early childhood research considerable emphasis has been placed on examining teachers' beliefs and practices about second language acquisition (SLA) among ELLs. More recently, researchers in SLA have started investigating teachers' beliefs and practices from various perspectives according to diverse theoretical frameworks, such as sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic. In addition, the researchers have collected a variety of types of data, and have used a range of data analysis (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002, 2010; Harvey, 2011; Haworth, Cullen, Simmons, Schimanski, McGarva, & Woodhead, 2006; Podmore & Samu, 2006; Schofield, 2007, 2011). Most of these studies have used interviews, observations or questionnaires. My study fills a gap in the research by drawing on data from pre- and post-observation interviews to examine New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices regarding supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs. In addition, the Asian immigrant parents' perspectives are examined to provide more comprehensive views on ELLs' English acquisition. Sociocultural perspectives frame the research.

1.2 Asian children

The Asians included in the fieldwork for this doctoral study are from East and South East Asia. The Asian population in New Zealand is very diverse, with settlers from all areas within Asia and from other countries with large Asian diasporas, together with a growing locally born population. There are two well-established groups with a long history of settlement: people of Indian ethnicities (23% born in New Zealand) and people of Chinese ethnicities (22% born in New Zealand). While it is often convenient to refer to these groups as ‘Chinese ethnic group’ and ‘Indian ethnic group’, this is quite misleading because, in both cases, these labels subsume a very diverse group of ethnicities. These include people born in New Zealand, as well as people born in a number of Asian, European and Pacific countries (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

The change of immigration policy in the 1990s created an unprecedented influx of Asian immigrants and refugees into New Zealand (Guo, 2002). The Asian population is projected to increase in all territorial authority areas (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The projected increase is mainly driven by the assumed levels of net migration, with natural increase (births minus deaths) playing a secondary role overall. As a result, the Asian population makes up the fourth largest population category in New Zealand and it is projected that the Asian population in New Zealand, which has for the first time overtaken the Pasifika population, will rise from its current numbers of approximately 240,000 to 370,000 by 2016; an estimated 9% of the total New Zealand population in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Consequently, it is becoming the norm for Asian children to enrol in mainstream education settings from early childhood education to tertiary level in New Zealand (Hashimoto, 2009). As at 1 July 2010, Asian enrolments (13,181) accounted for 7.0% of the total enrolments (188,924) in licensed early childhood services, only second to European/Pākehā (63.1%) and Māori (20.4%). During the period 2006 to 2010, Asian enrolments increased by 39.0%, compared to 24.9% for Pasifika, 16.8% for Māori, and 8.0% for European/Pākehā (Education Counts, 2013).

Due the fact that numbers of Asian immigrant ELLs vary across education and care centres, most early childhood practitioners in New Zealand have had experiences working with Asian parents and children. Asians as perceived by many teachers are Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Philippino, Singaporean, and Malaysian (Guo, 2010). As

an Asian, myself, I have background knowledge as well as firsthand experience which allow me to have a better understanding of Asian cultures and people. The common cultural heritage leads to similar childrearing and educational philosophies (Guo, 2010) as well as English being a second language or foreign language to many Asian children.

Researchers use a number of terms when referring to Asian children who are acquiring English, including English language learners (ELLs), English learners (ELs), limited English proficient (LEP) students, non-native English speakers, language-minority learners, and either bilingual learners or emerging bilingual learners. Nonetheless, all the terms refer to the same group of learners — those with limited proficiency in English mainly due to English being a second, third or foreign language to these learners. For the sake of simplicity, the term ‘Asian immigrant ELLs’ is replaced with English language learners (ELLs) in the subsequent chapters. However, the Asian children’s background as immigrants in New Zealand is recognised to reflect their language and cultural diversity as they attend ECE centres.

In summary, I have described the background of the Asian children in the context of their origins and immigration into New Zealand. The terminology which refers to Asian children is also varied, however, I have chosen to use ELLs instead of Asian immigrant ELLs in the subsequent chapters for the sake of terminology simplification.

1.3 Research topic and aim

The objective of this study is to explore the beliefs and practices of New Zealand early childhood teachers in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs.

The central question of this study is:

What are New Zealand early child childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs?

The study, and especially the data gathering process, were guided by the following questions:

1. What do New Zealand early childhood teachers state as their beliefs about supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs?

2. Do New Zealand early childhood teachers vary in their beliefs about supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs? If so, how?
3. How do New Zealand early childhood teachers perceive that they support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs?
4. How can New Zealand early childhood teachers support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs by using sociocultural approaches?

The focus of the study is on analysing early childhood teachers' beliefs about how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and how these beliefs influence their practice in the early childhood education setting. In addition, the Asian immigrant ELLs parents' views were sought through interviews to get the parents' perspectives about the phenomenon. This study provides a basis from which to consider how early childhood teachers in New Zealand could support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs, while valuing and supporting children's language and cultural background.

1.4 Purpose of the research

This doctoral study is undertaken for two main reasons. The first reason is due to the scarcity of research that examines the area of English acquisition from sociocultural perspectives in New Zealand, and the second reason is on account as an Asian ELL parent who was concerned about my children's ability to adapt in English medium ECE centre and schools due to limited English competence and as an academic attached to ECE department and had been approached by Malaysian early childhood teachers and my students regarding concerns and issues in supporting English acquisition for ELLs.

1.4.1 Scarcity of research

The scarcity of research about New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant ELLs compared to research about Asian children in New Zealand has led to this study because there has been an increasing number of Asian children enrolled in ECE centres yet little is known about how early childhood

teachers' work with Asian children. Whilst there are empirical studies in bilingual education in the context of New Zealand early childhood education and development (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002, 2010; Harvey, 2011; Haworth et. al., 2006; Schofield, 2007, 2011), there are limited numbers of studies which explore early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to specifically supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs .

With regard to English acquisition studies among ELLs, several researchers have examined different aspects of this research area (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002; 2010; Hashimoto, 2009; Haworth et al., 2006; Schofield, 2011). Brierley (2003) undertook an action research project with ELLs at her own centre, where she investigated ways to increase opportunities for ELLs to have interactions with children and teachers. Using a sociocultural approach, Hashimoto (2009) examined how the environment and teaching influenced ELLs' learning. Guo's (2002) study provided an empirical basis on which to formulate an enquiry into whether ELL children have difficulties developing holistically in English-speaking childcare settings. Haworth et al. (2006) studied the provision of bilingual experiences at kindergarten, adding English without detracting from Samoan, and fostering positive intercultural relationships. Schofield (2011) investigated the English language learning experiences of 12 children who were sole speakers of home languages, other than English, and were attending three English medium ECE centres with different philosophies, programmes, and practices. These centres were a sessional kindergarten, and two education and care centres. The study findings suggest that differences in early childhood centres temporal environments influence the centres' interpersonal environments, and thus the English as a second language learners' English acquisition opportunities. Together, these studies (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002, 2010; Hashimoto, 2009; Haworth et al., 2006; Schofield, 2011) presented a variety of perceptions regarding migrant children's learning, including not only the gaining of a new language but also factors that help children to learn effectively.

An extensive search of literature found limited studies investigating teachers' beliefs and practices regarding English acquisition of Asian immigrant ELLs. However, in the context of New Zealand, three studies examining Asian ELLs' perspectives pertaining to English acquisition and learning experiences in the New Zealand ECE context selected Chinese young children and parents as participants (Guo, 2002, 2010; Zhang, 2012). Guo's (2002) case study explored the learning experiences within an English-speaking education

and care service of a four year-old Taiwanese boy, who had immigrated to New Zealand. The findings were that the Taiwanese boy could successfully complete his learning activity under two circumstances: firstly, there was little interaction required of him and the English-speaking children, and secondly, there was a teacher participating in his learning activity. Guo's (2002) findings highlighted the important role of teachers in ensuring successful learning experiences of ELLs. Another study by Guo (2010) investigated eight Chinese immigrant children's learning experiences, particularly regarding languages and interpersonal relationships in New Zealand early childhood centres. Guo's (2010) study found that Chinese immigrant children were active drivers of their own learning and capably negotiated and created relationships between their family culture and their ECE centres. Zhang's (2012) study compared the parental involvement of 120 Chinese immigrant parents and 127 English speaking non-Chinese parents in early childhood education (ECE), and investigated the role of parenting beliefs, parenting practices, and demographic variables in the level of parental involvement. Results showed that Chinese immigrant parents were less likely than non-Chinese parents to communicate with teachers, volunteer to help at the kindergarten, and participate in kindergarten decision making.

This present study aims to explore the teachers' beliefs and practices from sociocultural perspectives. It is very important to reflect current knowledge about how Asian immigrants ELLs acquire English in the early childhood education setting. It is worthwhile exploring teachers' beliefs and practices regarding supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs because of the increasing number of Asian immigrant children enrolled in ECE centres. If 92% of teachers in New Zealand ECE centres are of non-Asian ethnicity (Ministry of Education, 2008), then it is important to identify insights and reflect upon the beliefs and practices of teachers who work with Asian immigrant ELLs.

1.4.2 My background, perspectives, influences, positions

My background is as an Asian ELL's parent and as an ECE professional, attached to an ECE Department in my university as a lecturer who trained early childhood education pre-service teachers prior to my study leave in New Zealand. Upon arrival in New Zealand, I was concerned about my children's ability to adapt in English medium schools due to limited English proficiency. I was even more worried about my four year-old son, who had not been to any ECE centre before. As an Asian ELL, he initially faced challenging experiences, such

as difficulties of communication in an unfamiliar language and unfamiliar cultural knowledge and experience. Rogoff (2003) described how children who are raised to be members of their culture could face many difficulties when trying to function in another cultural system. Teachers in my son's ECE were all seen to adopt appropriate speaking strategies when talking to him. They spoke very slowly when talking to him and resorted to body language to make themselves understood. My son's self-esteem was seen to improve as a result of his interactions with his teachers. This brief scenario of my son's experience at an ECE centre triggered my interest in better understanding early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices as they support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs.

Prior to my doctoral study in New Zealand, I started my bachelor programme in Teaching English as a second language (TESL) and I was always intrigued to find out how a second language is acquired. My first job at a secondary school in Malaysia, upon graduation, was challenging as many of my students still struggled to use English as a second language despite learning English since kindergarten level. I wondered what could be the cause of this situation and I hypothesised that it was probably useful to tackle the problem of low proficiency in English by understanding it from the context of early childhood education. I then pursued a Master of Early Childhood qualification to understand more about children's development including language development and language acquisition. I found that early childhood education provides insights to improve the educational system from many perspectives such as parents' and teacher education programmes' perspectives.

When I became an early childhood lecturer at a university of education in 2008, one of the courses that I taught was 'Teaching English to young learners' where I covered the pedagogical practices such as teaching English through songs and stories. However, I did not consider how these children acquired English to enable them to interact with the teacher and their peers, or indeed to learn the concepts being taught. I had also been approached by Malaysian early childhood teachers and my students regarding concerns and issues in supporting English acquisition for ELLs. As I attempted to understand this issue through reading related academic journals, I became aware of the lack of empirical research in teaching and learning English as a second language in early childhood education. As I reflected on my teaching, I also contemplated on related social theories which support English acquisition for these children. The experience of being an educator to ECE pre-

service teachers was valuable as it opened my mind to different views of teaching and learning. These views describe how children's construction of their understandings and their development of knowledge cannot be separated from their social context, as well as the key role language plays in mental development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Being in early childhood educational settings during the teaching practices of my students, especially when they were using English with the children, also allowed me to witness the influence of teachers' beliefs in their practices. This was evident during my observations of their teaching slots and during post observation's self-reflection sessions. Beliefs play a significant role in directing human behaviour. In the SLA field, almost two decades of research has revealed how teachers' and students' beliefs have the potential to shape their cognitive and affective processes in teaching and learning and impact on their actions (Bernat, 2008).

Malaysian children are not a homogeneous group. They come from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds as do children in New Zealand. Sociocultural perspectives are very relevant to addressing this diversity with regard to supporting successful English acquisition among Malaysian young children in ECE settings. The sociocultural perspectives consider aspects of culture that can influence an individual's interactions with others of different backgrounds and offer understanding of the development of mental processes as they are shaped, or 'mediated' by their social and contextual influences (Vygotsky, 1978). Although ECE teachers in Malaysia are not native speakers of English, the understanding of New Zealand ECE beliefs and their pedagogical practices may help to improve Asian ELLs' English acquisition. Upon completion of this doctoral study, I hope to share with my students and colleagues, as well Malaysian ECE teachers, useful insights, particularly on applying sociocultural approaches in the ECE context. As Rogoff (2003) stated, "[to] understand human development, it is essential to understand the development of cultural institutions and practices in which people participate" (p. 327). The cultural institutions and practices I have described were part of my development and provided the basis of my interest in undertaking my doctoral study.

Both reasons, the scarcity of the related research in New Zealand and internationally, and my personal, educational and career background impact on my interest to investigate the teachers' beliefs and practices as they support English acquisition for Asian immigrant ELLs.

1.5 Context of the Study

As this study is situated in the New Zealand early childhood education sector, this section describes both the historical and current context of ECE in New Zealand, different types of early childhood centres in New Zealand and demographics of ELLs' participation in early childhood services in New Zealand.

1.5.1 The early childhood education context in New Zealand

New Zealand early childhood institutions were first established in the late nineteenth century (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). These were charitable kindergartens for the colonial urban poor and the occasional charitable crèche (May, 2002), and were seen as an enlightened response to those less fortunate (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). Government interest was limited to kindergartens, whose programmes fitted with the rationales for emerging state investment and/or intervention in the lives of children such as moral reform, child rescue and child health (May, 2002). Early childhood care and education underwent a dramatic transformation during the second half of the twentieth century. By the 1950s, those children not attending preschool came to be regarded as unfortunate; by the 1960s, deprived or disadvantaged; by the 1970s-80s, disenfranchised; and by the end of the century, 'at risk' and a potential problem to society (May 2002). Such perceptions reflect shifts in political, educational and social opinion regarding the best place for the rearing and education of young children and the changing role of the state in its support of ECE (May, 2002).

By the 1970s and 1980s, new social movements such as feminism and biculturalism began to gain ground in New Zealand (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). The government commissioned a report on early childhood education, under the direction of Anne Meade. This report, *Education To Be More* recommended a funding and administrative infrastructure, policies for quality assurance and quality curriculum for all early childhood services (May, 2002). However, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a shift in the ideology of

government that began to undermine the concern for women and children (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007).

Throughout the 1990s, early childhood education endured a number of setbacks, including an 11% cut in funding and decreasing quality requirements in terms of child and teacher ratios (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). While the period of retrenchment proved difficult for early childhood, it is notable for the development of the acclaimed early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, in 1996. In 1996, the Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, launched the final draft of *Te Whāriki*, the national early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). This was the first time a Prime Minister so explicitly stamped government approval on what children might do on a daily basis in early childhood centres (May, 2002). The development and wide acceptance of *Te Whāriki*, as a curriculum within the early childhood sector, was a surprising story of careful collaboration between a National government and the sector (May, 2002). Since 1999, with the election of a Labour-led coalition, education policy for early childhood was strengthened (May, 2002; Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007).

An Early Childhood Education Strategic Plan Working Group, that was set up in 2000 and again led by Anne Meade, identified a number of concerns about funding, quality and access and participation in early childhood education (May, 2002; Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). The implementation of the strategic plan resulted in a period of professionalisation in the sector, including a move towards the registration of all early childhood teachers, the development of sociocultural assessment exemplars ‘Kei Tua o te Pae’ (Ministry of Education, 2004), pay parity for kindergarten teachers, a requirement for all early childhood centres to have fully qualified teachers by 2012 and the funding by a wide range of professional development and innovative practice schemes (May, 2002). The plan also set out stronger links with family, community, social services, health services and schools, as part of a seamless educational paradigm in the wider context of New Zealand’s family-friendly social policy (Walker & Rodriguez de France, 2007). The strategic plan was in operation from 2002-2008 but was no longer being followed till Budget 2009 when funding was cut to many of the initiatives put in place by the plan.

While there have been a number of ECE reports in New Zealand which emphasised the influential impact of ECE (Carroll-Lind & Angus, 2011; Dalli, Rockel, Duhn, Craw & Doyle, 2011; ECE Taskforce, 2011; Mitchell, Wylie & Carr, 2008), there was one report which had a significant impact on my study. Mitchell, Tangaere, Mara, and Wylie (2006) evaluated initial use and impact of 'Equity Funding'. 'Equity Funding' is a targeted funding mechanism for all licensed early childhood (ECE) services. Equity Funding is paid to eligible services in addition to the ECE Funding Subsidy and 20 Hours ECE (Ministry of Education, 2015). The funding aimed to decrease educational discrepancy between different groups, reduce barriers to participation for groups underrepresented in ECE which include the Asian immigrant ELLs, and support ECE services to raise their level of educational achievement (Ministry of Education, 2015).

In this section, I have briefly presented the historical context of New Zealand ECE and the relevant policies that have impacted the Asian culture and other minority cultures living in New Zealand. In addressing the needs of children from diverse backgrounds, including the Asian immigrant ELLs, the government has taken the most identifiable initiatives through 'equity funding' for ECE services to support children to learn English as a second language, or to provide learning programmes in a language other than English. This support was planned to facilitate diversity, as well as to minimise inconsistencies in children's learning due to children's diverse background (Cullen, 2003; Mitchell, Tangaere, Mara & Wylie, 2006).

1.5.2 Current early childhood educational practices in New Zealand

Early childhood education (ECE) in New Zealand occurs through a diverse range of services, including education and care services (private or community-organised, full day or sessional), playcentres (sessional, parent collectives), kindergartens (sessional), Te Kohanga Reo (Māori immersion language nests), Pasifika Island Language groups, and home-based services (a small group of children in a caregiver's home) (Ministry of Education, 2009). All licensed and chartered ECE services in New Zealand are required to operate their programmes in line with *Te Whāriki*, the national ECE curriculum despite the distinctive contexts across the early childhood provision services (Ministry of Education, 1996).

As noted, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) was released in the 1990s. Its development was a contextual response to the educational, social, cultural, and political conditions in New Zealand (Nuttall, 2003). It was also a period in which early childhood education started to witness the emergence internationally of a teaching perspective that embraced sociocultural aspects and contextual issues (Carr & May, 1999; Penn, 2000). Consistent with the developmental and sociocultural perspectives, *Te Whāriki* supports the idea that children's learning experiences should be built on their major interests (Carr & May, 1999) and shared by teachers, parents and children in a collaborative participation process (Hedges, 2003).

Within early childhood education, according to statistics, 83% of children enrolled in licensed early childhood services are European/ Pākehā and Māori, the rest are children of 'Asian, Pasifika and other' ethnicities (Education Counts, 2013). In acknowledging the multicultural heritage and the identities and cultural beliefs of diverse immigrants in New Zealand, *Te Whāriki* states that:

The early childhood curriculum supports the cultural identity of all children, affirms and celebrates cultural differences, and aims to help children gain a positive awareness of their own and other cultures. Each early childhood education service should ensure that their programmes and resources are sensitive and responsive to the different culture and heritages among the families of the children attending that service. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p.18)

This statement reflects the socio-cultural nature of the curriculum and upholds educational practices which acknowledge cultural diversity for children from diverse language and cultural background.

Nevertheless, *Te Whāriki* is not without critics. One of the few critics of *Te Whāriki* was Cullen (1996). Cullen (1996) was concerned that "*Te Whāriki* contains high ideals but there is currently an enormous gap between practice and the achievement of those ideals. In turn, bridging this gap poses considerable challenges to policy makers and early childhood educators alike" (p. 123). One of the areas of unease for Cullen (1996) was the lack of understanding early childhood teachers had of the two paradigms that underpinned *Te*

Whāriki: developmental and socio-cultural. She felt educators and professional developers were not conversant with the theoretical basis of *Te Whāriki* which was set out in the draft, but dropped, in the final version. Cullen (2003) emphasised that diversity is an essential theme in *Te Whāriki*, which is described metaphorically as a woven mat. This curriculum embraces diversity in terms of languages, cultures, and socio-economic conditions of all children in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996).

Despite the effort from the government to provide quality services in early childhood education, there are inevitably discrepancies between practice and policy (Duncan, 2004; Nuttall, 2003). These occur due to the fact that ECE services are encouraged to implement programmes according to their particular sociocultural contexts and interests as illustrated in the following statement of *Te Whāriki*: “Each service will develop its own programme to meet the needs of its children, their families, the specific setting, and the local community” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 27). Teachers negotiate teaching practices in line with what they think appropriate (Nuttall, 2003) based on their different understandings of knowledge, their experiences, professional training, and their perceptions of children.

1.5.3 Different types of early childhood education centres in New Zealand

There are different types of ECE services to suit linguistically and culturally diverse family needs and educational preferences in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2009). Each type has its own way of working with children and their parents (Ministry of Education, 2009). The first type of early childhood service is led by registered teachers. Teacher led services include education and care services, government run and privately owned kindergartens, community crèches, private day centres, New Zealand (Free) kindergartens, The Correspondence School and family-based or home based services (Ministry of Education, 2009). Education and care services provide both sessional and all-day programmes for infants and toddlers and some three, four and five year-olds. These services are privately-owned or not-for-profit community-based services (Ministry of Education, 2014). Some are operated as an adjunct to the main purpose of a business or organisation such as an ECE centre at a university. New Zealand (Free) Kindergarten offers sessional and all-day early childhood education for children from two until school age. The Correspondence School provides a distance programme for early childhood education for young children who are unable to attend a service due to isolation, illness, special learning needs or other special circumstances

(Ministry of Education, 2014). Both the New Zealand (Free) Kindergarten and The Correspondence School employ only qualified and registered teachers. Finally, the family-based or home-based services are comprised of a group of home-based educators operating under the supervision of a qualified and registered early childhood coordinator who places children with educators in approved homes for an agreed number of hours per week (Ministry of Education, 2014). Some early childhood services may be based around certain philosophies or methods of education, such as Montessori or Rudolph Steiner centres (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The second group of early childhood services are administered by parents, whānau or caregivers who may have some degree of training or qualifications in ECE. These services include home based organisations. Parents may also be involved in parent run play centres, play groups, Pasifika Language nests and Te Kohanga Reo (Ministry of Education, 2009; Schofield, 2011).

There is some provision for children to maintain home languages or acquire cultural languages through services such as Te Kohanga Reo, Puna Reo, Māori Immersion programmes; Pasifika Island language nests; and first language, (for example, Chinese or Korean) preschools (Ministry of Education, 2014). Special education services are also offered to children who need them. All ECE services are regulated by the Ministry of Education which means that the services must meet a minimum standard of education and care in order to operate and receive funding from the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Although all centres in New Zealand are expected to base their programmes on the curriculum statement *Te Whāriki*, their environments vary considerably (Schofield, 2011). The unique nature of a centre's environment is dependent on the theories that underpin the centre's philosophy. In turn, a centre's philosophy has a direct effect on the children's experiences in terms of how it influences teaching practices. For example, a centre that is influenced by social interactionist theories such as those of Vygotsky (1978, 1986) may provide extended play sessions or shared play opportunities.

1.5.4 Early childhood teachers' qualification

There are nineteen tertiary providers which are fully accredited to offer the nationally recognised ECE qualifications in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2014). Each of the qualifications offered by these providers leads to teacher registration (Ministry of Education, 2014). Qualifications are regularly reviewed and re-approved by the New Zealand Teachers Council (Ministry of Education, 2014). The benchmark qualification for New Zealand qualified early childhood teachers is a Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) or Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education), or Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) or an equivalent Level 7 qualification approved by the New Zealand Teachers Council for registration (Ministry of Education, 2014). Since November 2010, New Zealand qualified and registered primary teachers in teacher-led services have been counted as registered teachers for funding purposes (Ministry of Education, 2014).

Besides choosing to study at the tertiary providers, which have been recognised by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, there are other programmes of study available for working with young children that are at lower levels on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF) (Ministry of Education, 2014). These lower-level qualifications, however, will not lead to teacher registration. All teacher education qualifications in New Zealand must go through a quality approval process and be approved by the New Zealand Teachers Council to ensure that graduates are eligible to apply for registration (Ministry of Education, 2014).

1.5.5 Demographics of children with non-English speaking backgrounds

May (2002) argued that New Zealand has not had to seriously address issues regarding children of non-English speaking backgrounds due to its postcolonial history. Specifically, the history of immigration to New Zealand from the nineteenth century until the twentieth century has been dominated by migration from Britain. A smaller numbers of immigrants was from other nations where English is a national language such as Australia, the United States of America, and Canada (May, 2002). The first significant changes in New Zealand migration were in the 1960s when Pasifika people began migrating in significant numbers. Then, in the 1970s, there was a relative increase in refugee settlement in New Zealand from South East Asia, particularly from Cambodia and Vietnam, as well as from Somalia in Africa. Despite

the increasing migration from non-English speaking countries, it was only over the last decade that New Zealand's demographic profile has become markedly more diverse, along with languages spoken within it (May, 2002; Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

The marked changes in immigration patterns, together with the now long settled Pasifika population, many of whom are second or even third generation migrants, and the influx of Asian immigrants since the 1990s suggest that New Zealand would be a very diverse country (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The most recent census highlighted that ethnic diversity is increasing in New Zealand. According to the latest 2013 Census results, New Zealand's five largest ethnic groups are New Zealand European, Māori, Chinese, Samoan, and Indian. Some of the biggest increases since the 2006 Census came from groups within the broader Asian category, spearheaded by the Chinese, Indian, and Filipino ethnic groups. During the seven-year period between censuses, increases in these groups were Chinese (up 16% to 171,000 people), Indian (up 48% to 155,000), and Filipino (more than doubled to 40,000) (Statistics New Zealand, 2013).

New Zealand's changing ethnic composition and the impact of migration within the five years between 2001 and 2006 is reflected in the increasing diversity of languages spoken. A consequence of shifts in immigration policy has been an increase in the numbers of General Skills or Business category immigrants from regions where English is not the main language. Therefore, there has been an increasing numbers of people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) who have gained entry to New Zealand through other residence categories such as family reunification, refugee and humanitarian (White, Watts & Trlin, 2002). Between 2001 and 2006, the numbers of people in New Zealand who were able to speak Hindi almost doubled, from 22,749 to 44,589. The number of people able to speak Mandarin increased from 26,514 to 41,391, the number of people able to speak Korean increased from 15,873 to 26,967, and the number of people able to speak Afrikaans increased from 12,783 to 21,123 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013).

1.5.6 Demographics of children attending ECE with ELLs

As mentioned in the previous section, between 2001 and 2006, the increase of ethnicities whose English is not their first language has almost doubled. According to the recent census on the enrolment of ELLs in ECE centres between 2010 and 2013, the number of Māori

children increased from 12,603 to 14,368 (or 14%) while Pasifika enrolments rose from 6,034 to 6,916 (or 15%). Growth in Asian enrolments also continues to be high, up by 1,900 (or 20%). By comparison European/Pākehā enrolments during the period 2010 to 2013 rose by 9% (Education Counts, 2013). As at June 2013, Asian enrolments accounted for 11% of the total enrolments (58,574) in licensed early childhood services, in fourth place after European/Pākehā (65%), Māori (25%), and Pasifika (12%) (Education Counts, 2013). However, the languages spoken by children enrolled in ECE centres are not part of the data collected by the Ministry of Education (Dalli, White, Rockel, Duhn, Buchanan, Davidson, Ganly, Kus, & Wang, 2011; Genesse, 2008; Harvey, 2011). Therefore, the number of developing bilinguals immersed in English medium services at this vulnerable phase of language acquisition and development is not known (Dalli, White, Rockel, Duhn, Buchanan, Davidson, Ganly, Kus, & Wang, 2011; Genesse, 2008; Harvey, 2011).

The demographics of children attending ECE with ELLs suggest that ELLs have opportunities to interact with English speaking children in ECE centres and to use English in a meaningful context. During these interactions, those peers who are more knowledgeable in English support ELLs, could extend their skills and knowledge. Social interaction can be a mediating role in the development of learners' cognition, including second language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978).

1.5.7 English as a second language learning in New Zealand

New Zealand is an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-lingual society, and this is reflected in the demographics of the population. A recent OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) report highlighted that the percentage of students with an immigrant background in New Zealand has risen by 5% or more between 2000 and 2009 (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Ministry of Education reported in New Zealand primary and secondary classrooms there are 161 ethnic groups from 158 countries who speak 116 languages, (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Ministry estimated that students who have an immigrant background have increased from 20% to 25% of the student population (Ministry of Education, 2012). These students numbered 175,909 in 2012 (Education Counts, 2013) and it is likely that a majority of these are also ELLs (Ministry of Education, 2014).

As the Ministry of Education acknowledges the increasing number of students who are learning English as a second language, there are other special funding entitlements available to schools to address the particular needs of students of migrant and refugee backgrounds (Ministry of Education, 2012). While it is not compulsory for all schools, the New Zealand education system supports ELLs as they acquire English by funding the practice of providing separate classes for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. The ELLs are assessed for their English proficiency by the Ministry's system of determining which ELLs are eligible for funding. If the ELLs exceed a benchmark of 112 points according to the Ministry's ESOL Funding Assessment form, they are not eligible for funding. However, in 2012 only 32,487 out of 175,909 students were deemed to have a level of English entitling their schools to receive ESOL funding assistance (Ministry of Education, 2014). A large numbers of these students, totalling 25,789, were identified as primary school students (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Ministry acknowledges that the number of ELLs in New Zealand schools is much higher than the ESOL funded students who may be considered as ELLs (Ministry of Education, 2012).

However, this type of support is not available for ELLs in English medium early childhood centres in New Zealand because the nature of learning at ECE is different from primary schools. There is no formal classroom teaching like primary school although there are teacher-led activities. The majority of early childhood centres in New Zealand are monolingual English, where English is used as the medium of interaction and the teachers are mostly monolingual English speakers. Tabor (2008) pointed out that early childhood teachers should be aware of the stages of second language acquisition that young children pass through in order to become competent in English. Knowing a learner's stage of second language learning is useful because it allows teachers to implement accommodations that are appropriate for that stage in learning (Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin, 2011).

1.6 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study draws on a range of perspectives, including sociocultural theories initially framed by Lev Vygotsky (1978), the notion of guided participation and transformation as highlighted by Rogoff (2003), the model of acculturation as developed by Berry (2001), and second language acquisition theories in relation to sociocultural perspectives (Lantolf, 2000a, 2000b, 2001; Lantolf, & Thorne, 2006a, 2007).

1.6.1 Sociocultural theories

Lev Vygotsky, the founder of sociocultural perspectives, highlights the importance of one's social interaction with others in human development. Vygotsky claimed that a person develops on two levels; firstly on the social level where he/she learns from others, and secondly, on the individual level where he/she digests, and further interprets the material gained from social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). The emphasis of this theory is on how the child develops the skills and knowledge relative to her or his community, rather than on the basis of a universal description of development (Nuttall, 2003). Development is understood as an outcome of children's and adult's social interactions within a given cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978).

Drawing on the idea that children are born into social and cultural worlds defined by the histories of these worlds, sociocultural theory understands development as processes interwoven with a child's participation within her or his community (Vygotsky, 1978). Increasingly, programmes serve children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, requiring that all programmes demonstrate understanding of and responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002; Fleeer, 2002; Nuttall, 2003). Because culture and language are critical components of children's development, practices should be responsive to cultural and linguistic diversity. One of Vygotsky's main claims was that human development cannot be understood by a study of the individual in isolation. Therefore, learning is embedded within social events and occurs as individuals interact with people, objects, and events in the environment.

Vygotsky (1978) described children's potential for cognitive development within the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky explained this key concept in his theory of education as follows:

We propose that an essential feature of learning is that it creates the zone of proximal development; that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when a child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90)

The key principle of this approach is that all development begins with social interaction, and that development consists of the internalisation of social processes. ZPD is often discussed as involving an ‘expert’, usually an adult or a teacher, interacting with a novice to learn some content (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a). Vygotsky (1978) argued that a child can achieve a higher level of functioning in collaboration with others than they might do alone. This present study also focuses on ZPD created by early childhood teachers and English speaking peers as ELLs are learning to develop their English language skills, since more experienced partners are important for the child’s ZPD.

1.6.2 Learning as guided transformation and participation

Barbara Rogoff is another prominent figure in sociocultural schools of thoughts. Although she believed that Vygotsky’s ZPD idea is important, she argued that his idea seems to focus on the kind of interaction involved in schooling and academic discourse (Rogoff, 2003). In 1990, Rogoff proposed the concept of guided participation in cultural activities. Rogoff (2003) used the term ‘guided participation’ to include both the notion of guidance (or scaffolding) and participation in culturally approved activities. The key aspects of how people develop are communication and coordination during participation in shared endeavours (Isik-Ercan & Golbeck, 2010; Rogoff, 2003). People adapt among themselves with different, corresponding, or even conflicting roles to stretch their common understanding to fit new perspectives (Isik-Ercan & Golbeck, 2010; Rogoff, 2003). For example, when a young ELL says “my jacket” and the teacher says “do you want your jacket?” When the ELL says “outside” the teacher fills in “Oh! Do you want to wear your jacket because you want to play outside?” In the example given, mutuality in language is apparent as the ELL establishes interactions in English with the teacher through successive turns that layer a one phrase comment.

In relation to this present study, the idea of learning as guided transformation and participation indicates the importance of processes in which Asian immigrant ELLs become members of another cultural community. They do so through the involvement of their family knowledge and experiences within the events of the new cultural community as well as support received from early childhood teachers. It is important to recognise that ELLs’

learning and development are dynamic and transformative, being influenced by their social partners and learning contexts (Guo, 2010).

1.6.3 Second language acquisition (SLA)

Language acquisition is the terminology used to describe the less formal, ‘natural’ way of learning a second language through exposure to it (Baker, 2011). The very word acquisition implies that language is ‘picked up’ rather than directly taught (Jalongo & Li, 2010). The second language acquisition for most young learners is parallel to the pattern they follow when learning their first language because they are more likely to use the new language in play than learning it as a subject (Baker, 2011). The linguistic items they start with when learning two languages move from single words to phrases such as, ‘yes’, ‘ok’ to routine language and through to more complex language (Baker, 2011; Tabors, 2008).

The development of a second language after the establishment of a first language is referred to as sequential acquisition of bilingualism (Baker, 2011). In this process, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors have been identified as explanations for the outcomes of learners’ experience. According to Mickan (2006), “psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic studies in second language have made us aware of the centrality of learners’ communicative experiences for learning additional languages” (p. 342). Psycholinguistic studies take into account individual differences such as personality, previous language learning experience, language preferences, and cognitive and social strategies, or attitudes towards learning a new language. Sociolinguistic studies consider the social environment in which language acquisition takes place. Sociolinguistic researchers believe that social interaction constitutes an environment for language learning (Thorne, 2000). There is, therefore, an alignment between the sociolinguistic views of language acquisition and sociocultural perspectives because they both consider social interaction to be the basis for language acquisition.

1.5.3.1 Sociocultural approaches to second language acquisition (SLA)

Research indicates that sequential second language learners approach learning situations with certain social skills, understanding conversational rules, ways of influencing communicators and of social conditions that underpin communication (Thorne, 2000). It is interesting to note

a shift in SLA research from a social learning/behavioural perspective to a more sociocultural perspective. Thorne (2000) claims that “the entailments of a sociocultural theory approach foreground sociality to individuality, language as socially constructed rather than internally intrinsic” (Thorne, 2000, p. 225).

Researchers have started investigating not only learners’ inner factors and language input but also the role of teachers, peers and cultural tools in supporting the language learning process (Haworth et al., 2006). Lantolf and Thorne (2006a, 2009) and Thorne (2006) argued that sociocultural theory is participating in newer genres of SLA research due to the importance of human agency and societal context in SLA research. Representing a variety of perspectives, one productive new focus looks specifically at the relations between language acquisition, language learning, and social identity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006b).

In this section, I have introduced three central relevant theories to my study; sociocultural theories, learning as a guided transformation and participation, and second language acquisition (SLA) theories. Within the sociocultural theoretical framework, my study focuses on the ELLs’ English acquisition; hence the sociocultural approaches in the SLA. These theories provide the theoretical framework for my study. A more comprehensive discussion of my study’s theoretical framework is presented in Chapter Two.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises nine chapters:

Chapter One provides the rationale, aim and context for the study.

Chapter Two discusses the underpinning theoretical concepts of my research derived primarily from sociocultural theories. These concepts act as theoretical and conceptual supports to help understand the issues and dynamics raised in this research.

Chapter Three reviews the literature of second language acquisition (SLA) based on the key concepts in sociocultural theories which are relevant to the focus of my study.

Chapter Four describes the research methodologies and provides an overview of the study design and procedures.

Chapter Five discusses the first study findings and results in relation to the theoretical and empirical research literature.

Chapter Six discusses the second study findings and results in relation to the theoretical and empirical research literature.

Chapter Seven discusses the third study findings and results in relation to the theoretical and empirical research literature.

Chapter Eight draws together the first, second, and third study findings and results in relation to the theoretical and empirical research literature.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by summarizing the findings, discussing the limitations of this study, and suggesting recommendations for future studies as well as identifying how the study has contributed to the field of second language acquisition in early childhood education from sociocultural perspectives.

1.8 Summary

This chapter presented an introduction and the aims of this study, provided purposes for undertaking this study, and discussed contexts of the study. The choice of theoretical frameworks was briefly explained; a detailed discussion on the theoretical frameworks is discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the underpinning theoretical concepts of this study derived from sociocultural theories (SCT). Some core concepts of SCT that are relevant to the field of second language acquisition are discussed in the context of learning and development in early childhood education. Central to this theoretical choice is the view that understanding how to support Asian immigrant English language learners can be achieved by investigating early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in their social and cultural contexts.

Sociocultural theories (SCT), developed by Lev Vygotsky in the 1920s and 1930s, describe human cognition as developed by an individual through engagement in social and cultural activities with other people, objects, and events (Vygotsky, 1978; Wang, Bruce, & Hughes, 2011). In the context of my investigation, ELLs' language acquisition arises from the process of meaning-making in collaborative activity with other members of a given culture (Vygotsky, 1978). Lantolf (2001) argued that sociocultural theories are not theories of the social and cultural aspects; rather they are theories of mind that acknowledge the important role of social relationships and culturally constructed artifacts that organise human forms of thinking in a unique way. While most theories of mind recognise the presence of social milieu in which cognition grows, Vygotsky argued for the uniqueness of the social milieu (Lantolf, 2001). Vygotsky (1978) conceives of sociocultural settings as the primary and determining factor in the development of higher forms of human mental activity.

Sociocultural theories have been extended to a wide number of domains including second language acquisition. Second language acquisition (SLA) is concerned with how individuals acquire a language other than their native language. Saville-Troike (2012) defined second language acquisition as the study of individuals or groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children. SLA has emerged as a field of study primarily from within linguistics and psychology, which emphasises the mental and cognitive processes involved in language acquisition apart from other fields such as linguistics and sociolinguistics (Saville-Troike, 2012). Sociocultural theories in second language acquisition research offer a framework through which human cognition can be systematically investigated without isolating it from social context (Lantolf, 2011; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

Throughout the past few decades, psychologists and psycholinguists have discussed SLA from different perspectives. One of these perspectives is behaviourism which suggests that language learning occurs through a series of stimuli and responses and that all learning is the establishment of habit as a result of reinforcement (Aimin, 2013; Skinner, 1948). Skinner (1948), a leading behaviourist, claimed that language is a verbal behaviour. Language learners can be made to produce and comprehend language if they are being reinforced to do so. The behaviorists believe that second language learners imitate what they hear and develop habits in the second language by routine practice (Saville-Troike, 2012). As a behaviourist perspective focuses on observable behaviour, this theory neglects mental processes involved when a child acquires a language (Aimin, 2013; Chomsky, 1959; Virues-Ortega, 2006). In addition, there has been a critic that imitation does not help the learner in real-life situations (Chomsky, 1959; Saville-Troike, 2012).

An alternative perspective to behaviourism, led by Noam Chomsky (1959), focuses on cognitivism and critiques Skinner's theory of verbal behaviour. As a cognitivist, Chomsky (1959) proposed that human beings are born with a genetic capability that predisposes them to the systematic perception of language around them, resulting in the construction of an internalised system of language. Within Chomsky's theory, Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is a mechanism which simply needs to be triggered by the linguistic environment in order to start operating. Chomsky (1959) claimed that language acquisition is a complete mental process. In the cognitive view, second language learners are thought to creatively use their skills of cognition in order to figure out the second language on their own. For example, the learners notice a pattern and construct their own rules accordingly, then go back and change the rules if they are faulty. In this approach to SLA, the learners benefit from their mistakes because they are playing an active role in the FLL process and learning first-hand how the language works. However, cognition is not the only factor that learners use to make assumptions about a language (Ellis, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2012). It has been viewed that some errors learners make are based on rules of the first language; they are influenced by these rules as opposed to coming to conclusions based on their cognitive abilities. Another problem is that it is not always possible to deduce what the FL learner meant to say, and therefore the error cannot be clearly determined. However, cognitive perspectives focusing on learning as an individual mental event ignore social processes (Ellis, 2008; Aimin, 2013).

Another perspective of language acquisition which depicts the interrelated cognitive and social characteristics is based on Vygotskian sociocultural theories. Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in SLA research that is informed by sociocultural theories (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a; Swain & Deters, 2007). In 1985, Frawley and Lantoff (as cited Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a) started exploring the potential relevance of sociocultural theories for second language acquisition in the mid-1980s. The authors were initially interested in investigating how second language speakers used their new language as a mediation while doing difficult tasks (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006b) and how second language learners developed the ability to use their new language as a mediation their mental and communicative ability (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Since then, a great deal of research that is directly or indirectly informed by sociocultural theories has been carried out in the second language acquisition discipline (Lantolf, 2006a, 2006b, 2007).

Sociocultural theories differ fundamentally from other perspectives in second language acquisition because of their understanding that social environment is not the context for, but rather the source of, mental development (Swain & Deters, 2007). Whereas other perspectives focus on an individual and what the individual is doing, SCT takes into account the complex interaction between the individual acting with mediational means and the sociocultural context (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). In other words, sociocultural theories emphasise what tools the person is acting with, where the action takes place, and why the person is acting (Swain & Deters, 2007).

2.2 The context of children's learning and development

Sociocultural theories describe learning and development as being embedded within social events and occurring as a learner interacts with other people, objects, and events in the collaborative environment (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning and development are two different processes that are related to each other in a complex manner (Bodrova & Leong, 2002). Vygotsky (1978) argued that “learning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in mental development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning (p. 9)”. Vygotsky addressed one of the most fundamental concerns, the relationship between learning and teaching within a learner's cognitive development. From Vygotsky's perspective, cognitive, social, and affective development take place through teaching and learning processes.

Vygotsky (1978) argued that social contexts influence the way a person thinks. Sociocultural theories illuminate the point that learning and environment cannot be separated from their social context as the context influences how and what children think (Vygotsky, 1978). The child's attempts to learn and society's attempt to teach through parents, teachers and peers all contribute to the way a child mind's work (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Bodrova and Leong (2007) illustrated this by suggesting that the meanings of concepts change as they are linked with their social contexts. For example, 'kindergarten' is not simply a physical structure but also a place where children learn while they play with their friends and interact with their teachers. Thus, social context moulds the learning process and is part of the developmental process.

Within sociocultural theories, Vygotsky (1967, 1978) identified play as the leading activity, with particularly fundamental implications for understanding learning and development in early childhood education. Vygotsky (1967) argued that during the early childhood period, "the child moves forward essentially through play activity" (p. 16). Play is regarded as "the leading source of development" (p. 6) in early childhood education. According to Vygotsky, play leads to learning and development in two main ways. First, play with a substitute object constitutes a significant step in the development of semiotic mediation, although play is not itself a fully-developed symbolic activity. Second, sociodramatic play involves the active appropriation of sociocultural rules of activity, having a profound influence on cognitive and personality development (Duncan & Taruli, 2003).

Vygotsky (1967) claimed that play becomes the leading form of activity around the age of three years, when the child begins to experience new kinds of desire that cannot be addressed directly. Before this age, "immediately unrealisable desires" of this kind are of limited importance and "the child tends to gratify his desires immediately" (Vygotsky, 1967, p. 7). The child's inability to perform real adult activities and carry out adult roles, as he or she wishes, results in a dialectical tension which is resolved through play activity (Vygotsky, 1967, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), play seems to be invented "at the point when the child begins to experience unrealisable tendencies" (p. 93) leading to the creation of "an imaginary, illusory world in which the unrealisable desires cannot be realised" (p. 93). In

Vygotsky's view, development of new desires of this kind is the driving force behind the emergence of play for children (Duncan & Taruli, 2003).

2.2.1 Meaning and object: Decontextualisation

Vygotsky (1967, 1978) claimed that play with objects in imaginary situations constituted a significant step in the development of symbolism, although this particular play is not itself true symbolic activity because it does not involve full decontextualisation of meaning. In playing with a substitute object, the child separates meaning from its actual object and establishes it in the substitute object, which functions as a concrete mediator (Duncan & Taruli, 2003). In play involving an imaginary situation, "the child begins to act independently of what he sees" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 97), and "operates its meaning detached from their usual objects or actions" (p. 98). The child performs specific representational actions with the substitute play object that are consistent with its meaning in the play context, despite the fact that the object is not the real thing (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, when the child uses a stick to represent a sword or a gun, he/she pretends to be a warrior or a policeman.

As a result of this significance of meaning, objects "lose their determining force" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 96) in the context of play activity. The "child learns to act in cognitive, rather than externally visible realm, relying on internal tendencies and motives, and not on incentives supplied by external things" (Vygotsky, 1967, p. 11). In this way, the child's motivational and cognitive processes slowly progress in the direction of decontextualisation (Duncan & Taruli, 2003). Finally, the child's thinking "is separated from objects and action arises from ideas rather than from things" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 97). Through play with substitute objects children, to some extent, free themselves from situational constraints of the real physical context, enabling the indirect satisfaction of unrealisable desires through pretense (Duncan & Taruli, 2003).

Play is an important step in the development of semiotic mediation and abstraction of meaning (Vygotsky, 1978). However, decontextualisation of meaning becomes a challenging problem for children around the age of three years (Vygotsky, 1967). Meaning is only partially decontextualised in children's play, and objects cannot freely substitute for one another in an interchangeable way. It is this "lack of free substitution" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 98) which shapes the basis for Vygotsky's position that the use of a substitute object is not

true symbolism. Although meaning is partially decontextualised in play and thus the children's use of substitute objects does not constitute true symbolism, play has an enormous role in the appropriative development of semiotic mediation.

2.2.2 Roles and rules: Appropriation of sociocultural practice

Vygotsky's analysis of play and its developmental changes emphasises the importance of rules in the imaginary situation (Duncan & Taruli, 2003). Early sociodramatic play is a foundation for the development of games with rules. These rules become explicit and the children must follow the rules in order for the play to be satisfying. Thus, the child playing the role of a teacher must follow the rules of teaching behaviour.

Vygotsky (1978) discussed the example of two sisters who were asked to play sisters. In so doing, the pair acted in ways that emphasise the rules governing relationships between sisters. Vygotsky (1978) argued that "as a result of playing, the child comes to understand that sisters possess a different relationship to each other than to other people" (p. 95). Performing the role in the context of play activity "induces them to both acquire rules of behaviour" (p. 95) in order to display the specific characteristics of the role. In this way, "what passes unnoticed by the child in real life becomes a rule of behaviour in play" (p. 95). Subordinating his or her behaviour to specific role-related rules increases the child's explicit, conscious awareness of these rules (Duncan & Taruli, 2003).

Vygotsky (1978) claimed that a child first becomes able to subordinate her behaviour to rules in group play and only later does voluntary self-regulation of behaviour arise as an internal function. Vygotsky (1978) argued there are rules in play but the rules are not formulated in advance and change during the course of a game. According to Vygotsky (1978) "every game with rules contains an imaginary situation in a concealed form" (p. 95), in a subordinate, implicit form.

It is interesting to note paradoxes of play highlighted by sociocultural theories. Vygotsky (1978) noted that a child adopts the line of least resistance because she does what she feels like doing because play is connected with pleasure. At the same time, she learns to follow the line of greatest resistance by subordinating herself to rules and thereby renouncing what she wants. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that subjection to rules and renunciation of

spontaneous action lead to maximum pleasure of play. However, play continually creates demands on the child to act against immediate impulse (Vygotsky, 1978). The child is always faced with a conflict between the rules of the game and what she would do if she could act spontaneously (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) emphasised that the child's greatest self-control occurs in play. Hence, the essential characteristic of play is a rule that has become a desire (Vygotsky, 1978).

2.3 Tools and symbols as mediation

Historically Vygotsky (1978) argued that while humans sought to adapt to their external world through assimilating the laws of nature, humans also attempted to control and master their nature. The need for control led to the creation of tools (Vygotsky, 1978), technical as well as mechanical (McDonald, Le, Higgins & Podmore, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) explained:

The tool's function is to serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity; it is externally oriented; it must lead to changes in objects. It is a means by which human external activity is aimed at mastering and triumphing over, nature.
(p. 55)

Vygotsky (1978) extended the notion of instrumental mediation by drawing an analogy between the role of mechanical tools and psychological tools. Psychological tools are artifacts, including mnemonic techniques, algebraic symbols, diagrams and of course language (McDonald et al., 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's fundamental claim is that just as individuals use technical tools for manipulating the environment, they use psychological tools for directing and controlling their physical behaviour (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) claimed that transformation of thinking processes into higher order ones is possible through the mediating function of culturally constructed artifacts including tools, symbols and more elaborate sign systems such as language. Opinions differ on the precise relation between material and mental tools (McDonald et al., 2009) but Vygotsky (1978) connected material and mental tools through their mediating function. In other words they both fall into the same psychological category. All manner of things have been considered as tools if their function or their consequence is mediation (McDonald et al., 2009). Swain, Kinnear and Steinman (2010) noted that sociocultural theories emphasise how humans think through the creation and use of mediating tools.

Mediation is a central concept of sociocultural theories' approach to second language acquisition (Lantolf, 2000). A fundamental principle in sociocultural theories is that human psychological processes are mediated by psychological and material tools such as the symbolic system of language (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Lantolf, 2006; Swain & Deters, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Language is the most persistent and powerful symbolic tool that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other and to themselves (Aimin, 2013). Wertsch (2007) noted that language serves as a symbolic tool to facilitate social activities, and children's appropriation of language is in and through these activities. However, children's early appropriation of language is implicit since the main function of interaction is not usually language learning but also learning other aspects, including how to participate appropriately in social activities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

2.3.1 Mediation is regulation

Mediation is a form of regulation (Gass, 2013; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Lantolf, 2000a, 2000b). Regulation can be defined as the controlling of an activity or process, usually by means of rules. Gass and Mackey (2000) claimed that as children learn language, they regulate their activities linguistically. In sociocultural theories, regulation is one form of mediation referring to children's capacity to regulate their own activity through language (Vygotsky, 1978). When children acquire language, words not only function to separate specific objects and actions, they also serve to reshape biological perception into cultural perception and concepts (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

Thinking and actions at early stages for children are at first subordinate to the words of adults (Luria & Yudovich, 1972 cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). By subordinating their behaviour to adult speech, children acquire the particular language used by the other members and eventually utilise this language to regulate their own behaviour (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Subordination of the child's action and thinking to adult speech raises the child's mental and physical activity to a new and higher stage of development (Vygostky, 1978). This enables children to acquire the particular language used by other members of a community and finally utilise this language to regulate their behaviour (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). In other words, children develop the capacity to regulate their activity through linguistic means because this

activity is initially subordinated or regulated by others. This process of developing self-regulation moves through three general stages (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

The first stage is known as ‘object-regulation’ where children are often controlled by, or use objects in their environment in order to think (Gass, 2013; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). For example, when a mother asks her child to fetch a particular toy, her child does not give the toy requested by the mother as he or she is distracted by other toys or objects which are more attractive to him or her, and may thus fail to fulfil the mother’s request. This is an example of the child being regulated by the other objects (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). The second stage is termed ‘other-regulation’ that includes implicit and explicit mediations which involve varying levels of assistance by adults and other peers (Gass, 2013; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). This regulation is sometimes described as ‘scaffolding’. The final stage is ‘self-regulation’ which refers to the ability to accomplish activities with minimal or no external support and can be realised through internalisation (Gass, 2013; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Internalisation is a process of making what was once external assistance a resource that is internally available to the individual (Lantolf, 2006a, 2006b; Vygotsky, 1978). For example, some children may not need the assistance of objects to do addition as they are able to do it in their heads. Hence, sociocultural theories argue that learning consists of a progression from object regulation to other regulation to self-regulation, in which children go from relying on external assistance in the performance of activities to being able to perform the activities on their own (Loewen & Reinders, 2011). In the SLA context, the same process occurs when the second language learners gain greater control over the use of their new language.

2.3.2 Mediation by symbolic artifacts

While second language learners gain greater control over the use of their new language through progressing through stages of regulation, symbolic artifacts mediate their psychological processes. Within sociocultural theories, humans use symbolic artifacts for two main reasons: firstly, as tools to mediate psychological activities and secondly, to control psychological process (Gass & Mackey, 2000). Gass (2013) argued that the control is voluntary, and allows humans to think about particular things, to plan, and to think rationally. In the same vein, Vygotsky (1978) argued that humans have the ability to use symbols, not to control the environment but to mediate their own psychological activity. He suggested that while physical tools are supporting means to enhance the ability to control and change the

physical world, symbolic tools serve as supporting means to control and reorganise human psychological processes. The primary tool that humans have available is language and therefore language gives the capacity to humans to go beyond the immediate environment and to think, and talk about events and objects that are far removed (Gass, 2013; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). In the SLA context, second language learners use language as symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect or mediated relationship between themselves and the world (Lantolf, 2007, 2009, 2011).

Vygotsky (1978) claimed that these are higher psychological functions because they are symbolically mediated, and ultimately come under control of the individual. Lantolf (2006) suggests that the process of gaining and maintaining control over complex mental processes is characterised by two features: it begins outside the individual and it is directed by language. Vygotsky (1978) conceived of a child as learning from society some activities such as play that the society has constructed and valued. The sociocultural environment presents the child with a variety of tasks, which demand and engage the child primarily, but not exclusively, through the use of language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). In the early stages of development, the child is completely dependent on other people, usually the parents, who initiate the child's acting by controlling what he/she does, how he/she does and what he/she should not do (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). For example, the parents might give an instruction to the child to sit quietly in a formal event and monitor her behaviour during the event. Parents, as representatives of the culture, and the channel through which the culture passes into the child, actualise these instructions primarily by talking to their children (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky (1978) argued that language separates humans from animals, making humans more efficient, and effective problem solvers. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that children, with the assistance of speech, create greater possibilities and flexibilities than animals to accomplish tasks. For example, in the process of solving a task, a child is able to use words to create a specific plan. The child who uses speech divides the task into two consecutive parts. Firstly, she plans how to solve the problem and then carries out the prepared solution. This new kind of psychological structure is absent in animals, even in basic forms (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky (1978) noted that there are three stages in speech development. The first stage is called 'social speech' or 'external speech'. In this stage, a child uses speech to control the behaviour of others and to express simple thoughts and emotions such as crying and laughing (Aimin, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). In infancy, speech has a mainly public function and is vital for adaptation to the social environment and learning (Vygotsky, 1978). As the child grows, speech requires a new function; it is not used solely for communication but also to assist the child to master his or her behaviour and acquire new knowledge (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Wink & Putney, 2002).

The second stage of speech development is referred to as 'egocentric speech' or 'private speech'. Piaget was the first to coin the term 'egocentric speech' in relation to the egocentric stage of child development (Piaget, 1959). In Piaget's view, children are not born social or able to relate to others. Instead, they are born focused solely on themselves; their desires, thoughts. It is typically the type of speech found in three to seven year-old children (Aimin, 2013; Vygotsky, 1986). In this stage, children often talk to themselves, regardless of whether anyone is listening to them. They think out-loud in an attempt to guide their behaviour. They may speak about what they are doing as they are doing it (Aimin, 2013). This type of speech has a self-regulatory function in which children process information and thought about their actions when speaking to themselves. Vygotsky (1978) studied the egocentric speech of children engaged in various activities. Functionally, egocentric speech is the basis for inner speech while in its external form it is embedded in communicative speech (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Vygotsky (1978, 1986) suggested that one way to increase the production of egocentric speech is to complicate a task in such a way that the child cannot make direct use of speech for its solution. When faced with such difficulty, the children's emotional language use increases as well as their efforts to achieve a more intelligent solution. As they search verbally for a new solution, their speech reveals the close connection between egocentric and socialised speech (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Vygotsky (1978) emphasised that egocentric speech is linked to children's social speech by many transitional forms. When children find that they are unable to solve a problem by themselves, they consult an adult and verbally describe the method that they then carry out by themselves. The children's capacity to use language as a problem-solving tool develops to socialised speech when they address the adult.

The third stage is 'inner speech'. This is the type of speech used by older children and adults (Aimin, 2013). Vygotsky (1978) argued that once a child has reached this final stage, they are able to engage in all forms of higher mental functions. This stage is also called 'verbal thought stage' in which speech and thinking are connected together (Aimin, 2013).

Bligh (2011) claimed that it is difficult to explain Vygotsky's thoughts regarding how a young second language learner makes meaning, yet it is evident that Vygotsky regarded meaning making as a predictable part of a child's cultural development from external speech to internal speech. Many second language learners encounter a silent period or a silent phase (Bligh, 2011; Tabor, 2008) as they go through the first stage of second language acquisition known as pre-production (Krashen, 1985). While Vygotsky did not discuss the silent period, there are several pieces of evidence in his writing (1978, 1986) that suggest the creation of thought (mother tongue thinking) may result from a transformative act of internalisation (Bligh, 2011). Examining the silent period through a sociocultural lens reveals that the initial stage of second language acquisition is significant (Bligh, 2011).

In all human cultures language serves as a universal tool. Language is described as a cultural tool as it is formed and shared by all members of a specific culture. Language is also defined as a symbolic tool because each member of the culture uses language to think (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). Vygotsky (1978) noted that using language actively represents two distinct expressions of the social area. Firstly, psychological tools are social in the sense that they are products of the social cultural system in which individuals use these products practices. Secondly, the tools are social in the sense that they are utilised in the process of social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky (1978) studied language in two ways. The first is to make links between language and thoughts (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Kozulin, 1998) in which he theorised the relationship between cognitive development and language (Wink & Putney, 2002). The second is to consider language as a device that serves specific social practices (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). During the developmental process, children become active participants in their learning through the use of language and interactions with others (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, Wink & Putney, 2002). Vygotsky (1978) claimed that children use language, in the act of speaking, as a tool for developing thought, and at the same time, they develop language

through thought. This reciprocal relationship allows children to realise that the social action of using language can lead to cognitive development (Wink & Putney, 2002). Interaction of thinking and speech results in experience for the learner and Vygotsky viewed this experience as an important factor in further impacting the relationship of thinking and speech (Wink & Putney, 2002). Therefore, Vygotsky (1978) claimed that language and thought are interactive dynamics and bound together.

Besides of the role of language in supporting thinking, Vygotsky (1978) perceived language as a tool for social operations. Language assists individuals to employ their social roles and the use of a language is “cultural practice with specific rules and tools in socially appropriate ways” (van Oers & Poland, 2007, p. 300). Vygotsky (1978; 1986) argued that language shapes the mind to function in the most efficient way for a particular culture. Since language is both a social and cultural tool, delays in its development have consequences. Language delays impact other areas of development including motor, social and cognitive (Bodrova & Leong, 2007).

Vygotsky (1978; 1986) argued that the acquisition of language can provide a paradigm for the entire problem of the relation between learning and development. Language arises initially as a means of communication between the child and people in the child’s environment. Subsequently, after language is converted to internal speech, language then organises the child’s thoughts which leads to internal mental function (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). Internal speech and reflective thought arise from the interactions between the child and persons in the child’s environment (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). These interactions provide the source of development of a child’s voluntary behaviour (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986).

2.3.3 Mediation through gestures

Vygotsky (1986) regarded gestures as having an important role in the development of language. Vygotsky (1986) further noted that intentionality develops out of gestures in conjunction with a child’s word. “The word at first is a conventional substitute for the gesture: it appears long before the crucial discovery of language and before he is capable of logical operations” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 65). This notion indicates that gestures are where the child first comes into contact in a meaningful way with semiotic (study of meaning) mediation, thus this is an essential aspect of being human (McCafferty & Ahmed, 2000).

One of the most insightful areas of sociocultural theories in relation to second language acquisition research deals with the appropriation and use of gestures as a form of mediation (Lantolf, 2006). There are two general areas of interest. The first area investigates the extent to which second language learners are able to appropriate gestures that are specific to particular meaning (McCafferty, 2002; McCafferty & Ahmed, 2000). The second area studies the interface between speech and gestures as it relates to Slobin's (2003) thinking for speaking hypothesis (Lantolf, 2006a, 2006b). McCafferty (2004) claimed that there is a close connection between speech and gesture that goes beyond social communication. Gesture can contribute to the development of thinking and, as such, can function as "a separate, spatio-motoric mode of thinking" (p. 149). Vygotsky (1997) observed that speech is at first "a conventional substitute for the gesture" (p. 98) in child development and he perceived a close connection between gesture and symbolic play.

Gesture is generally understood as manual movements that frequently occur in the absence of speech (Lantolf, 2006a, 2001; Negueruela, Lantolf, Jordan, & Gelabert, 2004) such as when someone waves to indicate that he or she is leaving. These types of gestures can be interpreted independently of speech (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). According to McNeill (2005), speech and gesture form a unit of thinking that he called 'growth point', a notion closely related to Vygotsky's concept of inner speech or private speech (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). The growth point of a speech combines one verbal and one imagistic into a single meaning system (McNeill & Duncan, 2000). It is important to note that each component of the growth point has "unique semiotic properties," each can exceed "the meaning possibilities of the other" (McNeill & Duncan, 2000, p. 144). Vygotsky (1978) and McNeill and Duncan (2000) suggested that gestures are "material carriers of thinking" (p. 155) and therefore provide "an enhanced window into mental processes" (p. 144).

Lantolf and Thorne (2006a, 2007) argued that second language speakers clearly seem to rely on gesture both to assist them access words in their second language and as a means of requesting mediation from others. McCafferty and Ahmed (2000) claimed that the appropriation of conceptual metaphors among second language learners is manifested through gestures. Concepts, according to Vygotsky (1997), are culturally organised artifacts that play a central role in regulating one's mind. Vygotsky (1986; 1997) argued that words do not have

meanings that stand independently from other words; rather word meanings are organised into networks that, taken together, and form concepts.

2.4 Internalisation

Internalisation is the second core concept of Vygotsky's theory in my study's theoretical framework and the relevance of this concept will be discussed in the light of second language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) called an internal reconstruction of an external operation 'internalisation' (p. 56). Vygotsky (1978) illustrated this process by using the development of pointing. In the beginning the gesture of pointing for a baby is nothing more than an unsuccessful attempt to grasp something. However, when the mother comes to the child's aid and realises his pointing gesture, the situation changes fundamentally. Consequently, the primary meaning of the pointing gesture becomes a gesture for others. Its meaning and functions are first created by an objective situation and then by people who surround the child (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). As the above description of pointing illustrates, Vygotsky (1978, 1986) explained that the process of internalisation consists of a series of transformations. The first transformation is an operation that initially represents an external activity which is reconstructed and begins to occur internally (Vygotsky, 1978;1986). The second transformation involves an interpersonal (between people) process first and then an intrapersonal (inside the child) process (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). Finally, the transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one is the result of a long series of developmental events (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986).

2.4.1 Imitation

Vygotsky proposed that the key to internalisation resides in the uniquely human capacity to imitate the intentional activity of human activity (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). According to Vygotsky (1978) imitation is the process through which socioculturally constructed forms of mediation are internalised. One of the earliest social scientists to propose imitation as a uniquely human form of development was James Mark Baldwin (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a). According to Baldwin:

Imitation to the intelligent and earnest imitator is never slavish, never mere repetition; it is on the contrary, a means for further ends, a method of absorbing

what is present in others and making it over in forms peculiar to one's own temper and valuable to one's own genius". (cited in Valsiner and van der Veer, 2000, p. 153)

In the second language acquisition context, Tomasello's (2003) usage-based theory considers the role of imitation. He argued that imitation is not a simple copy of what others say, but it is an intentional and self-selective behaviour on the child's part. The view of language acquisition that best complements sociocultural theories is predicated on the innately specified human capacity to interpret and imitate the means through which we realise intentions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006b). Tomasello's theory emphasised utterance which is necessarily instilled with the intention of the user. Tomasello (2003) claimed that a child uses linguistic symbols in utterances as a social act, and when this act is internalised in Vygostkian theory, the product is a unique kind of cognitive representation. Additionally, Tomasello (2003) argued that a child's utterances can also be perspectival in the sense that the child understands that the same referent could have been indicated in some other way.

Tomasello (2003) stated that children begin to acquire language during the learning process which depends critically on the more fundamental skills of joint attention, intention-reading, and cultural learning. This attention is important because it helps a learner notice a mismatch between what he or she knows about the second language and what is produced by speakers of the second language. From this perspective, Lantolf and Thorne (2006a, 2006b; 2007) viewed language as a special and complex type of attentional skill that people employ to influence and manipulate one another's attention. Tomasello (2003) emphasised that how children become competent users of language is an empirical rather than a logical problem. In the context of second language learners' development, learning or development is encapsulated in sociocultural theories' construct of ZPD, defined as a distance between what a learner can do in second language learning if assisted by others compared to what he or she can accomplish alone.

2.5 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky (1978) explained that humans cannot limit themselves merely to determining developmental levels if they wish to discover the actual relations of the developmental process to learning capabilities. Hence, Vygotsky (1978) suggested that humans must

determine at least two developmental levels. The first level is referred to as an “actual developmental level” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85), which means the level of development of a child’s mental functions that has been established as a result of certain already completed developmental cycles (Vygotsky, 1978). The second level is the ZPD which takes account of not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed but also those processes that are currently in the state of formation.

Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as “the distance between actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). If a child can solve a problem independently, it means that the functions for that problem solving have already matured in the child. In the ZPD, a child cannot solve a problem independently unless with assistance. The ZPD defines that the functions for that problem solving have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation (Vygotsky, 1978).

The ZPD is also a way of conceptualising the relationship between learning and development (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Wink & Putney, 2002). The word ‘zone’ was chosen by Vygotsky because he conceived development as a continuum of behaviours or degree of maturation, not as a point on a scale (Bodrova & Leong, 2007). The skills and behaviours represented in the ZPD by children are dynamic and constantly changing. A child who may need some assistance in doing something today may do the same thing independently tomorrow as the child internalises the new idea (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Vygotsky (1962) believed that as children learn new words they internalise the meanings of the words they say. As children begin to use and internalise new words in the presence of a knowledgeable other person, they often find themselves in the ZPD for new learning. The concept of internalisation is inseparable from the ZPD (Aimin, 2013). Lantolf (2007) claimed that it is through the internalisation of the ZPD that the activities between people and cultural artifacts transform into the inner activities of the human brain.

As stated earlier, imitation is the most effective method to promote internalisation in second language acquisition. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) claimed that children can imitate a

variety of actions, including a new language that goes well beyond the limits of their own capabilities. However, Aimin (2013) argued that imitation can occur with a delay of a day or more after the child is exposed to a pattern of new language. Deferred imitation permits the child to analyse language ‘off-line’ and is considered a continuum between imitation and spontaneous language production (Aimin, 2013; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). In this case, deferred imitation serves as an essential building block for spontaneous speech (Aimin, 2013; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

Play activity leads children forward in development by drawing them into two ways. First, through extensive imitation and appropriative reconstruction of adult activities (Duncan & Taruli, 2003); second, by inducing the child to voluntarily subordinate his or her actions to rules of adults’ behaviour (Duncan & Taruli, 2003). Vygotsky (1967) claimed that as the leading activity during the early childhood period, play “creates the zone of proximal development” (p. 16). When the child is engaged in play, the social, contextual and situational supports integral to the activity enable the child to act in ways that are beyond the actual developmental level (Duncan & Taruli, 2003). As Vygotsky (1978) argued, play creates a ZPD by drawing the child forward to a level of activity in advance of the level of his or her real-life non-play activity. Vygotsky (1967) noted that “in play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself” (p. 16).

2.5 Acculturation

Acculturation was defined by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936, as cited in Berry, 1997) as “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 7). According to Berry (2003), acculturating individuals are faced with two main issues: “to what extent do people wish to have contact with (or avoid) others outside their group?” and “to what extent do people wish to maintain (or give up) their cultural attributes?” (Berry, 2001, p. 618). The interplay between attitudes and behaviours that individuals use to respond to these two issues results in the strategies that they utilize during acculturation.

Acculturation strategy is a significant concept in the study of adaptation (Ataca & Berry, 2002). In diverse societies, cultural groups and their individual members must deal with the issue of how to acculturate (Berry, 2006). Four strategies have been proposed (Berry, 1976 as cited in Berry, 2005): adaptation to the mainstream culture and cultural maintenance. The four different acculturation strategies are separation, assimilation, integration, and marginalisation (Berry, 2003; Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret & Ward, 2007). These different strategies should not be perceived as ‘additive’, indicating that one can think of an individual as being fully ‘integrated’ (Sam, 2006). Alternatively, these varied strategies could be regarded as phases which immigrants may use at any time as they pass through the phases. Since acculturation is a continuous process, the Asian immigrant ELLs might adopt different strategies at different times to deal with different challenges.

The assimilation strategy is adopted when the person does not want to maintain either their own cultural identity or contact with outside groups; the integration strategy when it is of value to both maintain one's culture and maintain contact with others; the marginalisation strategy when there is little interest in maintaining one's own cultural identity or contact with others. If the person does not wish to maintain relationships with other groups but wants to hold on to his or her own cultural values, separation strategy (Berry, 1997).

A table simplifying the concept, based on Berry's acculturation strategies framework, is presented in the table below:

		Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?	
		YES	NO
Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?	YES	integration	assimilation
	NO	separation	marginalisation

Table One: Berry's four strategies of acculturation

Source: Berry (2003)

In the context of my study, from the point of view of the non-dominant group, when the ELLs and their parents did not wish to maintain their cultural identity and sought daily interaction with other cultures, they used the assimilation strategy. In contrast, when the ELLs and their parents held on to their original culture, and at the same time decided to avoid interaction with others, they employed the separation strategy. When there was an interest in both maintaining the Asian culture, and having daily interaction with others, they used the integration strategy. Berry (2006, 2012) noted that there is some degree of cultural integrity when the integration strategy is used; the individuals seek to be a member of an ethnocultural group and to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. Previous research has consistently shown that the strategy of integration predicts more positive outcomes for psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret & Ward, 2007; Recker, 2012). Finally, when there was little interest in maintaining their Asian culture and in having relations with others, then the Asian immigrant ELLs and their families used the marginalisation strategy. Berry (2005) argued that an individual's choice of a strategy is influenced by previous circumstances such as the person's level of involvement with each culture which includes specific attitudinal and behavioural preferences and characteristics. The choice of a particular strategy would also reflect the attitudes of the immigrants toward the host culture or the culture of origin (Berry, 2005, 2006, 2012; Sam, 2006).

A sociocultural learning framework emphasises the acquisition of culturally appropriate skills and behaviours, through contact with hosts, cross cultural experience, and training in sociocultural adaptation (Searle & Wards, 1990). Berry (2006) claimed that one of the most reliable means for immigrants to acquire, improve, and master their intercultural knowledge in a host culture is through their interactions. The sociocultural learning approaches, therefore, acknowledge the importance of interpersonal relationship, and specifically highlight that friendships with the hosts are critical for acquiring the skills of a new culture (Neuliep, 2012; Searle & Ward, 1990). Specifically, close intercultural friendships can improve the immigrants' and the host's social skills (Berry, 2006). Searle and Ward (1990) argued that the hosts are able to assist in social skills learning as an increased contact with hosts would enable the immigrants' greater participation and skill development. From this perspective, it is suggested that if the immigrants have less positive contact with the host, they have more barriers in negotiating daily encounters (Neuliep, 2012; Searle & Ward, 1990).

2.6 Guided participation

There are two processes of guided participation that are relevant in my study: bridging meaning using culturally existing tools and structuring opportunities for the Asian immigrant ELLs to observe and participate. In my study context, mutual bridging of meaning plays a central role in the guided participation process. Rogoff (1990) argued that adults facilitate children making connections using culturally existing tools in many ways: by specifying how the new situations resemble the old, providing emotional cues about the nature of the situations, and by offering information about the situations. Bridging the meaning between the known and the new in interaction presumes intersubjectivity (Rogoff, 1990, Vygotsky, 1978). However, when children have difficulty in achieving mutual understanding due to an ambiguous situation, they use social referencing to facilitate them making interpretations about the situation. Rogoff (2003) claimed that social referencing is an influential way to get and offer information. Therefore, in my study, social referencing was useful for the Asian immigrant ELLs to achieve understanding.

Another process of Rogoff's (2003) is the argument that teachers, community institutions, and children's own choices mutually determine the circumstances in which children are available and have opportunities to learn. Rogoff (1990) suggested that the transfer of responsibility takes into account children's competence in particular tasks so that responsibility is given in accordance to their competence. In the process of structuring opportunities for children, it was evident that the teachers and the more experienced peers adjusted their language with verbal and nonverbal information to ensure mutual understanding. Rogoff (1990) noted that adults' language adjustment simultaneously supports the child's understanding and helps the adult to determine the child's need for support. Rogoff (1990, 2003) and Vygotsky (1978) argued that symbolic play may offer avenues for children to understand daily adult skills and roles, and to learn to take the perspective of others.

2.7 Conclusion

Sociocultural theories are rather new in the field of second language acquisition but the contribution of these theories has been so influential that the field has been divided into two schools of thought: mainstream approaches and sociocultural approaches (Nieto, 2007). The former considers that acquiring a second language is an individual activity while the latter,

based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theories, conceives the act of acquiring a language as a social process, and acknowledges the role played by interacting with peers or more advanced users of the language (Lantolf, 2006b, 2007; Nieto, 2007).

In this chapter, I discussed three key constructs of sociocultural theories relevant to my study: tools and symbols as mediation, internalisation, and the zone of proximal development. Within these key constructs, Vygotsky (1967, 1978) emphasised play as the context of children's learning and development. In the early childhood settings in New Zealand play has been strongly positioned within the context of learning and subtly woven into the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* (White, Ellis, O'Rockel, Stover & Toso, 2009). As a central means of promoting learning, including second language learning, the role of the teachers is to support play by selecting from a range of appropriate and relevant teaching strategies that will enhance English acquisition for the English language learners.

In the first key construct, tools and symbols are regarded as mediation. I highlighted three aspects of mediation: mediation as regulation, mediation by symbolic artifacts, and mediation through gestures. These three aspects of mediation are important in second language acquisition because language serves as a symbolic tool to facilitate social activities and children's early appropriation of language is in and through these activities (Wertsch, 2007). The second core concept is internalisation where I focused on how second language learners initially use linguistic symbols in utterance as social acts and then internalise them as a cognitive representation. The final key construct is the zone of proximal development in which I argued that children can internalise new concepts or knowledge, including language, with the assistance of a more knowledgeable person.

In addition I discussed two relevant theories within the sociocultural learning framework: acculturation and guided participation. In the section on acculturation, I described four different acculturation strategies: separation, assimilation, integration and marginalisation based on parallel constructs, those of adaptation to the mainstream culture maintenance. In the guided participation section, I focused on two processes of guided participation that are relevant in my study: bridging meaning using culturally existing tools and structuring opportunities for the ELLs.

This present study aims to explore early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices to support English acquisition for Asian immigrant children by using the lens of sociocultural theories. Important relevant core concepts of sociocultural theories such as mediation, internalisation and the ZPD have been discussed in relation to second language acquisition, the focus of this study. These concepts act as theoretical and conceptual supports to help understand the issues and dynamics raised in this research. I gained inspiration from sociocultural ideas with which I was able to contemplate on the English acquisition experiences of Asian Immigrant children as a process mediated and internalised by their social experiences in early childhood settings.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical foundations of sociocultural perspectives in relation to second language acquisition and an account of research stemming from these perspectives. I continue to review the literature of second language acquisition based on those parts of Vygotsky's theoretical thinking which are pivotal to the focus of my study. The central aim of my study is to gain, from sociocultural perspectives, an understanding of how the early childhood teachers, as more advanced users of English, support English language learners (ELLs) as they acquire English.

In this chapter, I examine literature which explains second language acquisition in the context of sociocultural approaches that draw on key constructs and that afford an alternative account to behaviourist and cognitivist perspectives of how a second language acquisition is conceptualised, and the ways in which it is developed. The key constructs discussed in the literature review are central to sociocultural theories and are of particular importance to those who acquire and teach languages. These key constructs, which have been discussed in Chapter Two, are mediation, internalisation, and zone of proximal development. Within each key construct, I have added relevant perspectives that are allied to second language acquisition in relation to sociocultural theories to elucidate the focus of my study. The key constructs and relevant perspectives support my current understandings about how ELLs acquire English and how teachers' beliefs and practices can support ELLs' acquisition.

3.2 Second language acquisition as viewed by sociocultural theories

Lantolf (2011) emphasised that "the central thread that runs through most SCT-L2 (Sociocultural Theory on Second Language Learning) research since its inception, and which marks it off from other SLA approaches, is its focus on if and how learners develop the ability to use the new language to mediate (i.e., regulate or control) their mental and communicative activity" (Lantolf, 2011, p. 24).

Research in second language acquisition drawing from sociocultural theories emphasises the relationships among the individual's physiological aspects, the social and culturally produced contexts, and artifacts. These relationships have the potential to transform

the individual's cognitive functions (Ellis, 2008; Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). The essence of Vygotsky's theory of mind is captured in "the notion that human mental functioning results from participation in, and appropriation of, the forms of cultural mediation integrated into social activities" (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009, p. 459).

This, in turn, leads to Vygotsky's methodological argument that in order to understand an individual, it is necessary to study that individual as a sociocultural being in the context of his/her history (Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2013). From a sociocultural perspective, acquiring or learning a second or foreign language is, therefore, seen as the increasing ability to use the new language as a mediational tool, both socially and cognitively (Gánem-Gutiérrez, 2013; Lantolf & Beckett, 2009). Mediation is defined as "the process through which humans deploy culturally constructed artifacts, concepts, and activities to regulate (i.e. gain voluntary control over and transform) the material world or their own and each other's social and mental activity" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 29). Mediation involves the use of culturally-derived psychological tools, such as utterances in spoken or sign language, in transforming the relations between psychological inputs and outputs (Fembyhough, 2008).

Zuengler and Miller (2006) argued that researchers who studied second language acquisition from sociocultural perspectives do not focus on language input, but see language learning as a resource for participation in everyday activities. Mitchell and Myles (2004) critiqued second language acquisition in the context of sociocultural theories for not locating itself more explicitly with respect to linguistic theory. Ellis (2008) agreed with Mitchell and Myles (2004) in the respect that any theory of second language acquisition must specify the acquisition of language input. Such critical debate has given rise to interesting responses by leading sociocultural scholars such as James Lantolf and Steven Thorne.

Vygotsky (1978, 1986) viewed language as a semiotic tool; that is, language is seen as the means by which humans achieve the goals of social living. As a psychologist, Vygotsky was concerned with the relationship between language and thought and viewed language as the means for mediating higher levels of thinking (Ellis, 2008). Wells (1994) too pointed out that language is a particularly powerful semiotic tool because of its semantic structure:

It encodes the culture's theory of experience, including the knowledge associated with the use of all other tools and it enables its users to interact with each other in order to coordinate their activity and simultaneously to reflect on and share their interpretations. (p. 72)

Language and speech were given attention by Vygotsky in his sociocultural theories' psychological system because they play a double role (Kozulin, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). On the one hand, language and speech are regarded as psychological tools that help to form mental functions. On the other hand, language and speech are considered as one of the mental functions that go through a cultural development (Kozulin, 1998).

Ellis (2008) suggested that sociocultural theories in relation to second language acquisition is best seen as a holistic theory informed by a number of interlocking constructs and it is not easy to provide separate accounts of these constructs. Moreover, the relationship between socially and culturally produced artifacts and the transformation of individual psychological systems continues to intrigue scholars in second language acquisition (Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2011). As Lantolf (2001, 2006a, 2009) has consistently emphasised, one of the key constructs of sociocultural theories is that the mind is mediated, a significant concept which I discuss in more detail in the following paragraphs.

3.3 Mediation and mediated learning

Vygotsky (1978) claimed that all human-made objects (material and symbolic) are artifacts, which include books, numbers, languages, concepts and belief systems. However, it is important to note that not all artifacts are mediating means; that is, they do not by virtue of their existence act as tools of individuals' interaction with the world. Nevertheless, they have the potential to become mediating means, but until used as such, they offer only affordances and constraints to an individual (Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2011). According to Lantolf (2006b), within sociocultural theories, artifacts can be simultaneously material and symbolic aspects of second language acquisition activity.

Additionally, sociocultural theories argue that individuals interact with the material and symbolic world around them (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). Lantolf (2000) suggested that mediation in second language acquisition can involve others through social interaction, or the

individual learner through private speech. That is, mediation can occur externally, as when a novice is given assistance in the performance of some function, or internally as when an individual uses his or her resources to achieve control over a function. In both cases, however, these mediational resources are viewed as social in nature (Ellis, 2008). Thus, a theory of the mediated mind claims that what originates as social speech becomes internalised as inner speech so that it can be used by the individual to regulate his/her own behaviour outside any social situation.

In sociocultural theories, the most powerful artifact for mediating thought is language. As humans acquire language, they are able to use it as an autonomous tool for organising and controlling thought (Ellis, 2008). In Vygotskian theory, language is viewed as both a means for accomplishing social interaction and of managing mental activity, with the former serving the basis for the latter (Lantolf, 2000, 2006a). In the case of a language learner, the second language serves as both the object of attention and also the tool for mediating its acquisition. As Swain (2000) put it, second language acquisition involves learning how to use language to mediate language learning.

3.4 Mediation through social interaction

The central theme of sociocultural theories is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). Interactionist approaches in the second language acquisition field view verbal interaction as being of crucial importance for second language acquisition. From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky (1978) argued that everything is learned on two levels. First, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual's mental structure:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (p. 57)

The mental structure conceptualised by Vygotsky is also known as the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) identified the ZPD as a metaphoric space

where, with the assistance of a more knowledgeable person, children can reach a higher level of knowledge. Underlying this idea is Vygotsky's view that the learner acquires concepts first through social interaction with others, and only then intrapersonally, where those concepts are thus internalised. ZPD is important in second language acquisition because it can be used to assess a second language learner's learning potential and the type of assistance that can be offered to promote internalisation.

3.4.1 The zone of proximal development (ZPD)

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is arguably the most well-known of Vygotskian concepts in second language acquisition within sociocultural perspectives (Aimin, 2013; Ellis, 2008; Kinginger, 2002; Lantolf, 2000a, 2001; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, Mahn & John Steiner, 2000). It is meaningful and attractive to those who teach (Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2011) because the concept of ZPD emphasises social interactions (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Social interaction can be a mediating role in the development of learners' cognition, including second language acquisition. It is important to consider how and when interactions can help learning to take place. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) have identified that scaffolding during social interaction can assist children to acquire new linguistic forms and functions. The term 'scaffolding' was coined in the 1970s by the United States psychologist Jerome Bruner, after observing the mostly natural efforts parents make to support young children in learning to speak (McLeod, 2008). Scaffolding "refers to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring". (Bruner, 1978, p. 19, as cited in McLeod, 2008)

The concept of scaffolding is very similar to Vygotsky's notion of the ZPD, and it not uncommon for the terms to be used interchangeably (McLeod, 2008; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011). However, according to Thorne (2000), scaffolding and the ZPD are not the same, though they are often associated with other another in literature. In the same vein, Daniels (2001) argued that 'scaffolding' can be interpreted as an involvement established by the expert alone, whereas the ZPD is interpreted as a negotiated activity. In the context of teaching and learning, Verenikina (2003) claimed that the term 'scaffold' indicates 'a direct

and heavy-handed intervention' by teachers whereas the ZPD is the distance between what a person can do and what a person can do without help (Vygotsky, 1978). Cole and Cole (2001) note that the term 'proximal' or nearby suggested that the assistance provided goes just slightly beyond the learner's current competence, complementing and building on their current abilities.

Research in the area of mediation through social interaction within second language acquisition has commonly focused on strategies for supporting or scaffolding ELLs to acquire and learn English. Some studies focus on what teachers could do to encourage opportunities for an ELL to interact with the teacher in naturalistic studies (Brierley, 2003), interpersonal interactions between the teacher and the ELLs (Hakamäki, 2005), and relationships among teachers, ELLs and their parents, as well as peers within the ELLs' ZPD.

Mohd Sidek (2011) examined scaffolding strategies by a more advanced user of English for a 4 ½ year old Malaysian ELL's ZPD in English syntax (the pattern of formation of sentences or phrases in English language) in Malaysia. The development of syntax was investigated through delayed post-test experimental study. A narrative picture book was selected as the study instrument, as it provided an age-appropriate and wide variety of syntax to the ELL and thus, the child's reproduction could be inferred as intake instead of products of memorisation. During each scaffolding session, the child negotiated meaning by asking questions, to confirm or clarify the model's description of the pictures or illustrations. The child's syntax development was measured by comparing the child's pre-, post-, and target description in terms of aspects relevant to English syntax. The findings suggested that the child's telegraphic and ungrammatical utterances were mostly due to the omission of the auxiliary verbs. In addition, the complexity of model utterances could hinder the child's ability to imitate the suggested structure completely. It was hypothesised that because children have such a small memory span, function words may be dropped because they carry little information and tend to be unstressed in speech. The findings suggested that language scaffolding in ZPD could be used as a potential vehicle for second language syntax development.

Mohd Sidek (2011), through his experimental study, manipulated the interactions with the child to determine the interactions' effect of scaffolding on the child's syntax

development. Brierley (2003) employed an action research project to explore what she could do to increase interaction opportunities between Lisa, an ELL and herself, a New Zealand early childhood teacher, along with other children attending the ECE centre. Over the three weeks of her action research project, Brierley (2003) found that it was important to follow Lisa's interest in order to engage in interaction and thus create more natural opportunities for interactions such as working alongside Lisa while inviting other children to participate in group activities, and using more props when learning new songs or poems. Whenever Lisa participated in the activities, Brierley used these opportunities to scaffold Lisa's English acquisition by modelling English phrases for Lisa and encouraging other children to initiate interactions with the ELL. Brierley was able to initiate daily interactions with Lisa on a one-to-one basis, and as part of a larger group. The data was recorded in Brierley's daily field notes which she later wrote in Lisa's 'learning story' (a technique to assess children's learning in early childhood centres in New Zealand). Brierley's (2003) findings also noted Lisa's preference to initiate interactions with the teacher more than with peers. The findings also revealed that a lot of groundwork needed to be done in order to create an environment where children are accepting of others and proactive in initiating interactions with other children. The implication of Brierley's (2003) study is important because as there has been an increasing enrolment of ELLs worldwide in ECE centres, therefore opportunities for the ELLs to interact with English speaking peers as well as with teachers are crucial so that the ELLs will acquire English.

In both Mohd Sidek's (2011) and Brierley's (2003) study, they were able to employ the strategies of scaffolding consciously with the ELLs as they learned and acquired English. Although Brierley's study was conducted in a natural setting, unlike Mohd Sidek's study, they were able to employ their strategies accordingly. Thus, the findings might not generalise to the studies where teachers were observed by the researcher as they work with the ELLs. Nevertheless, the findings do suggest that language scaffolding in ZPD could be used as a potential vehicle for second language syntax development.

Another scaffolding strategy to support the ELLs as they acquire English is teachers' use of oral language to encourage the ELLs to be active participants in interactions and develop their cognitive development. Neu (2013) examined the oral language of four Spanish ELLs who attended an ECE programme within a public elementary school located in the

upper Midwest of the United States. Specifically, the researcher observed and recorded the ELLs' responses to questions, comments, and requests made by an English-speaking teacher for the duration of eight weeks using video recordings and field notes. Neu's (2013) findings explained that interactions between the teacher and ELLs initially often began with observation and by communicating nonverbally or with gestures. As relationships and rapport were established, ELLs responded using a combination of English and Spanish and typically replied by using one or two English word phrases. Compared to the English speaking children who were seldom hesitant in their oral language when they responded to the teacher in either small or large group activities, the ELLs would only take the risk of interacting with the teacher during small group or one on one interaction with the teacher. Small group sessions, activities and language that were consistent and repeated daily elicited more verbal responses from the ELLs. The teacher and the ELLs maintained conversations that were back-and-forth in nature and allowed ample opportunities for scaffolding the ELLs' English oral language. One implication of Neu's (2013) study is that early childhood teachers should consider incorporating ample amounts of time for scaffolding ELLs' oral language in small group activities to encourage ELLs to be active participants in interactions and develop their cognitive development.

There have been a number of research studies (Brierley, 2003; Mohd Sidek, 2011; Neu, 2013) investigating a relationship between interaction and scaffolding, yet there are limited studies which revealed that teachers sometimes overlooked the opportunities to use interactions as a mediating tool to support the ELLs' English acquisition. Piker and Rex (2008) found that the early childhood teachers in their study did not utilise the opportunities to interact with the ELLs. Piker and Rex (2008) examined the influence of interactions between the teachers and the ELLs within an early childhood natural setting. Specifically, Piker and Rex (2008) investigated the role of teachers' interactions with four ELLs who were between three to four years old, particularly during 'free play' event because this event promoted spontaneous interactions among the children and the teachers. The data analysis was based on 24 video recordings of 'free play' events. The findings of the study revealed that when the ELLs attempted to share what they made or to relate to a family story, the teachers' brief responses to the ELLs prevented them from experiencing optimal interactions, which limited them from developing their oral production of English into more complex forms. In other words, the four ELLs' ZPDs were not optimised by the teachers to support

their English acquisition as the amount of English produced by the ELLs with the teachers was minimal. However, while the teachers might not optimise the ELLs' ZPD, they did offer opportunities to develop English comprehension or receptive language.

Piker and Rex's (2008) study highlighted what could be really happening in natural settings during the social interactions between the teachers and the ELLs. One implication of Piker's and Rex's (2008) study is that mere exposure to an English dominant context is insufficient to develop the ELLs' oral production if the teachers did not utilise the ELLs' ZPD during their interactions. Therefore, it is also important to understand how the teachers structure their instruction to identify what strategies work best in which situation or for what kind of tasks as the teachers scaffold the ELLs' English acquisition within their ZPD.

De Jong's (2012) study addressed the gap in Piker and Rex's (2008) study by examining how the teachers structured their instruction to support ELLs as they work with English speaking peers. De Jong (2012) analysed 20 lessons from the teachers' lessons focusing on teacher – structured pair work, for example Think-Pair-Share. The findings demonstrated that teachers performed four different strategies for scaffolding: (1) provide access to the content, (2) provide access to the language, (3) facilitate the students to negotiate the activity, and (4) encourage the ELLs to extend their language production. In addition, the strategies for scaffolding the activity, the content and the language demand were more teacher-fronted in nature whereas the strategies that encouraged the ELLs' language use were responsive to the ELLs' interactional needs. De Jong's (2012) study emphasised the importance of teachers' evaluation between macro and micro scaffolding strategies.

In this section, I have reviewed studies that explored scaffolding strategies to support ELLs to acquire English as the teachers and the ELLs interact within the ELLs' ZPD. These studies investigated aspects of English language such as the development of syntax, teachers' use of oral language, and teachers' macro and micro scaffolding strategies during their instructional interaction with the ELLs. These studies are important to offer an understanding of scaffolding strategies during social interaction. However, there was a body of research which has specifically examined the role of comprehensible input in interaction to support ELLs' English acquisition. Comprehensible input is important in second language acquisition within sociocultural theories because Vygotsky (1987) emphasised that humans develop the

ability to acquire meaningful speech in their interaction with others. In the next section, I discuss key constructs of comprehensible input and review studies of comprehensible input in second language acquisition within sociocultural theories.

3.4.1.1 Comprehensible input in interaction

The focus on comprehensibility during interaction can also be found in a strand of research that influenced the development of the interactionist approach in second language acquisition. Influenced by Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, interactionists in SLA research (eg. Long, 1983, 1996) advocate that comprehensible input is necessary for SLA. After reviewing some thirty five studies, Long (1996) concluded that modified input and modified verbal interaction were evident in all successful second language acquisition. Long's modified input is comparable to Krashen's Input hypothesis (Krashen, 1982, 1985).

Input hypothesis

According to Input hypothesis, the most important factor in the amount of language acquired by a learner is the amount of comprehensible input to which that learner is exposed. In Krashen's view, second language acquisition takes place when learners understand language that is a bit beyond their current level of competence. Comprehensible input, as Krashen characterised, shares both "a point of commonality and a point of difference" with the ZPD (DeVillar, 1991, p. 23). There are two constructs that are shared by comprehensible input and ZPD; first, advancement is achievable as long as that language input is made comprehensible to the learner by an adult or more capable peer, and second, both constructs emphasise the need of being responsive to the learners' perceived needs (DeVillar, 1991). The difference between comprehensible input and the ZPD is in the focus each construct places on the role of language in learning. While comprehensible input highlights the importance of adjusting speech to the learners' linguistic level of competence, the ZPD emphasises adjusting speech to the learner's interactional level of competence (DeVillar, 1991).

At this point, it is important to understand why comprehensible input is important for second language acquisition from sociocultural perspectives. Just as Vygotsky claimed that mediation is the distinctive feature of highly developed forms of human behaviour, he observed that "the distinguished and unique character of human speech was that it carried out generalised meaningful speech" (Eun & Lim, 2009, p. 16). Eun and Lim (2009) noted that

meaningful speech is important because it allows social interaction to become possible across contexts. Vygotsky's emphasis on the significance of meaning was highlighted through his discussions of various types and modes of speech (Eun & Lim, 2009; Vygotsky, 1987). In achieving meaningful speech, verbal interaction makes linguistic input comprehensible, in particular where meaning is negotiated or modified. Negotiation of meaning is defined as:

The modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility. As they negotiate, they work linguistically to achieve the needed comprehensibility, whether repeating a message verbatim, adjusting its syntax, or modifying its form and meaning in a host of other ways. (Pica, 1994, p. 494)

Negotiation of meaning happens to be labelled differently by different scholars, such as conversational adjustment and interactional modification (Pica, 2008). In other words, these modifications of meaning are commonly regarded as interactional adjustments during negotiation for meaning to achieve comprehensibility of input (Mackey, Abbuhl, & Gass, 2012).

When negotiating meaning in order to resolve a communication difficulty, Long (1983) identified several strategies employed by learners such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, and repetitions. Mackey, Abbuhl, and Gass (2012) suggested that the process of interacting with another individual may also serve to draw the ELL's attention to some kind of 'gap' between their language and the target language. Although these modifications were not the only means of achieving message comprehensibility during the interactions, Long (1983) suggested that these modifications were positioned to promote comprehensible input, and eventually second language acquisition. Curtain and Dahlberg (2010) claimed that the target language must be used in a way that the message is understood by the second language learners at all times, even though every word of the message may not be familiar.

Interaction provides learners with input containing the information they need for second language acquisition. In addition, it affords opportunities for learners to experiment in the target language through production and to receive feedback based on these attempts (Ellis,

2008). Further studies in interactionist approaches have investigated how second language learners receive input during interaction which can be modified in ways to make it more comprehensible to them (Loewen & Reinders, 2011). It should be emphasised, however, that sociocultural theories do not distinguish between ‘input’ and ‘output’ but rather view language acquisition as an inherently social practice that takes place within interaction as learners are scaffolded to produce linguistic forms and functions that they are unable to perform by themselves. Therefore, the roles of a more experienced language user are significant in the social interactions.

There have been a substantial number of empirical studies that examined strategies used to make the language input comprehensible to ELLs during interactions. Facella, Rampino and Shea (2010) studied strategies that teachers deemed effective for comprehensible language input for ELLs’ within the ELLs’ ZPD. Twenty early childhood teachers who taught from pre-kindergarten to second grade in two culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Massachusetts were interviewed about the strategies that they found effective and why they felt these strategies worked. The findings highlighted four strategies that were named by the majority of the teachers as being effective in general: gestures and visual cues; repetition and opportunities for practising English language; use of objects, real props and hands-on materials; and multi-sensory approaches. The teachers mentioned that the main goals of using these strategies, among many others mentioned in this study, included helping ELLs to make the connection between content and language, and providing ELLs with the tools they needed to use English to interact with the teachers and peers in the centre. By understanding learners’ characteristics and teaching strategies appropriate for each stage, the study suggested that teachers can offer support while ELLs acquire English.

Facella, Rampino and Shea’s (2010) study reported on what teachers perceived as effective strategies; however, their study did not address whether the teachers employed those strategies while they worked with the ELLs. Craighead and Ramanathan’s (2007) observational study investigated teachers’ interactions found to advance the ELLs’ learning. The participants were three experienced teachers with at least three years’ teaching experience with ELLs. Data gathering included six observations and nine pre- and post-observation interviews with the participants who taught English to school children of the age between seven and thirteen years attending a Midwestern middle school. During pre-

observation interviews, the teachers listed several verbal interaction practices they claimed were beneficial for teaching ELLs such as verbal praise and restating information. This study discovered ‘inhibiting factors’ as the main theme of their findings. Although the teachers were experienced teachers and were welcoming of the ELLs in their classes, the strategies that the teachers claimed were effective during the pre-observations interviews were either not evident or the teachers did not have the confidence to address the issues that ELLs have. For example, ‘direct help from the teachers’ was one of the strategies emphasised by the teachers; however, it was not evident that teachers employed this particular strategy effectively. The teachers claimed that inhibiting factors were having more difficulty relating personally with the ELLs than with the English speaking children in the classroom because of language and cultural barriers. This difficulty was exacerbated because the ELLs did not typically request clarification verbally from teachers in the classroom setting. Interestingly, the same teaching strategies proved to be successful with the English speaking children. One important implication of this finding is that the strategies which worked effectively with English speaking children might not be adequate in fully meeting the needs of ELLs.

Baharun and Zakaria (2013) examined oral discourse produced by 18 Malaysian public university students who learn English as a second language, using two different communication task types: jigsaw and decision-making. Specifically, this study investigated how the learners approached and processed the tasks and how they interacted during task completion. The data for the study comprised transcribed recordings of learner interactions when working on given tasks. The data were qualitatively analysed focusing on cognitive and social processing. The cognitive processing offered an understanding as to how the participants approached and processed the task, while the social processing provided an insight into how the participants interacted during task completion. Findings showed that both task types promoted episodes of negotiated interaction when the participants attempted task completion. However, close examination showed that the participants engaged in more intensive negotiations which were exploratory in nature and highly collaborative during decision-making task completion than during task completion of the jigsaw task type. The participants took the effort to explain, clarify, and even translate the English words to Malay language when their friend did not understand the English words in order to provide feedback to the group member. The results suggest that different task types elicit different kinds of

interaction from the learners, and how the participants approached and processed the tasks shaped the kind of learner interactions they generated.

Similarly, Foster and Ohta (2005) investigated the value of language classroom negotiation of meaning from both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. The participants were twenty young adults from various first language backgrounds studying intermediate level English language at a language academy in London. The data were gathered during an interactive classroom task where second language learners were observed to employ negotiation of meaning strategies such as clarification requests, comprehension and confirmation checks. The incidents of these negotiation moves were recorded only when communication problems were clearly signalled. The quantitative result showed that the incidence of negotiation of meaning was very low. The qualitative analysis of the data subsequently investigated what was going on in the long stretches of interaction that lacked any signs of meaning negotiation. The findings suggested that learners actively assist each other to transact the task through co-construction and prompting. The learners expressed interest and encouragement while seeking and providing assistance and initiating self-repair of their own utterances, all in the absence of communication breakdown. The findings also claimed that comprehensible input appeared to be of lower priority than maintaining supportive and friendly discourse.

Theoretically, the findings from these studies support the notion in Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) which assumes that when the learners interact, they make both conversational and linguistic modifications that facilitate SLA. Vygotsky's emphasis on interaction seems closely related to Long's Interaction Hypothesis, because Vygotsky and Long both highlighted the importance of meaningful interaction. Closely related is the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 2000, 2007) which posits that the act of producing the target language (speaking or writing) constitutes part of the second language acquisition process. When the participants interacted, they not only received input but also produced the target language and made modifications as they explored and generated ideas.

Output hypothesis

A number of researchers in second language acquisition have challenged Krashen's comprehensible input by claiming that while comprehensible input is necessary for second

language learning to occur, it is far from sufficient for development in the second language. In her Output Hypothesis, Swain (1985) argued that if the learners do not have regular opportunities to use the second language, their production skills (speaking and writing) would lag considerably behind their receptive (listening and reading) skills of comprehension. Output Hypothesis (1985) posits that producing oral language plays a critical role in the development of the second language because it gives the learners the opportunities to practise and thus automatise the production of the second language (Swain, 1985). While Krashen (1985) rejected the Output Hypothesis on the basis that output is too scarce to make a real contribution to SLA, Long (1996) noted that Output Hypothesis is “useful...because it elicits negative input and encourages analysis and grammaticisation; it’s facilitative but not necessary” (p. 413).

Swain (2000) also hypothesised that comprehensible output serves four primary functions in SLA: it (1) enhances fluency; (2) creates awareness of language knowledge gaps; (3) provides opportunities to experiment with language forms and structures; and (4) obtains feedback from others about language use. Comprehensible output assists learners in conveying meaning while providing linguistic challenges; that is, “. . . in producing the L2 (the second, or target language), a learner will on occasion become aware of (i.e., notice) a linguistic problem (brought to his/ her attention either by external feedback or internal feedback). Noticing a problem ‘pushes’ the learner to modify his/ her output (1985, p. 249). From this perspective, comprehensible output plays an important role in interaction, which then supports second language acquisition, and offers opportunities for ELLs to acquire English through interaction.

Sociocultural theories view learning, including second language learning and acquisition, as dialogically based (Ellis, 2008; Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Ellis (2008) suggests that the primary means of mediation is social interaction. From this perspective, then, second language acquisition is not a purely individual-based process but one shared between an individual and other persons because second language learners realise that they can interact with their peers or teachers who speak the target language. Nonetheless, mediated learning does not necessarily occur in social interaction as it can happen during silent period.

3.4.2 Relationship within ZPD

Much research about Vygotsky's ZPD emphasises the integration of the affective dimension as the 'extended' version of ZPD (Levykh, 2008; Nelmes, 2003). Specifically, these researchers argue that ZPD can be developed as a conceptual framework to understand the role of human emotions in development and learning (Nelmes, 2003). Vygotsky (1986) remarked about the role of emotions in human development:

Thought is not begotten by thought; it is engendered by motivation, i.e. our desires and needs, our interests, and emotions. Behind every thought there is an affective-volitional tendency which holds the answer to the last "why" in the analysis of thinking. A true and full understanding of another's thought is possible only when we understand its volitional basis. (1986, p. 252)

Not only did Vygotsky claim that emotion afforded to thought, he established his theory on the basis that emotion and cognition were interdependent. Vygotsky (1986) criticised any study that separated emotion and cognition or ignored this interdependence (Nelmes, 2003). In addition, he warned against the practice of separating emotions, and cognitions (Levykh, 2008). Vygotsky stated that "the separation of the intellectual side of our consciousness from its affective, volitional side is one of the fundamental defects of all traditional psychology (p. 53). From this perspective, researchers assert that positive relationships within the educational context support ELLs to reaffirm their sense of belonging and security which then support their cognitive development to acquire English.

Vygotsky (1987) claimed that individuals use symbolic tools in order to mediate and regulate their relationships with other people. Similarly, they depend on the use of tools when acting directly on the physical world. Lantolf (2006a) argued that within ZPD the relationships between the teachers and the ELLs have a positive impact on the ELLs' English acquisition. There have been substantial studies that examine aspects of relationship such as implications of teachers' positive engagement with ELLs (Akrofi, Janisch, Zebidi, & Lewis, 2012); how the relationship creates a social context which scaffolds the ELLs' increased access to opportunities for acquiring English (Gillanders, 2007); how teachers would express their caring to ELLs in early childhood settings (Pappamihel, 2004); types of relational experiences of Hispanic ELLs (Jerome, 2009); how relationships affect interactions (Sullivan,

Hedge, Ballard, & Ticknor, 2014), and the relationships between the teachers and the parents of ELLs (Michael-Luna, 2013).

Akrofi, Janisch, Zebidi, and Lewis' (2012) study explored a second grade teacher's social interactional roles that promote effective literacy learning in a mainstream class. This study analysed interactions between the teacher and a case study ELL during 23 literacy lessons for two weeks as well as the ELL's instructional and assessment materials. The teacher set the literacy tasks which required the ELL to collaborate with the mainstream students. The ELL, in her learning journals, noted the teacher's engagement in supporting the collaboration. The findings identified that the teacher's roles were as a team builder and a team captain. The mainstream students and the ELL collaborated in the literacy tasks which encouraged the ELL to become a more competent peer and learner. This study illuminated that the teacher's positive engagement with the ELL had a significant influence on mainstream students' participation with the ELLs.

Another study that investigated positive engagement with ELLs was undertaken by Gillanders (2007). Gillanders (2007) investigated a teacher's relationship with Latino children and how the relationship creates a social context which scaffolds the ELLs' increased access to opportunities for acquiring English and for becoming fully involved in the classroom. Data sources of the study included 51 classroom observations, field notes and interviews with the case study teacher and the ELLs' parents. Despite a language barrier, findings of Gillanders' (2007) study highlighted that the teacher's interest in enhancing her relationship with the ELLs and helping them become part of the group was evident in her attitudes and practices. Among the strategies used by the case study teacher to promote positive relationships between herself and the Latino children was her attempt to speak Spanish and incorporate Spanish materials in her classroom. The teacher's use of Spanish gave the Latino's children a social status that increased their opportunities to engage in interactions with English-speaking children. Interestingly, the relationships between the ELLs and their English speaking children were also observed to be better compared to the beginning of the preschool year, because the English speaking children emulated the teacher's relationship with the ELLs. Gillanders (2007) argued that positive relationships with the ELLs can be achieved through both verbal language and body language. Gillanders' (2007) study found that at preschool level many nonverbal cues such as gently moving ELLs closer to the teacher when they

became frustrated for not being able to express themselves in English exhibited a willingness on the teacher's part to support the children as they acquired English. One implication of Gillander's (2007) study is that body language is an effective strategy as it can be generally understood universally and nonverbal cues are very powerful and transmitted clearly, whether used negatively or positively, about the teachers' feelings in a particular situation.

Akrofi, Janisch, Zebidi, and Lewis (2012), and Gillanders (2007) demonstrated that the teachers' good relationships with the ELLs have encouraged other mainstream children to interact with the ELLs. On the practical level, it simply means that if a teacher manipulates relationships in a way that encourages other children to socially interact with ELLs in a positive manner, this will enable ELLs to acquire English. Vygotsky (1978) pointed out that language is both a highly personal and profoundly social human process.

Similar to Gillanders' (2007) study, Pappamihel (2004) investigated how 28 pre-service teachers expressed caring to ELLs in the early childhood setting. The pre-service teachers were typical of early childhood teachers across the United States in that they were predominantly female, white, monocultural, monolingual and middle class. An interesting aspect of this group of pre-service teachers was that their programme of study philosophically emphasised the caring environment. The participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire administered by email. The findings highlighted that most of the participants would demonstrate caring in ways that address surface culture and linguistic concerns but did not address potential deep cultural differences. This was evident in the manner in which they would accommodate ELLs, indicating a superficial understanding of cultural difference. The findings also reported that there is a need to investigate an ELL's culture and make accommodations in the manner in which caring is demonstrated to include culturally appropriate indicators.

While Gillanders (2007) and Pappamihel (2004) denoted the importance of positive relationships between teachers and ELLs, Jerome's (2009) study offered insights about types of relational experiences Hispanic ELLs have in preschool, and whether these experiences differ from relational experiences of non-ELLs. The main participants included 351 Hispanic ELLs who were enrolled in three early childhood education centres and teachers at the respective centres. Parents and teachers reports were used as well as observational measures

to evaluate the quality of relationships and interactions. The findings of this study reported that Hispanic ELLs experience less conflict and less closeness with teachers than their English-proficient peers. The quality of relationships between the teachers and the ELLs varied according to child's gender, teachers' sensitivity, ELLs' language ability and teachers' ability to speak Spanish. The findings indicated that developing appropriate interventions may be able to promote success for Hispanic ELLs.

Similar to Jerome's study, which focused on the relationships and interaction between the teachers, the ELLs and the English speaking children, Sullivan, Hegde, Ballard & Ticknor (2014) examined two aspects: relationships between native English speaking kindergarten teachers, ELLs, and English speaking children; and whether native English speaking teachers differ in their interactions with ELLs and English speaking children. Through a sociocultural theoretical lens, a minimum of 30 kindergarten English speaking teachers in Eastern North Carolina were observed over a three-week period, as they interacted with the ELLs and the English speaking children. The findings highlighted that the teachers differed significantly in their closeness with the ELLs and the English speaking children, and the ELLs spent more time engaged in onlooker behaviours than the English speaking children. In terms of interaction, the teachers spent less time in interaction with the ELLs in comparison with English speaking children. The findings indicated that the differences within these relationships and interactions have a number of consequences that demand the attention of both individual teachers and teacher education programmes.

There is a scarcity of research investigating relationships between teachers and ELLs' parents which support ELLs as they acquire English. Michael-Luna's (2013) study explored what information linguistically diverse families hold about their bilingual children's English development and use. During the 24 month ethnographic study, 39 families attending a private dual language preschool programme participated in the study. Michael-Luna (2013) observed teacher-ELL interactions, after school activities and parents' events such as parent-teacher conferences. The study reported three key findings: parents can be careful observers of their children's English development, parents are critical of the current school assessment, and parents want and need to understand language development of their children. The findings indicated that parents of ELLs may be able to contribute to their children's English development if they are given the opportunity to do so and thus help to foster relationships

between the teachers and the ELLs' parents. Michael-Luna's (2013) study suggested that the information provided by the ELLs' parents might be able to help teachers understand formal and informal assessment data and create linguistically appropriate support for young ELLs and their families.

In summary, it is clear that relationships, as an affective domain in ZPD, play an important role in ELLs' English acquisition. Within the ZPD, the findings of the studies suggest that relationships can either support or hinder ELLs to acquire English. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to understand that positive relationships with the ELLs would encourage English speaking children to interact more with the ELLs as well as offer more opportunities for interactions between teachers and the ELLs.

3.5 Mediation through the silent period

Second language acquisition research by linguists has established well-accepted early stages for second language development (Tabor, 2008) and has drawn specific attention to what has been referred to as the silent period. Krashen (1985) referred to the silent period as the pre-production stage of second language acquisition when a second language learner is unable or unwilling to speak in his or her developing second language. In the process of language acquisition, second language learners need time to listen to others talk, to digest what they hear, to develop receptive vocabulary, to observe other's actions and they usually do these during the silent period (Krashen, 1985). Krashen (1985) also considered that the silent period is necessary for second language learners to think in their home language.

However research addressing the silent period from sociocultural perspectives has been scarce. Investigating the silent period through a sociocultural lens reveals the initial stage of second language acquisition as an important, but lesser acknowledged contribution to ELLs in ECE (Bligh, 2011). From sociocultural perspectives, the silent period can be regarded as self-mediated learning (Bligh, 2011; Vygotsky, 1986). Parents, siblings, and other family members across generations introduce language through the medium of the home language, which builds upon and serves as a cultural tool for social participation (Bligh, 2011). Home language, therefore, is an instrument of social relations which is internalised as thought. According to Vygotsky (1986), "the speech structures mastered by the child become the basic structures of his thinking" (p. 94). From this perspective, the ELLs think in their

home language during the silent period. This acts as a self-mediating tool which facilitates their acquisition of English.

Bligh (2011) argued that linguistics perspectives regard the silent period as a phase in the gaining of language competence, without acknowledging the complexities that occur in the shared learning practices and environment. Sociocultural approaches, on the other hand, recognise and embrace these complexities that exist within the social and cultural practices of learning.

In order to understand the emergence of English as a second language, Iddings and Jang (2008) observed a five year-old new immigrant ELL, Juan, in a mainstream kindergarten classroom, while he was going through the silent period. The observational analysis was based on three episodes depicting regularly occurring classroom practices: the Quiet Mouse, learning centres, and testing practices. The Quiet Mouse practice was performed during transitions between class activities mainly to keep students quiet. The finding on this practice highlighted that Juan had been attending to and learning language pertinent to the Quiet Mouse activity. The second episode was during 60 minutes each afternoon in which students participated in learning centre activities which reinforced mathematical and literacy concepts. The findings revealed that although only a few words were exchanged during these activities, Juan paid very close attention to the activities, and intently monitored the actions of other students. The last episode was the weekly teacher-made test which consisted of a one-page testing sheet and lasted for 20 minutes. These routine actions of testing established a joint attentional frame between the teacher and Juan through mediation of the testing procedures. Although Juan might fail to acquire content knowledge in the tests, he gained experiences in becoming more adept and natural in the activity. Juan might not have the linguistic base in English to fully engage in the content of instruction; however, he was able to understand others' communicative intentions, a prerequisite for language learning (Tomasello, 2003). Participating in the various classroom activities provided Juan with key interactional affordances for the understanding and internalisation of linguistic and non-linguistic types of interactions and thus, for English acquisition. The findings from these episodes suggested that Juan was intentionally and actively engaged in learning English during this period of silence.

Unlike Iddings' and Jang's (2008) study that examined how an ELL engaged in learning English during this silent period, Drury (2013) explored the learning experience of a four year-old ELL, Nazma, who had attended an ECE centre in England for seven weeks and refused to speak in English. Data sources included observations that took place in the ECE centre and Nazma's house, and interviews with her teachers and her mother. The findings revealed that during the first term, she did not speak to other children or participate in the activities. She only watched and was silent for much of the time in the centre. Nazma's teachers' concern about her silence was reflected in the report at the end of her four terms which stated: "Nazma is extremely reluctant to communicate in English". However, Nazma interacted well with a bilingual teacher who shared the same home language of Nazma. By drawing upon Nazma's home experiences and using home language, the bilingual teacher mediated between home and the centre. In contrast to her experience at nursery school, Nazma was lively and confident, and even used English when she played with her siblings at home. Drury (2013) argued that Nazma's learning experiences as she entered the centre revealed 'invisible learning' which went unrecognised by her teachers. Although the teachers acted with patience in response to Nazma's silent period, allowing time for her to orientate, and catch up with her English speaking peers, Nazma's learning experiences signal the urgent need to recognise the ELLs' home language and build upon their linguistic and cultural background; as well as understanding the role of the silent period in the wider sociocultural context of home and school.

Similar to Drury's (2013) findings that the silent period might not always be constructive for ELLs, Gibbons (2006) discovered that the initial silent period probably began as a period of 'silent incomprehension' and the prolonged silent period might be a result of psychological withdrawal rather than of language acquisition processes. Gibbons (2006) examined the silent period of forty-seven ELLs in Sydney primary schools through a survey. The early use of routines and patterns was also examined. This revealed a period of silence with a mean of just over two weeks, with very great individual variation. Gibbon's (2006) study dealt with three widely accepted propositions: (1) that ELLs will remain silent for a period of one or more months if they are not pressured to speak, (2) that this period of silence is necessary for intake and acquisition before speaking, and (3) consequently the second language curriculum should allow for an initial period of silence before speaking begins. The data for propositions 1 and 2 were examined and found to be based on inadequate research

with contradictory findings. These findings resulted in Gibbons (2006) consequently not only proposing that initial silence in the language curriculum is undesirable but also suggesting that the adoption of early routines and patterns might support ELLs.

In a more recent study, Bligh (2011) examined the emergent stage or silent period of English language acquisition, through the experiences of Adyta, a boy of Punjabi heritage, who attended his preschool playgroup and was aged three and a half years. It was initially presumed that Adyta would communicate in spoken English because both he and his parents were articulate Punjabi/English speakers. However, as is customary in many South Asian communities, the paternal grandmother lived with Adyta's parents. According to Adyta's mother, her mother-in-law kept the Punjabi alive and active within the family. Out of respect to Adyta's grandmother, the family members spoke Punjabi in the grandmother's presence. As both of Adyta's parents worked full-time Adyta's grandmother was his main carer and educator. Data gathering involved participant observations, unstructured interviews with monolingual participants, participant narratives and significant auto-ethnographic accounts. Adyta, who was observed to be a confident, fun-loving boy at home, remained almost silent in the pre-school setting. Since there was nobody at the centre who was able to interact in his home language and share Adyta's mother tongue, his learning was dependent upon making connections between what he already knew and what he was capable of understanding. The findings revealed self-mediated learning throughout the silent period, contextualised within legitimate peripheral participation which acted as a safe location through which Adyta could mediate his learning and make meaning of the practices around him. The findings also revealed that for Adyta, there was a preferred location for the emergent bilingual learner within the early years; on the periphery of practice. This location (legitimate, peripheral participation) facilitates fractionally increasing participation and offers the emergent bilingual learner a 'safe' location (on the periphery of practice) through which to observe, listen and copy the practices within the early years setting. Bligh (2011) claimed that notably absent in the findings was evidence of the early childhood teachers knowingly mediating learning during the silent period, and yet this mediatory role is considered as crucial (Vygotsky, 1978; Rogoff, 2003) for learning.

In summation, the silent period may be beneficial for second language acquisition from linguistic and sociocultural perspectives. However, sociocultural theories acknowledge and

accept the complexities that exist within the social and cultural practices of learning as reflected in the studies pertaining to the silent period.

3.6 Mediation by using home language and home culture

Sociocultural perspectives posit that social factors in the cultural, historical and institutional settings strongly shape who individuals are and how they think (Lantolf, 2000a; Vygotsky, 1978). The human mind, from the sociocultural perspective, is mediated by people's use of tools and signs as they engage in activities. In early childhood settings, these activities represent a set of social practices in which ELLs construct identities that in turn mediate their experiences with acquiring English. Home language, as part of the ELLs' identities and culture, are interrelated in the sense that ELLs bring to the early childhood centre the culture of their home and take home the culture of the centre.

There has been increasing acknowledgement of the importance of supporting home language development for ELLs. Many researchers highlight the importance of identity and culture including the role of home language in learning English as a second language. Wong Fillmore (2000), Leseman and van Tuijl (2006), and Peterson and Haywood (2007) noted the importance of developing cultural identity by sharing past experiences with the children while at the same time introducing increasingly more challenging vocabulary in their ELLs' home language. Sadly, the findings highlighted that many immigrant families and teachers do not understand the value that these home language and culture experiences have on their children's identity construction and English acquisition. Nevertheless, the issue of identity construction is complex for children who are linguistically and culturally diverse (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000). A number of studies have attended specifically to the issue of identity, home language, and culture for ELLs as they acquire English.

Wong Fillmore (2000) investigated a Chinese immigrant family in the United States of America. The children of Chen family, Chu-Mei and Kai-Fong were four and five years-old respectively when they migrated in 1989. Both began kindergarten at the same time and were placed in the same classroom. Chu-Mei and Kai Fong were 15 and 16 years-old at the time the study was carried out. However, the findings of the study reported they had contrasting experiences in kindergartens. Chu-Mei, soon after her enrolment in the kindergarten, made friends with English speaking children and acquired English as she tried

to interact with them and her teacher. She fitted into the social world of the kindergarten without much difficulty. In contrast, Kai Fong had quite a different experience in school. He was not as outgoing as his sister, and from the start, had difficulty establishing himself socially with his classmates. However, once he learned a little English, he stopped speaking Cantonese altogether despite the fact that his parents only spoke Cantonese at home. His sister, although she still spoke Cantonese, was not as fluent as she could be. She was unable to express herself fully in Cantonese. The findings indicated that immigrant children, who were learning English as a second language and dealing with school successfully, there was more than just one set of problems to be faced. Hanging on to their first language as they learned English was an equally great problem. Holding on to their sense of worth, their cultural identities, and their family connections as they become assimilated into the school and society was a tremendous problem for all immigrant children. Wong Fillmore (2000) suggested that teachers can help parents understand that they must provide children opportunities to attain a mature command of their first language in their home, whether or not it is supported in school.

Similarly, Zhang's ethnographic study (2010) investigated language shift of 18 Chinese immigrant families from two important Chinese communities in Philadelphia: University city with its neighbouring suburban areas and Chinatown with its close proximity areas. These two communities were greatly different, but representative of two important subgroups of the Chinese population in United States urban areas. The data source was mainly from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both the parents and their children focusing on how they encountered and learned English, and how their perceptions of their home language changed in the language contact. The findings revealed that the English abilities of Chinese parents varied vastly from individual to individual, ranging from a spectrum of minimum English ability to a very high level of English proficiency. In contrast, as reflected during the interviews, all of the children exhibited a strong preference for English. English had become a dominant language for all of the children who attended schools in the U.S. although they maintained a certain level of home language proficiency for their age.

Consistent with Wong Fillmore's (2000) study, the second generation of Chinese children in Zhang's (2010) study exhibited a swift shift to English and a strong preference for

English after schooling as a result of assimilation as they adapted to the mainstream educational system. As with Wong Fillmore's (2000) study, Zhang's (2010) study suggested the important role of teachers in assisting the understanding of ELLs' parents about their children's use of home language.

The important role of the teachers in negotiating with the ELLs' parents on the maintenance of their home language was also highlighted by Hu, Torr, and Whiteman (2014). They recommended that the teachers could negotiate with the ELLs' parents about their roles in supporting their home language. Hu, Torr, and Whiteman's study (2014) investigated five Australian ECE teachers' negotiation of working in partnership with Chinese parents regarding their children's use of language in ECE settings. Using semi-structured questions, the teachers were interviewed on the use of language by ELLs in ECE settings, their perception of the Chinese parents' language expectations, and their strategies in resolving the tension between parental expectation and the teachers' view on the ELLs' language use. The findings reported that the teachers identified the benefits of the ELLs using home language in the ECE centres in terms of children's social development, confidence, and sense of belonging, rather than specifically in the aspect of its potential to improve interaction and support either English or home language linguistic development. Nevertheless, three of the teachers acknowledged some social and communicative challenges when the ELLs used their home language in the centre. For example, English speaking children could not join in conversations with the ELLs whenever the ELLs used Chinese which resulted in social exclusion. The teachers reported that some Chinese parents discouraged their children from using their home language in the centre because the parents thought that there would be a negative effect on their children's English acquisition if their home language was used. The findings demonstrated that the teachers, regardless of their views on the ELLs' use of home language, were mainly concerned with what they considered to be most beneficial for children's learning.

The sociocultural framework situates learners as active meaning makers who interpret interactions as they make sense of their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). This framework provides an understanding of how learning is mediated by cultural artifacts such as speech. Studies specifically related to understanding the unique needs of ELLs demonstrate that there is a significant relationship between English proficiency and home language (Carlisle &

Beeman, 2000; Escamilla & Coady, 2005; Garcia, 2006). These researchers all recommend accommodating ELLs and the important role the native language plays in learning a second language. Carlisle and Beeman (2000) found that Spanish-speaking students who were taught in Spanish before English developed more complex sentences than their counterparts who did not get this type of instruction. Escamilla and Coady (2005) also investigated students' transfer of knowledge from their first language to the second. They argued that educators should understand the implications of teaching second language learners.

Castilla, Restrepo, and Perez-Leroux (2009) examined ELLs' first language influence on second language acquisition. This quantitative study assessed whether performance in a first language predicted success in the acquisition of a second language nine months after exposure to the second language began. Participants in this study were 49 pre-kindergarten Spanish-speaking children attending English-only pre-kindergarten classrooms. The participants were assessed in Spanish at the beginning of the school year using the Spanish version of the Bilingual English Spanish Assessment (BESA), Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) in words, and a lexical diversity measure, obtained from a language sample. Nine months later, the participants were assessed in English using the English-BESA. The findings indicated that in sequential bilingual preschool children, there was a strong relationship between Spanish as the first language and English as a second language. Thus, the findings supported developmental interdependence in sequential bilingual acquisition, in which first language development can predict second language development. Castilla, Restrepo, and Perez-Leroux (2009) proposed that native language skills predict the success in second language acquisition, not because of linguistic transfer, but by virtue of individual differences in language learning abilities present in typical populations.

3.7 Beliefs as conceptualised in sociocultural theories

An increasing strand of research notes that teachers' beliefs and practices should be examined within the sociocultural contexts of their work because the relationship between their beliefs and practices is both complex and context dependent (Mansour, 2013). Research focusing on teachers' beliefs and practices cannot be isolated from the sociocultural context because the research is usually situated in a physical setting in which opportunities, limitations or external influences may derive from sources such as the teachers' educational background and parents' expectations. Beliefs, from sociocultural perspectives, are viewed as a specific type

of cultural artifacts that mediates human activity in a manner similar to tools, symbols, and signs (Alanen, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Beliefs have their origins in the social plane since they are constructed in and through social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural approaches to the study of beliefs about SLA and second language teaching and learning is relatively new (Alanen, 2003; Negueruela-Azarola, 2011).

There have been a wide range of definitions for the word ‘belief’; however there is a focused definition for belief in the context of second language acquisition. Kalaja and Barcelos (2003) defined beliefs as opinions and ideas that learners (and teachers) have about the task of learning a second/foreign language. Barcelos (2003) reviewed different ways in which beliefs have been constructed in SLA research: (1) in normative research, beliefs as opinions or generally inaccurate myths with regard to second language learning and teaching; (2) in metacognitive research, beliefs as metacognitive knowledge or representations characterised by some personal commitment; and (3) in contextual studies, beliefs as ideas which are interrelated with contexts and experiences of participants.

From sociocultural perspectives, beliefs are social in origin, but not merely social in the general sense. That is, beliefs are regarded as systems about how the social domain is internalised into the private domain, to then once again become social (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011). From these sociocultural perspectives, beliefs are socially historical, social in origin, but also dynamically and personally transformed in the process of internalisation (Kalaja and Barcelos, 2003). Beliefs must be both socially relevant and personally meaningful to maintain significance for the self (Negueruela-Azarola, 2011). Beliefs as conceptualisations transform an individual’s cognition because those beliefs transcend the individual’s understanding in practice.

Research on teachers’ beliefs over the last two decades in the field of second language acquisition demonstrate that beliefs assume an important position in influencing learning and pedagogical practices. Within early childhood research considerable emphasis has been placed on examining teachers’ beliefs about developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom. However, very little is known about teachers’ beliefs and practices particularly regarding how the teachers support the ELLs as they acquire English.

There is a body of research which examines teachers' beliefs and practices in the context of ELLs. Seungyoun, Butler, and Tippins (2007) studied an early childhood teacher's perspectives on working with ELLs. The in-depth interviews focused on the teacher's knowledge, beliefs, and experiences about diversity. The findings revealed that the teacher believed that the issues of ELLs and their families are the most important aspects of diversity. In particular, she emphasised the difficulties of communicating with ELLs and their parents and the need to support English acquisition for ELLs. She also reported that the ELLs were found to participate less frequently than their peers in classroom activities. Despite the challenges, she perceived that it is important to create a safe learning environment for ELLs. She also described the importance of active interactions with ELLs, teachers' positive attitudes of acceptance, understanding and willingness to learn about ELLs' cultures. Among teaching strategies that she considered effective in supporting English acquisition are role-playing and using children's literature. Interestingly, she indicated the importance of teachers' "vulnerability" with respect to ELLs' language learning. Showing ELLs that English is a language like their own and also that teachers are "vulnerable" learners when learning a new language, she hoped to enhance the ELLs' self-esteem as they acquire English.

Similarly, Yoon's (2008) study examined regular classroom teachers' beliefs about their roles with regard to ELLs and the relationship between their teaching practices and the students' reactions and positioning of themselves in the classroom. Data gathering included in-depth interviews with three teachers and six ELLs, and extensive observations in their classrooms. The findings suggested that the teachers' beliefs about their roles varied based on their positioning of themselves as teachers for all students, as teachers for regular education students, or as teachers for a single subject. In addition, these teachers' concepts of their roles focusing on the ELLs' linguistic needs seemed to be related to how the teachers viewed the ELLs' learning in the regular classroom. For example, the teachers failed to recognise the importance of the teachers' active and diverse roles to support the ELLs' learning when they viewed language learning as a simple subconscious process. As for the teachers' pedagogical practices and their interactions with the ELLs, Yoon's (2008) study revealed different levels of participation in the classroom contexts and their positioning of themselves as powerful or powerless, poor students. Another noteworthy finding of Yoon's (2008) study was that mainstream students followed the teachers' model in interacting with ELLs. The mainstream students in a class with one participant teacher, who encouraged her ELLs to participate in

classroom activities, actively interacted with the ELLs. In contrast, the mainstream students in class with another teacher, who rarely showed interest in the ELLs, did not encourage the ELLs' participation and resisted working with the ELLs. This finding suggests that the teachers' active or passive involvement influenced the mainstream peers' interactive positioning of the ELLs as acceptable or unacceptable.

3.7.1 Internalisation of beliefs as conceptualising activity

Alanen (2003) claimed that "beliefs are very specific types of mediational means, or rather mediation-means-in the making" (p. 65). Sociocultural theories view beliefs as mediational means; beliefs are both stable and changing. From this perspective, beliefs are regarded as psychological tools which are stable yet dynamic, social yet personally significant, situated yet generalisable (Kozulin, 1998). In this sense, Negueruela-Azarola (2011) argued that beliefs are permeable because of their social meaning but susceptible to change due to their contextual nature. Permeability permits for the understanding of beliefs as situated social ideas emergent in concrete activities.

Negueruela-Azarola (2011) undertook a study to explore eight in-service teachers' internalisation of beliefs as conceptualising activity in a second language classroom context while they attended a graduate course. The course introduced a sociocultural approach to second language teaching. A variety of textbooks, articles, and book chapters was used to base classroom discussion and reflection. The course integrated a variety of reflective activities from the course including classroom debates, practical workshops, and classroom observation of other instructors, self-observations, peer feedback, and weekly lesson planning. To promote internalisation of beliefs, one of the objectives of the course was to identify critical theoretical notions for language teaching that could be contrasted with personal beliefs so as to be defined, synthesised, evaluated, and applied to articulating and understanding concrete pedagogical practices. The findings suggested that the very process of connecting personal beliefs with new theoretical notions and concrete pedagogical tasks promotes the internalisation of beliefs as conceptualising activities. For example one teacher was able to explain a theoretical notion in her own words, connect it to her personal beliefs and give an example of a pedagogical practice she did in the classroom based on the theoretical notion. The findings also suggested that the critical link in second language teaching was that the teachers used concepts as tools for understanding practical activity and

this conceptual manipulation is the privileged source for observing the emergence of beliefs as conceptualising activity.

In another study, Wan, Low, and Li (2011) examined how a group of Chinese university teachers and the two groups of their English major students used metaphors to represent their beliefs relating to teachers' roles in teaching English as a second language. The central aims of the study were to examine the effects of metaphor analysis concerning beliefs about classroom teachers' roles by both teachers and learners, including the comparing of accounts by students at different levels of English proficiency. The findings highlighted mismatches regarding the interpretations of the teachers' roles between the learners and teachers. The findings also suggested that metaphor functioned as a powerful mediational tool in gaining insights into learners' and teachers' beliefs. Engaging in interactions involving 'teacher' metaphors between students and teachers worked reasonably well in resolving conflicts in beliefs across the two groups and led to willingness for changes in teaching practice by most teachers. The findings claimed that metaphor analysis linked to sociocultural approach can be effective as a way of accessing how beliefs about pedagogical practices impact on evaluations by teachers and learners. The key limitation to this study was that it was not possible to establish how far the teachers did, in fact, make changes to their programmes based on findings of this study.

Negueruela-Azarola (2011) argued that the relationship between thinking, articulations of beliefs through language, and actions as learners and teachers in second language educational context is not a direct one. The multifaceted and sometimes contradictory relationships between thinking, talking, and doing as learners and teachers are difficult to capture in research as well as in theories of learning, development and cognition. Negueruela-Azarola (2011) explained the complexity as the following:

that which we know (ideas that are applicable in actual practice) and that which we think we know (ideas about the nature of our ideas and actions) has an influence on what we do (actions) and what we think we do (ideas about our actions that explain post facto what we do but do not always orient in practice. (p. 361)

More studies which explore the sociocultural approaches need to be undertaken in order to have a better understanding of how beliefs influence teachers' pedagogical practices as well as learners' strategies in the field of SLA.

In this section, I have argued that teachers' beliefs and practices in second language acquisition should be discussed within the context of sociocultural contexts due to the complexity and dependency of the relationship between beliefs and practices. I have also discussed the internalisation of beliefs as a conceptualising activity. Empirical studies related to these concepts of beliefs were discussed in the context of second language acquisition.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature relevant to the key areas, within the sociocultural framework, in this present study: mediated learning and beliefs. Evidence from the literature has demonstrated social interactions, relationship, and home language as the mediating roles for ELLs to acquire English. Significant findings from related studies on interactions, relationships, home language, and beliefs have been discussed in this chapter, emphasising that sociocultural theories have become a major force in second language acquisition, reflected in the growing numbers of research articles and doctoral theses that draw on them (Ellis, 2008; Lantolf, 2006b).

It is worth noting that in the literature reviewed, researchers who foreground sociocultural perspectives in their research seemed to have established their own agenda. Despite the label of 'sociocultural', the researchers did not seek to explain how learners acquire the cultural values of a second language but rather how knowledge of the second language is internalised through experiences of a sociocultural nature.

To date, the research into supporting ELLs as they acquire English has mostly been with strategies by the teachers at school level, and there has been a scarcity of research investigating the strategies of early childhood teachers to support second language acquisition in early childhood education settings. In the context of New Zealand early childhood education, there has been scarcity in research that specifically investigates the teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting Asian immigrant ELLs. Therefore, this present study

hopes to fill the gap in the research area pertaining to English acquisition within the sociocultural framework.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological focus and methods of the study in two parts. In the first part, I discuss the theoretical lens I brought to the study and outline related research design decisions. Methodologically, I located this study within a phenomenological perspective and adopted phenomenological approaches. In the second part of this chapter, I describe how I carried out this study in response to my research focus, and identify the research questions, and the methodological focus. A clear understanding of the methodology and methods has assisted me to interpret data trustworthily, reliably, and critically.

Methodology and methods are distinctive concepts, as noted by scholars. According to Dew (2007, p. 433) methodology refers to “the principles underlying particular research approaches, as distinct from methods, which are ways of gathering data”. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argued that ‘methodology’ is a more generic term that refers to the general logic and theoretical perspective of a research project, while ‘methods’ is a term that refers to a specific technique a researcher uses such as interviews and observations. In the same vein, Liamputtong (2013) emphasised that methodology comes prior to method and is more fundamental as it provides the philosophical groundwork for methods. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) claimed that methods should be consistent with the methodology in order to produce high quality research. In addition, Mutch (2005) argued that methodologies are the encompassing links between theories and research practices.

There are a number of methodological theories that researchers adopt in qualitative research. In this study, I chose qualitative research design considers relevant key sociocultural concepts to my study which are tools and symbols as mediation, internalisation, and ZPD. Phenomenology as a position of enquiry to provide an in-depth, ‘thick’ description (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and understanding of the early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices in supporting Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs) as they acquire English.

Part 1

4.2 Qualitative Design

The suitability of a research design derives from the nature of the social phenomena to be explored. A qualitative design has been chosen for this study. A research design explains a flexible set of guidelines that relate a theoretical paradigm first to strategies of enquiry and then to the choice of appropriate methods for collection of empirical materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Similarly, a research design connotes the plan for what is to be investigated and how this is to be undertaken (Edwards, 2010; Grieshaber, 2010). Qualitative researchers have a design which is based on theoretical assumptions, on traditions of data-collection, and on generally stated substantive questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In general, the main purpose of qualitative study is to provide an in-depth description and understanding of human experience (Lichtman, 2010; Hughes, 2010).

I aim to describe and explain a phenomenon: early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices as they support English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs). An investigation of this phenomenon provides insights into how ELLs can be supported in their English acquisition by early childhood teachers in New Zealand early childhood education (ECE) centres. Qualitative researchers typically attempt to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them by studying them in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) rather than contriving artificial situations or experiments (Lichtman, 2010). Merriam (2009) claimed that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, the meaning people have constructed, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). The qualitative research paradigm assumes "the best way to learn about people's subjective experience is to ask them about it, and then listen carefully to what they say" (Silverstein & Auerbach, 2003, p. 23). It is important to understand how the participants make sense of their lived experiences from their own perspectives and not the researcher's.

Qualitative researchers seek to gather rich information about people's activities in natural settings through building on insiders' perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In an effort to obtain richly descriptive data, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation analysis (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Compared to other methods of data collection, qualitative researchers are responsive to the context, adaptable to circumstances, and involved in fieldwork where the researchers must physically go to the people, setting, and site in order to observe behaviour in its natural setting (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers also seek to probe deeply into research settings in order to obtain understandings about the way things are, why they are, and how the participants in the context perceive them (Gay, 2000). As the primary instrument for data gathering and data analysis in this study, I aimed to investigate New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting ELLs as they acquire English. I carried out my investigation in two ECE centres over a period of six weeks for each centre. I interviewed the teachers twice during pre- and post-observations, and the Asian parents once, as well as observations on my case study children and teachers.

4.3 Position of enquiry: Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the most commonly used methodological theory in qualitative research (Liamputtong, 2013). A phenomenological position describes, interprets and seeks to understand how individuals experience phenomena (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009; van Manen, 1997) within the everyday social contexts in which the phenomena occur, from the perspective of those who experience them (Titchen & Hobson, 2005) and those who are involved in them (Wilson, 2002).

Phenomenology arose as a philosophy in Germany before World War 1 and has since occupied a prominent position in modern philosophy. It challenged the dominant views of the time about the origin and nature of truth. The word phenomenon comes from the Greek *phaenesthai*, to flare up, to show itself, to appear. Thus the motto of phenomenology: "*Zu den Sachen*" which means both "to the things themselves" and "let's get down to what matters!" (van Manen, 1990, p. 184). Phenomenology was founded as a philosophy by a German mathematician, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) around 1900 and further developed as an existential philosophy by Martin Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. It has been widely used in the social and human sciences (Moran, 1999). The subject matter of phenomenology began with consciousness and experience, and was then expanded by Husserl and also Heidegger to include the world of human life (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009; Creswell, 2007). As a philosophy, phenomenology is associated with the writings of Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Arendt, Levinas, Sarte, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida (Moran, 1999). Although none

of the phenomenological philosophers developed research methods, their philosophies are often used to fortify contemporary qualitative research (Fleming, Gaidys & Robb, 2003).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Amadeo Giorgi (1985), Donald Polkinghorne (1976) and Max van Manen (1984, 1989, 1990), among others, began promoting the use of phenomenological qualitative methods in psychological and educational research (Kakkori, 2009; Titchen & Hobson, 2005). Increasingly, the value of investigating the phenomenon of professional practice has also been highlighted by many qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2012; Liamputtong, 2013; Lichtman, 2010; Titchen & Hobson, 2005).

A phenomenological approach is the theoretical orientation most relevant to this educational study of professional practice because it attempts to understand the meaning of events and interactions from the point of view of individuals in social contexts in which these events take place (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) in order to generate knowledge about individual experience (Leavy & Hesse-Biber, 2011). In trying to arrive at this kind of understanding, researchers are expected to ‘bracket’, or suspend any prejudgments about the phenomenon so that they may ‘see it as the participant would see it’ (Creswell, 2007; Dahlberg, 2006; Daly, 2007, p. 98). Heidegger, among many, saw this absolute bracketing as being unrealistic (Dahlberg, 2006). Researchers will naturally enter the research field with biases and indeed with enthusiasm and interest about the phenomenon being studied usually because of their own experiences. Some bracketing or setting aside of pre-conceived notions is important but one’s own experience can be channelled to encourage a deeper meaning. Henriksson (2012) claimed that novice researchers often misunderstand this process of bracketing as an initial first step where subjective bias is acknowledged as part of the project to establish the rigor and validity of the research. In my experience, it seems to be impossible to detach personal interpretations from the phenomena that are of personal interest. Thus, I had to be aware of my own experience being infused into both engagement in the interviews and the analysis of data.

Titchen and Hobson (2005) claimed that “phenomena can be *directly* [emphasis in original] examined by exploring human *knowing* [emphasis in original], through accessing consciousness, and *indirectly* [emphasis in original] by investigating human *being*, through accessing the senses and shared background meanings and practices” (p. 121). In other words,

the idea of different perspectives can be obtained in two ways: foreground (directly) and background of the phenomenon (indirectly). The foreground perspectives can be accessed through participants' consciousness while background phenomena can be accessed through the researcher's engagement in the participants' world (Titchen & Hobson, 2005). For example, in my study, I examined the teachers' perspectives directly by interviewing them about their perspectives in relation to how they perceived they would support the ELLs, and I investigated whether the teachers actually made sense of their perspectives by observing their practices while working with the ELLs.

Originally, the ideas of the direct and indirect phenomenological approaches were formed as a result of German philosophers searching for a new interpretive science. The philosophers' ideas were based on the investigation of life and social worlds through the study of context and the individuals' own constructions and meanings within that context. This work led to the development of two philosophical frameworks that influence interpretive research methodologies today. The direct phenomenological approach was introduced by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), premised on epistemological concerns which emphasised the separation of a conscious person in a world of object. In contrast, the indirect approach was formulated by Martin Heidegger's view, on the basis of ontological concerns, that humans must be immersed in the world and not separate from it. While some researchers tend to adopt either direct or indirect phenomenological approaches due to philosophical and methodological oppositions, Titchen and Hobson (2005) claimed that researchers are clear about the methodological distinctions.

Being aware of the distinctions and implications of direct and indirect phenomenological approaches, I used both approaches in complementary ways in my study to offer a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon. When investigating foreground perspectives, I adopted an uninvolved and detached approach in order to engage in the participants' mental representation as they experienced it. In contrast, when examining background perspectives, I adopted an involved, connected observer stance and immersed myself in the participants' everyday world so that I could better understand the participants' intuitions. Through working with the participants in a reflective way and gathering information about their perspectives through conversations, interviews and observations, I could obtain insights into the meanings that they bring to their individual actions. Taking a

phenomenological approach allowed me to foreground the early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices against my experience and the pre-given meanings in present research literature. Thus, the use of direct and indirect phenomenological approaches in this study enabled me to understand better the lived experience of early childhood teachers and ELLs within ECE settings in the context of English acquisition.

Phenomenology, in qualitative educational research, tends to be misunderstood (Magrini, 2012). There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is that researchers working in the field often emulate and imitate the dense writing styles of the philosophical forerunners in phenomenology such as Hegel, Brentano, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty (Magrini, 2012). Consequently, the writing is beyond the comprehension of many education professionals and practitioners. Phenomenology need not be highly complex, and it is important that educators are able to see the potential this philosophical practice might hold for enhancing educational endeavours.

Van Manen is the most famous educational researcher to use phenomenological approaches successfully in his research (Kakkori, 2009). Known mainly for his concept of lived experience and his hermeneutic-phenomenological method, van Manen (1990, pp. 7-8) argued that not all educational scientists and researchers who use phenomenological approaches have to be philosophers. I agree with van Manen's view and his work has guided many of my research related decisions.

Van Manen chose to focus on how research can be used "to make interpretative sense of the phenomena of the life world in order to see the pedagogic significance of situations and relations of living with children" (p. 2). His emphasis on a human science methodology that serves the practical aims of pedagogy resonated with my aims to not only explore the lived experiences of my participants but to have some impact on the pedagogical competence of teachers working with ELLs. The central purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of a group of early childhood teachers as they support ELLs' English acquisition. More specifically, I aimed to find out what the teachers saw as the essence of the meanings around the phenomenon of how ELLs can be supported in their English acquisition by early childhood teachers in New Zealand early childhood education (ECE) centres.

4.3.1 Phenomenology and sociocultural theories

Phenomenology, as the position of inquiry, orients myself to the phenomenon and reflects on the meaning of the experiences of the teachers. This position allowed the experiences of my participants to be presented in a direct and evocative manner, encouraging the reader to enter into the experiences described. Sociocultural theories, as the main theoretical framework, provide perspectives on the process of SLA using the relevant concepts such as mediation and ZPD. Therefore, phenomenology focuses more on the teachers' and parents' interpretation of the phenomenon studied while sociocultural concepts analyse the perspectives of ELLs, the teachers and the Asian parents' perspectives with regard to ELLs' English acquisition.

In the context of commonalities between phenomenology and sociocultural theories, both share several crucial understandings of the relation between thought and action, communication and contexts, or situations. In addition, phenomenology and sociocultural theories emphasise on the aspect of intentionality which explains that consciousness and action are always directed toward someone, something, some object (Van Manen, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). These commonalities can offer meaningful analysis of the data and rich understanding of the phenomenon.

4.3.2 Essence: Key concept in phenomenological research

Phenomena may be appreciated as essences, and describing phenomena and their essences is a common methodological goal in phenomenological research (Dahlberg, 2006). As Merleau-Ponty (2013, p. xx) emphasised in his famous preface to 'Phenomenology of Perception', "Phenomenology is the study of essences and it holds that all problems amount to defining essences such as the essence of perception or the essence of consciousness". The idea of essences is central in Husserlian philosophy, but Husserl had a philosophical analysis in mind and in order for this idea to be valid in empirical phenomenological research, it has to be interpreted (Dahlberg, 2006).

An essence could be understood as a structure of essential meanings that explicates a phenomenon of interest (Merleau-Ponty, 2013). Seeing essences as belonging to the everyday world, Husserl (1998, p. 41) argued:

The truth is that everyone sees ‘ideas’, ‘essences’ and sees them, so to speak, continuously; they operate with them in their thinking and they also make judgments about them. It is only that, from their theoretical ‘standpoint,’ people interpret them anyway.

In other words, the essence or structure is what makes the phenomenon to be that very phenomenon (Dahlberg, 2006). The focus on the essence of an experience in a phenomenon is trying to understand the basic structure of that experience and interpreting the meaning it has for a person or a group (Suter, 2012). As a social researcher drawing on phenomenological approaches, I aimed at capturing the essences of the lived experiences of early childhood teachers in a phenomenon where they supported the ELLs’ English acquisition through interviews and observations with the participants.

4.3.3 Procedures of Phenomenological inquiry

Van Manen (1990) suggested six practical approaches which may be useful in doing hermeneutic phenomenological human science research. However, van Manen (1990) cautioned that these approaches are meant not to prescribe a mechanical set of procedures, but “to animate inventiveness and stimulate insight” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30). The approaches may also be viewed as a dynamic interplay among six research activities: (1) choosing a phenomenon which the researcher is really interested in; (2) examining the experience as the researcher lives it rather than conceptualises it; (3) reflecting on the important themes which characterise the phenomenon; (4) describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting; (5) maintaining a solid and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; and (6) balancing the research context by giving consideration to the parts and the whole. In carrying out my study, I used these approaches and found that they were useful in ensuring that I was able to understand the phenomenon of my study.

In summary, in Part 1, I have discussed the qualitative design as related to my study. I have presented an outline of the brief history of phenomenology, and its key concepts as a research position of inquiry. In addition, I have described van Manen’s (1990) procedures of phenomenological inquiry. In the next section, I discuss my research practice in investigating the early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices in supporting the ELLs’ as they acquired English.

Part II

4.4 Research practice in making inquiry

In this second part of the chapter I describe how I designed and undertook the study in response to my research focus, the research questions, and the theoretical orientations described above. I begin by describing my application to gain ethical approval to carry out the study in order to move into the field and I discuss important aspects of this process. I then describe the data generation tools and processes in more depth and outline the process I used to introduce the research participants.

4.5 Gaining ethical approval for the research project

In February 2012, I applied to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) of University of Canterbury Ethics. In preparing my application I focused closely on two issues in particular: respect for the early childhood teachers; and minimisation of risk of harm to them. In qualitative research, the participant is regarded as the expert in relation to his or her experiences, interpretations, and representations. My ethical stance as a researcher was to respect each participant's views during the interviews. Before commencing the field research, an approval was obtained from ERHEC of University of Canterbury (Appendix A). Thus, this study was conducted in accordance with ethical norms and was subject to ethical appraisal and approval of both its means and ends as required by ERHEC of University of Canterbury.

4.5.1 Documentation

A set of documents were submitted to the ethics committee. These documents: information letter for management of ECE centre (Appendix B), pamphlet for management (Appendix C), management consent form (Appendix D), information letter for case study teacher (Appendix E), pamphlet for case study teacher centre (Appendix F), case study teachers' consent form (Appendix G), information letter for case study parents (Appendix H), pamphlet for case study parents (Appendix I), case study parents' consent form (Appendix J), information letter and consent form for all teachers and staff (Appendix K), pamphlet for teachers and staff (Appendix L), information letter and consent form for all parents (Appendix M), pamphlet for all parents (Appendix N), information booklet for case study children (Appendix O), case study children consent form (Appendix P), information booklet for all children (Q), and all

children consent form (Appendix Q). On the application forms, detailed information about this doctoral study was provided such as the research aims, data collection methods, and rationale of the study, and participants of the research.

Information letters informed the participants about this doctoral study, my responsibilities as a researcher and how they could participate in the study. The information letters for the teachers were written in English and those for parents were translated according to their first language, when necessary. The participants were reassured about their rights including the right to withdraw from the study. The consent form for children included both picture and words that children could understand and parents were requested to assist me in seeking consent from children using the form provided. All participants were asked to sign the form if they agreed to participate in the study.

4.5.2 The principles of ethical conduct

Ethics are very important in research especially when human beings are involved as participants. Lichtman (2010) identified principles of ethical conduct which include that participants will not be involved in any situation in which they might be harmed, participants' privacy will be guaranteed, information provided to the researcher by the participants will be treated in a confidential manner, participants will be informed the nature of the study and given a choice to participate in the research, the researcher is responsible to develop good rapport with the participants, the conduct of the researcher will not be excessively intrusive, and the researcher will interpret the data supported by sound evidence.

During the research process, I strictly followed the procedures as described in the ethical application. Professional ethical judgments are an important part of the ethical practice of this doctoral study as they "are not a statement of task or preference, nor they are the same as personal morality or law. Professional ethical judgments are a guide to what we ought to do and not to do as professionals" (Feeney, 2010, p. 73).

4.5.3 Informed consent

Informed consent entails informing the research participants about the overall purpose of investigation and the main features of the design, as well as any possible risks and benefits

from participation in the research project. Informed consent further involves obtaining the voluntary participation of the people involved, and informing them of the right to withdraw from the study at any time (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009).

Through briefing and debriefing, the participants were informed about the purpose, and the procedures of the research project. This included information about confidentiality and who would have access to the interview or other material; the researcher's right to publish the whole interview or parts of it, and the participant's possible transcription; and the analysis of the quantitative data.

4.5.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality in research implies that private data identifying the participants will not be disclosed. If a study publishes information that is potentially recognisable to others, the participants should agree to the release of identifiable information (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009, p. 72). In a qualitative interview study where participants' statements from a private interview setting may appear in public reports, precautions need to be taken to protect the participants' privacy.

4.6 Case Studies

Qualitative case studies are prevalent throughout the field of education (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Stake (2006a) claimed that case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what to be studied. A qualitative case study approach has been selected for this study for "its very uniqueness, for what it can reveal about a phenomenon, knowledge we would not otherwise have access to (Merriam, 2009, p. 33). Being new to New Zealand ECE and having had no access to early childhood education and care in New Zealand, it was essential for me to understand the range of early childhood teachers' experiences in dealing with ELLs in order to explore and explain the essence of the lived experiences of early childhood teachers. The term 'essence' may be "understood as a linguistic construction, a description of phenomenon" (van Manen, 1990, p. 39). In other words, the essence is the central underlying meaning of the experience shared within the different lived experiences.

There are many different types of qualitative case studies. Each type has special considerations for determining its feasibility for study as well as the procedures to be employed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) highlighted four types of case studies: historical organisational case studies, observational case studies, life history, and documents. On the other hand, Yin (2009) claimed that there are three different types of case studies, namely: exploratory case studies, descriptive case studies or explanatory case studies. Even though each type of case study has its distinctive characteristics, there are a number of overlaps between them.

Case studies are concerned with a strong description and explanation of situations regarding cases. Merriam (2009) explained that qualitative case studies give an in-depth description of a particular instance, which reveals in detail the meanings associated with this instance. Stark and Torrance (2005) stated that case study seeks “to engage with and report the complexity of social activity in order to represent the meanings that individuals bring to those settings” (p. 3). Case studies assume that things may not be as they seem and privilege in-depth inquiry into the coverage and understanding of “the case” rather than generalising to a population at large (Stark & Torrance, 2005). My research questions: ‘What do New Zealand early childhood teachers state as their beliefs about supporting ELLs as they acquire English?’; ‘How do the teachers vary in their beliefs?’; ‘How do they perceive their support of English acquisition’, and ‘How can they support their ELLs by using sociocultural approaches?’ provided the rationales for conducting an exploratory and explanatory study. Patton (2002) argued that the *what* and *how* of qualitative inquiry are closely linked.

Qualitative case studies can be characterised as being particularistic, descriptive and heuristic (Merriam, 2009). Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular programme, event, or phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). This specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for situations arising from every day early childhood teacher’s practice in ECE centres with regard to supporting English acquisition for ELLs. Descriptive means that the end product of a case study is rich, ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009). Stake (2006b) highlighted that the ideal for most naturalistic, holistic, and phenomenological case studies is to provide description: subjective, potentially disciplined interpretation; a respect and curiosity for culturally different perceptions of phenomena; and emphatic representation of local settings. This phenomenological case study

aims to offer rich description of early childhood teachers’ beliefs and experiences within their local context.

Multisite case study (Merriam, 2009) or multiple case study (Stake, 2006a) or multi-case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) approaches align with the aim of my study, which is to investigate a phenomenon regarding teachers’ beliefs and practices in two ECE centres to support English acquisition for ELLs. Selected early childhood teachers from each ECE centre represented each case. Although each case was compared to others, I did not give emphasis to attributes for comparison. Instead, this phenomenological study aims to describe these cases in sufficient detail. Stake (2006a) argued that multicase study is not a design for comparing cases. Instead, the cases studied are “a selected group of instances chosen for better understanding of the quintain” (p. 83). It is instrumental study extended to several cases (Stake, 2006a) and involves collecting and analysing data from several cases (Merriam, 2009).

Multiple case studies offer a means of examining complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding a phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study result in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon as it “offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 41). The phenomenon under study is early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices to support English acquisition for ELLs. My study aimed to search for rich and in-depth forms of evidence about this phenomenon.

The stages involved in conducting multiple case studies are illustrated below:

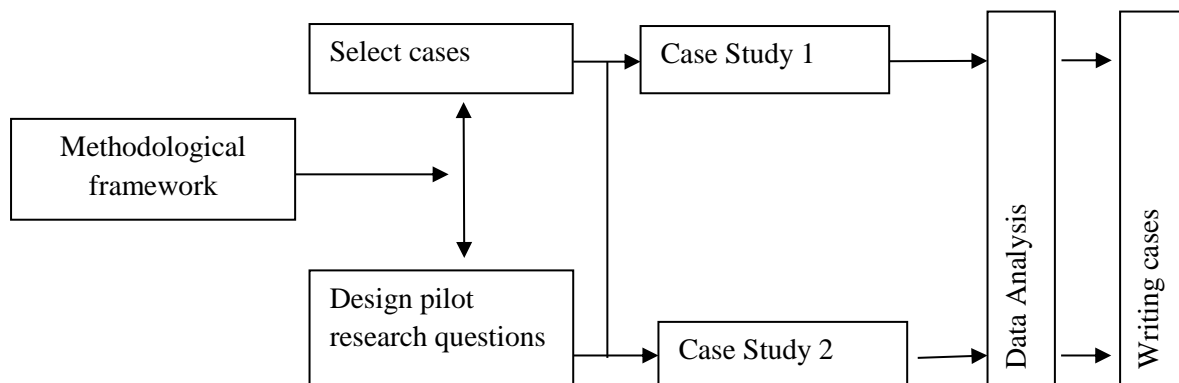


Figure One: Stages involved in the conduct of multiple case studies

In summary, the multiple case studies method allowed me, as a researcher, to retain the realistic and meaningful characteristics of early childhood teachers' real-life experiences in supporting English acquisition among ELLs and to provide a rich, thick description of the early childhood teachers' experiences. The next section describes the data generation tools and processes in more detail.

4.7 Participants and Setting

Purposive sampling was used in this study as a sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight from the participants and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned to illuminate the questions under study (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) claimed that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich-cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling" (p. 230). Creswell (2012) argued that the researcher must first determine what selection criteria are essential in choosing the sites or people to be studied in order to begin purposive sampling. Therefore, to find the best case to study, I would first need to establish the criteria that would guide case selection, and then select several cases that meet those criteria.

4.7.1 Selection criteria

Selection criteria for the sites to be studied represented early childhood services and programmes which operated on similar programmes. The more demographically similar the participants are the better a researcher's ability to understand the 'general' nature of the experience to be defined (Creswell, 2007). In this study, I narrowed down the demographics of the participants to the extent that I was able to find a sufficient number of participants to validate the study. It was important to examine teachers' beliefs and practices in similar programmes at ECE centres to offer information-rich-cases. The selection was based on a discussion with the head teachers, an analysis of their centre documentation, identification of the centre philosophies, and expected practices. The data from these discussions and documents provided an overview of philosophies and programmes of each ECE centre. An important criterion is the linguistic diversity of the children attending the ECE centres which was identified at this stage to ensure that a suitable sample number of child participants was

available. Two ECE centres which met the selection criteria were selected to provide the data. This decision was also made in order to meet the expectations about depth and quality, as well as the completion of the study within the time frame.

In the effort of obtaining rich-cases, the selection of participating teachers in this study followed two criteria. Firstly, they had to be qualified teachers. Qualified teachers have been selected for this study as they have undergone early childhood teacher education programmes in New Zealand and these programmes, while retaining roots in developmentalism, have increased their focus on sociocultural and bicultural approaches. Immediately after the implementation of *Te Whāriki*, some teacher education providers significantly redeveloped their ECE qualifications and aligned their programmes with its sociocultural direction (Farquhar & Fler, 2007). Currently, most early childhood programmes in New Zealand offer a three-year old diploma and/or degree to enable graduate students to teach children from birth to five years (Farquhar & Fler, 2007).

Another criterion for the selection of early childhood teachers at ECE services is that they have had experience working with ELLs of the age between three and four years because the children's first language is already established between these ages. Since this doctoral study focuses on early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for ELLs, it seems likely that this study would yield more meaningful data if conducted with teachers who are familiar with these children. Patton (2002) suggested specifying a minimum sample size "based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomena given the purpose of the study" (p. 246). The number of participants chosen allowed me to concentrate on each participating case and to document rich information to address the aims of this doctoral study.

4.7.2 Background of the ECE centres and the participants

My field work took place in two ECE centres in New Zealand. From the first centre, three teachers, three ELLs, and two Asian parents agreed to participate in my research project. The participants from the second centre were four teachers, three ELLs, and two Asian parents. All identifying markers such as the participants' names and the ECE centres were given pseudonyms at the outset of my study in order to protect their identity and

confidentiality in all documents, including the final report of this study and any subsequent articles or presentations.

Two centres which participated in my study were located in New Zealand. The first centre runs on a sessional basis with five morning and afternoon sessions for children below three years-old, and children between three years-old, and five years-olds. However, the second centre runs on the sessional basis with five morning and afternoon sessions only for children between two years-old and five years-olds. Both centres' programmes were based on *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), the New Zealand early childhood curriculum.

The first centre's philosophy was to observe each child and extend their natural interest. Therefore, the centre aimed to ensure that each child receives individual attention to enhance positive development. The centre was fully licensed for up to 55 children from birth to five years. It was divided into three areas of care: babies (up to six babies at any time and from six weeks to one year-old), toddlers (up to 28 aged one to turning three), and young children (up to 27 children aged three and four). The teacher/child ratios were above the minimum standards. They were 1:3 under one's, 1:4 one to three's, and 1:8 three to five's.

The philosophy of the second centre stated that the programme supports the holistic development of each child. It also emphasised reciprocal relationships with teachers and children. The centre was fully licensed for up to 37 over two year-old children. However, at the time of my observation, the children's enrolment was only 22. Therefore, the teacher/child ratios were above the minimum standards. They were 1:5 two to five's.

The teachers for both centres were all qualified and did their qualification in New Zealand tertiary institutions. All teachers were registered except for one teacher from the first centre who was still in the first year of her teacher registration. Teacher registration in New Zealand indicated their official membership of the teaching profession (New Zealand Teachers Council, 2014). All teachers had worked with a diverse range of children with home languages other than English including European, Māori, Asian, and Pasifika languages. For the first centre, Jennifer and Heather were English speaking teachers while Rosalind was a bilingual teacher who was very fluent in English and was not from Asian background. Jennifer had been teaching in different settings of ECE for almost twenty years. Heather had

been an ECE teacher for about four and half years. Rosalind had just been teaching in the first centre for almost two years when this present study began.

A summary of the teachers of the first centre is presented below:

Name of teacher	Language background
Rosalind	Bilingual
Heather	Monolingual (English)
Jennifer	Monolingual (English)

Table Two: Summary of the teachers of the first centre

For the second centre, Angela was the only English speaking teacher while Razan, Ming, and Akiko were bilingual teachers who had Asian backgrounds. Angela had been the Head teacher at the second centre for about four years. Razan had been teaching in the second centre for about five years while Ming and Akiko had the experience of teaching in the second centre for about three years. Apart from their experiences as bilingual teachers, they also have children who were raised in bilingual environment and attended English dominant educational settings.

A summary of the teachers of the second centre is presented below:

Name of teacher	Language background
Angela	Monolingual (English)
Razan	Bilingual
Ming	Bilingual
Akiko	Bilingual

Table Three: Summary of the teachers of the second centre

The three ELLs from the first centre who participated in my study were Hyun-woo, Seo-yeon, and Ji-Min. All of them shared the home language and had similar cultural background. Among the three participants, Hyun-woo was the oldest (he was four years- and six months old at the time of observation), and had been enrolled at the first centre since he was about two years old. Upon his enrolment, he attended an ECE programme for children below two years-old before moving on to the programme for children aged between three and five years-old. As he had been in the first centre since he was two years-old, Hyun-woo was familiar with the surrounding, the teachers, and had developed friendships with English speaking peers as well as other ELLs at the centre. According to the teachers, Hyun-woo gradually gained his confidence to interact with the teachers and his peers in English. Hyun-woo's family migrated to New Zealand six years ago but his mother, who always sent, and picked Hyun-woo's up from the centre did not speak English very well and declined to be interviewed.

Unlike Hyun-woo, Seo-yeon first enrolled at the first centre just before he reached three years-old, and attended the ECE programme for children below two years-old just for a few months before he moved on to the programme for children between three and five-year olds. When this study began, Seo-yeon was three years and three months-old, and had only attended above three years-old programme for about a few weeks. Seo-yeon, like Hyun-woo, was the eldest child in the family and had younger siblings. While Seo-yeon was perceived by the teachers as not proficient as Hyun-woo in English due to the difference of the time length spent at the ECE centre, he demonstrated considerably good efforts in acquiring English. Seo-yeon's mother, Subin, had her final high school in New Zealand and his father was a business man in New Zealand. She gave consent to be interviewed in this study and proficient in English.

Ji-Min was the third child participant of the first centre in my study and he was three years and two months. He shared similar time frame of enrolment and home language with Seo-yeon and therefore, always played together even before they both began the programme for children aged three to five years-old. Among the three case study children of the first centre, the teachers felt that Ji-Min was still at the initial stage of second language acquisition. Ji-Min's father, Jeoung, was concerned about Ji-Min's first and second language acquisition as Ji-Min had difficulty in expressing himself even in their home language compared to her

older brother and sister when they were at his age. Ji-Min's father was a postgraduate student at a university and the family migrated to New Zealand for about five years ago. I managed to interview Ji-Min's father in this study and he spoke English very well.

The summary of the case study children of the first centre is presented below:

Name of child and age	Name of parent interviewed	Indication of level of English competence	Other language spoken	Any adults or other children spoke child's home language
Hyun-woo (4 years and 6 months)	-	Gaining confidence to use English with friends and teachers	Korean	Children- Yes Adult -teacher reliever
Seo-yeon (3 years and 3months)	Subin	Demonstrated considerably good efforts in acquiring English.	Korean	Children-Yes Adult-teacher reliever
Ji-Min (3 years and two months)	Jeoung	The initial stage of second language acquisition.	Korean	Children-Yes Adult- teacher reliever

Table Four: Summary of each case study child of the first centre

Unlike Hyun-woo, Seo-yeon, and Ji-Min who spoke the same home language, the three ELLs of the second centre, Masaru, Shin, and Ji Hun did not share the same home language. While they have Asian background, they still had to rely on nonverbal language, and limited English to interact among themselves, and other children.

Masaru was the only girl among my case study children. She had been enrolled at the second centre once she reached three years-old. At the time of my observation, she was four years and five months. Compared to the first year when she first enrolled, the teachers commented that Masaru was more verbal in her second year at the centre, and had a few good friends whom she always played together. Masaru was the middle child in her family and according to her mother; she was very quiet but gradually speaking more English with her siblings at home than using their home language. Masaru's family migrated to New Zealand about five years ago when her father was offered a job in New Zealand. Masaru's mother,

Zhi, was willing to be interviewed although she was not able to speak in English very well, hence the interpreter during the interview.

Unlike Masaru who had been enrolled at the centre for almost two years (when this study began), Shin and Ji Hun had only been at the second centre for a few weeks when I began this study. Shin was three years and five months whereas Ji Hun was three years and two months at the time of my observation at the second centre. According to his teacher, while Shin was always seen to be playing with Ji Hun, Shin appeared to have been playing with more English speaking peers compared to Ji Hun due to their personality. Shin was described by the teachers as having a pleasant personality which encouraged other children to play with him. Shin's mother, Suzu, was an international student at a university and the family arrived in New Zealand about a year when I began my study at the centre. I was able to interview Suzu in this study and she was quite proficient in English.

Shin and Ji Hun were often seen playing together. However, Ji Hun appeared to be having difficulty in developing friendship with other children as they always did not invite him to play together or their play ended up in disagreement. Ji Hun rarely used English verbally but understood English fairly well. Ji Hun was the only child to his parents and the only grandchild to his grandparents from his mother's and father's side. Ji Hun was always sent and picked up by his grandparents from the centre. I did not get the consent to interview Ji Hun's parents for this study.

The summary of the case study children of the second centre is presented below:

Name of child and age	Name of parent interviewed	Indication of level of English competence	Other language spoken	Any adults or other children spoke child's home language
Masaru (4 years and 5 months)	Zhi	Used more English in her second year at the centre.	Chinese	Children- Yes Adult -Yes (One teacher)
Shin (3 years and 5 months)	Suzu	Began to acquire English as a result of playing with his English peers.	Japanese	Children-Yes Adult- Yes (One teacher)
Ji Hun (3 years and two months)	-	Rarely used English verbally but understood English fairly well.	Korean	Children-Yes Adult- teacher reliever

Table Five: Summary of the case study children of the second centre

I have introduced a summary of the participants' and the ECEs background in this section, based on the selection criteria, to provide better understandings of the participants and the contexts of scenarios in my study. In the following section, I describe phases of my study.

4.8 Phases of Study: Pilot and Main Study

This study was conducted in two phases, a pilot phase and a main study phase. One ECE centre was chosen to participate in the pilot case study. The selection of my pilot case study was based on convenience, access, and geographic proximity. The purpose of conducting the pilot study was to test the appropriateness of research methods regarding the efficacy of my approach to observations and interviews in drawing out early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices about supporting English acquisition among ELLs. Yin (2009) highlighted that a pilot case study helps a researcher to refine the data collection plans with respect to both content of the data and the procedures to be followed. Kezar (2000) argued for the importance of pilot studies for "obtaining first-hand, real world experience with the issue studied to enhance the research design, conceptualisation, interpretation of findings, and ultimately the results" (p. 385). Methodologically, the work on the pilot cases can provide information about relevant questions and about the logistics of the field inquiry (Yin, 2009). Procedures

designed for the main studies, which were the taking of field notes and conducting of interviews with teachers, as well as the approach proposed in the main study, were followed in the pilot study.

For both the pilot and main phases of the study, an initial contact was made with the management or owners of selected centres to get information on enrolment of ELLs in their centres as well as to seek the centre's consent to participate in this doctoral study. Following that, information letters written in English were sent to prospective participating teachers and to prospective participating parents. These letters explained the aims, background, timescale and data gathering process of the study and formally invited both parties to participate in this doctoral study. In this thesis, however, only data and findings from the main study were analysed and discussed to answer the research questions.

There were two major changes made to the final design of the main study as a consequence of the pilot study. In the pilot study, parents' views on their children's language acquisition and the value of home language were not sought as it was not considered as necessary. However, the analysis of data highlighted that parents' perspectives would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Another change involved was the interviews of the teachers. "Three-interview series" (Seidman, 2013) of phenomenological interviews were initially adopted in the pilot study where the teachers were interviewed three times and each interview was spaced from 3 days to a week apart. However, in the main study, the teachers preferred to be interviewed twice due to their time constraint. Therefore, the interviews for each teacher were reduced to two times. The structure of the interviews questions, however, remained similar to the questions asked in the pilot study. Seidman (2013) claimed that as long as a structure is maintained that allows participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives, alterations to the three-interview structure and the duration and spacing of interviews can certainly be explored.

4.9 Fieldwork strategies

Patton (2002) argued that "naturalistic observations take place in the *field* [emphasis in original]" (p. 262). There were several advantages of entering the field work when I carried out my pilot project. I was better able to understand and capture the ECE context within

which early childhood teachers interacted with the ELLs through direct observation. This first hand experience with the ECE setting and the people in the setting allowed me to be open and discovery oriented, without relying on prior conceptualisations of the setting. Understanding the context of my study was essential to providing a holistic perspective. I also had the opportunity to see things that routinely escaped awareness among the people in the setting and discovered things that paid less attention.

The first and most fundamental distinction that differentiates observational strategies concerns the extent to which an observer will be a participant in the setting being studied (Patton, 2002). Merriam (2009) claimed that in reality, researchers are rarely total participants or total observers. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argued that being a participant observer is more difficult for many doctoral students as it is time-consuming. Therefore, I tried to stay sufficiently detached to observe and analyse during my fieldwork. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) have illustrated the scenario of being in the fieldwork as:

In one way researchers join the subject's world, but in another way, they remain detached. They unobtrusively keep a written record of what happens as well as collect forms of descriptive data. They attempt to learn from the subjects, but don't necessarily emulate the subject. They may participate in the activities, but on a more limited basis, and they do not compete for prestige or status. They learn how the subjects think but they do not think like the subjects. They are empathetic, but also reflective. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 73)

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) claimed that most qualitative researchers do not do their fieldwork at more than one site at a time to avoid confusion and too much diverse data to manage. Occasionally, the researchers may return to the earlier sites to collect additional data but the field work is not carried out simultaneously (Bogdan & Bilen, 2007; Creswell, 2012). By adopting this approach, it enabled me to improve my technique for subsequent case studies after I finished with the first case study. Furthermore, the first case study had provided a focus to define the parameters of the other case studies.

4.10 Data gathering instruments

In order to increase the quality of case studies, Yin (2009) has suggested some principles for any data gathering effort in case studies which include the use of (1) multiple sources of evidence (evidence from two or more sources, converging on the same facts or findings), (2) a case study database (a formal assembly of evidence distinct from the final case study report), and (3) a chain of evidence (explicit links among the questions asked, the data collected, and the conclusions drawn). In my data gathering, I included pre- and post-observation interviews with the teachers, interviews with the case study parents, and field notes based on my observations. In addition, I created a case study database where I assembled evidence significant for my study, and linked the evidence to my research questions in the process of discussing my findings and making conclusions of my study.

Two major methods of data gathering were used for each case study to obtain rich and detailed information about teachers' beliefs and practices to support English acquisition among ELLs. One method was field notes encompassing direct observations of early childhood teachers' practices in each ECE centre alongside my reflective notes containing insights, understanding, questions and thoughts generated during the data gathering process. The second method was interviews conducted with each of the early childhood teachers.

4.10.1 Observation

Jones and Somekh (2008) claimed that the key factor in the choice of observation method is largely influenced by the methodological framework of the research. Unstructured observation, which allowed me to sit at the back or side of the room or space and make detailed notes, was deemed appropriate for my phenomenological study. Nevertheless, I needed to be thoughtful about the kind of relationship to be established with the participants as all kinds of observation involve "invading other people's space and constructing meanings from the experience of participating in their activities" (Jones & Somekh, p. 141). Therefore, my aim during the field work was to increase the teachers' level of comfort and build trust by making it clear that this study's findings were not regarded as an attempt to find fault with their teaching practices.

The purpose of the observation in my study was to compile details of the participants' experience. Naturalistic observation is useful, not only to identify the lived experiences of the

individuals being studied, but also to understand the relevant contexts of the experiences (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2012). Liamputtong (2013) suggested that a camera can be used in an uncomplicated and unobtrusive manner to photograph participants in action. In qualitative study, unobtrusive methods are “non-reactive methods” (Liamputtong, 2013, p. 99) as they do not require the active participation of the participants (Bryman, 2004). In this study, I took photographs and video-recorded the teachers and children as a visual record of how they looked in a natural setting in order for me to remember and to help manage my data. Although there was a possibility of being obtrusive when photographs or video recordings of participants were taken during observation, I found that taking pictures and video footages was a means of enriching relations. After taking pictures and videos of events related to the teachers’ support for ELLs as they acquire English, I shared them with the teachers, which stimulated good conversation and produced rich data for my study.

4.10.2 Post observation interviews and use of the video stimulated recall tool

In the post-observation interviews, participants reflected on the meanings behind statements made in the pre-observation interviews and interpreted practices as viewed on videotape, as a stimulated recall tool. The tool of stimulated recall is a family of introspective research procedures in which cognitive process can be examined by inviting participants’ recollections when prompted by a video sequence (Hodgson, 2008; Lyle, 2003) or audio recordings (Dempsey, 2010). Stimulated recall is a tried and tested data collection that allows the interviewer to elicit, identify and explore participants’ thinking (Henderson & Tallman, 2006). The stimulated recall tool in the field of education has been used by researchers to encourage and support teachers’ reflective practice as well as to offer opportunities for pedagogical development in teacher-researcher collaborative research (Cutrim Schmid, 2011).

In this study, I used video recordings as stimulated recall tools during the post observation interview with the teachers. Prior to the post-observation interview, videotapes were edited to approximately 40 minutes which contained recorded footage of key moments when the teachers were around or interacting with the ELLs. The participants used the videotaped observation of their centres as the stimulus for recalling specific examples of beliefs and practices and for explaining contexts that would be deemed as critical to the decisions they have made. Lyle (2003) suggested that the general pattern employed for the

stimulated recall tool is a series of structured, but relatively open-ended, questions posed to the participant as soon as possible after, or during, the viewing of the tape. The post-observation interview of this study was semi-structured. When the video footage was shown to the teachers, I asked them to freely discuss whatever aspects of their beliefs and practices they felt were relevant for the study. In addition, the participants were encouraged to think and reflect on their beliefs and practices in supporting the ELLs as they acquired English in terms of their responses from the pre-observation interviews, which were provided to them.

Inevitably, there are some limitations with the stimulated recall tool method such as its use becoming a matter of judgement; difficulty recalling the rationales of recorded actions; and the potential of bias in the responses (Lyle, 2003). Therefore, I was careful when using the video stimulated recall tool and took precautionary steps before the post-observation interviews with the teachers. In line with the concept of bracketing, as proposed by a phenomenological approach, I avoided the perception of judgmental probing, allowed the participant a relatively unstructured response and employed an 'indirect' route to the focus of the study. This was because, as Creswell (2007) has stated, a researcher's bias regarding the phenomenon being studied could lead to a misinterpretation of the data and erroneous conclusions, regardless of the detail and thoroughness of the research.

4.10.3 Validity and reliability of the stimulated recall interview

The validity and reliability of the data being collected is highly dependent on the way in which the stimulated recall interview is conducted (Henderson, Henderson, Grant, & Huang, 2010). Three issues need to be addressed to ensure the data collected using a stimulated recall interview are valid and reliable: (1) promoting interviewee confidence, (2) instructions to the interviewee and (3) interviewer prompts (Henderson, Henderson, Grant, & Huang, 2010; Henderson & Tallman, 2006).

In promoting interviewee confidence, I tried to establish rapport, mutual trust, and respect with the interviewee by being supportive, a good listener, and engaged in, and non-judgmental of, what the participants were saying. Henderson and Tallman (2006) claimed that becoming aware that they are capable of telling the researcher about their thoughts and feelings allows participants to realise that they are the authority on their cognitive process during the interview. With regard to the instructions to the interviewee, I always checked that

the instructions were simple, minimal and implemented the requirements of the study. In the issue of interviewer's prompts, Gass and Mackey (2000) contended that the researchers' questions and responses are "the most serious of difficulties" (p. 89) as they have the potential to compromise the data. Henderson, Henderson, Grant, and Huang (2010) suggested that exposure of the participants thoughts through the adherence of tested protocols helps maximise reliability and credibility of recall. Adhering to the suggested protocols, I focused on non-directive questioning, and checked to ascertain recall versus the plausible story.

In this study, I used video stimulated recall during the post observation interviews with the early childhood teachers to elicit, identify, and explore their thinking with regard to their beliefs and practices as they support English acquisition among ELLs. The key methodological procedures of using the stimulated recall interviews have been discussed in the context of post observation interview. The methodological concerns, especially those pertaining to reliability and validity of data, have been outlined along with the strategies to minimise those concerns.

4.10.4 Field notes

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) claimed that the achievement of a successful outcome of qualitative research depends on "detailed accurate and extensive field notes" (p. 111). Field notes are essential to participant observation and can be an important supplement to other data collecting methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further elaborated the process of constructing interpretations from the field notes. First, the researcher moves from field notes to research texts based on interpretation. Second, the text is then re-created as a working interpretive document that makes sense of what the researcher has learned. Finally, the researcher produces the texts to the readers (Denzin & Linclon, 2005).

The use of field notes in this study is grounded in a qualitative research methodology and is aligned with a multiple case study approach aimed at obtaining detailed and in-depth information about early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices to support English acquisition among ELLs. The field notes assisted me to keep track of the development of the study, to visualise how the research plan has been affected by the data collected, and to remain aware of how I had been influenced by the data. I documented detailed information of

this phenomenon through a written account of what I heard, saw, thought, and experienced in the course of collecting and reflecting on data.

My field notes encompass two parts: a descriptive part and a reflective part. Information recorded in the descriptive part included “portraits of subjects; reconstruction of dialogue; description of physical setting; accounts of particular events; depiction of activities; the observer’s behaviour” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 113-4). Specifically, I recorded social interactions in which each teacher in the study participated as well as activities the teacher engaged in, and child-child interactions. Observations were recorded by using pen and paper, digital camera and camera video recorder to document salient scenarios on the basis of clear illustrations of teachers’ behaviour, language or social relationships with ELLs. The use of this equipment was negotiated with the early childhood teachers, children and the children’s parents. Photographs can help in recalling things that have happened as well as vividly capturing the setting for others (Patton, 2002).

The reflective part of my field notes consisted of my personal experiences and accounts of this doctoral research journey. They comprised “reflections on analysis; on method; on ethical dilemmas and conflicts; on frame of mind; on points of clarification” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 115-116). After returning from each field trip, I documented my feelings, biases, standpoint, dilemmas, possible mistakes, reactions, and responses to fieldwork and participants. Brodsky (2008) suggests that reflective field notes can be written whenever one muses on the process, findings, problems, patterns, and so on of the study. They capture impressions and the researcher’s ongoing analytic process. Reflections often change iteratively over the study course, as is true of most qualitative work, and serve as a record of progress as well as a place to work out problems (Patton, 2002). Finally, it is important that all field notes be well organised so that memoing, coding, and other analytic techniques can be utilized to draw meaning from this rich qualitative tool (Brodsky, 2008).

4.10.5 In-depth interviews

Among qualitative research methods, in-depth interview is the most commonly used and is widely employed by qualitative researchers (Bryman, 2012; Liamputtong, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). In depth interview usually means “a process in which a researcher and a

participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (DeMarrais, 2004, p. 55). Rubin and Rubin (2012, p. 3) noted that in-depth interviewing “helps reconstruct events the researchers have never experienced”. Qualitative research can “give us compelling descriptions of the qualitative human world, and qualitative interviewing can provide us with well-founded knowledge about conversational reality” (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009, p. 47). Miller and Glassner (2004) described the strengths of qualitative interviewing as “precisely its capacity to access self-reflexivity among interview subjects” (p. 130).

In this study, in-depth interview was the primary method of data gathering to get at the fundamental meaning of early childhood teachers’ experience in supporting English acquisition among ELLs. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argued that interviewing is usually a better approach than participant observation in case studies as individuals’ perspectives will “emerge more clearly when you individually solicit their perspectives rather than observe their activities” (p. 56). Early in the interview, I briefly informed the participants of my purpose, and made the assurance that what was said in the interview would be treated confidentially.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommended that qualitative researchers use a “more free-flowing, exploratory interview” (p. 96) at the beginning of fieldwork in order to get a general understanding of a range of perspectives on a topic. After the exploratory interview, I used more structured interviews to focus on particular topics from the interviews. The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009; Liamputtong, 2013). Merriam (2009) suggested that the researcher usually explores his or her experiences to examine dimensions of the experiences and to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions prior to interviewing those who have had direct experiences.

In order to get good data from an interview, asking good questions is essential. The interviewer bears the responsibility to pose questions that make it clear to the interviewee what is being asked (Patton, 2002) and to make them comfortable to talk about their points of view (Bogdan & Biklan, 2007). Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) argued that getting the

questions right is not as important as it might seem because in most cases, the answers participants give are more important than the questions asked by the researcher. Since asking good questions is not an easy task, pilot interviews are crucial for trying out interview questions (Merriam, 2009). During the phase of my pilot study, some practices and skills acquired during the interview enabled me to ask questions which yielded meaningful data for the main study. Without sensitivity “to the impact of particular words on the person being interviewed, the answer may make no sense at all-or there may be no answer” (Patton, 2002, p. 312). In an effort to obtain the participants’ own words and let the analysis emerge, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested that qualitative researchers must allow for open-ended responses and flexibility to enable them to note and collect data on unexpected dimensions of the study.

Yin (2009) suggested two tasks for the researcher throughout the interview process for a case study: (1) to follow the researcher’s line of inquiry and (2) to ask the researcher’s actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of the researcher’s line of inquiry. I used a list of questions and issues to be explored as a guide in the course of an interview. In this type of interview, “either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). My attempts were to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects’ own perspectives and to obtain descriptions of the interviewees’ lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomenon. The interview was conducted according to an interview guide that focused on certain themes and that might include suggested questions (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009, p. 27). As Guo (2010) suggested, a schedule for the interview followed the lines of natural conversations. My main role was mainly as an active listener who occasionally sought clarification of any new insights generated during the interview process. I focused specifically on the early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices, and sociocultural approaches with regard to supporting English acquisition among ELLs.

Technically, the interview was tape recorded by using an unobtrusive digital recorder to ensure that everything said would be preserved for analysis. Yin (2009) claimed that “audiotapes certainly provide a more accurate rendition of any interview than any other method” (p. 109). More than just increasing the accuracy of data collection, using a tape recorder allows the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee. The interview was

then transcribed, and the written text and sound recording together constitute the materials for the subsequent analysis of meaning (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009). Each interview concluded with a space for any comments. However, not all interviews were recorded. Immediately after informal conversation with the teachers, useful and relevant points were recorded with paper and pen on the spot. Once a field note was taken and an interview was completed, I read the notes or played the tape over and over again. While the experience of the gathering of these data was still fresh in my mind, I looked at the data promptly in the effort to be as accurate as possible within the context of the setting. My reflective field notes about thoughts on these data became my guide for subsequent research with each teacher. Most qualitative researchers acknowledge the dilemma of trying to be unbiased or objective (Lichtman, 2010). Several stances can be taken to reduce bias in qualitative research. A technique called bracketing has been used by some qualitative researchers who see themselves as phenomenological researchers.

4.10.6 Data gathering stages

Data gathering occurred in two phases: first, the interviews with the case study parents, and second, the interviews with the teachers. There were no specific timetables for the interviews with parents because I had to accommodate the parents' time; however, the interviews were carried out before my field work ended. Out of six case study ELLs, only four parents were willing to be interviewed. Each interview lasted for about an hour and took place in many different venues as decided by the case study parents. One of the case study parents did not have the competency to converse in English and she requested that one of the teachers who spoke the same home language as hers to be the interpreter during her interview. For reliability purposes, I asked a bilingual colleague to listen to the audio recording of the interview which used the interpreter, in order to confirm that what had been interpreted was in line with the parent's statements during the interview.

The next phase of my data gathering involved three stages. For each participant a pre-observation interview, a videotaped observation, and a post-observation interview were conducted. The purpose of the pre-observation interview was to collect background information and data about each participant's beliefs. The present study included three main stages. Semi-structured (i.e., open-ended) interviews were conducted in a pilot study and a second interview protocol was developed on the basis of teachers' feedback obtained in the

pilot study. The revised interview questions were used in the second stage of the study. The findings were analysed thematically. The purpose of thematic analysis was to interpret emergent themes across the full set of interviews while the purpose of interpretive analysis was to discuss implications of the teachers' beliefs and practices. The summary of the data gathering is presented below:

Table Five: Main study data gathering for each teacher

	Pre-observation Teacher interview	Observation	Post-observation Teacher Interview
Frequency	Once (semi-structured) Ongoing (Unstructured)	4/5 days a week (for 6 weeks)	Once (semi-structured) Ongoing (Unstructured)
Duration	An hour (semi structured)	Full day	One and a half hour (semi structured)

4.11 Triangulation

Triangulation strengthens a study by using several kinds of methods or data (Lichtman, 2010; Patton, 2002). Denzin, a qualitative methodologist (1978) specified four basic types of triangulation: (1) data triangulation, the use of a variety of data sources in a study; (2) investigator triangulation, the use of several different researchers; (3) theory triangulation, the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and (4) methodological triangulation, the use of multiple methods to study a single problem. Excluding investigator triangulation suggested by Denzin (1978), Bryman (2004) has also highlighted three possible components of triangulation, consisting of (i) the use of a variety of data sources, (ii) multiple methods to investigate the issues or (iii) multiple theoretical perspectives to analyse the data.

Bryman (2004) has suggested specific procedures such as the approaches of participant validation and triangulation. Participant validation means that researchers return to the research participants with their tentative results and refine them according to the feedback

of the participants. To validate the findings, I returned a summary account of what I had observed, and interview transcripts to the teacher participants to verify that accounts made reflect their beliefs and practices. Triangulation of data was also sought through the use of several data gathering methods to gain insights into the research questions. The use of interviews and observations as well as field notes allowed a degree of cross checking of the data gathered for this study. Additionally, insights used from theoretical perspectives to analyse the data, such as sociocultural and second language acquisition, also triangulated the data. The inclusion of multiple cases in this study is a common strategy for enhancing the external validity of findings. Merriam (2009) argued that the more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be.

4.12 Data Analysis

Holloway and Todres (2003) argued that qualitative research is very diverse, and complicated. Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed that thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. It is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, p. 79) and is commonly referred to as the constant comparative method in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009).

As a novice researcher in qualitative research design, thematic analysis provided me with important skills that would be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. Based on my experience in analysing the data, I found that thematic analysis was a useful research tool as it offered flexibility yet provided a rich, detailed and complex account of data. Data was undertaken for two purposes: (1) drawing together each early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices to create a holistic description of the events within each case study and (2) synthesising congruence and differences across all cases.

4.12.1 Steps in data analysis

Thematic analyses focuses on identifying and describing both explicit and implicit ideas and themes within the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). The basic step used in thematic

analysis is coding, a process of closely inspecting text to look for recurrent themes, topics, relationships, and marking similar texts with a code or label to categorise them for later retrieval (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012; Merriam, 2009).

For individual case study analysis, three steps were involved which were in line with thematic analysis. The first step was to review the transcripts and field notes to get a sense of early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among ELLs. I read and reread the field notes, listened to the audio recordings of interviews with teachers and watched the videotapes several times to gain sensitivity to the entire data. I jotted down early impressions that I thought would be significant for the analysis. My reflective notes were not analysed or included in the case description but they assisted me to analyse the data and reminded me of how and why I understood something when it happened during my fieldwork.

The second step of the data analysis was to scrutinise the data to develop preliminary codes for clustering around topics. It involved extracting the notes and transcripts that directly pertained to understanding early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among ELLs and putting aside data which were not relevant to the research phenomenon. Although certain codes were developed during the preliminary stage, coding topics was not a static process in my data analysis as later thoughts about including other items were also part of the data development analysis.

The final stage of the data analysis was to discover the themes. This was achieved through close examination of the data and studying the preliminary codes many times to see whether some of them illustrated a similar point. From the initial codes, I identified keywords, phrases and sentences that indicated similarities in the early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among ELLs and grouped these together. As I read and listened, I searched for patterns and meanings among all the initial codes. I looked across the transcripts and notes to reorganise the segmented codes to establish links with my research questions. Then I defined and named the main themes, and identified sub-themes within the main themes. The names of the themes were selected so the readers would easily understand what it meant in the context of the findings of the study.

In this section, I have focused on my research practice as I designed and carried out the study in response to my research focus, the research questions, and the theoretical orientations. I have described the procedures and documentations required in gaining ethical approval. In carrying out my study, I have discussed aspects pertaining to participants, phases of my study, field work strategies, data gathering, and data analysis.

The main themes that emerged from the data analysis were ‘English dominance’, ‘Social adaptation’, and ‘Guided participation’. The following chapters; Chapter Five, Chapter Six, and Chapter Seven discuss these themes within the theoretical perspectives of the present study.

4.13 Summary

This chapter has described the methodological foundations of my study, encompassing the qualitative framework, phenomenological position and the approach of multiple case studies. It has also detailed information about the research methods including the research instrument, participants and the specific procedures for gathering the data. Data gathering in this study was conducted in two phases: the pilot and main study. The pilot study was conducted to inform me of the feasibility of the study and methodology planned for the main study. In the main study, data was gathered from observing and interviewing the early childhood teachers.

The following chapter presents the data analysis of this thesis resulting from the research methodology and methods described above. Data were analysed in line with a phenomenological framework and involved two steps: individual case description to search for individual meanings, and cross-case analysis. These data provided the essential basis for investigating the research question regarding early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among ELLs.

Chapter 5: English language Dominance: Teacher and Parental perceptions, complexities and competing values

5.1 Introduction

*English is dominant in a way that no language has ever been before,
across cultures, English is the word.
(Mydans, 2007, April 9)*

Linguists claim that English dominates the world despite the fact that there are more speakers of other languages (Mydans, 2007). It is English that is spoken across the cultures in a globalised world regardless of the pattern of global migration. In the history of New Zealand's immigration context, at the beginning of the 19th century, Māori was the predominant language spoken in New Zealand. However, as more English speakers arrived in New Zealand, by the early 1860s English became the dominant language of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2009). Consequently, for immigrants in New Zealand, English is the common language spoken in their external environment. Thus, English occupies a central role in the immigrants' everyday life, which affects opportunities for education and employment.

This chapter discusses the issue of English as a dominant language as the first theme of my research findings, which emerged from the analysis of the data. This theme, as well as other themes from my study, conveys aspects of beliefs of the teachers and parents interviewed as well as teachers' practices observed while they work with Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs). Within this theme, there are complexities of how the teachers enact their beliefs and what they actually practise to support ELLs as they acquire English. These complexities were analysed based on the pre- and post-observation teachers' interviews, field notes, and video recordings during my pre-observations at the early childhood education (ECE) centres. In addition, the Asian immigrant parents' voice was analysed in order to understand their perceptions in relation to their children's English acquisition and home language. The theme, "English dominance" was examined through the lens of sociocultural perspectives, which served as the main theoretical framework in my study.

5.2 Sociocultural perspectives on ‘English dominance’

In this section, I discuss three central notions of sociocultural perspectives, in the context of second language acquisition, which are relevant to my theme. The first notion is that all development, including the development of language, is embedded in a sociocultural context. The second notion is that language is an important mediational tool in the development of higher mental processes of learners. The final notion is that interactions are the source of development for children. These notions are so integrated and interdependent in the context of my study that separating them would be almost impossible and in a sense meaningless. I have discussed the details of sociocultural perspectives in the Chapter Two and for the purpose of my finding chapter, I have summarised these notions and examples from my study.

From sociocultural perspectives, Vygotsky (1994, p. 338) was interested in examining the environment and its “role, meaning, and influence” in human development. Drawing on sociocultural perspectives, Lantolf and Poehner (2014) highlighted that what is important in second language acquisition was how the environment influenced an individual as he or she acquired English. English dominance is an important theme in my study because it describes a phenomenon that is associated with how teachers supported ELLs as they acquired English. This phenomenon was evident in the environment of two mainstream ECE centres where I undertook my study. My study demonstrated that the environment in both the ECE centres, where English was a dominant language, was a key factor that influenced the ELLs as they acquired English. It was apparent that within the English dominant environment, the ELLs monitored and listened to interactions with or without being directly involved. The teacher-led activities, in which all children were expected to participate, were conducted in English, even by bilingual teachers. Moreover, the majority of artifacts that supported children’s learning, such as books available in the centres, were also in English, adding another aspect to the English dominant environment. In other words, when ELLs attend mainstream ECE centres, they learn, play, and make friends in English. These activities are important in their lives and expose them to how English is used in the context of their experience at the ECE centre.

The fundamental thoughts of sociocultural theories are that learning and cognitive development (including language) occur as a result of social interactions. Sociocultural

theories argue that “while human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher order thinking, the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction within social and material environments” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006a, p. 201). In the SLA context, from a sociocultural perspective, language acquisition occurs *in* rather than *as* a result of interaction between an expert and a novice in language (Lantolf, 2006; Vygotsky, 1987). Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) suggested that children have agency and intentions which facilitate them to learn and construct their understandings through interactions with the environment. Lantolf and Poehner (2014) suggested that human cultures, based on Vygotsky’s ideas on conceptual knowledge, create concepts for managing events and objects in the world. Karpov (2003) defined conceptual knowledge as the knowledge of concepts, theories and principles. These concepts are generally represented in linguistics signs passed on from one speaker to another and from one generation to the succeeding (Lantolf, 2014, Vygotsky, 1987). As children interact socially with their parents and other members of their social class or group, they appropriate concepts of that particular social group (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). My study demonstrates that development of higher mental processes of ELLs, through the support of English as the mediational tool, required active engagement of the ELLs in social interactions with peers and adults. Therefore, interactions with English speaking peers, teachers, and artifacts from the English dominant environment supported the development of thinking and English acquisition for the ELLs.

Sociocultural theories highlight that language is an important mediational tool in the development of higher mental processes of learners (Vygotsky, 1986). As the mediational tool, it supports development of higher mental processes by facilitating the developing communicative and cognitive functions to progress from ‘the interpsychological’ to ‘the intrapsychological plane’ (Vygotsky, 1987); that is, from the social to the personal level. Specifically, Vygotsky (1978) stated that a child acquires knowledge (including the knowledge of language) through contacts and interactions with people as the first step (interpsychological plane), then later assimilates and internalises this knowledge adding his personal value to it (intrapsychological plane). Drawing on sociocultural theories, Lantolf (2000a) argued that mediation in second language acquisition can occur externally, when the second language learner is given assistance in the performance of some function, or internally, when the second language learner uses his or her resources to achieve control over a task. In the context of my study, it was evident that mediation occurred externally for the

ELLs when the teachers or the more experienced peers facilitated the ELLs' performance in a task through verbal interactions, and the Asian immigrant ELL used his or her abilities through internalisation to accomplish the task. My study demonstrated that the teachers and peers structured the opportunities for the Asian immigrant to participate in activities. However, it was apparent that the ELLs needed support from their English speaking peers and their teachers, in terms of understanding the ELLs' language and learning development within their new social environment with its different cultural rules and expectations. It was apparent in my study that while some of the ELLs were able to make sense of experiences with others and then be able to use the language meaningfully and appropriately, some were still struggling in the English dominant environment. Being exposed to a second language is obviously not enough; wanting to communicate with people who speak that language is crucial if acquisition is to occur (Tabor, 2008). Therefore, even though the ELLs were in the English dominant environment, they had to be sufficiently motivated to acquire English as evident from my observations.

In summary, I have discussed three main concepts of sociocultural theories which are related to my theme: the influences of social environment in human development, interactions as the source of development, and language as the mediational tool. It was apparent that these three interrelated concepts played their role in supporting the ELLs as they acquired English. In the context of the ELLs' second language acquisition development, English was the key mediational tool in which the teachers, the children, and the ELLs interacted. Therefore, English became a dominant tool in the interactions which occurred at both the ECE centres. This section has demonstrated how sociocultural perspectives were used to frame my 'English dominance' theme. The next section illustrates how 'English dominance' emerged as the first theme of my study.

5.2.1 English dominance in early childhood education centres

As English was the medium of instruction in both the ECE centres, most teachers directly stated in the interviews that the ELLs acquired English naturally, and that an emphasis should rather be given to their home language. Indirectly, the teachers implied that it was not necessary for them to put much effort into their Asian immigrants' English acquisition. Nevertheless, the teachers mentioned and applied some strategies in achieving basic communication skills, such as checking understanding for instructions given. Through my

observations, it was apparent that most of the teachers encountered challenges while working with the ELLs. Therefore, I discuss core issues that emerged from the theme of ‘English dominance’ in this chapter which include ‘English acquisition is natural yet challenging’, ‘Use your words’, and ‘Competing values of English and home language’.

The first observation that led to the theme of English dominance occurred after watching a series of video footages which I recorded at the ECE centres. A typical day at New Zealand ECE centres, after the arrival of most children, started with ‘mat time’, a teacher-led activity. In one of the mat times, Angela, a teacher, was telling the children about a visit of a few fire fighters in a fire engine to the centre. Angela then read a book entitled “Fireman Sam”. All the children seemed very excited as most of them put their hands up either to ask questions, or to respond to the teacher, including Ji Hun¹ and Shin². When Angela called Ji Hun’s name, she asked him what he was about to tell her and the group of children and Ji Hun looked a little anxious. He began murmuring something, incomprehensible to Angela, so she asked Ji Hun to repeat himself. Angela paused for a few moments to wait for Ji Hun’s response but Ji Hun stopped talking. Angela then chose another child to talk. Ji Hun looked down at the mat and kept quiet for a while, not looking as excited as he had been before when Angela had talked about the fire fighters’ visit.

After the mat time, the boys who were playing outside imitated the fire engine sound. Ji Hun and Shin were riding trikes as if they were fire engines and pretended to be fire fighters. As there were not enough trikes, there was a disagreement among the boys as to whose turn it was to use the trikes. Bailey, a child who was playing with them, argued that Shin took a longer turn on the trikes. Shin kept saying “No”, and “my one”. Razan, a teacher came to the scene. She asked both Bailey and Shin to explain to her what happened. Bailey elaborated on how the disagreement started but Shin did not say a word. Unlike Bailey, Shin was not able to elaborate on what he wanted to say. However, Shin looked as if he wanted to explain to Razan; his eyes were full of expression but he was unable to, because of his limited English proficiency. Ji Hun was still standing next to Shin and did not say anything. While

¹ Ji Hun was a case study child of the second centre.

² Shin was a case study child of the second centre.

other children were able to interact with each other and with the teachers in English, Shin, like many other ELLs, resorted to keeping quiet. Asian immigrant parents, who have internalized Chinese cultural values, tend to socialise their children based on their cultural models which emphasise being silent as a virtue (Yamamoto & Li, 2011). Thus, Asian immigrant children are likely to face a difficult adjustment at the time of transition from home to school in Western countries because school cultures represent Western norms. In Western society where people view individuals as independent and individualised, verbal communication is a mediational tool for people to understand each other (Yamamoto & Li, 2011). Therefore, Shin, in this context, possibly resorted to keeping quiet during the disagreement due to inability to express himself in English, and also the influence of Asian culture.

In another example, at lunch time, Ming, a bilingual teacher, sat at the table with the children. Shin brought sushi for his lunch that day. Ming commented on how delicious Shin's sushi looked to her. In her effort for a conversation with Shin, Ming asked a few questions such as, "Do you like sushi?", "Did your mum make those sushi?", "Did you help your mum making those (sushi)?" Shin responded to these open-ended questions only by nodding or shaking his head. While other children at the table were talking to each other and having their meals, Shin ate quietly. Sometimes he smiled at the other children sitting close to him, pretended to take their lunch and he got told off by them for doing so. He quickly finished his lunch and rushed outside. He sat on the swing alone for some time. As Ji Hun went home earlier that day, Shin did not play with anyone else; there were no interactions with his peers or his teachers. This scenario illuminated Shin's social relationship with his English speaking peers within the English dominant environment.

These episodes of Ji Hun and Shin were shown to the three teachers who were seen in the recorded video footages. At first, the teachers were not sure of how to respond to the episodes shown. These scenarios were typical of interactions at the ECE centre. I probed the teachers for what they thought Ji Hun and Shin's experiences were in these typical scenarios. Angela commented:

I sometimes feel sorry for them. I know both of them are big fans of fire fighters. I have seen many times before this that they had 'pretend play' as fire fighters,

pretended to use the hose to put out the fire. I think they must have a lot to say about it [the fire fighters play activity] but I guess they found it difficult to express in English. But I cannot speak their language, though I wish I could. We use English here. Perhaps, what matters most is that they understand.

Razan responded to the scene when there was a disagreement between Shin and Bailey:

Shin looked frustrated obviously. It was hard to make judgment when you just know one side of the story, but once they [Ji Hun and Shin] are able to speak in English, things will get better in a situation like this.

Like-wise, Ming also felt sorry for Shin as she commented:

I wanted to start a conversation with Shin during lunch time. I noticed if Ji Hun is not around, Shin did not interact much with us [the teachers] and his friends. I tried to use simple [open ended] questions or words because I know if I asked him long, complicated questions, he would not be able to answer. At least he [Shin] responded to my question, nonverbal, of course. And he tried to start conversation with his friends by pretending to take their lunch but I hope he will have better communication skills when he can speak English with his friends.

Their responses were interesting on a single account: the teachers expected that when the Asian immigrants ELLs were able to speak English it would make things much easier for the teachers, their friends, and themselves. Being able to speak English in an environment where English is dominant is convenient for most parties at the ECE centres. In the meantime, the ELLs had to struggle to make themselves heard, and seen by their teachers and friends. The sub-themes in the next sections which are ‘English acquisition is natural yet challenging’, ‘Use your words’, and ‘Competing values between English and home language’ illuminate English dominance in the ECE centres in the context of English acquisition for the ELLs.

5.3 English acquisition is natural yet challenging

In an English dominant environment, I observed that it was expected for the majority of the ELLs to acquire English through listening and watching their teachers and English speaking

peers. Most of the Asian immigrants did not interact as much as their English speaking peers but they seemed to be picking up words and phrases used by their peers and teachers by listening and watching how and when these words and phrases were used contextually. I observed that some of the Asian immigrants used some of the words and phrases in their English speech. This scenario was depicted in my field notes and in my observation videos:

It was a beautiful autumn day. As I looked around the centre, the leaves were beginning to change colours into the reds and oranges of the season. The cool breeze scattered the leaves in all directions. Rosalind, a bilingual teacher, joyfully raked the leaves while singing an ‘Autumn’ song:

Autumn leaves are falling, falling to the ground. Autumn leaves are falling, yellow, red, and brown. Falling, falling, and falling to the ground. Falling, falling yellow, red, and brown. Pick them up and gather in a pretty bunch. Autumn leaves are falling in the parks they crunch.

Seo-yeon³ was watching Rosalind with full interest despite the background noise of the children playing nearby. Rosalind noticed Seo-yeon was watching her and asked whether he would like to help Rosalind rake the leaves. Seo-yeon nodded his head and held the rake that Rosalind was using. Rosalind asked him, “Would you like to use the rake?” Seo-yeon repeated the word “rake”. Rosalind got another rake from the store-room for Seo-yeon. They raked the leaves together and Rosalind started to sing the “Autumn” song again. Immediately, Seo-yeon repeated some of the lyrics after Rosalind such as “falling, falling, falling to the ground”. Rosalind stopped, looked at Seo-yeon and complimented Seo-yeon’s singing, “that was a nice song, wasn’t it?” Seo-yeon smiled broadly, looking very happy, and continued raking the leaves while singing some parts of the song with Rosalind. Rosalind picked some dried leaves and crushed them while singing the part “autumn leaves are falling, in the parks they crunch”. Seo-yeon repeated the word “crunch” while matching the exact action of Rosalind’s. Then he said, rather loudly to himself, “Coco crunch”.

³ Seo-yeon was a case study child of the first centre.

The brief scenario between Rosalind and Seo-yeon illuminated how natural it was for Seo-yeon to listen, watch, and later imitate Rosalind's actions and words. There were two sociocultural concepts which were evident in the scenario: firstly, scaffolding and secondly, conceptual knowledge. Scaffolding and conceptual knowledge are important concepts in sociocultural perspectives which are related to second language acquisition. Learners first need the help of experts in order to 'scaffold' them into the next developmental stages before they can appropriate the newly acquired knowledge (Vygotsky, 1987). This is seen as an essentially social process, in which interaction plays a central role, not as a source of input, but as a medium for development (Lantolf, 2006).

From sociocultural perspectives, scaffolding structures such as repetition, modelling and linguistic simplification used by more proficient speakers are perceived to provide support to the ELLs, thus enabling them to function within their zones of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1962). In the above scenario between Rosalind and Seo-yeon, Seo-yeon repeated the word "falling" a few times, followed by the word "crunch" at the end of the song. This type of repetition reflected scaffolding by Rosalind to support Seo-yeon's English acquisition.

In addition, Seo-yeon imitated Rosalind's actions as she raked the leaves while singing and crushing the leaves. From sociocultural perspectives, imitation is regarded as a complex and transformative process rather than simply copying (Lantolf, 2014; Vygotsky, 1987). Vygotsky suggested that "all the specifically human characteristics of consciousness" (including language) develop as a result of imitation (Vygotsky, 1987, p.210). Lantolf (2014) argued that imitation formed the basis of ZPD. If a person is able to imitate a feature of behaviour under the guidance of another, it is the process of 'ripening' until the person is fully independent and in control of that behaviour (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 188).

An example of conceptual knowledge from the scenario was when Rosalind crunched dry leaves while she was singing the part, "Autumn leaves are falling, in the parks they crunch". The conceptual knowledge for Seo-yeon was that, the word "crunch" might not necessarily be used for leaves when they were dry but also food as in "Coco crunch", a breakfast cereal which is popular among children. In this scenario, Seo-yeon was not only

learning two things, a new concept as well as a new language, but also discovering that the English word “Crunch” can be used in something he already knew. The fact that Seo-yeon said “Coco Crunch” to himself reflected Vygotsky’s idea that children solve problems with their speech and they talk aloud to guide their thinking process. Vygotsky (1986) argued that young children appropriate concepts of tools and objects through interaction with more experienced adults. In addition, Vygotsky (1986) claimed that everyday concepts were most prominent. Hedges (2012) highlighted that everyday concepts which emerged from children’s thinking about daily experiences occurred naturally as the children participated in family and community activities. It was evident that Seo-yeon learned about the word “Crunch” through interactions with Rosalind, not through formal instruction, but through interaction which was spontaneous and natural.

Therefore, it was important to note in the scenario between Seo-yeon and Rosalind, that scaffolding and conceptual knowledge were evident through the interactions, in a natural manner. Seo-yeon’s inclination to participate in the activity and subsequently to acquire some contextual English words was observed to be without conscious learning but as a result of listening and interacting with Rosalind. Rosalind seemed to focus more on the communicative aspect of the language rather than on just rules and patterns for Seo-yeon to repeat and memorize. Therefore, Seo-yeon seemed to acquire English through a source of natural communication with the support of Rosalind.

5.3.1 Teachers’ perspectives on natural acquisition of English

I was really interested to find out Rosalind’s comments about the scenario when I showed her the recording of the scenario with Seo-yeon:

It was really nice to see how Seo-yeon was first watching me and then there were bits of learning there. Seo-yeon is always curious about things and I think that curiosity leads him to explore many things, which benefits him especially as he doesn’t speak English very much. He learns how to socialise and pick up some English words during that socialisation process. I hope we will have more of this kind of opportunity so that I can interact more with Seo-yeon.

The dominance of English in the ECE centres has been seen to influence the teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting ELLs' English acquisition. Most of the teachers, particularly who were native speakers of English, argued that these children picked up English naturally because they were in an environment where English is spoken by majority of the children, who were also native speakers. Comments made by these teachers such as "these children pick up English quickly", "they are going to take English on board", and "everybody speaks English here, and "they will somehow speak English like the rest" reflected some of the teachers' beliefs that the acquisition of English by the ELLs was a process which happened naturally while they attended ECE centres.

During an interview with one of these teachers, Heather, I asked her to describe what she meant by saying that English acquisition was natural and her response was:

Well, these [ELLs] children will develop their English when they interact with the teachers and friends, the native speakers of English. They will learn basic words to interact with us. They pick up main words, may not be grammar yet, but as long as they use basic English words first to communicate. I think that is a natural process. You don't drill them to interact with others. It is unnatural. But you help them when they need your help.

Heather's belief was reflected in her practice when working with ELLs. From my observations of some of her practices, she usually let the ELLs explored their own ways of acquiring English while giving support when there was a need to do so. For instance, Heather was watching Hyun-woo⁴ playing at the sand pit with an English speaking child, Jack. Hyun-woo used simple words when he interacted with Jack such as "Look" and "It's cool", and Jack sometimes extended a few more phrases. Heather did not interfere with their play. She only explained when Hyun-woo went to her and asked her questions like "What's this?" When I asked Heather to describe her thoughts of the video footage recording this episode, her response was that she was providing words that Hyun-woo needed in that context of his play so that he could make contextual association between words and objects. Heather's

⁴ Hyun-woo was a case study child of the first centre.

explanation demonstrated her understanding of the natural way to acquire English: the child speaks when he feels like doing so because it is only natural if the need is not forced by anyone.

5.3.2 Parents' perspectives on natural acquisition of English

Suzu and Subin, the Asian immigrant parents, seemed to have almost similar understanding of the concept that English acquisition is a natural process, as reflected in their interviews. Being the main language spoken in the ECE centres, Suzu and Subin argued that their children were acquiring English naturally when they interacted with native English speakers in an 'English dominance' environment. In order to interact with the English native speakers, Suzu and Subin claimed that the ELLs needed the natural source of communication such as when their children played together with native English speakers or when the teachers interacted with their children during activities. Consequently, their need to communicate paves the way for English acquisition to take place. Suzu, Shin's mother commented:

I can put Shin in Japanese kindy if I want to but I think he would not learn English in that environment because his friends and his teachers speak in Japanese. We speak Japanese at home, so Shin gets Japanese from me and my husband. Shin needs to speak English with his friends and his teachers so that he gets English from there. But I noticed that Shin doesn't play a lot with English-speaking children. I hope he will, because it [English acquisition] is faster and 'normal' [natural] to speak English there. I think the teachers can help.

From the interviews with the parents, a majority of the teachers and the immigrant parents emphasised the need of the ELLs to interact with English speaking children and teachers. While Heather, the teacher, reflected on her beliefs on the natural need of ELLs to communicate through her practice, the immigrant parents seemed to hope that the teachers would facilitate their children to interact with their English speaking friends and teachers in a natural manner. There appeared to be a similar but slightly different perception by the native English teachers' and the Asian immigrant parents' about the notion of natural acquisition of English. The difference in perception may be caused by their experiences and backgrounds as native speakers and as Asian immigrant parents because their needs differed from one another. Being native speakers, the teachers might not feel the assistance to interact is

necessary. On the other hand, being non-native speakers, the Asian immigrant parents and ELLs found it hard to interact in English since they lack adequate natural language acquisition provision.

5.3.3 Scaffolding as ELLs acquire English

Some of the Asian immigrant parents viewed that their children still needed facilitation from the teachers to interact with English speaking children and teachers. This view was shared by the bilingual teachers. In the second centre where I conducted my study, three out of four teacher participants were bilingual speakers and they came from Asian backgrounds. Two of these bilingual teachers, Akiko and Ming, voiced their concerns on the limitations of the ELLs in their access to the kinds of interactions that would support the ELLs' English acquisition. The limitations emphasised by the teachers were mainly due to the ELLs' English proficiency. Akiko shared her view:

I think language, because we had a Chinese boy; he was playing with Pākehā child all the time, because he has very good English. I also think some children prefer to play with someone who looks like them. Maybe they feel comfortable. I'm not sure but I think language is the biggest barrier.

Similarly, Ming also argued that while language can serve as an opportunity for the ELLs to communicate, it can also be a barrier if they do not speak the same language as English speaking children. However, Ming understood the difficulty of not being able to communicate in English and felt that it was her responsibility to help the ELLs.

Sometimes language gives us the chance and the opportunity to communicate with each other. But sometimes I think language is a barrier that creates a distance from people, because we speak a different language. Then we think we cannot communicate with each other. So I can understand how children find it difficult to communicate with each other in English if their first language is not English at home. So I try to help them or as much as I can to try to use English to help them to express their ideas, or what they want.

In the context of English being a dominant language at the ECE centres, Ming and Akiko appeared to demonstrate their beliefs about acquisition of English for the ELLs is embedded in social interactions with their friends and teachers. Moreover, Ming and Masaru reflected their experiences of being bilinguals and also having their own children who struggled to acquire English when they first attended ECE centres and schools respectively. While Ming agreed that the ELLs would acquire English naturally, yet it was not without struggle, particularly when there was no opportunity for them to interact with their English speaking friends.

I know the Asian children will pick up English eventually because after attending the ECE centre, they will go to school. These places [ECE centres and school] will make them English speakers. But, based on my experience as a bilingual, and my child was a bilingual too, we had tough times, though. If you cannot speak English, not many children want to play with you, right? When you don't play along with the native speakers, you don't use English that much. How can you pick up English when you don't use it?

In her interview, Ming highlighted that even in the English dominant environment, where English naturally became the medium of interactions, the ELLs still struggled to acquire English naturally. Ming emphasised that the ELLs needed support and opportunities to participate in interactions. From my observations, however, I noticed that the teachers did not deliberately make the effort to ensure there were opportunities for interactions between the ELLs and the English speaking children. It was evident that most of the time the children chose who they wanted to play with and the teachers seemed not to intervene with the children's choice. The ELLs who were able to use English for their interactions seemed to have more opportunities to engage in interactions with the English speaking friends. In contrast, the ELLs who had limited proficiency in English seemed to be playing with each other. Therefore, it was evident that even though Ming argued in her interview that the ELLs did not get many opportunities to interact with their English speaking peers because of their limited English proficiency, there were no significant evidence that the teachers encouraged the ELLs and the English speaking friends to interact and play together.

Within sociocultural perspectives, Vygotsky (1967, 1978) identified play as the leading activity, with specific important implications for understanding learning and development. Play is considered as “the leading source of development” (Vygotsky, 1967, p.6) and the “child moves forward essentially through play activity” (Vygotsky, 1967, p.16). Vygotsky suggested that play leads to learning and development in two major ways. First, play with substitute objects establishes an essential move in the development of semiotic mediation, although play is not itself a fully symbolic activity. Second, sociodramatic play influences cognitive development, which includes language acquisition, as well as personality development, when the children are involved in active appropriation of sociocultural rules of activity (Duncan & Taruli, 2003; Vygotsky, 1967). From this perspective, in the context of English acquisition, ELLs would benefit from play as it supports their cognitive and personality development.

I noticed that the language barrier did limit the access to interaction which could support the ELLs to acquire English naturally. However, I noticed that the ELLs observed and listened a lot to interactions that were going on among their peers and the teachers. Tabor (2008) argued that while the second language learners are not able to use English in their interaction, they observe, and listen to interactions in English, which are their natural source of information of how English can be used in appropriate contexts.

Both responses from Heather, the native speaker of English, and the bilingual teachers, were insightful on two accounts: the first because all teachers felt that interaction is a natural way to acquire English in an environment where English is a dominant language and secondly, because their concepts of interaction were viewed in a different vein. For Heather, English acquisition occurs in a ‘natural’ interaction which means the children mutually speak when they feel like doing so, whereas Ming feels in order for the ELLs to acquire English they need to find ways to interact with the native speakers. The teachers’ view of the concept that ‘English acquisition occurs naturally’ demonstrated that there were some challenges even when the process of acquisition is claimed by the majority of the teachers as natural. For example, there were limited interactions between the ELLs and their English speaking friends.

5.4 “Use your words”

In both ECE centres, it was apparent that the teachers encouraged the children to “use their words” to express their feelings. While it may be easier for English speaking children to express their feelings by using words because they are using their mother tongue, it may be harder for children whose English is not their first language. Moreover, in an English dominant environment, ‘Use your words’ can be interpreted differently in the context of English acquisition for ELLs.

5.4.1 Using English

A majority of the teachers emphasised the importance of the children using words to express their feelings. When the children verbalised their feelings, I noticed the teachers would reinforce the behaviour by praising the effort by saying, for example “I really like the way you ‘use your words’ when you told your friend that you were upset with him when he took your toy”. However, in the case of ELLs who were not proficient in English, they might not be able to use English words to express themselves in order to follow the ECE practice. In addition, the teachers seemed to face challenges when they employed the same practice with the ELLs as illustrated in the video episode:

Ji Hun always played by himself when Shin was not around. Ji Hun was stacking blocks at the ‘Blocks’ corner to build a tall ‘tower’. He collected the blocks which were left scattered on the floor to make the ‘tower’ taller. He was very careful so that the ‘tower’ would not tumble. I could see that he was very proud of his effort, looking at it from different standing positions a few times. Suddenly, there was a boy who was running to go outside and stopped at Ji Hun’s tower for a few seconds and took some blocks from the middle part of the ‘tower’. The ‘tower’ collapsed instantly. Ji Hun cried loudly. Ming, a teacher rushed to Ji Hun. Ming instantly could see what had happened from the scattered blocks when Ji Hun pointed to the blocks. Ming hugged him but he kept crying. Ming, then asked him a few times to tell her what happened by using his words, but Ji Hun kept crying. After a while, Ji Hun nodded his head and stopped crying. Ji Hun spoke to Ming in Korean, a language that she could not understand. Ming looked Ji Hun in his eyes and hugged

him again. She said “It’s okay, we can build it again. I can help you to build it again. It’s okay.”

Ming, the bilingual teacher, realised the difficulty of this practice of expecting the children to be able to use English to express emotions, particularly for children whose English is not their first language. Ming commented:

I asked him what happened, and he just kept crying, and I said, “Did the child take your blocks?” He just shook his head. And then I said, “Ji Hun, you need to use your words.” Because [here] we encourage children to use their words. And then he spoke Korean to me but I still asked him to use his words. Then only I realised and I feel very upset, so sorry for him, because that is my fault – I can’t understand him. Not his problem – he did use his words.

Ji Hun was still at an early stage of acquiring English, therefore had difficulty to express himself in English. However, Ji Hun seemed to understand Ming’s instructions to use words to explain what had happened because he did use his home language to explain to Ming. As “use your words” practice is associated with using English, Ming expected that Ji Hun would be able to explain to her in English. In her reflection, Ming then further recalled a few more similar incidents which she had experienced with Asian immigrant children prior to the above incident. Being bilingual, Ming felt she could have been more sensitive to the ELLs’ needs. In an environment where English is a dominant language, Ming admitted that she sometimes overlooked the fact that not all children, particularly the immigrant children, were able to use English to communicate their needs or wishes due to their limited English proficiency. There was also a conflict in such incidents. While using English may be indicated as a strategy for English acquisition, the act of repressing the child’s first language may send a message that English is expected to be used for communication. When Ji Hun spoke to Ming in Korean in his attempt to explain to Ming what had happened, Ming at first insisted a few times that Ji Hun needed to use his words.

From sociocultural perspectives, how individuals develop, particularly how individuals think is primarily a function of the sociocultural environment (Bjorklund, 2000). Vygotsky (1978) argued that social environment influences more than just attitudes, and

beliefs of an individual; it has a profound influence on how the individual thinks, as well as what the individual thinks. Although Ming was a bilingual teacher, the sociocultural environment where she worked emphasised English as a dominant language for the teachers and the children. Consequently, that social environment influenced her thinking that all children attending the ECE centre must be able to use English as reflected in her practice, portraying the English dominance at the ECE centre.

It was apparent that Ji Hun had difficulties speaking English as expected by Ming although he was able to express his emotions in his home language. Ji Hun's English acquisition had not reached the level that he was able to explain to Ming what had happened or how he felt about the situation. Vygotsky (1978) argued that there is an interrelated relationship between learning and development from the first stage of a child's life. Therefore, Vygotsky (1978) suggested that teachers, for example, must consider the child's developmental level and also present information at a level that will lead to the child's further cognitive development. From this perspective, Ming could have considered Ji Hun's developmental level in English acquisition and interacted with Ji Hun in a way that could advance Ji Hun's cognitive development, which would assist him in English acquisition.

There were many similar incidents in my observations at the centres where ELLs were reminded to explain what had happened, particularly after disagreements. Rosalind, a bilingual teacher from the first centre, admitted that while it was difficult when ELLs were not able to use English to communicate, it was not always the case that they were taken advantage of by other English speaking children. In some situations, Rosalind explained it could be the other way round, such as when the Asian immigrant ELL was the one who started the disagreement and it was difficult for the teachers to handle situations where there was one party who was not able to use English to explain what exactly had happened. Rosalind commented:

What I find difficult is that when you do have a dominant English speaking child, and you've got this younger boy who doesn't speak English much who might be crying all the time, and you ask, "what's going on?" and he would say, "I don't know", or the other one would not answer. Immediately you take this assumption in – this child's crying, you must have hurt him, and you just have to, and that makes

it difficult, because sometimes I think, is it really or was it really, or was it just something that he wasn't happy with?

Besides challenges faced by the ELLs due to their limited proficiency in English, the teachers also had difficulty in handling situations where the ELLs were not able to use English to explain the cause and what had happened during the disagreement. While Rosalind was aware that the assumptions made that the child who was crying might not necessarily be the one who had been hurt by another child, she seemed to question the relationship between her reaction and her thinking in the particular situation. Vygotsky (1978) claimed that the content and processes that individuals use in thinking is culturally determined. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that there are two levels of mental function, lower and higher. The lower mental functions are innate, and comprise abilities such as reactive attention. In contrast, the higher mental processes are unique to humans; passed down by generations by teaching and learning and varied from culture to culture. Through the passing of the cultural tools, humans acquire skills such as interpretation (Vygotsky, 1978). From this sociocultural perspective, Rosalind's thinking about how to handle difficult situations with the ELLs appeared to be influenced by the higher mental process.

However, the teachers might not realise that there may be more reasons as to why the ELLs did not use words to explain themselves. I observed that "use your words" sometimes can be conflicting with Asian values, which may have been instilled in the ELLs, as shown in the video snippet below:

Masaru⁵ was playing alone in a corner and a girl came along [probably with the intention to play with Masaru] and took one of the dolls that Masaru was holding. Masaru pulled the doll back from the girl. The girl cried and Razan, the teacher came to ask what happened. The girl told her that Masaru did not want to share the doll. Razan asked Masaru what actually happened and she kept quiet. Razan told Masaru to share toys with other children. The look on Masaru's face showed that she wanted to explain but then, she left without saying anything to Razan. The girl

⁵ Masaru was the case study child of the second centre.

did not hand over the doll to Masaru. As Masaru went to play on the swing at the playground, Razan left to read books with other children.

After watching the above video footage, Razan reflected on her practice that sometimes when an ELL, like Masaru, did not express herself this made the situation harder. It gave the impression to the teacher that it was of no use to explain, or it was too complicated to provide the explanation. In addition, Razan admitted that she might overlook the issue of gender among the ELLs when asked to use English to express themselves. Masaru was the only girl in my case study's child participants. Unlike Ji Hun, who always expressed his frustrations or anger, Masaru, on the contrary, was usually seen to withdraw from any conflict. Masaru had been attending the ECE centre for more than a year, compared to Shin and Ji Hun, who had only been enrolled in the ECE centre for a few months before I began my field work there. Her English, according to Razan, was better than Shin's and Ji Hun's. Razan was confident that Masaru was able to use simple English to explain the situation. Razan suggested that it was possible that Masaru did not use English to explain the situation using her words, although possibly she was able to, because of Masaru's personality as she was a quiet, non-confrontational type of girl. It was evident from my observations that Masaru was able to use English in her interactions with her friends.

From sociocultural perspectives, the meanings of quietness, self-expression, and related behaviour vary significantly from culture to culture. Quietness as well as self-expression can become a positive or negative communication style depending on cultural contexts (Yamamoto & Li, 2012). In East Asia, quietness and shyness are regarded as virtues because such characteristics imply caution, modesty, and courtesy, indicating a valued sensitivity to social environments (Chen, Chen, Li & Wang, 2009). However, this cultural norm does not mean that Asian children can never express their disagreement or opinion. They usually express their feelings in a different way such as talking to the teacher one-on-one (Yamamoto & Li, 2012). Wertsch (2007) noted that language serves as a symbolic tool to facilitate social activities and children's appropriation of language is in and through these activities. Therefore, if Masaru chose not to express herself using English because of her cultural influence, she might not get many opportunities to engage in social interactions which might affect her English acquisition. However, children's early appropriation of language is implicit since the main function of interaction is not usually language learning but also

learning other aspects, including how to participate appropriately in social activities (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

I was interested in finding out more about the Asian immigrant parents' view on the practice of "using words" to express their children's feelings. Suzu, Jeoung, and Subin, who were interviewed on this issue, claimed that using words to express feelings was beneficial in Western society because in schools, homes, and work places it is culturally accepted. In a comparison between Western and Asian cultures, two of the interviewed parents, Suzu and Jeoung, shared the same perception about using words to express feelings. Their perception related to Asian culture, particularly parenting styles. They asserted that the Asian parenting style was about raising their children to be obedient, compliant, and able to control impulse. During my interview with Masaru's mother, I did highlight the issue of using words to express one's feelings. According to her, using words to express oneself is apparent in Western culture but it is lacking in Asian culture. However, it is very interesting to note that Masaru's mother, Suzu, expressed her concern that it was important not only to learn English, but also a Western style of communication. Masaru's mother, Suzu, who had just immigrated to New Zealand four years ago, stated clearly her preference of having her children educated in accordance with New Zealand's educational system, which encouraged the students to voice their feelings and opinions. In the interview with Suzu, I asked her about Masaru's learning experience in the ECE centre. While acknowledging Masaru's improvement in English, Suzu recognised the need for Masaru to be able to express herself confidently:

I actually like the education here, but one thing about our children, they don't actually express their feelings, and talk about their ideas and what they want in public even talking to the teacher independently. They are not open-minded. Masaru started with no English, but after one year, her English has improved a lot. Now she can [speak English], when she is sad or she needs help, she will come to the teacher. But like expressing her feelings and ideas in front of everybody, she never says she wants to do that. Just needs encouragement. When I was small, my parents did not always let me say what I want or what I feel. They said it's not nice. But, it's okay because I was in China. In New Zealand, we have to express what we feel.

Suzu's expectation that Masaru would be more open about expressing her feelings raised two issues. The first issue was about the Asian parenting style and the second was about the complexity of English words needed to express one's wishes. The Asian parenting style is relatively about raising their children to be obedient, compliant, and able to control impulse. Being an Asian, Suzu admitted that her parents used to remind her not to express her feelings verbally. The second issue was the complexities of words used in order to express one's wishes. Both Suzu and Ming felt that Masaru was able to use English to express her feelings. However, it can be difficult for Masaru to express her feelings because her home culture did not encourage children to express feelings particularly to people who are older than them.

In summary, this section discusses a common practice in the ECE centres where I gathered my data. Encouraging children to express their feelings using words is common in both the ECE centres. Mostly teachers emphasised that the practice helps children to verbalise their feelings to the other party. However, for the ELLs, expressing their feelings using English is not an easy effort. This is mainly due to their English proficiency and complexities of using words spontaneously. The parents' perspective on this practice was based on the Western cultural value. While some of the Asian parents from my study valued the approach used by the majority of the teachers in the ECE centres which encouraged the use of words for self-expression, the parents were inclined to associate their children's improvement in English with their ability to express themselves. The fact that their children were able to use English for interaction did not necessarily mean that they were ready to express themselves because of other reasons. For example, the reasons could be the limited vocabularies and limited structured sentences to do so, or the parenting styles. From my observations, these children resorted either to keeping quiet when asked to express their feelings or to using other means of expression such as crying. It was one of the challenges when the teachers expected the ELLs to use words in a dominant English speaking environment.

5.4.2 Using home language

In a dominant English speaking environment, the Asian immigrants ELLs were seldom seen to use their home languages. In the first centre where I conducted my study, there was no teacher who was able to speak the ELLs' language although there was quite a number of ELLs. Previously there had been a Korean teacher who worked there before she resigned.

Jennifer, an English teacher, felt that the Korean teacher was an ‘asset’ to the ECE centre because at that time there was a large number of Korean children who were enrolled in the centre. Having the Korean teacher around, according to Jennifer, had always been helpful to the English speaking teachers, as well as to the Korean immigrant parents and children.

In the second centre, there were three Asian bilingual teachers. Two of these teachers speak the ELLs’ home language. For example, the teacher, Ming, spoke the same language as Masaru, while the teacher, Akiko, shared the home language of Shin. The ELLs in the second ECE centre were observed to have been using their home languages to interact with the teacher who spoke the same language as theirs. However, I noticed that interactions that used the ELLs’ home language between the children and the teachers were only evident during less-structured moments of the day and during one-to-one interaction as illustrated in the scene below:

After the mat time, Shin went to the book corner. Shin chose a few books, including a Japanese book. He put away the other books. He sat comfortably in a sofa turning pages and focusing on the illustrations of the books. The book was about the daily life of a Japanese school boy. After a while, Shin stopped looking at the pages and went to look for Akiko. He spoke in Japanese to Akiko while showing her the Japanese book (I presumed he was asking Akiko to read him the book). Akiko sat on the sofa, next to Shin, and started reading the book in Japanese. Shin seemed to ask a lot of questions as Akiko read him the book. The conversation was in Japanese. Shin looked satisfied when he finished reading the book with Akiko.

In another scenario, Ming was seen talking to Masaru in Mandarin when she fell down at the ECE centre:

It was about home time. Masaru was running with her friends. Suddenly, she fell down and cried. Ming, who happened to be nearby, came to comfort her and checked with Masaru which part of the body felt hurt. Masaru showed her palms and said some phrases in Mandarin. Ming replied to Masaru in Mandarin, too. Ming put plasters on the wound. They were talking in Mandarin. When Masaru’s mother,

Suzu came to pick her up, Ming explained to Suzu what happened to Masaru. They were talking for a while before Masaru and her mother left.

Both episodes demonstrated that being a bilingual teacher is an advantage for the ELLs and their families. When I showed these recordings to Akiko and Ming, they felt that the home languages were used at the right time in the right context. It was an opportunity for Akiko and Ming to use their home language, where English was pre-dominantly spoken at the ECE centre. Akiko admitted that she felt a special bond when both of them, Shin and herself, were discussing the story in their home language. According to Akiko, Shin's Japanese was good and she was impressed at the beautiful words that came from Shin, the boy who was usually shy and quiet. Shin was able to engage in the interaction using his home language. According to Akiko, when she finished reading and discussing the book with Shin, she encouraged Shin to tell her when he wanted her to read the Japanese books again. While Akiko's situation was a relaxed one, Ming's scenario was an unexpected one. Ming emphasised that it was spontaneous and natural of her to speak with Masaru in their home language when Masaru fell down. She argued that Masaru, in that situation, would be able to explain better where she felt hurt using the home language. Furthermore, Ming claimed that she felt it was comforting to be able to communicate in their home language and she suggested that Masaru probably felt the same way because she was able to use her home language. Moreover, Ming mentioned that Masaru's mother was relieved to know that Ming was the one who helped Masaru when she fell down, because Ming was able to explain to her in their home language.

In the context of language acquisition, Clark (2002) emphasised that the language, learned in the home, was significant because it establishes the foundations for all later language development. Many linguists agreed that maintaining the home language facilitated the acquisition of English as an additional language (Clark, 2009; Tabor, 2008). The home language is a resource that second language learners use both consciously and unconsciously to facilitate their shift in second language input in order to perform effectively in the second language (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002). Thus, English acquisition is strongly influenced by the learners' home language (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002). From sociocultural perspectives, home language also has a sociocultural function, both as a means of communication and as a way of identifying and transforming sociocultural groups (He, 2010).

Home language helps parents to socialise their children, serving as a major tool to transmit implicitly cultural values to children (He, 2010).

This section has highlighted the role and value of the ELLs' home language. In an English dominant environment, it seems that it was a privilege for the ELLs and the bilingual teachers to be able to use the home languages, because they were not many children or teachers who could speak the home language. However, that privilege was not seen to be well used by the bilingual teachers with the ELLs as it happened only occasionally and under specific circumstances. Nevertheless, the bilingual teachers who can speak the ELLs' language were always regarded as an advantage to the ECE centre and valued by the Asian immigrant parents. The next section illuminates the 'competing values between English and home language' of the ELLs.

5.5 Competing values between English and the home language

It was apparent in my study that both languages, English and the ELLs' home language, were valuable but one appeared to compete with the attainment or maintenance of the other language. The teachers and their Asian immigrant parents expressed the challenges of trying to equip the ELLs with their home language so that these languages were not competing one against the other or subtracting one from the other. This finding was mainly based on the Asian immigrant parents' voice, followed by the teachers' perspectives at the ECE centres.

5.5.1 The parents' voice

Most of the Asian immigrant parents in my study expressed their concerns about their children's language through the interviews. While they admitted the need to learn English in New Zealand, they were also anxious about their children growing up losing competency in their home language. When I first began my study, I presumed that Asian immigrant parents would prioritise English over their home language as a means of communication in the ECE centres to ensure smooth transitioning and adapt themselves in an English dominant ECE centre. However, most of the parents, although they agreed about the needs of English acquisition for their children, they were even more worried about their children losing their home language. These Asian immigrants expressed their challenges; they were trying to equip their children with the home language and English, but they felt that both languages were

competing one against another. Ji-Min⁶'s father, Jeoung, shared his views and experiences on the competing values of languages, English and the home language.

At every level, I think English is the key to success in New Zealand. Firstly, we should be able to communicate with other people – at every level. Like even young children, like Ji-Min, it's easy, if he can speak well but he wants to. So English is the key. But, as long as he's growing up here, speaking English, he will probably pick up more English than Korean I guess. So now we try to not speak English at home. But that doesn't mean, you know, English is not important or Korean is more important. I think he can easily learn Korean first at home – then probably he will be more exposed to English. I have seen many other cases. Like Korean children, maybe they were born here or they grew up here, they arrived here when they were very young, so at first maybe they feel comfortable speaking Korean language, but right after that, immediately after they go to school, start losing their Korean language. So we don't want that to happen.

The above excerpt from the interview illustrated the values of both English and home language, and how English appeared to be competing against the home language of the ELLs. Jeoung seemed to acknowledge the importance of English for his child, Ji-Min, but later on emphasised the concern of losing the home language as the child grows up, based on what he had seen happening to other Korean children. Jeoung's concern was possibly influenced by the sociocultural context, coupled with the general societal message that English was the preferred and dominant language at Ji-Min's centre, and generally, in the New Zealand environment. Tabor (2008) claimed that in English dominant environments, there was a tendency for a young ELL to go from monolingualism to active bilingualism (when they are developing both languages) to passive bilingualism (when they stop producing their home language, although they understand it), and then back to monolingualism but this time in English. From this perspective, it was apparent that the sociocultural environment influences a young ELLs' tendency in the context of the competing values of the home language and English.

⁶ Ji-min was a case study child from the first centre.

Masaru's mother, Zhi voiced her concern when she observed that Masaru preferred to speak in English with her older brother and sister when they were playing together. At first, Zhi said that she was very enthusiastic when Masaru could speak in English, thus preparing her for school. While she hoped that Masaru would have a good grasp of English when she starts her primary school next year, she feared that Masaru would only speak Chinese with Zhi and her husband but not with her siblings. She commented:

The other day, I was watching Masaru playing together with her older brother and sister. Masaru only spoke English with her brother and sister, no Chinese at all. I wonder when it exactly happened. She used to speak in Chinese with them, not anymore now. I called her name and asked her something in Chinese, she replied to me in Chinese. I felt relief, but I am still worried. I am worried that my children start answering in English when I speak Chinese to them. I do want them to learn English very well but I also want them to keep using Chinese.

Zhi's concern suggested the competing values of both languages which was evident from Masaru's use of English with her siblings and her values of their home language. Unlike Jeoung who emphasised that English was not to be spoken at home, Zhi found it difficult to make her children understand the importance of both languages. From sociocultural perspectives, Vygotsky's theory of learning as an essentially social process focuses on the mediating role of a more knowledgeable 'other' in the development of a learner and her or his subsequent internalization of culture-specific psychological tools (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, Masaru's older siblings, based on the parent's view, were possibly playing a mediating role in expressing a notion that English is more commonly used during play with children, including with the siblings. The mediating role was possibly influenced by their experience attending mainstream education in New Zealand, where English is the dominant language used by the children and the teachers. On the other hand, Zhi was possibly playing a mediating role to their children that their home language was still valued and should be spoken among the family members.

It is interesting, however, to note that the Asian immigrant parents interviewed in regard to the competing values of English and their home language seemed to be inconsistent.

Two Asian immigrant parents, Jeoung and Zhi seemed to be still deciding what was the best for their children; Seo-yan's mother, Subin, appeared to be very adamant in her belief about maintaining their home language. Unlike Jeoung and Suzu, Subin seemed to be clear about the values of both languages:

Honestly, my husband and I do not care about English, because we think [that] Korean is first to him, because he is from Korea. And if he cannot speak Korean well when he becomes an adult, I don't think it is good. So Korean first and then when he goes to school, he will learn English. We are going to live in New Zealand for a long time.

When I further asked her about Seo-yan's language at the ECE centre, she indirectly admitted the need to be able to speak in English.

So to him it's a little bit difficult because he can't express his feeling in English in the preschool, so always curious how to say 'this', how to say 'that'.

Despite the need of English for Seo-yeon, Subin strongly enacted her beliefs about the importance of Korean language. Subin emphasised that the home language is part of their cultural heritage. If Seo-yan loses his home language, he may be at risk of losing his cultural heritage. She persistently argued the importance of Korean language compared to English as she repeated phrases like "Korean first" and "English next".

Such expressions of assertion and anxiety about losing home language were mostly asserted by Subin and Jeoung, because they had seen their friends' experiences in which their children preferred to use English to their home language especially when they were in secondary schools. Most of the ELLs who were my case study participants are either the first or second child in the family, thus their parents have not encountered any prior experience of their child losing the home language. Nevertheless, three of the Asian immigrant parents, Subin, Jeoung, and Suzu, expressed confidence that their children would not lose their home language because they emphasise it in their homes. As Jeoung highlighted a few times during the interview, "I do not speak English at home," and "My family never use English when we talk to each other".

On the one hand, Shin's mother, Suzu, prior to her arrival in New Zealand did not regard English as important for her children but when her children were enrolled in the ECE centre and primary school, she then realised the importance of English for her children. She commented:

Before I came to New Zealand, I didn't think my children needed to study English. They need to study Japanese first and then English, I thought. But after I came here, I think English is very important. They need to learn by themselves, naturally. I make circumstance for them to learn, but I don't push them. But I am positive that Shin will continue to speak Japanese with us. I am not that good in English, so I am more comfortable using my own language at home with my family.

Suzu expressed her optimism that Shin would continue to speak in Japanese with the family members as long as she was comfortable speaking Japanese at home. Tabor (2008) suggested that just speaking a home language within the home environment, although a good start, might not be sufficient to allow for the maximum development of the language. Therefore, Tabor (2008) claimed that parents must make sure that their children have multiple and frequent opportunities to speak the home language outside the home language setting such as in community gatherings. A sociocultural perspective states that language is learned from social and cultural interactions, not just through communicative interactions (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2010).

In summary, while Jeoung and Zhi highlighted the importance of both English and home language for their children, they seemed to be worried about their children's inclination towards either language. Subin, on the one hand, seemed to express her strong view that Seoyeon must learn Korean first to avoid the risk of losing their cultural heritage. Suzu, although before she migrated to New Zealand did not consider English important for Shin, now expressed her view that English is important for him and he needs to acquire English naturally. Therefore, it was apparent from the interviews with the Asian immigrant parents that there seemed to be complexities regarding the values between the home language and English based on their sociocultural experiences.

5.5.2 The teachers' voice

Jennifer, the English speaking teacher from the first centre, and Razan, a bilingual teacher from the second centre, expressed their perceptions regarding the values between the home language and English in their interviews. The above excerpt from the interview illustrated English appeared to be competing against the home language of the ELLs. Jennifer felt that when the parents had made a decision to send their children to an English dominant environment so that they could acquire English, it was the teachers' responsibility to provide support for the children to acquire English.

It is the parents' decision to send them to this preschool so obviously they want immersion so that they can learn English and, to me, that's a really good way of learning a language. Sometimes it might be quite daunting for a child to begin with, but children are extremely adaptable and the first couple of days might be very hard for them. Therefore, it's the teacher's responsibility to support them through those days, through the first few weeks or so that they are feeling comfortable, so that they're feeling trusted, and giving them that support, allowing them to experience and to explore and to find things for themselves and find a peer that may assist them.

It was interesting to note that Jennifer's view of support was beyond support simply for the ELLs to acquire English. Jennifer included other ways of supporting the ELLs, such as trust and the importance of feeling comfortable. Jennifer was the only teacher who argued about the need to support English acquisition while the ELLs attended the ECE centre. Jennifer explained that her beliefs and practices about the urgency of the ELLs to acquire English was not because she did not value their home language, but because of the realities of preparing children to enter primary school. It was apparent that Jennifer's view was influenced by the fact that English was the dominant language used in educational settings. From sociocultural perspectives, social environment largely determined what individuals perceived, and the ways in which individuals cognitively processed that information (Vygotsky, 1978). Implicit in Jennifer's view was the importance of English for the ELLs' when their transition to school would be facilitated if they were more able to use English. Jennifer's view was possibly derived from her professional experiences as an early childhood teacher whose role was to prepare the bilingual children for transitioning to primary schools

through school visits. It was evident that during my data gathering at the centre, Jennifer was involved in the children's school visits, and had communicated with the primary school teachers in her preparation for the school visits organised by the centre.

Another example of the competing values of the home language and English in the English dominant ECE centres was that of Heather, who said that when the Asian immigrant children used their home language, the teachers responded by using English. This circumstance was inevitable because she did not speak and understand the home language spoken by the ELLs. For example, Heather commented on her approach during her interactions with Ji-Min:

They [ELLs] need to get used to English, so we do modelling so they start picking up English. When they speak to us in their own language, we cannot pretend we understand, so we respond in English. Of course, I value their home language but sometimes in situations like I just mentioned [responding to ELLs' home language with English], I just have to respond in English — not that I did not value it. I hope they still get the message that their home language is valued even though I have to respond in English.

Heather's view reflects complexity in the issue of competing values between the home language and English. Heather expressed her view that it was important for the ELLs to be familiar with English, and she claimed that she modelled English so that the ELLs would start acquiring English. Under circumstances, such as Heather's not being able to respond in the ELLs' home language, this did not necessarily mean that their home language was not valued. In her practice, I observed, Heather sometimes had challenges such as the following:

Seo-yeon was playing with the play dough. He was preparing some 'food' and put the 'food' on the plate. Heather was sitting at the craft table, next to the play dough table. Seo-yeon put the plate in front of the table:

Heather: Is this for me?

Seo-yeon: (Nodded, smiling)

Heather: Erm...it looks yummy! (pretending to eat). What's this food called?

Seo-yeon: (saying words in Korean which could be the name of the food)

Heather: Can you say again?

Seo-yeon: (saying words in Korean which could be the name of the food)

Heather: (Laughing) I'm sorry I didn't get it.

Seo-yeon: (looked a bit disappointed)

In the above scenario, Heather was trying to say the food in Korean but she could not and Seo-yeon looked a bit disappointed. When I showed the video to Heather, she commented that she understood that it can quite disappointing not to be able to say simple words in the home language. However, Heather said there were some sounds in Korean that English does not have, and that made it difficult for her to repeat the Korean word that Seo-yeon pronounced to her. She hoped that Seo-yeon did not get the impression that she was not making an effort to acknowledge his home language. Colombo (2005) argued that linguistically and culturally diverse children often perceive that their language and culture are not valued in an English dominant environment if they sense that the teacher does not acknowledge the children's diversity. In sociocultural environments, early childhood teachers are often the ELLs' first regular, ongoing contact with someone outside their home community and culture. Therefore, the teachers' role is important to make sure that there were no conflicting views about the values of the ELLs' home language and English.

On the otherhand, all of the bilingual and bicultural teachers from the second centre, Razan, Ming, and Akiko, expressed their views that it was very critical to maintain the ELLs' home language because English acquisition is developed from the first language.

I would advise them to keep their mother tongue going and then, on top of it, build the second language, like English. It will come, but it might not come as easily for some children, but when it comes, they are more competent in language than other children because they've already got those two languages. I mean when people talk about 'Oh, they don't speak English', I do tell parents that to learn the second language, it's important to learn their own language. I'm really big on that, but I'm on a journey as well as a teacher. It's my passion to go about how to foster home language for the immigrant children. I am an immigrant, myself, so how I could incorporate that [home language] into the learning?

Razan's view echoed sociocultural perspectives in second language acquisition. Razan emphasised that English acquisition was influenced by how the children acquired the home language. The ELLs' home language can be a mediational tool for acquiring English, as a second language. As Vygotsky (1986) emphasised, second language learning is necessary because learning a second language allowed the child to begin thinking objectively about the nature of the home language use. From a sociocultural perspective, both the ELLs' home language and English can go back and forth symbiotically as mediational tools within the interactions (Martin-Beltrán, 2010).

Razan appeared to be a strong advocate of the values of maintaining home language. However, it was very interesting to note in my observations that some of these teachers used English when interacting with a child of the same language as theirs. When the issue was highlighted during the post observation interviews, after they watched the video episodes, the teachers justified their actions in the interviews. For example, one of the bilingual teachers argued that she only used their home language when they were both alone or during one-to-one interaction. In addition, she did not want the English speaking children to be feeling left out in their interaction.

In this section, I have presented the parents' and the teachers' voice pertaining to the issue of the competing values between English and the ELLs' home language. From the parents' perspectives, there was a variation of perceptions towards the values of the home language and English. From the teachers' point of view, the English speaking teachers like Jennifer and Heather emphasised the importance of English particularly for preparing the ELLs for primary school. However, the bilingual teachers like Razan, Ming and Akiko placed more stress on the value of maintaining the home language for the ELLs. It was evident that the English speaking teachers from the first centre emphasised the use of English for educational purposes such as for facilitating transition to primary school and modelling the use of English to the ELLs. However, all the bilingual teachers stressed the values of the home language and the advantage of being bilingual children. Nevertheless, they had challenges in supporting the ELLs' home language at the centre. For example, Razan noted that, in practice, she claimed that she often had to consider the use of English during one-on-one interactions to avoid other children who did not speak the Asian immigrant's language feeling left out in the interactions.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the first finding of my study, which is ‘English dominance’, to understand the phenomenon which occurred in the ECE centres where I conducted my study. The phenomenon of English being a dominant language was analysed from the teachers’, the Asian immigrant parents’ and the ELLs’ perspectives through the pre-observation and post-observation interviews as well as the observations of the teacher’s practice as they worked with the ELLs. The analysis of this phenomenon was framed within sociocultural perspectives. I discussed three notions of sociocultural perspectives which were relevant to my study: (1) human development occurs in a particular sociocultural context or environment, (2) language is an important mediational tool in the development of higher mental processes of learners, and (3) interactions are the source of development for children. These notions are discussed interdependently in order to understand the phenomenon from sociocultural perspectives.

The influences of English dominance environment complexities were experienced by the teachers, the Asian immigrant parents, and the ELLs. While the teachers argued that English acquisition was natural in an English dominant environment, there were still challenges that need to be addressed within that environment. There have also been challenges for the ELLs to comply with the practice of the teachers in the centres where children were encouraged to use words to express themselves but there were complexities such as the ELLs’ limited English competence and Asian cultural values. In addition, the issue of values of home language and English reflected that despite the enthusiasm for English acquisition, there was an importance given to ‘being’ Asian, particularly by the Asian immigrant parents and bicultural teachers. All of the bilingual teachers from the second centre expressed their views about the values of the ELLs’ home language. Two of the English speaking teachers from the first centre, besides acknowledging the value of the home language, emphasised the importance of English to facilitate the ELLs’ transition to primary schools and the need for the teachers to model the use of English for the ELLs. Due to challenges faced by the ELLs particularly in the English dominant environment, they had to adapt themselves in that environment. Therefore, the next chapter discusses how the ELLs adapted themselves in the sociocultural context.

Chapter 6: Sociocultural Adaptation

6.1 Introduction

Adapting to a new and unfamiliar culture is more than survival. It is a life-changing journey. It is a process of “becoming” – personal reinvention, transformation, growth, reaching out beyond the boundaries of our own existence (Kim, 2001, p. 9)

When immigrants migrate to another country, their challenge is not only to survive while they adapt to a new and unfamiliar culture. In fact, they are embarking on a very significant journey that will change their lives as they go through a process of becoming adaptive to the new culture. Kim (2001) argued that the process of adapting oneself to another culture, however, does not require abandonment of one's personality or of the culture into which one was born. Rather, Kim (2001) claimed that the process compels an individual to find him or herself as if for the first time, particularly those cultural invariants within the self. Therefore, while the process of cultural adaptation challenges the very basis of who an individual is, it offers opportunities for new learning and growth (Kim, 2001).

Sociocultural adaptation to dominant and non-dominant cultures emerged as another theme from my study. I have discussed the general concepts of acculturation in Chapter Two. Sociocultural adaptation is defined as an ability to ‘fit in’ or effectively interact with members of the host culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1996). It has been linked with factors that influence cultural learning and the acquisition of social skills in the host culture, like language fluency, acculturation strategies, length of residence in a host culture and cultural distance (Searle & Ward, 1990: Ward & Kennedy, 1996). In this ‘Sociocultural adaptation’ chapter, I summarise prevalent aspects of sociocultural adaptation relevant to my findings: acculturation, and acculturation strategies.

John Berry (2001) developed a bilinear model of acculturation in which one linearity represented ‘contact and participation (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves)’ and the other linearity represented ‘cultural maintenance (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance striven for)’ (p. 304, 305).

Closely related to the construct of acculturation is the concept of enculturation (Kim, Ahn, & Lam, 2009). First defined by Herskovits (1948, cited in Kim, Ahn, & Lam, 2009), enculturation refers to the process of socialisation into and maintenance of the norms of one's indigenous culture, including its salient ideas, concepts, and values. Kim (2007) pointed out that the 'cultural maintenance' process might be better represented with the broader terminology of enculturation. Kim (2007) claimed that the concept of enculturation provides a more comprehensive description of socialization into and maintenance of one's home cultural norms.

In the context of my study, adaptation to mainstream culture describes the process of the ELLs and their families in adapting to the norms of New Zealand culture, and enculturation refers to the process of the ELLs and their families becoming socialised into and maintaining the norms of their Asian culture. Berry (2005) argued that an individual's choice of strategy is influenced by previous circumstances such as the person's level of involvement with each culture, which includes specific attitudinal and behavioural preferences and characteristics. The choice of a particular strategy would also reflect the attitudes of the immigrant towards the host culture or the culture of origin (Berry, 2005, 2006; Sam, 2006).

It was also apparent that the participants' choice of strategy in the process of acculturation was influenced by the degree of contact between them and members of the dominant culture. The acculturation strategies have been discussed in Chapter Two. For example, my study demonstrated that Angela, an English speaking teacher, expressed her view that it had been difficult to communicate with the Asian parents due to language and cultural barriers. Angela and the Asian parents did not get the opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions which might influence the degree of contact between the teachers and the Asian parents. Due to low degree of contact, the Asian parents might choose to use a strategy of separation in which they held on to their original culture, and avoid interactions with the English speaking teachers because they might not want to get involved with the dominant culture at the ECE centre.

The formation of ethnic or host society identity is also integral in the process of culture competence (Liebkind, 2006). Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001)

described four possible outcomes of identity formation from the acculturation strategies: integration, which involves high levels of both own ethnic and low host society identity; separation, which highlights high ethnic and low host identity; assimilation, in which the ethnic identity is low but the host identity is high, and finally, marginalised ethnic identity, which is an expression of low levels of identification with both sociocultural groups. Each acculturation strategy is linked with particular sociocultural conditions and also is related to specific social and behavioural attainment (Oppedal, 2006).

This chapter discusses the second theme of my study which is ‘Sociocultural adaptation’. Sociocultural adaptation is viewed within the framework of acculturation. The acculturative strategies used by the teachers, the ELLs and the Asian parents were identified and examined through the sub-themes of my findings, which include ‘Degree of contact and positive interactions’, ‘Making interactions comprehensible’, and ‘Cultural competence’. The sub-themes are important as they emphasise how the participants of my study adapted themselves socially and culturally within the context of the ELLs’ English acquisition.

6.2 Degree of contact and positive interactions

A sociocultural learning framework emphasises the acquisition of culturally appropriate skills and behaviours, through contact with hosts, cross cultural experiences, and training in sociocultural adaptation (Searle & Wards, 1990). Berry (2006) claimed that one of the most reliable means by which immigrants acquire, improve and master their intercultural knowledge in a host culture is through their interactions with others. Specifically, close intercultural friendships can improve the immigrants’ and the hosts’ social skills (Berry, 2006). Searle and Ward (1990) claimed that hosts are able to assist in social skills learning as increased contact enables greater participation and skill development in immigrants. From this perspective, it is suggested that if the immigrants have less positive contact with the host, they have more barriers in negotiating daily encounters (Searle & Ward, 1990). The opposite is also true.

Cultural distance refers to the differences or similarities between two cultures in terms of their physical (e.g., climate) and social (e.g., language, education, religion, family, etc.) characteristics (Hofstede, 1980). Cultural distance or the perceived cultural distance between the home and host culture has been viewed as a crucial factor in acculturation orientations

(Berry, 1992; Searle & Ward, 1990) and sociocultural adaptation (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). Masgoret and Ward (2006) claimed that language proficiency and cultural knowledge are at the core of effective social interaction and are most likely to predict better sociocultural adaptation. My study demonstrated that language and culture seemed to be a barrier to effective communication and good relationships between (1) the Asian parents and the teachers, and (2) the ELLs and the teachers. In terms of language, the lower the English proficiency, the greater the increase in language barriers, and therefore the greater the difficulties faced by the ELLs and Asian parents in interacting with the English speaking teachers and peers. In the context of cultural distance, the more distant the culture between the Asian families and the teachers, the greater the cultural barrier: therefore it was harder for the Asian parents and their children to communicate effectively with the teachers and other children from different cultural backgrounds. In the following sections, I present evidence based on the issues of language and cultural barrier, in particular how teachers adapt to the language abilities of Asian parents and ELLs.

6.2.1 Adapting to Asian parents

In this section, I explore the ways in which language and cultural barriers might have affected the relationships between the teachers and the Asian parents in both early childhood centres. Then I present the father of Ji-min⁷, Jeong's view, in an attempt to illuminate the possible reasons why language and cultural barrier might have an impact on interactions between Jeoung and the teachers.

All the teachers from the first centre, Jennifer, Heather and Rosalind, and Angela from the second centre noted in the interviews that they had to adapt to the way they interacted with Asian parents as well. These teachers, except Rosalind, were English speaking teachers. Rosalind, although bilingual, spoke English fluently and was not from an Asian background. In my observation, it was apparent that these teachers adapted the way they interacted with the Asian parents.

⁷ Ji-min was a case study child of the first centre.

Angela, one of the English speaking teachers from the second centre, admitted that she had to adapt the way she communicated with the Asian parents because her relationship with them was not as well developed as it was with the English speaking parents. It seemed that Angela found there were some aspects of communication which were not as apparent with the Asian parents such as sense of humour. Angela explained:

I feel that my relationship with the Asian parents is friendly, but perhaps not as deep, definitely not as deep as with English-speaking parents from a similar culture because we just have that kind of cultural understanding. I think sometimes the subtleties of conversation are not picked up, so the conversations are simplified, whereas with the English-speaking people of a similar culture, you hear those nuances that you pick up on and there's that humour there that's missing from those conversations with Asian parents. And I'm not saying at all that they don't have it. It's just because of the language and the slight cultural difference.

Angela's views on sociocultural adaptation with the Asian parents began with her description of the relationship between herself and the ELLs. According to Angela, the language and cultural barrier made her adapt herself by being 'more careful' about her way of interacting with the Asian parents. Angela mentioned some reasons for her being 'reserved' with the Asian parents such as "not sure whether it was acceptable to say such things" and "it's better to be safe than sorry". From my observations, Angela behaved more formally with the Asian parents though appeared more casual with the English speaking parents where there were jokes involved. Moreover, the conversation usually looked more engaging for both Angela, and the English speaking parents compared to the conversation with the Asian parents.

Rosalind, a bilingual teacher from the first centre, also expressed her view that there could be a barrier of communication between her and Jeoung. Like Angela, Rosalind emphasised that she would like to know more about the Asian parents but there were barriers in terms of communication affecting her effort. She also commented on her difficulty in communicating with Jeoung, Ji-min's father:

When there is an opportunity and you really want to talk to him, Ji-min's dad [Jeoung], he's more a person that's just more a bit in a rush sometimes. Sometimes he's [Jeoung] just kind of like a "pick up and go" dad. When there are things that you need to discuss, like Ji-min's had an accident – for example, the time when he [Ji-min] had the accident just with a swing, I told him [Jeoung] about that, had a good explanation with him [Jeoung], and he [Jeoung] said, "okay, okay," and he [Jeoung] walked away and he [Jeoung] came back and he [Jeoung] said, "So exactly what happened?" And so it's almost like I'm wondering if there's a barrier with communication with dad. Mum's pretty awesome; she's [Ji-min's mother] great with understanding and talking. I think her [Ji-min's mother] language is quite good. But with dad, I'm just wondering if it is that, or is it just because he's [Jeoung] in a rush that he [Jeoung] doesn't have time to process it – it's just all at the same time, very quickly, but he [Jeoung] needs to obviously know what happened. Relationship wise, I think that you'd probably want a bit more of a great scope of an understanding of who Ji-min is and a bit more conversation. I really appreciated that mum brought in the fact that she was baking with him [Ji-min] and he [Ji-min] had made his own name, and it was quite special to bring that experience of home to the centre.

Rosalind's comments were important on two accounts; the Asian parents were perceived to be busy, and there was a communication barrier between her and Jeoung. Rosalind described Ji-min's father as busy by mentioning that he was "a bit in a rush", and "like a 'pick up and go' dad". On the language barrier, she wondered "if there's a barrier with communication". However, Rosalind, then, compared Jeoung to his wife in terms of language by describing Ji-min's mother as "pretty awesome; she's great with understanding and talking. I think [Ji-min's mother's] language is quite good". It was apparent that Rosalind was comparing Jeoung and his wife from the perspectives of language when she highlighted "if it is that" when referring to Jeoung's language.

While Rosalind highlighted the communication barriers from the teacher's perspectives, Jeoung, too, implied that he had uncertainties regarding how he should approach the teachers, interact with the teachers, and participate in his child's learning, particularly when the

teachers did not come from the same background. Ji-min's father, Jeoung, reflected this view in the interview:

In my culture, we should not interfere with the teachers' teaching. They are the authority. But, since we moved to New Zealand, my wife was not really happy because she said that Ji-min was playing all day – like not much learning. I send Ji-min in the morning and she picks him up in the afternoon, so she could see that [Ji-min's activities at the ECE centre]. It's hard for me to tell the teachers, I don't want them to feel bad but I don't know how to make my wife happy. But Ji-min looks happy there [in the ECE centre]. Maybe I should discuss with the teachers, but I'll just wait first, see how things go.

Jeoung demonstrated an accepting attitude to Ji-min's learning experiences as he mentioned that "Ji-min looks happy there". However, there could be two interpretations with regard to Jeoung's attitude; he accepted the teachers' way of teaching children at the New Zealand ECE centre that encouraged learning through play or he would have been reluctant to say anything that might be perceived as offending the teachers. However, Ji-min's mother expressed her concern that there was not much 'learning' involved when Ji-Min attended the centre. Ji-min's mother's view reflected that she still believed that there should be some kind of formal learning, as a common practice in her ECE home country, for Ji-min when he attended the centre. However, neither Jeoung nor his wife had approached the teachers at the first centre to discuss their views. Asian culture regards teachers as highly respected professionals who are never questioned, and the Asian parents usually refrain from actively participating in school discussions about solutions to problems in some areas (Kim & Hinchey, 2013). In his acculturation, Jeoung seemed to use the assimilation strategy when he mentioned that he "should not interfere" with the teachers' way of teaching, which was in line with his Asian cultural background. Asian parents have very high expectations and aspirations for their children's education (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Therefore, in Ji-min's situation, his parents expected that there should be some kind of formal learning for Ji-min at the centre.

In summary, this section discussed Rosalind's and Jeoung's perspectives on communication. Apparently, there was a cultural gap that both parties needed to understand.

The low level of contact between Rosalind and Jeoung may have contributed to Rosalind's assumption that Jeoung was always in a rush, which made it difficult for her to discuss matters related to Ji-min. Rosalind might not have been aware of the Asian emphasis on the father's role as a hard working provider for the family and assumed that time was very crucial (Kim & Hinchey, 2013). In addition, Rosalind also assumed that Jeoung's English ability made it difficult for him to understand her. Jeoung, on the other hand, assumed that the teachers had the authority to teach and that he should not interfere. These assumptions were made because of both the teacher's and the parents' insufficient cultural knowledge which led to a communication barrier.

6.2.2 ELLs' language abilities and cultural learning

Having a knowledge of the language spoken in the host community plays a central role within the cultural learning process, since language is viewed as the primary medium through which cultural information is communicated (Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Smith, 2013). As language and cultural learning are intimately linked, miscommunication will likely result if the immigrants do not acquire at least some basic verbal skills (Berry, 2006; Masgoret & Ward, 2006). My study demonstrated that the ELLs, namely, Ji-min and Seo-yeon, from the first centre, and Shin and Ji-Hun, from the second centre, faced challenges as they adapted to the New Zealand culture. The challenges were mainly due to their limited proficiency in English, which subsequently affected their understanding of the culture of the New Zealand ECE centre.

From their perspectives, the parents of Ji-min and Seo-yeon,⁸ from the first centre, and Shin⁹ and Ji-Hun¹⁰, from the second centre, expressed their views that their children's sociocultural adaptation was largely affected by actual, and perceived, English limitations. The common concern for the Asian parents was English proficiency, both for their children and themselves. They were aware of how isolated the children were when they first arrived in New Zealand. Suzu, Shin's mother, commented:

⁸ Seo-yeon was a case study child of the first centre.

⁹ Shin was a case study child of the second centre.

¹⁰ Ji-Hun was a case study child of the second centre.

When we first came to New Zealand last year, Shin had tough times. My English, my husband's English is not good, too. But we were exposed to English when we were in school, university. Shin had no English at all. So, I felt sorry for Shin, he had to struggle here [at the ECE centre]. The first few weeks, Shin didn't want to come here [the ECE centre], but we told him, he will get many friends when he speaks English. But we were lucky; we found this centre because there is Akiko [a Japanese bilingual teacher]. But still, with his friends, he does not talk much, I think. When I send him and pick him up, I always see him play with Ji Hun. I think Ji Hun's English is like Shin too.

While settling in at the ECE centre, Suzu noted that having Akiko was helpful but at the same time she hoped that Shin would get more English speaking friends so that he could improve on his English. However, when she observed that Shin was playing with another Asian immigrant child, Ji Hun, she indicated that Shin's English would not improve because Ji Hun was also in the process of acquiring English. Suzu believed that learning English would be useful to help Shin adapt himself better to the ECE centre. It was apparent that Suzu was also concerned when Shin did not have much contact with English speaking friends. Suzu's view on Shin's acculturation seemed important on two accounts: firstly, it was important to have Akiko, a bilingual teacher who spoke the same language as Shin while Shin was settling in, and secondly, it was necessary for Shin to have frequent contact with English speaking friends in order to acquire English. These two accounts were related to the acculturation strategies in the sense that they might help Shin to adapt himself socially and culturally to the New Zealand ECE culture. Nevertheless, Ji-Hun, who was always seen playing with Shin, appeared to have difficulty in adapting himself to the ECE centre.

Ji-Hun enrolled at the centre about the same time as Shin. According to Razan, a bilingual teacher, they soon played together even though they did not speak the same language. However, Shin adapted himself faster than Ji Hun, although they had almost the same level of English proficiency. Razan noted that Shin was observed to settle in faster than Ji Hun, who took a few months to settle in at the centre. As I observed Shin and Ji Hun, Shin looked more relaxed, flexible, and had more friends to play with compared to Ji Hun, who was always seen crying if his needs were not met and preferred to play with Shin most of the

time during the process of acculturation. In addition, Razan highlighted Shin's cultural adaptation as better than Ji Hun's due to Shin's temperament:

He [Shin] would just smile and he would just...from his body language, he would just acknowledge you – a smile, and we would call him and get him to be part of the teams and he would slowly start once he knew that this was a safe place, the teachers are good. And it depends on children's temperament too, you know. Most of the time he is quite happy and even I think because Shin is quite a nice-natured boy, and they've [Shin and Ji Hun] become really good friends apart from some times when they just – when he wants him to do the same thing, I mean that would be the case sometimes for non-English speaking children, sometimes there will be children who would expect them to do the things that they want.

According to Razan, Shin's adaptive personality was seen to enable him to develop his friendship with other children, besides being a good friend to Ji Hun. Both Razan's view and my observation of Shin revealed his use of the integration strategy during the acculturation process. He had shown interest in having daily interaction with others at the centre by participating in activities, but was still being reserved and obliging in his character, which was a reflection of being an Asian child. It was apparent that as Shin used the strategy of integration in his acculturation, there was a positive outcome for his sociocultural adaptation because it increased his contact with his English speaking friends and teachers. As a result of the increased contact, there were positive consequences; firstly, he was able to acquire English while he socialised with his friends and teachers, and secondly, he was able to improve and master his intercultural knowledge of New Zealand culture through these interactions.

Ji Hun, on the other hand, was described by Razan and Ming as a struggling English user and he was always seen crying if his needs were not met. All of the teachers from the second centre, Razan, Ming, Akiko, and Angela, expressed their concerns about Ji Hun's behaviour, although they felt that the main reason of such behaviour was due to the fact that he was recently enrolled at the centre. Razan, Akiko, and Angela presumed that over time, Ji Hun would be able to adapt himself with his friends and teachers in the centre. It was evident that Ji Hun's behaviour can be interpreted as potentially leading to acculturation along

separatist lines based on the following evidence; he seemed to refuse the friendship of children who were not from the same cultural background as his and insisted on playing only with Shin. In the context of having less contact with English speaking friends, Ji Hun did not have much opportunity to interact with English speaking teachers and friends. Ji Hun's behaviour could be a manifestation of shyness. As such, he had fewer chances to acquire English through his social interactions or to learn about New Zealand culture.

In this section, I have discussed how the ELLs' English proficiency affected their contact with English speaking teachers and friends, which subsequently influenced their English acquisition and New Zealand cultural knowledge. Both Shin and Ji Hun were still at the initial stage of English acquisition. However, Shin had more contact with the English speaking teachers and friends because his behaviour can be interpreted as potentially leading to acculturation along integrative lines. On the one hand, Ji Hun had less contact with the English speaking teachers and friends because his behaviour can be interpreted as potentially leading to acculturation along separatist lines. Hence, Shin and Ji Hun had different experiences as they adapted themselves socially and culturally at the centres.

6.2.3 Summary

This section explored the issues pertaining to interactions between the English speaking teachers and Asian parents. It highlights several key points. First, the teachers were not sure what would be the right way to communicate, particularly on issues which involved the children's learning experience and the parents' culture. Second, the parents also had to adapt to the teachers, particularly with English speaking teachers. Lack of cultural knowledge and language abilities seemed to affect relationships between some of the English speaking teachers and the Asian parents. The teachers and the Asian parents were uncertain how to interact with each other. However, the teachers who were able to speak the same language as the Asian parents usually had good relationships with the parents. They were able to share their thoughts and their feelings particularly about the children, which led to engaging in communication. In the context of acculturation strategies, Ji Hun's and Shin's behaviour could also be interpreted as potentially leading to acculturation along separatist and integrative line respectively.

6.3 Making interactions comprehensible

This next section explores the sub-theme: ‘Making interactions comprehensible’ for the ELLs while they attended the ECE centre. This is an important sub-theme of my study. As I have noted already, one of the abilities entailed in sociocultural adaptation is the ability to interact with the host culture (Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret,& Ward, 2007). However, as the ELLs have limited English proficiency, it is important for the teachers to ensure that any interactions are comprehensible to the ELLs. As the ELLs are still acquiring English, most of the teachers were observed to provide support in making interactions comprehensible for the ELLs. They also emphasised this in their interviews.

The teachers highlighted the strategies and modifications they made in order to make their interactions comprehensible. It was apparent that the better the understanding of English and of interaction competence, the easier the sociocultural adaptation process was for the ELLs and the teachers. For example, the teachers might use strategies such as repetition and gestures to facilitate the ELLs’ understanding during their interactions. In the next section, I present some examples which illuminate what, when, why, and how the ELLs and their parents, and the English speaking and bilingual teachers adapted themselves socially and culturally through their mutual interactions.

6.3.1 Making interactions comprehensible with the ELLs

The majority of the ECE teachers demonstrated strategies which aimed to make their interactions more comprehensible to the ELLs. The following scenario reflected many of the strategies employed:

It was ‘clean-up’ time. Some of the children had gone back home. Only a few were left at the centre before the teacher in charge held the last mat time session for the day. During this time, the teachers were usually busy cleaning up the centre. Therefore, most of the children usually played by themselves. However, some children were seen to offer their help to the teachers, including Seo-yeon. Since there were not many children left towards the end of the day, I always noticed that Seo-yeon took the opportunity to seek more interactions with the teachers. Seo-yeon was watching Rosalind wiping the table. He stood by the table, smiling to

Rosalind. Rosalind got down on her knee and asked him, “Would you like to help?” Seo-yeon nodded his head and repeated the word ‘help’. Rosalind told him to get a cloth hanging at the sink where the teachers usually washed painting brushes. Seo-yeon looked unsure. Rosalind showed him the cloth, “This is the cloth, and you can use it to wipe the table”. As she talked to Seo-yeon, she demonstrated the action of wiping the table. Then she pointed toward the cloth hanging at the sink and said “The cloth is at the sink”. Seo-yeon walked quickly towards the sink but he stopped halfway. He turned to Rosalind and shrugged his shoulders, indicating that he did not understand her instruction. Rosalind instructed him to walk further by counting the steps that Seo-yeon should take to reach the sink, “Walk straight [straighten her hand towards the sink] One step, two step and turn right [turning her body to the right from where she was standing]. Seo-yeon grabbed the cloth and ran towards Rosalind. As both of them were wiping the table, Rosalind sang a “clean up” song, “We’re going to t.i.d.y [as she spelled out the word tidy] tidy up, we’re going to make this whole room clean”.

In this scenario, Rosalind was seen to use several strategies to ensure that Seo-yeon understood the instructions. First, she asked whether Seo-yeon wanted to help, to make sure that the reason Seo-yeon was standing at the corner of the table was to help. She then showed the cloth, said the word ‘cloth’ accompanied with the action of wiping the table. When she gave the instructions to Seo-yeon to go to the sink and take the cloth, she used simple words and body language to help Seo-yeon understand the message. Seo-yeon finally accomplished what he wanted to do.

Besides the strategies used by Rosalind to ensure her instructions were clear to Seo-yeon, I observed that Seo-yeon was more inclined to initiate more interactions with the teachers when there were fewer children around, usually towards the end of day session. In addition, the kinds of interactions that often took place were in the form of teachers giving instructions to him as reflected by the ‘clean up’ scenario between Seo-yeon and Rosalind. The kind of interaction and the common time where that interaction took place triggered further investigation by me. Was it possible that ELLs felt more comfortable in one-on-one interactions which helped them to understand interactions in English better? Was it more natural for the ELLs to prefer to be involved in interactions which involved instructions from

adults? In many East and Southeast Asian cultures, Confucian ideals, which include respect for elders and showing self-control, hold a strong influence (Zhen, 2010). Most Asian parents teach their children to respect people in authority such as teachers (Zhen, 2010). In the scenario recorded between Seo-yeon and Rosalind, he was seen standing at a corner of the table, waiting to be asked by Rosalind whether he would like to help her. Possibly waiting for her to ask him first is a sign of respect for her as a teacher, so that he would not interrupt what she was doing. In this scenario, Seo-yeon's behaviour could be interpreted as potentially leading to acculturation along integrative lines. He maintained his culture in which being respectful to the teacher is important, and sought, like other children attending the centre, to participate in activities as an integral part of the ECE community.

Rosalind commented on the scenario between her and Seo-yeon, and the way in which Seo-yeon was always observed to approach her during 'clean up' time when there were fewer children:

Seo-yeo always goes home after 3 [o'clock]. Now that you asked, I notice that Seo-yeo always offers his help during clean time. He and Ji-min always play together, so when Ji-min goes back at 3, he [Seo-yeon] always comes around. I thought he's being helpful, always likes to help, or may be [he has] no good friends to play with or may be [he has] nothing much to do. So, probably that's the reason and may be [pause] that's how and when we always communicate with each other, not really engaging like I do with other children who speak English, but I guess that's fine, it takes time, he needs more English.

Rosalind provided factors which could explain why Seo-yeon always looked for opportunities to initiate interactions with Rosalind such as his personality, not having good friends around, and there being nothing to do. She highlighted the fact that interactions between her and Seo-yeo were not "engaging" due to his English proficiency but she thought it was "fine". From Rosalind's view, "engaging" most likely refers to how she and the English speaking children were able to talk about something in a more in-depth manner compared to how she interacted with the ELLs, which was usually brief and less verbally interactive. Engaging in interactions is one of the abilities entailed in sociocultural adaptation

(Berry, 2006). Rosalind was implying that once Seo-yeon acquired English, the interactions would be more engaging.

However, there was a complexity in making the interactions more engaging with the ELLs. As evident in the 'clean up' scenario, Seo-yeon was possibly using the integration strategy during his acculturation process when he showed interest in interacting with Rosalind and, as a sign of respect; he waited for Rosalind to ask him to help. However, Rosalind did not highlight the integration strategy used by Seo-yeon in her understanding of why the interactions between her and Seo-yeon were not engaging. In addition, Rosalind did not emphasise the maintenance of Asian culture which possibly led Seo-yeon to be respectful to the teacher by not interrupting her. She may have misinterpreted this as the interactions being less engaging due to limited English proficiency.

Nevertheless, Rosalind was observed to be accommodating to Seo-yeon's need for their interactions to be more comprehensible. She used a range of strategies to ensure her instructions were clear to Seo-yeon. Therefore, it was important to note that while the ELLs were using the acculturative strategy of integration in order to adapt themselves to the New Zealand ECE culture, the teachers might not be fully aware of the use of any acculturative strategy.

In summary, the scenario between Rosalind and Seo-yeon depicted two issues derived from interactions which were representative of the two centres where I conducted my study: firstly, the acculturation strategies involved during interactions which are those of integration and mutual accommodation, and secondly, the need for the ELLs to acquire English to engage in interactions with the teachers as well as their English speaking friends. The next section discusses the sub-theme of cultural distance revealed incongruence between the teachers' strategies and Asian cultural practices as the teachers and the ELLs interact at the ECE centres.

6.3.2 Cultural distance

A cultural distance is defined by the differences and similarities between the home culture and that of the host country (Berry, 2006). While the teachers provided examples and were observed to provide strategies and modifications for the ELLs to ensure comprehensible

interactions, there were incidents where sometimes the strategies were incongruent with the ELLs' culture. The clash could be due to cultural distance.

Both sociocultural adaptation and cultural distance are interrelated because they imply that the more different, or the greater culturally distant, an immigrant's home and host culture are, the more difficult their adaptation may be (Demes & Geeraert, 2013). In terms of a social learning framework, individuals who are more culturally distant are likely to have fewer culturally appropriate skills for negotiating daily situations (Searle & Ward, 1990). Among the differences were differences in language, differences in nonverbal communication, difference in rules and difference in values (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). These differences may act as barriers to effective communication, positive social relations, and broader sociocultural adaptation (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). For example, a smile can be misunderstood by Western and Asian cultures. While a smile can be understood as happiness, in other cultures it may have very different meanings, including confusion and embarrassment (Kim & Hinchey, 2013).

Sociocultural adaptation, therefore, requires understanding of relevant norms and cultures (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). My study has demonstrated that language can act as a cultural tool to understand Asian norms and cultures but there is a complexity due to cultural distance. Smith (2013) argued that language and culture are complexly interrelated as language is regarded as a cultural tool for individuals to make sense of themselves and their surroundings. From my observation, the potential of cultural distance that emerged from the differences in language and nonverbal communication is illustrated in the following scenario:

Alex was playing at the playground with his 'Action man' toy. He made sounds of the fighting man. Ji-min happened to pass where Alex was playing. Ji-min wanted to see the toy, but Alex did not allow Ji-min to see his toy. He hid the toy behind his back. Ji-min tried a few times to see the toy but Alex was persistent and held the toy tightly. Ji-min did not utter even a word to indicate that he would just like to see the toy for a while. All he did was trying to grab the toy from Alex. After a few unsuccessful attempts, he pushed Alex. Alex cried. He called out Jennifer's [teacher] name as she was standing near to them. Jennifer asked Alex what had happened that caused him to cry and Alex explained the reason he was crying.

Jennifer turned to Ji-min. She told Ji-min that she was not happy that Ji-min pushed Alex. Jennifer was using a lot of gestures, body language, and facial expression when she was talking to Ji-min. However, Ji-min was looking down at the floor.

When I asked Jennifer to comment on the video recording that captured this scenario, she responded:

If it is a conflict resolution, I want them to see that I'm not happy. I mean, look at my face, I'm not happy, and if they are looking all over the place, they can't see that, they just hear the tone of your voice – they need to see your face. But, you know, with children that have English as a second language, I think it is really important that they look at your face and they look at your mouth when you're interacting with them.

In that brief duration of time when Jennifer was explaining to Ji-min that it was not acceptable to hit another child, he was observed to be looking to the ground and avoiding eye contact. He made a few nods, however, and he looked upset. When I asked about the possible reasons of Ji-min's action, Jennifer's responded:

I think he couldn't really understand. That was why I needed him to see my facial expression, not only hearing the tone of my voice. Ji-min seemed to have difficulty in understanding, may be because of his English. He was new, anyway.

It was evident that Jennifer was making an effort to make Ji-min understood what she was saying to him due to the Ji-min's limited English proficiency. Jennifer perceived that Ji-min was unable to understand her; so she claimed that she put the effort into making the interactions more comprehensible through her facial expressions. Therefore, Jennifer was observed to accommodate the needs of Ji-min, which was important during this period of acculturation to ensure comprehension.

However, it was important to note the incongruence between Jennifer's observed practices and beliefs and Asian cultural practices. In the scenario where Jennifer was talking to Ji-min, he was observed to nod a few times and did not look directly into the eyes of his

teacher. While nodding generally, in Western culture, means that the person who is listening understands or agrees, in Asian culture, nodding simply means that the person is listening and may not necessarily understand (Kim, 2007; Kim & Hinchey, 2013). Also, Ji-min may have learned in Asian culture that it is disrespectful to look directly into the eyes of an authority figure like the teacher (Kim, 2007; Kim & Hinchey, 2013). In contrast, Jennifer did not interpret Ji-min's response within the Asian cultural context and therefore, concluded that it was important for Ji-min to look at her face when she was talking to him.

In the context of sociocultural adaptation, Ji-min, being a new child at the centre, might still be in the process of adapting himself to the New Zealand ECE culture. As a sign of being respectful to teachers in Asian culture, he had possibly learned that he had to nod to imply that he was listening to Jennifer and to not look directly at Jennifer when she was talking to him, thus, maintaining his Asian culture. In addition, Ji-min still had difficulties to adapt himself to the New Zealand ECE culture which advocated taking turns and asking permission before taking other children's toys. Jennifer, however, might not understand Ji-min's reaction to the situation. She emphasised the importance of looking at her facial expression to make sure that Ji-min understood her message without relating Ji-min's actions to his cultural practices. Therefore, the scenario between Jennifer and Seo-yeon demonstrated that there was incongruence between Jennifer's strategy and Ji-min's cultural practice.

In the effort to make interactions comprehensible to the ELLs, the bilingual teachers in the second centre appeared more aware of the incongruence between the teachers' strategies and cultural practices than the English speaking teachers. These bilingual teachers, Razan, Ming, and Akiko, all have Asian cultural backgrounds, and are familiar with Asian cultural practices.

Akiko, a bilingual teacher in the second centre, highlighted that some practices were incongruent with Asian culture even if they were widely acceptable among early childhood teachers, particularly English speaking teachers. For example, in her interview, I asked Akiko to reflect on the cultural distance which the Asian immigrants ELLs were adapting themselves to socially and culturally. She reflected:

I understand it's not easy for the Asian children to behave as expected by other teachers. My background is the same [from Asian background]. Even as [an] adult, I learnt about so many things that do not fit with the Kiwi¹¹ culture. Sometimes it can cause conflict because it was interpreted wrongly. With children who don't speak English, some teachers need to make sure the children understand, so they have to look at the face, or say something. But my upbringing said it's rude to look straight to the face. I usually explain to the Kiwi teachers¹² here about this and other things, too – just to let them understand why new [enrolled] children behave as such.

Jennifer and Akiko presented two contrasting views on some the ECE teachers' practices. Jennifer, the English speaking teacher, emphasised the need for the children to look at her face when she was speaking to make sure the child was giving her attention, particularly during conflict resolution. However, as Akiko, the bilingual teacher, highlighted, in Asian culture it was considered disrespectful to look directly at the teacher when the teacher was speaking to them. In this scenario, it was evident that limited cultural knowledge about how Asian children would react, particularly in the event of conflict, caused some misunderstanding from Jennifer who came from a Western cultural background.

Cultural distance can lead to acculturation stress (Berry, 2006). Stress resulting from cultural distance was observed to affect the interactions between Ji-min and Jennifer. Ji-min was always observed to have minimal interactions with the teachers and the English speaking children. Since there were few interactions between Ji-min and the teachers and English speaking friends, Ji-min was seen to have fewer opportunities to acquire English compared to other ELLs at the centre. Ji-min's father, Jeoung expressed his concerns:

He tried to speak as much as possible, but I don't know why this happened, but you know he's slow. He's got lots of things he wants to express, but he can't, so that's why he often gets frustrated, so that's why he yells and I think that also affects his

11 Kiwi culture refers to New Zealand culture.

12 Kiwi teachers refer to New Zealand ECE English speaking teachers.

behaviour. He wants to express lots of things, but like I say, he yells or he shows violent behaviour sometimes, because he can't communicate ideas properly. So that's our concern at the moment. But compared to the kids at his age, I think that he's still slow – so that's our biggest concern. But when it comes to English, I think he has more difficulty. I think language - communication is the key to his success in the centre. Again, he's got lots of things to express, but he can't, so that's why maybe that makes it hard for him to socialise.

Jeoung's concern was that Ji-min's limited English proficiency affected his behaviour and his socialisation. He believed it was also a reflection of the challenges that Ji-min faced in the process of adapting to the new, unfamiliar culture at the centre. From my observation, the challenges appeared most likely to stem from the cultural incongruences and Ji-min's limited proficiency in English, which affected the interaction between Ji-min and the teachers and his friends.

When I asked Jeoung whether he had discussed his concern with Ji-min's teachers at the centre, he responded:

No...Not yet. I heard from Plunket ¹³ nurse, she said I need kind of referrals from the centre, so I need to ask the teachers about my concern, then they will look into this matter if they think it's necessary then. But I don't know, I mean I'm not sure yet when.

It was apparent that Jeoung was hesitant to discuss his concerns about Ji-min's language even after the Plunket nurse recommended him to do so. While Asian cultures generally respect teachers and give over the authority to teachers to teach their children (Kim & Hinchey, 2013), in New Zealand ECE, parents are encouraged to share their concerns about their children. Therefore, it was evident that cultural distance also occurred between the Asian parents and the New Zealand ECE teachers.

¹³ Plunket is a provider of child health services.

6.3.3 Summary

In summary, Ji-min was observed using separation strategies during his acculturation. While he was listening to the teacher, he was possibly maintaining his cultural practices by nodding his head as a sign of listening and being respectful to the teacher. However, he was still seen as struggling to adapt to the New Zealand ECE culture that encouraged children to take turns and ask permission before taking something from other children. His struggle, according to Jennifer and his father, was due to his limited English proficiency. Ji-min's father, Jeoung expressed his concern about Ji-min's inability to express himself but he had not shared his concern, possibly because of his Asian cultural background which gives the authority to the teachers to teach their children. Moreover, Jeoung's possible reservation could be considered as a separation strategy; he maintained his cultural practices which give the authority to the teacher to deal with Ji-min's language ability.

On the other hand, Jennifer was possibly not aware of the Asian cultural way of respecting the teacher by not looking directly at teachers when they are talking to the children. Hence, she emphasised that Ji-min should look at her when she is talking to him to aid his comprehension. Therefore, it was apparent that cultural distance affected the interactions particularly between Ji-min and Jennifer. Cultural incongruence was also highlighted by Akiko, the bilingual teacher, as she reflected on the practices in the second centre. She made the effort to explain to the teachers about cultural distance so that the teachers would understand the behaviours of the ELLs which seemed to be incongruent with the ECE culture.

This section has discussed the cultural distance between the ELLs, the Asian parents, and the teachers. Separation strategy was used by Ji-min and his father while they adapted to the New Zealand ECE centre. This strategy reflected the cultural distance which was discussed in the scenario where Jennifer's effort was to make her interactions comprehensible and Jeoung's choice was not to approach Ji-min's teachers just yet, even though he was concerned about Ji-min's language ability which might lead to his behavioural and socioemotional issues. Therefore, in line with social learning perspectives, cultural distance as discussed in this section is related to the use of language in acquiring social skills in the new, unfamiliar culture.

6.4 Cultural competence

Cultural competence is a concept discussed in acculturation development (Oppedal, 2006). The notion of acculturation development emphasises two important issues underpinning adaptation among immigrant children: firstly, the developmental tasks the immigrant children are dealing with, and secondly, the age-specific attributes of culture competence (Oppedal, 2006). Therefore, immigrant children may not need similar competencies which adults need to have available.

Oppedal (2006) claimed that there are two culture competences that the immigrant children need to become skilled at for positive sociocultural adaptation, namely ethnic culture competence and host culture competence. The acquisition of ethnic competence is influential in the formation of in group loyalties, and affords a sense of security, feelings of continuity and self-esteem (Oppedal, 2006). On the other hand, host culture competence prepares the immigrant children to participate efficiently both within their own ethnic networks, and within the host society (Oppedal, 2006). In terms of support, ethnic culture competence is associated with social support from the family and ethnic friends, whereas host culture competence is related to social support from sources of the host culture (Oppedal, 2006; Oppedal, Røysamb, & Samet, 2004).

My study demonstrated three sub-findings related to culture competence: peer pressure, ethnic identity, and competing values of ethnic culture and home culture. Within the context of 'peer pressure', I discuss Masaru and Hyun-woo¹⁴'s scenario and the teachers' view about the scenario. 'Ethnic identity' was considered from the perspectives of ethnic name; and the 'competing values of ethnic culture and home culture' are argued from the context of language and culture.

6.4.1 Peer pressure

As the findings of my study suggested, the challenging experiences of establishing friendship with English speaking children served as a motivating force for Masaru¹⁵ to use the

¹⁴ Hyun-woo was a case study child of the first centre.

¹⁵ Masaru was a case study child of the second centre.

assimilation strategy as she acquired host culture competence during her acculturation. Masaru had been attending the ECE centre for almost two years when my data gathering began in the centre. According to Ming, the bilingual teacher and a friend of Masaru's mother, when Masaru first enrolled in the centre she did not have many friends due to her limited English proficiency and her shy personality. Most of the ELLs who attended the ECE centre at that time were boys. Ming described how Masaru struggled for almost a year to establish friendships with the English speaking friends at the centre, as she was always seen playing alone and had very minimal interaction with other children at the centre. After almost a year, Ming noticed that Masaru adapted herself to the New Zealand culture by gradually communicating in English which led her to have a few good English speaking friends. It was evident that Masaru's English acquisition helped her to interact with her English speaking friends and understand their culture. Therefore, when Masaru had been in the New Zealand ECE context after almost a year, she gradually absorbed and developed English and cultural understandings of this social context during acculturation (Smith, 2013).

However, it was apparent that while Masaru acquired cultural competence in the New Zealand early childhood social context, she used the assimilation strategy. Masaru was seen to resist responding in her home language during interactions with the bilingual teacher who spoke their home language, particularly when her English speaking friends were around her. In terms of identity formation this time, it appeared that when Masaru used the assimilation strategy, it reflected low ethnic identity but high host identity, as illuminated in the following scenario:

Masaru was cutting a piece of paper into a butterfly shape. There were a few other English speaking children who were doing the same activity as Masaru around the table. As they were cutting, they were talking to each other about the colours they would choose to paint their butterflies later on. Ming, a bilingual teacher who spoke the same language as Masaru, sat next to her and watched her. Ming asked Masaru a few questions in their home language and pointed to some parts of the butterfly. However, Masaru did not answer Ming's questions. She either nodded or shook her head in responding to Ming's questions. Masaru looked at Ming and glanced at her English speaking friends every time Ming asked her questions. Masaru then silently continued with her activity until Ming left the table.

When I asked Ming to comment on the above recorded episode, she expressed her concern about Masaru, who had recently refused to use her home language at the ECE centre. Ming explained the concern was initially brought up by Masaru's mother, Zhi. Zhi shared her concern with Ming that Masaru appeared to be more comfortable speaking in English when she was interacting with her older brother and sister at home. Ming commented:

We [Ming and Zhi] were talking about Masaru the other day. Zhi wondered whether Masaru still speaks in her home language at the centre. I wasn't quite sure because Masaru is a quiet girl – usually. When I sat next to her in the video, I was trying to see whether Masaru would still speak to me in Chinese, but as you could see, she wouldn't. I wonder why, at this stage, maybe she has been here long enough to make her comfortable to speak in English all the time. Maybe she is embarrassed of [speaking] her language in front of her friends. I don't know myself. But she used to speak with me in Chinese, I think, when she first started here.

Ming recalled in her interview that Masaru was comfortable talking to her in Chinese when she first enrolled in the ECE centre two years ago. However, Ming recently was becoming aware that Masaru had begun to show resistance to her home language, particularly after she established good friendships with a few English speaking friends at the ECE centre. There was an underlying issue that might be related to the use of language and identity for Masaru. I noticed Masaru was looking at her English speaking friends every time Ming communicated with her in Chinese, as if she would like to see her friends' reaction when there was a conversation between her and Ming in Chinese. Ming assumed that Masaru possibly felt embarrassed about speaking in her home language in front of her friends. Masaru's assimilation strategy highlighted that her English acquisition helped to develop her culture competence through her interaction and her coping skills with peer pressure. However, Masaru's refusal to speak her home language with Ming could also be an indication that Masaru was seeking to "fit in" because she wanted to belong; a very human desire that need not come from external pressure but be internally driven.

Another example of peer pressure was when I observed Hyun-woo who was playing with Emma, a Korean girl who was fluent in both Korean and English. Unlike Masaru who attempted to conform to mainstream pressure by not responding to Ming in her home language, Emma and Hyun-woo were both capable of talking in Korean. However, they both chose to speak English as they were influenced by the dominant language spoken in the mainstream environment:

After mat time, Emma asked whether Hyun-woo would like to play at the swings. Rosalind, the bilingual teacher, was pushing another child on the swing when Hyun-woo and Emma reached the swing area. When Rosalind asked both of them whether they would like to have a turn, they nodded their heads. Rosalind, then asked Emma and Hyun-woo whether they needed her to push them at the swing but they refused. Emma told Rosalind that she wanted to teach Hyun-woo how to push himself on the swing, without any assistance from the teacher. Emma told Hyun-woo to follow her movements with an explanation of how this helped him swing more efficiently. "Push your legs out, pull them in". Rosalind was smiling when she watched Emma and Hyun-woo, looking quite impressed at the ability of Emma teaching Hyun-woo. Rosalind then asked Emma to talk to Hyun-woo in Korean:

Rosalind: Emma, why don't you talk to Hyun-woo in Korean?

Emma: It's easier, he can understand English.

Rosalind: Hyun-woo, would you like Emma to speak to you in Korean. You both can speak Korean.

Hyun-woo: No Korean here (while looking at Emma).

Emma and Hyun-woo were able to speak Korean yet they chose to speak in English. Moreover, unlike Masaru's situation, there were no English speaking friends around them at that time, except Rosalind. It was worth noting that Hyun-woo's Korean accent and tone were still evident when he used English. Although Emma could speak Korean, English was the dominant language used by the majority of her peers at the centre. Therefore, it was evident that Hyun-woo chose to speak English to develop the host cultural competence within the centre and, thus, he used the assimilation strategy during acculturation. I was interested to find out about Rosalind's perception about the episode as she commented:

I found them talking to each other in English was interesting, too. English is not my first language. But if I can get an opportunity to speak in my own language with someone who can understand the language, I will be thrilled.

Rosalind highlighted that, in an English dominant environment, it was a privilege to be able to speak in her native language with someone who understood her language. Rosalind implied that it was important for the ELLs to feel that speaking their home language, as part of their cultural values, was still acceptable as they adapted themselves at the ECE centre. Rosalind valued diverse identity in the process of sociocultural adaptation.

Rosalind's advocacy for the importance of identity during the sociocultural adaptation process for the ELLs was shared by Heather, an English speaking teacher at the second centre, when she commented:

I think it's great. You know, it's your language, it's your culture, it's your home – absolutely. Absolutely I would never want to stop a child from speaking their own language. Um, often when they're talking, I'll say, "Oh, what does that mean?" And I'll say it, and they'll laugh at me because I've probably pronounced it terribly. But you know, you want to know and you want to be able to help them. When Hyun-woo first started – I mean now he's a very confident boy – but when he first started he was very very shy and very scared – no English – absolutely none. Mum and Dad are Koreans, and so he speaks Korean. But absolutely no English. They'd just moved over here – nothing – and he was very frightened. So I got him to show me what he wants, and then it's like, 'Oh so you would like help with your lunchbox.' And so then, 'this is a lunchbox'. And then maybe, 'what is it in Korean?'

In her interview, Heather emphasised that there was no question that the majority of immigrants want to learn English, but it was not sensible to give up their home language. Heather referred to the situation as "more harm than good". When asked to elaborate on her statement, Heather argued that the ELLs were more likely to be successful if, instead, they were encouraged to embrace their own culture as they learned English. In other words,

Heather emphasised that the ELLs should be encouraged to use the integration strategy during their acculturation; adding to their existing language and culture, rather than to replace their own with the new one.

In this section, I have discussed the ‘peer pressure’ finding based on Masaru and Hyun-woo’s scenarios and sought Ming and Rosalind’s views, respectively, on both scenarios. Both Masaru and Hyun-woo were using the assimilation strategy. The assimilation strategy was reflected when they did not want to use their home language as part of their culture identity when dealing with situations where they wanted to acquire host culture competence. Host culture competence seemed to be important for Masaru and Hyun-woo to participate efficiently, with Masaru’s English speaking friends and with Hyun-woo’s friend of the same ethnicity, respectively. In contrast, Ming and Rosalind emphasised the importance of maintaining Masaru’s and Hyun-woo’s home language and culture as they acculturated in the host culture. In the teachers’ perspectives, maintaining their home language while they acquired English at the centre was important due their ethnic identity.

6.4.2 Ethnic identity

A further aspect of culture competence concerns ethnic identity. Ethnic identity and its role in sociocultural adaptation can best be understood in terms of an interaction between the attitudes and characteristics of the immigrants and the responses of the host society (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder, 2001). Liebkind (2006) emphasised that ethnic identity is a dynamic construct that evolves and changes in response to contextual factors. Therefore, ethnic identity is likely to be strong when the immigrants have a strong desire to retain their identity and when diversity is encouraged and accepted in the host society (Liebkin, 2006).

In my interviews with the teachers, the majority of them claimed that it was very important for the ELLs to accommodate themselves during acculturation. Nevertheless, in practice, there may be subtle issues related to sociocultural adaptation that some teachers might overlook, possibly due to not having personal experience dealing with cultural adaptation. I particularly noticed that this was more apparent with English speaking teachers. The example below illustrated how Jennifer, the English speaking teacher, could have missed a significant aspect of cultural adaptation:

Emma, a Korean girl was playing alphabets with Hyun-woo. As both of them were approaching five years old, they recognised the English letters and were trying to spell their names. Emma asked Hyun-woo how to spell his name. Hyun-woo spelt out his name by arranging letters. Emma then rearranged the letters to spell her name. Hyun-woo then spelt his father's name which was a Korean name. Emma commented that "it was a long name" and it was not an English name. She said her father's name was easier because it was an English name, Adam. Hyun-woo looked a bit puzzled and he mumbled quietly to himself, "English name?" Right after that Jennifer, who happened to be nearby came and joined Hyun-woo and Emma at the table. She was praising Hyun-woo that he was able to spell both his name and his father's name correctly.

The above scenario illustrated the social identity issue in acculturation where one's name is a symbolic representation of one's social identity (Liao, 2011). An individual could announce his or her identity through their names respectively. For example, in Asian cultures, a person's name often establishes gender, ethnic identity, and may indicate family status and religious affiliation (Liao, 2011). Emma commented that Hyun-woo's father's name was not an English name compared to her father's name which had been anglicised to 'Adam'. Liao (2011) claimed that change of name is a symbolic representation of the bearer's identity change, which might involve the change of personal name, family name, or acquisition of a whole new name. Although Hyun-woo and Emma both have Korean backgrounds, Emma's and her father's names are not Korean names. The significance of Hyun-woo's name being an ethnic name indicated maintenance of home cultural identities and values. On the other hand, the changing of an ethnic name for an English one, Emma, seemed to suggest a change in cultural identities and values.

It was also important to note that Hyun-woo's ethnic identity was negotiated through the use of language. When Emma was commenting on the name of Hyun-woo's father as not being an 'English name', Hyun-woo was confused as he quietly asked himself what Emma meant by an 'English name'. Apparently, the concept of 'English name' was new to Hyun-woo. Hyun-woo discovered that an ethnic identity concept could be represented by an ethnic name as he interacted with Emma during the spelling activity.

Jennifer's response to the situation between Emma and Hyun-woo highlighted new information for Hyun-woo as she praised Hyun-woo for being able to spell both his name and his father's name correctly without discussing that those names were not English names. Smith (2013) suggested that children's engagement in discourse encompasses broad practice with checking their own internal representation against that of others. Smith (2013) argued that the child can listen to additional description of a concept and integrate it into his or her meanings. At this stage, Smith (2013) claimed that children can be aware of the dissimilarities between their own and someone else's understanding which leads them to realise that it is possible to have two views of the same situation. Therefore, Hyun-woo was possibly aware of the differences in Emma's and Jennifer's views about the concept of the ethnic name.

When I shared the video footage with Jennifer, she highlighted the number of letters in Hyun-woo's name:

We are so proud of our names, aren't we? He was so proud of his name; especially when Emma said "it's too long for a name". I said, "Well, it was a very long name, it has got lots of letters in it. One thing we probably could have done is counted the letters in his name, you know? How many letters do you have in your name, so that he would know.

However, when I further probed Jennifer about the importance of name and how it affected Hyun-woo's identity as a Korean child, she further responded:

That is why it is important to have the children come in the morning and they see their name and put their name on the board. That's about having a place, this is me; something personal, like belonging. If they are doing paintings and things like that, acknowledging them by, "let's write your name on it", talking about letters in the name, expressing themselves and being an individual. Probably learning about talking to the parents and asking them, you know, what is important to them. As I said, learning some words and phrases to help the child feel comfortable. And, you

know, we used to have a multicultural day, so that everyone would dress up in their national costume.

Jennifer emphasised the importance of names and their link to culture. Indirectly, Jennifer was indicating that names are a part of culture as they might signify one's origin and sense of belonging. What I found missing, though, was the fact that Hyun-woo spelled his name using the Roman alphabet and his name was not anglicised like Emma's. His name could also be spelled using Korean characters, and it would have been more meaningful to Hyun-woo's identity if it was written in Korean script. In this scenario, Hyun-woo was noticed to have adapted to the host culture by accepting that his name should be spelled according to English although there are Korean characters to spell his name

In this section, my study demonstrated that ethnic identity can be seen as an aspect of acculturation reflecting the individual's attitudes, feelings, values, and behaviours surrounding his or her ethnicity and culture (Liao, 2011). In the context of Emma and Hyun-woo's name episode, the ethnic name change or maintenance, as an indicator of change or maintenance in ethnic self-identification, could be associated with the changes of the individual in cultural values, attitudes, identities, and behaviours during acculturation (Liao, 2011). Due to the conformity of mainstream pressure, Emma was seen to be speaking English with Hyun-woo even though both were able to speak Korean. However, ethnic name maintenance or change was not identified from the teacher's perspective when Jennifer, the teacher, did not highlight this aspect of acculturation. It was apparent that as Hyun-woo interacted with the issue of ethnic identity, Jennifer's response, representing the host society, did not highlight the importance of an ethnic name as an aspect of ethnic identity.

6.4.3 Competing values of identity

Most of the teachers interviewed, including the bilingual teachers, argued that culture and language are inseparable for the ELLs and their families. When I showed a video which recorded Seo-yeon and Ji-min speaking Korean to each other, Heather, the teacher at the second centre, claimed that making the ELLs feel comfortable in their own language and culture would help them to adapt better than when they were under pressure to conform to the mainstream culture. Heather expressed her view about the importance of culture and language to the cultural adaptation for the ELLs in the following:

I think it's great that they have someone that they can engage with so easily. It would be difficult if for the whole day you were constantly trying to understand what other people were saying. And I think it's part of the way they've settled, that they can have someone that they can speak to in their own language as well. Ji-min found it really hard transitioning from the under 2 [2 years old and below section] to us, and Seo-yeon was here a little bit before him – maybe two weeks or so earlier than Ji-min. And it was almost like Seo-yeon was Ji-min's security blanket at first. Like when dad would drop him off in the morning, he would take him to Seo-yeon almost all the time. So I think it's great that they can use their own language together and make each other feel happy and confident and 'at home' within almost probably what seems to them often quite a foreign setting, really.

Heather's view could be interpreted as an advocacy for cultural maintenance for Seo-yeon and Ji-min. Heather expressed her view about Seo-yeon's and Ji-min's process of socialisation into, and maintenance of, the norms of Seo-yeon and Ji-min's home culture, which included the language and culture. From an ethnic cultural competence context, Heather's view reflected that Seo-yeon and Ji-min's home language provided a sense of security and feelings of continuity when they both transitioned from a lower aged child care group to a higher aged group.

Rosalind, the bilingual teacher, argued that culture, language, and identity were interrelated. According to her, it was complicated to separate one from another as they always emerge together for immigrant children. Smith (2013) claimed that in order to preserve the cultural heritage and the acquisition of cultural identity, language cannot be separated from culture as it allows anecdotes, ritual and customs to be conveyed from generation to generation. Therefore, language has become a mediating tool for the children to learn about their cultural practices in collaborative contexts. She commented:

That really makes me really happy to see that these children are already taking pride at such a young age in who they are, valuing what their parents are instilling inside of them, and maybe us using in partnership with those children, to respect

them and to build that bridge of respect with other cultures. It just takes them away, it makes them... I mean you don't want to lose that. I mean because it's so valuable, you know as a parent – you know how much you need that. At each different centre it has got its own culture as well. And because of the culture of the centre, each child has a different way of enacting their own culture as well you know. So depending on how multicultural your centre is and how adaptive and how accommodative centres are of different cultures, that is going to put the child – I'll say "Guess what, I'm Korean, I can talk Korean," You're going to have that pride from the child, but if they're like saying, "Kiwi's the best", you know, we don't acknowledge that. Then it's a whole different situation that you're moulding yourself into. So then you have those children that are more like, you know, they're feeling they're lesser valued, they're feeling inferior to their so-called better children and so on.

Rosalind's comments about the aspects of culture, language, and identity highlighted two important issues: the values of the ELLs in relation to cultural and ethnic identity, and the role of the ECE centres in supporting these values. Rosalind emphasised that if the ECE centres support the ELLs to use their language and culture, then they would be proud of their cultural heritage. Otherwise, they would feel that their language and culture were "lesser valued" compared to the dominant culture. Rosalind emphasised that when the ELLs were exposed to a new culture at the ECE centre, they were influenced to adapt to the culture of the ECE centre. Therefore, Rosalind highlighted that it was very important for the ECE centre to be adaptive and accommodating to other cultures.

While Rosalind and Heather expressed their views about the importance of home language, Angela, the English speaking teacher at the second centre, shared her perspectives regarding learning English within the ECE context. Angela, who emigrated from an English speaking country and grew up in New Zealand, shared her opinion on the issue of being adaptable to 'Kiwi' culture. According to Angela, while being secure in their home culture and language, it was also important to be comfortable in New Zealand culture:

We want to get insights on the children's culture and how we can support that, so the questions are: we want to know the languages that the children speak at

home, what cultural practices and celebrations are important to your family? What would you like to see us do to recognise and celebrate your family's culture in preschool, so we can incorporate those, because I'm sure that families from other cultures have perhaps unique games or songs that are culturally handed down. More importantly, it is also about them being secure in their cultural identity, but also being comfortable in the Kiwi culture as well. We don't want children to feel they don't quite belong.

In her interview, Angela promoted the idea that both cultures, the ELLs' and centre's culture could be integrated into the practices of the ECE teachers as they work with the ELLs. According to Angela, if the ELLs felt "secure in their cultural identity" and "comfortable in the Kiwi culture as well", they would adapt themselves better, culturally and linguistically. From this perspective, Angela highlighted the importance of integration during acculturation for the ELLs.

As a head teacher, Angela was working on the review about the ECE centre programme. In her interview, she shared the questionnaires that the ECE centre distributed to the parents. She was interested in exploring the multicultural aspects of the ECE centre. As more than half of the teachers at the ECE centre have Asian backgrounds, Angela felt that it was important to understand the manner in which the teachers with Asian background sorted out and interpreted their cultural identity:

So you can read where we are coming from with our thoughts, so that the reason for the review is that we are multi-cultural as a team, but does that then translate to our practice? We have realised that there are things about our practice we can actually improve upon. It's really useful having teachers that speak Japanese and Mandarin. We find that we perhaps would only use the Mandarin-speaking teachers as a fall-back if there was a particular issue and the child was particularly distressed and we needed to know more. So under normal teaching situations, we wouldn't need to refer to a teacher who spoke Mandarin because with those little interactions, children are quite content and relaxed and the engagements are rewarding.

Although Angela emphasised that the roles of teachers with Asian background were mainly in assisting with certain teaching situations involving the ELLs, she found that the Asian parents relied on the Asian teachers to look after their child's wellbeing at the ECE centre.

In my interview, I asked the Asian or bilingual teachers about their own sociocultural adaptation. In the course of becoming professional early childhood teachers, two of the immigrant teachers, Ming and Razan from the second centre, stated they had adopted the New Zealand ECE central beliefs but at the same time must take into account the Asian cultural values in child rearing. When asked the reason for this, Ming stated:

I have to. I don't want to be criticised by either the English speaking teachers or the parents. For example, the water play – the centre encouraged the children to explore about water play, but some Asian parents did not like their children's sleeves wet. So sometimes, I had to make sure that they [the ELLs] really pulled their sleeves or I would quickly ask them to change before they go back. Even like the sand play, sometimes there was sand on the head, some parents [Asian parents] do not like it. I still let them [the ELLs] play but I always make sure there's no sand on their head, or sometimes I don't let them play with the sand when their parents are coming to pick them up.

Razan argued about the values of child upbringing for Western and Asian culture. She admitted that sometimes she had to adapt herself according to the individual parenting values:

What they value is sometimes – this is something I noticed in Western culture – self-help skills are very vital for them, whereas for Asians, it's very important that they have their children well-fed.

In such scenarios, Razan and Ming from the second centre argued that they, at times, had to present themselves differently to their colleagues than to the immigrant parents. Ming commented that if she too completely adopts the position of her non-immigrant fellow teachers, she risked being seen as separated from her culture of origin. If Ming too completely adopts the position of the immigrant teachers, she risks being seen as non-adaptable to the

ECE centre's culture. In a cultural competence context, it was evident that the bilingual teachers were in a dilemma as to whether to acquire ethnic cultural competence or host cultural competence.

Akiko, one of the bilingual teachers from the second centre, reported that when asked to translate conversations between parents and other English speaking teachers, as they often were asked to, they had to edit what had to be conveyed to avoid exacerbating tensions. Akiko commented:

Sometimes I could not reveal exactly what both parties told me. Otherwise things will become worst. For example, of course you would expect cultural clashes between the two parties, the Asian parents and the teachers. But, you need to play a role so that the message conveyed is perceived in a good way. I think, we are here [in the ECE centres] to facilitate with the communication.

Akiko, Razan, and Ming identified themselves as being mediators to ensure smooth communication between the Asian parents and teachers. In the interviews, the immigrant teachers discussed both the role they played as cultural and language translators and mediators, and the challenges they encountered in situations where they felt pressured to speak as either the representative of the ECE centre or the voice of their community.

Similar to Angela's view that supported the maintenance of the ELLs' home culture, most of the immigrant parents seemed to value teachers who speak their language and understand their culture. Suzu, Shin's mother, noted in her interview that she viewed the bilingual teachers who could speak her home language as advocates for her child. My study demonstrated that Suzu was hoping that Shin would be able to identify himself with someone in a superior position [such as a teacher] and able to speak in their home language. Suzu claimed that having someone in that position in the ECE centre might have prevented Shin from being taken advantage of by other children. Suzu, Shin's mother commented:

It's good to have a teacher who can speak Japanese with Shin here. In his previous school, there was not a Japanese speaking teacher. At the beginning, Shin had problems in adjusting himself. All of his friends spoke English very well and he didn't. When Shin brought noodles for lunch, they said it was not lunch, so Shin

did not want to eat. I told Shin that he's Japanese not English. But when Shin started here [at the ECE centre], I felt relief because we have a Japanese speaking teacher. At least, if Shin was in trouble, we knew that there'll be someone to defend him and support him. Other children would know that there are teachers who can understand the Asian children.

When I asked Suzu whether it was important to have a bilingual teacher who could speak her language in order to preserve the home language, Suzu explained that a bilingual teacher was necessary not so much for home language preservation as for support and advocacy for their children. However, Suzu indicated that it was mainly her responsibility to ensure that Shin's home language was preserved and not the teachers' responsibility.

On the other hand, Jeoung, Ji-Min's father, argued that their children needed to balance between becoming an 'Asian Kiwi' and preserve their home cultural values:

I wanted my children to preserve our Korean home values. But at the same time, I hope they can become a participant citizen in New Zealand. I know it's going to be challenging for my children but I want them to learn about New Zealand culture as long as the New Zealand culture does not contradict my home culture.

In this section, I have discussed the competing values in the context of culture competence. While some of the Asian parents expressed their opinions about the role of teachers as advocates for their children, some of the parents highlighted identity in terms of being 'Asian' and 'Kiwi'. The parents in their interview told me that they wanted their children to become 'Kiwi', but also to maintain ties to their cultural roots.

6.4.4 Summary

In summary, in this chapter there are examples of ethnic culture and host culture competence. Masaru and Hyun-woo's preference of language choice was linked to their motivation to adapt with the mainstream culture and environment. Within the ECE centres where English was dominant over their home language, Masaru and Hyun-woo's preference for using English rather than their home language was likely influenced by peer pressure and mainstream cultural conformity. Therefore, Masaru and Hyun-woo were observed to use the

assimilation strategy in the context of using English when interacting with their peers as they sought host culture competence. Nevertheless, Suzu found it challenging for her and her family to adapt to the mainstream culture at the same time as retaining their cultural heritage. Rosalind and Heather, Ming, Akiko, and Razan expressed their views of the importance of cultural identity as well as being comfortable in the New Zealand ECE culture although this practice was not evident in my observations.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed strategies and challenges of sociocultural adaptation of the ELLs, the Asian parents and the Asian immigrant teachers. These strategies and challenges became the second theme for my findings, that of ‘Sociocultural Adaptation’. Three sub-themes that emerged from the main theme were ‘Degree of contact and positive interactions’, ‘Making interactions comprehensible’ and ‘Cultural competence’. These sub-themes illustrated the sociocultural adaptation process used by the ELLs, the Asian parents and the teachers.

During the acculturation process, the Asian parents and their children tended to adapt themselves by using both integration and assimilation strategies. The integration strategy was often the preference of the Asian parents because the reasons for migration were established in their decision to seek full-time employment or engage in the New Zealand community. This was highlighted during the interviews with the Asian parents because all of the parents were in full-time employment in New Zealand. Therefore, they emphasised the importance of preserving their cultural heritage while simultaneously acquiring cultural knowledge of New Zealand society. The assimilation strategy was only evident when two of the Asian immigrants ELLs were conforming to the mainstream culture. Other strategies in acculturation, such as marginalisation and rejection, were not evident in my data perhaps because the length of my data gathering was within a time frame that did not allow me to observe these strategies.

As sociocultural adaptation is a two way process, the teachers were also involved in the process of sociocultural adaptation. Unlike the Asian parents and the ELLs, there was no clear evidence that the teachers focused on preserving the ELLs’ cultural heritage. However, it was apparent that in the process of sociocultural adaptation, some of the teachers acquired

Asian cultural knowledge while some of them were not aware of the needs to acquire this knowledge.

Chapter 7: Guided Participation

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses ‘Guided participation’ as the final theme for my study. My study demonstrated that the teachers, parents, and the Asian immigrant English language learners’ (ELLs) peers provided guided participation as the ELLs acquired English. Using my central framework of sociocultural perspectives, guided participation is discussed in the context of the Asian immigrant ELLs’ English acquisition as they observed and engaged in meaningful activities through their nonverbal and verbal social interactions with the teachers, parents and peers.

Two processes of guided participation are relevant in my study: bridging meaning using culturally existing tools, and structuring opportunities for the ELLs to observe and participate. These two processes are examined through the pre- and post-observation interviews with the teachers, field notes, and video recordings during my observations at the early childhood centres. The teachers’ beliefs and practices in supporting the ELLs as they acquire English are discussed in the context of these processes. The theoretical aspect of guided participation has been discussed in Chapter Two.

7.2 Bridging meaning using culturally existing tools

My study revealed that the teachers and the ELLs supported their joint efforts by trying to bridge their different perspectives using culturally existing tools such as words, gestures, social referencing, and intersubjectivity.

7.2.1 Words and gestures

In her interview, Angela, the English speaking teacher at the second centre, revealed that it was important for her to understand how to find common perspectives, in order to engage in interactions with the ELLs. She commented:

Certainly with those verbal interactions [in the effort of finding common perspectives] and the children learning English, I think it is important that the teachers do have a bit of understanding [how to engage in interactions with ELLs]

and I have a little. I don't have a lot because I haven't had any specific training in it, but just using those short sentences and having things repeated.

Angela admitted that she did not have much knowledge, due to lack of specific training on how to find common perspectives so that she would be able to understand the ELLs through social interaction. However, in her practice, Angela and Shin¹⁶ were observed to mutually bridge the meanings by using words and gestures as illustrated in the following scenario:

Shin was holding a pig at a railway track table. At the railway track table, some of the trains were on the railway track. Angela came and rearranged the train back on the railway track. Angela saw Shin lift the pig in the air again, and he walked around and came back to Angela.

Angela: Can your pig fly? (When Shin was holding a pig in the air)

Shin: (shaking his head)

Angela: No?

Shin: (Smiling, nodded)

Angela: Does your pig have any friends?

Shin: (shaking his head)

Angela: No, he's happy by himself?

Shin: (Smiling, nodded)

Angela: You can put him on the train, if you want? (While putting the train back on the track)

Shin: (shaking his head, smiling)

Angela: (did not look at Shin, instead pushing the train on its track while making the 'choo' sound).

Shin: (touched Angela's hand with the pig a few times to attract Angela's attention and squeezed the pig a few times) I'm hungry!

¹⁶ Shin was a case study child of the second centre.

Angela: Oh, hello Pig. Are you hungry? Here's the blue berry muffin (pretended to take the muffin from the coach and feed the pig).

Shin: (Smiling) Nyum nyum... I...I...I... (looked like he wanted to say something) erm...Birthday! (A girl approached Shin and wanted to play with him)

Angela: Choo..Choo...Bye-bye Pig!

Although there was not much verbal interaction, I was interested to find out Angela's view on her and Shin's participation in that scenario and she commented:

I'm not quite sure with the pig; whether he just wanted to be silly with the pig, not really wanting to extend and I was trying to get him to engage and he didn't, he didn't want to, but he kept coming back to me. So I think that probably that eye contact was quite important in that one, that he was just ...[pause], he didn't look like he wanted to do - I don't know what he wanted to do with the pig, but he wanted to do it with me.

When Angela was watching the scenario between her and Shin, she was not sure whether Shin was interested in engaging in their interactions. According to Angela, Shin appeared not to be interested in interacting but he kept coming back to her. The scenario was rather ambiguous for Angela. Angela and Shin were observed to bridge their different views through verbal and nonverbal language to communicate their ideas. In the above successive turns between Angela and Shin, it was apparent that Angela relied heavily on nonverbal means of communication in her attempt to bridge meaning when interpreting the ambiguous situation. According to Rogoff (1990), in the context of interaction, caregivers and children link between what the children already know and what they must learn in order to handle a new situation. It was evident in the successive turns that Angela made connection between what Shin knew by asking Shin whether the pig could fly and Shin indicated through his nonverbal means of communication that the pig could not fly.

Although at the beginning of the interaction, Shin chose to participate in the interaction in a nonverbal manner, he began to use English words verbally such as "Toilet", "I'm hungry" in responding to Angela's questions towards the end of their conversation. Shin probably felt confident to use some English words in the context of the activity with Angela

as a result of Angela's effort to bridge the meaning with Shin. According to Angela, Shin was at the stage where he actually had a lot more English than he was using but because Shin was going through a quiet time, he did not feel confident in using English during their interaction. Therefore, Angela and Shin were observed to modify their interactions in order to achieve understanding about the activity that Shin was engaged in. Rogoff (2003) argued that mutuality in early language use, particularly, was always evident as some children built discussion with others through successive turns that layer upon the child's one word comment.

In summary, Angela and Shin attempted to mutually bridge meaning as they interacted in the activity chosen by Shin. Interaction between Angela and Shin bridged two views of a situation: it built from Shin's starting point, with modifications in the perspectives of Angela and Shin, and in addition, the interaction supported Shin as he acquired English by participating in taking successive turns. Therefore, while Angela and Shin attempted to mutually bridge the meaning, there was evidence that Shin was learning how to use English in the context of his play.

7.2.2 Social referencing

Social referencing is defined as "the child's spontaneous seeking of emotional information from the adult's face when faced with a stimulus of uncertain value" (Bacon, Morris, Waterhouse & Allen, 1998, p. 130). While Asian immigrant parents were not observed to provide guided participation in terms of verbal interactions when they sent and picked up their children from the centres, their nonverbal means of communication were apparent in their attempts to influence their children's social interactions at the centres. My study demonstrated how Seo-yeon¹⁷ and Ji Hun¹⁸ attempted to gain information from the parents' and caregivers' facial expressions in the following scenario:

There was a new pre-service teacher who started her first day of placement at the first centre. When Subin brought Seo-yeon that morning, Jennifer, the English

¹⁷ Seo-yeon was a case study child of the first centre.

¹⁸ Ji Hun was a case study child of the second centre.

speaking teacher, introduced the pre-service teacher to Seo-yeon and Subin. Then, Jennifer left them to do other things. Seo-yeon looked unsure of how he should be reacting to the new teacher. He stood behind Subin, but he was looking at Subin's face a few times when she was talking to the new teacher. Subin appeared to be relaxed and smiled during the conversation with the new teacher. After a while, Seo-yeon moved from his position and stood next to her. Later, when the new teacher asked Seo-yeon what he would like to play with, Seo-yeon looked at Subin. Subin smiled and nodded, giving him an approval look. Seo-yeon, then, went to the play dough area with the new teacher, looking more confident than when he first met the new teacher.

In the above scenario, Subin and Seo-yeon bridged understanding in the ambiguous situation through social referencing. Since that was the first time Seo-yeon and the new teacher met each other at the centre, Seo-yeon seemed to look unsure of how he should react to the teacher, as displayed by his body language when he initially stood behind Subin. However, he was observed looking at Subin's expression a few times before he slowly stood next to her, implying he could be more open with the new teacher. Then, when the new teacher asked him what he would like to play, he once again looked at Subin as he sought information from Subin as to whether he could go with the new teacher. When Subin gave him the information through her nonverbal communication that he could go with the new teacher, Seo-yeon opened up to the teacher by going to the play dough area with her.

I continued my observation of Seo-yeon and the new teacher after Subin left. Seo-yeon seemed to be responding well to the new teacher as they were playing at the play dough area. He answered a few questions when the new teacher asked him questions like "What are you making?", and he answered "Sushi". It was apparent that as Seo-yeon participated in the play-dough activity with the new teacher, he used English to interact with her. Subin's social referencing seemed to provide opportunities for Seo-yeon to participate in activities that helped him to acquire English as he interacted with the new teacher.

In another scenario at the second centre, my study, however, revealed that social referencing might offer a different interpretation of a situation for the children, compared to the scenario at the first centre. Ji Hun's grandmother always brought him in the morning.

Most of the time, Ji Hun would cry as he did not want his grandmother to leave him at the centre, as depicted in the following scenario:

This morning, like other mornings, Ji Hun's grandmother seemed to have a worried look when she brought Ji Hun to the centre. As she could not speak English at all, I noticed that she never had verbal interactions with any of the teachers. In addition, there was no bilingual teacher at the centre who could speak Ji Hun's home language. After she hung Ji Hun's bag and put his lunch box on the trolley, she spoke with Ji Hun briefly. There was a worried expression on her face when she spoke with Ji Hun which appeared to communicate apprehension to Ji Hun through her expression and tone of voice. As they were talking, Ji Hun was looking at his grandmother's facial expression. When she wanted to leave, Ji Hun cried and he held onto his grandmother's jacket. Angela approached Ji Hun, and reassured the grandmother that Ji Hun would be fine at the centre.

Bridging meaning between Ji Hun and his grandmother highlighted that Ji Hun's reaction when his grandmother wanted to leave was likely influenced by his grandmother's nonverbal means of communication. As Ji Hun looked at his grandmother's expression and listened to his grandmother's worried tone as she interacted with him, Ji Hun possibly thought that being left at the centre might not be a pleasurable experience for him; hence the crying.

Ji-Hun's habit, which was crying at the centre, was regarded by Ming and Razan as "unsettled behaviour". In addition, according to Ming, Ji Hun appeared to be a child who was not easily approached by other peers as he was always seen to be playing with Shin only, and therefore limiting his participation with other children, particularly his English speaking peers. His limited participation with other peers was seen to be affecting his opportunities to use English in his social interactions.

In summary, two distinctive scenarios of mutually bridging meaning through social referencing, which involved Seo-yeon and Subin, and Ji Hun and his grandmother, revealed how different social referencing can influence the ELL's perception. These scenarios depicted how social referencing from the adults could influence how children obtained and transmitted information and finally their reactions in some situations. Consequently, the way that Seo-

yeon and Ji Hun reacted in those situations was likely to have some impact on their opportunities to engage in social interactions with their peers or teachers which could support their English acquisition. Rogoff (2003) highlighted the fact that bridging meanings through nonverbal means such as social referencing in an ambiguous situation was a dominant way of obtaining and giving information. Rogoff (1990) claimed that young children were so skilled at obtaining information from adults' glances and moods that one of the greatest challenges of assessing young children was to escape nonverbal actions that may be regarded as cues.

7.2.3 Intersubjectivity

As noted, Rogoff (1990) proposed that a mutual understanding that is achieved between individuals in interactions has been termed intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity can be broadly defined as a person's sense of another person's experience (Rogoff, 1990; 2003). Intersubjectivity focuses on understanding what happens between individuals which cannot be attributed to another individual (Rogoff, 2003).

In a pre-observation interview with Ming, I explored how the friendship between the ELLs and English speaking children helped the ELLs to acquire English. Ming claimed that the more the ELLs and the English speaking peers interacted with each other, the better they understood each other. Ming commented:

The children here play with each other a lot. We [teachers] come and go, different days of duties, so we don't get that kind of constant interaction with the children. So, I think, the Asian children and English children can benefit a lot if they understand each other. I mean, when they play, and they get stuck at something, they can help each other. Of course, we can come and help too but I think that children start the play, so they can sometimes help each other, you know, like solve the problem, take turns, and I observe this [helping each other] a lot.

In the context of guided participation, Ming described the importance of mutually bridging meaning between the ELLs and the English speaking peers. She emphasised that in her observations, the ELLs and the English speaking peers can benefit from each other if they can achieve mutual understanding. For example, they would be able to solve problems as they played together.

As Ming highlighted the role of English speaking peers and the Asian immigrant ELLs, in mutually bridging meaning, I observed a scenario which depicted intersubjectivity as Shin and Lucy were working on a puzzle:

Ming was at the table observing Shin working on an aeroplane puzzle. Ming asked Shin what was the picture of the puzzle, and Shin answered, “Aeroplane”. Lucy, an English speaking child, who had just finished drawing, turned to Shin and asked Shin, “I’ve done this before. Can I do it, too?” Shin nodded.

Lucy: Shin, you can take that one (pointing to a piece of puzzle which was closer to Shin)

Shin: Where?

Lucy: There... there, that one.

Shin: This? (holding a piece of the puzzle which had some red pattern on it)

Lucy: Yes, the red one. I think that’s the wing.

Shin: Wing? Where (to put the piece of the puzzle)?

Lucy: Put it here (pointing to a space on the puzzle board)

Shin: Here? (looking unsure)

Lucy: Yes, see, there’s some shade of red.

Shin: Ok

In the above scenario, Ming asked Shin what was the overall shape of the puzzle. Then, she let Shin work on the puzzle on his own. Lucy, who happened to be at the same table as Shin, asked Shin whether she could join to help solve the puzzle. As Lucy was an English speaker, she was observed guiding Shin by giving him instructions to take a piece of puzzle which had some shade of red on it. Shin followed Lucy’s instructions and asked for clarification when he was not sure of Lucy’s instruction. In the scenario, Ming asked Shin whether he knew what the overall puzzle was. Ming’s question was to bridge understanding between her and Shin to ensure that Shin perceived the overall puzzle in the same way Ming did. In the interactions between Lucy and Shin, there were some modifications made by both of them. For example, when Shin asked Lucy “This?” to check he had the right piece of puzzle, Lucy modified her input by mentioning the word “red” to confirm Shin’s understanding. Rogoff (1990) highlighted that if the focus is on the novice’s modification,

that modification can be considered as the basis of development. The intersubjectivity that was established in the interactions between Shin and Lucy enabled Lucy to refer to the pieces of the puzzle such as, “this one”, “that” so that both of them understood each other while working on the puzzle.

I showed the video to Ming and asked her about her thoughts on the scenario. She commented:

I was asking Shin about the picture of the puzzle — just making sure that Shin knows that it’s an aeroplane. Lucy’s being helpful here. She’s able to help Shin, I know Shin can do it on his own but it may take longer. Since Lucy has done the puzzle before, that’s why I think she can tell him (Shin) which piece goes where. And they communicate quite well.

Ming explained that she wanted to make sure that Shin knew the overall puzzle. Although Ming knew that Shin would be able to complete the task on his own, Lucy’s help enabled Shin to accomplish the task faster. Ming acknowledged that Shin and Lucy communicated well while working on the puzzle. When I compared Ming’s view before the observation of the above scenario, there is a similar aspect of communication which was highlighted by her. Ming emphasised that understanding each other’s perspectives was important when the ELLs and the English speaking peers communicate with each other to mutually bridge the meaning.

With regard to intersubjectivity, I presented Ming’s views on how English speaking peers might help the Asian immigrant ELLs. Then, I presented a scenario which involved Lucy helping Shin to work on the puzzle. Ming was observing Shin and guided him in the beginning before Lucy came and joined in the activity. Vygotsky (1987) emphasised that intersubjectivity simultaneously provides grounds for communication and supports children’s understanding of new information and activities. In the interaction between Lucy and Shin, intersubjectivity was evident because both of them understood what they were referring to by using words that only they understood. Moreover, Lucy and Shin modified each other’s interactions in order to reach an understanding of the other person’s perspective.

7.2.4 Summary

In this section, I discussed two aspects of mutually bridging meaning which directly and indirectly supported the ELLs as they acquired English. The first aspect of mutually bridging meaning was examined in the social interactions which involved Angela and Shin. In the second aspect, social referencing, I considered how Seo-yeon's and Ji Hun's parents built bridges that helped Seo-yeon and Ji Hun to understand how to act in new situations by providing emotional cues about the nature of the situations and how to behave. Both aspects have the power to influence English acquisition for the ELLs like Shin, Seo-yeon and Ji Hun.

7.3 Structuring opportunities for ELLs to observe and participate

My study demonstrated that it was apparent that the majority of the English speaking teachers from both centres arranged for socialising experiences through a selection of opportunities for the ELLs which included opportunities to observe and participate, the transfer of responsibilities, language adjustments in social interactions, and social interactions through symbolic play.

7.3.1 Structuring children's opportunities to observe and participate

Angela, an English speaking teacher from the second centre, expressed that she would like to see the participation of ELLs during big group activities such as mat time. However, there was not much evidence of their participation during such activities. She commented:

There's a lot of keeping quiet and listening and that's something we actually have to address – that we do have quite a lot of stories in our mat times and if it was more of an interactive game that was predictable, then children who did not speak English would be able to participate more. I found that the Asian children do get up and participate when something like that happens at mat-time.

In her interview, Angela highlighted her concern that ELLs were not keen to participate during mat time activities as they did not always understand everything that was being said during mat time. Angela, however, suggested that the ELLs preferred to participate in activities that were predictable such as interactive games:

I think we still need to work on what we do in our bigger groups because I think sometimes the stories for the children who don't speak English, they may be attention waivers because they don't pick up all the words. But I think, they observe a lot.

It was apparent that Angela did not always choose the ELLs to participate in activities during mat time. As she noted the ELLs "observe a lot". Compared to English speaking children who were always chosen to participate in mat time activities, Angela was seen to have more one-on-one interaction with the ELLs when there was an opportunity to do so, such as was illustrated in the following scenario:

Ji Hun, as always, would go to a reading corner, after the mat time. Most of the times, he took the books that had been read by the teachers during the mat time. Ji Hun was always engaged in the book that he chose. He would spend some time looking at the pictures before flipping to the next page. Angela, the teacher, approached him and asked whether he would like her to read the book for him. Ji Hun nodded quickly, looking happy and moved to the side of the sofa to give some space to Angela. Angela read the book picked by Ji Hun earlier, the book on dinosaurs. As Angela was reading the book, she stopped at some pages to interact more with Ji Hun as the following shows:

Angela: (reading from the page of the book)... the dinosaurs roared fiercely (making a roaring sound "Roar" and looking at Ji Hun)

Ji Hun: "Roar"

Angela: Wow, there's a good, loud roar (smiling)

Ji Hun: "Roar" (making a fierce face)

Ji Hun repeated the word "roar" during the shared book reading activity. When Ji Hun heard the word "roar", he was able to produce that word twice, together with an appropriate expression. When I asked Angela to comment on the scenario, she responded:

I think he was interested in the subject matter of the story, but I also think at that time, because we were one-on-one, I felt that he felt quite secure at that time, so I

think that really helped with his engagement in the story as well and he felt unrushed and unpressured by other children, so I think that was it. From looking at that, I think the one-on-one times are really important and just using those short phrases. I think he was finding that interaction really rewarding with just the two of us, plus he was interested in the book. I think it was a very simple book and the speed at which it was going allowed him time to process and I think that feeling of being unhurried in the learning is really important.

Although Angela did not emphasise the word “roar” repeated by Ji Hun, she highlighted that interaction with Ji Hun was rewarding because she indicated that the one-on-one interaction had helped in two ways: firstly, Ji Hun’s engagement with the story due to feeling secure, with no rush and pressure from other children, and secondly, Ji Hun’s choice of the book helped him to understand the story and learn some contextual use of English words.

The interview with Angela based on the scenario at mat time and the reading activity drew attention to the process of guided participation, which in this case was mutual structuring participation. The structuring occurred as Ji Hun chose the activity, which was book reading, and was later joined in by Angela. While Angela highlighted that the ELLs were not participating well in the larger group activities such as during mat time, she was observed to structure the one-on-one activity with Ji Hun. Choosing this activity offered the opportunities for an interaction between Angela and Ji Hun that supported Ji Hun’s English acquisition. It was apparent that Angela made arrangements for the ELLs by selecting activities she considered appropriate for them such as one-on-one activities. Although Angela’s choice was made without the intention of teaching English to Ji Hun, as she did not emphasise the English words learned by him during the shared book reading, she implicitly supported Ji Hun’s English acquisition.

Angela’s view was supported by Jennifer, an English speaking teacher from the first centre. In her interview, I showed her a scenario in which Hyun-woo¹⁹ chose to join Jennifer and other children who were playing a board game at that time. Unlike the ELLs in the

¹⁹ Hyun-woo was a case study child of the first centre.

second centre who seldom participated in bigger group activities, Hyun-woo chose to participate in the bigger group activities. This was probably due to the fact that Hyun-woo had been in the centre for almost two years at the time I conducted my study at the centre. Within those two years, it was apparent that Hyun-woo's English acquisition was better than that of Ji-min and Seo-yeon, both of whom had been enrolled at the centre more recently. Moreover, the longer time spent at the centre had also made Hyun-woo feel comfortable with his teachers and peers compared to Ji-min and Seo-yeon.

The scenario depicted was in the following:

Hyun-woo had just finished playing at the sand-pit. He was looking around (perhaps to monitor activities around him before deciding which one that he would like to participate in). Then he looked at Jennifer and Jennifer smiled at him. Jennifer was playing a board game with a few other children at the deck near the sand-pit area. Hyun-woo came closer to the group, observed how the game was played for a while (he looked as if he was trying to understand how to go about playing the game) and sat next to Jennifer. The children had to wait for their turn to roll the dice. When the child who was sitting next to Hyun-woo had his turn, Jennifer started her interactions with Hyun-woo:

Jennifer: Would you like to join us?

Hyun-woo: (Smiling, nodded)

Jennifer: (passed the dice to Hyun-woo) Now, roll the dice, roll the dice on the board, warming it up (while rubbing her palms).

Hyun-woo: (Instead of rolling the dice, he just put the dice in front him)

Jennifer: Can you tell this colour?

Hyun-woo: (Instead of saying yellow, he pointed to another yellow card which was just in front of him).

Jennifer: Yellow...yellow...yellow (while pointing at the yellow colour of the dice)

Hyun-woo: (Nodded but did not repeat the word "Yellow")

Jennifer: Oh! What is it?

Hyun-woo: Sheep!

Jennifer: What noise does a sheep make?

Hyun-woo: Sheep

Jennifer: B... b... b...

Hyun-woo: Baa...baa...baa...

Based on the above scenario, I asked Jennifer to share her thoughts about Hyun-woo's participation, and she commented:

Obviously he had come just to join, which is great. Again, it's showing that he's confident to join an established group, and find his own place there. That's brilliant. There weren't a lot of interactions with me and Hyun-woo in that first clip because it was obviously some of the other children's turn, but in that second clip, it's actually quite lovely to see, it really is lovely to see. You don't realise, when you're actually with a group of children what's going on, but that was great. Hyun-woo, I mean he's showing like he's really enjoying himself and a sense of humour — his humour's coming out, he's laughing and everything and, obviously, like rolling the dice, he might not understand that word in English, "what's rolling the dice?", so I obviously showed him, you know, roll the dice, and the colours as well. He might know that it's yellow, but he might not know the English word for yellow. So again, it's just reinforcing those words for him and, telling me what the animal is. And I think, did I hold up the box so that he could actually see? [Yes, yes.] So he could actually see, okay, this is one of the animals on the card, it's the same as on the back.

Regarding the part in the scenario where Jennifer asked Hyun-woo what the colour of the dice was, I asked Jennifer what her intention was in not telling Hyun-woo the colour of the dice. She responded:

I always tend to like, you know, maybe he does know it, let him be able to express himself and if he doesn't know it, then I can help him with the word for the colours as well as the word for the animals, you know. Like if Hyun-woo didn't know what the animal was, I think he had picked it up that it was a sheep but maybe he did not understand my question about the noise the sheep makes and

that was why he answered “sheep” for the second time. That’s the whole point of that game — associating the animal and the noise, making the noise, and the colour. I’m really pleased to see that Hyun-woo chose to participate in that game.

As evident in the scenario, prior to Hyun-woo’s choice to participate in the board game activity, Hyun-woo was observed to actively monitor activities around him before making a decision about which activity he wanted to participate in. When Hyun-woo saw Jennifer was smiling at him, he then approached her and the other children who were playing the board game. Jennifer’s smile could be regarded as social referencing to indicate that he was welcome to participate in the board game activity.

It was apparent that mutual structuring of participation occurred through Jennifer’s arrangement of activities which allowed Hyun-woo access to observe and participate. Jennifer structured Hyun-woo’s contributions to the interactions during the board game by adjusting her prompts and assistance. For example, Jennifer prompted Hyun-woo to roll the dice by rubbing her palms. Although, Hyun-woo did not roll the dice as prompted by Jennifer, she further assisted Hyun-woo’s participation by providing words, such as “Yellow”, to enable him to engage in the activity.

In addition to the arrangement of activities, Hyun-woo and Jennifer collaborated during their direct interactions. After Jennifer asked Hyun-woo what the animal was that was shown behind the coloured card, Hyun-woo confidently answered “Sheep”. After Hyun-woo gave the correct answer, she requested information that was not visible in the picture (“What noise does the sheep make?”). Hyun-woo did not answer Jennifer’s question correctly as he said the word “sheep” again; indicating that either he did not understand Jennifer’s question or he did not know the sound of the sheep. Jennifer then adjusted her way of interaction with Hyun-woo by making the initial sound (B...) of the sheep noise. Hyun-woo, then, immediately imitated the sound “Baa”. Therefore, in her guided participation process, Jennifer was seen to adjust their structuring of the task according to Hyun-woo’s level of English acquisition.

In summary, Angela and Jennifer were observed to structure opportunities for the ELLs to participate in activities that facilitated English acquisition for them. The ELLs were

observed to be active in choosing their activities. The ELLs' success in deciding their own activities depended on the support of others to allow their choice of activities.

7.3.2 Transfer of responsibility for managing activities

Rogoff (1990) suggested that children accept increasing responsibility for managing circumstances in two ways: first, over the course of years, and secondly, through the familiarisation with a particular task. In an early childhood context, effective transfer of responsibility needs a teacher to be sensitive to children's competence in particular tasks, to ensure that the responsibility matches the children's skills. Specifically, the teacher needs to be sensitive to the children's skills development in a particular circumstance and to the knowledge needed to manage that circumstance. Complementary to the teacher's adjustment of support in accordance to the children's skills are the children's dynamic efforts to organise for participation at a suitable level (Rogoff, 1990).

In an interview with Rosalind, on how she had been supporting the ELLs as they acquired English, Rosalind emphasised that she always made sure that she observed the development of competencies in the ELLs and then gave appropriate tasks accordingly. She commented on Hyun-woo's abilities:

So Hyun-woo's my profile study child. One of my children that I do my learning stories for, and that's something that I've noticed, how he endures with a lot of time. Lately he's been creating structures that he's created from his own mind. So whether it's a bridge that he's found objects and resources for that he could use to make a bridge in a different way. His creativity's growing, and his imagination is helping him to create something new. He'd come up to me and he'd say, "This is an aeroplane," and for the life of me I couldn't see the aeroplane, but after he has explained it to me, "Oh, okay, where are the propellers?" And he'll show me where the propeller is. "Oh, where are the wings?" And he'll show me, and immediately you get that picture. So the artistic part of his brain is really working really well, and that's why he takes so much time and concentration, putting so much effort in what he's doing. That's why, sometimes I just let him be creative, and sometimes I challenge him a bit to see how far he accomplishes something.

Rosalind highlighted Hyun-woo's skills and knowledge, particularly his task endurance when doing a task, and his creative thinking. Since Hyun-woo were one of her profile children, she was aware of Hyun-woo's abilities and development because she had to include his abilities and development in his learning stories journal. Rogoff (1990) highlighted that a caregiver's sensitivity includes understanding of the abilities and knowledge a child needs to independently manage a situation or a task.

It was apparent that Rosalind transferred the responsibility to Hyun-woo to manage a shape drawing activity. At the beginning, Rosalind drew a shape and Hyun-woo copied it. Then, Rosalind extended the shape by drawing a few other shapes, and explained the number of lines in the shapes as reflected in the following:

Rosalind drew a shape of a big triangle on the pavement. Hyun-woo watched and approached her. Rosalind told Hyun-woo that she was drawing the shape of triangle, and explained that a triangle has three lines as she showed him the three lines. Handing her chalk to Hyun-woo she asked him whether he would like to draw a triangle shape next to hers. Then, he wrote number three in the triangle, and said the word "triangle". Rosalind complemented Hyun-woo for his effort. Seeing interest in Hyun-woo, Rosalind persisted with the shape activity drawing a new shape such as the shape of a circle which Hyun-woo copied. Then, Rosalind asked him what shape he would like to draw and Hyun-woo drew a square:

Rosalind: What shape are you drawing, Hyun-woo? (as Hyun-woo was drawing the square shape).

Hyun-woo: (Looking at the shape that he had just drawn, he showed four fingers to Rosalind).

Rosalind: yes, it has four lines. What shape is that?

Hyun-woo: (Looked at the shape again, but he did not say anything)

Rosalind: It's a square. You're right, a square has four lines. Well done, Hyun-woo.

Hyun-woo: Square.

In the above scenario, Rosalind was observed to transfer the responsibility for drawing a shape to Hyun-woo. Then, Hyun-woo drew a square shape, and while he could not tell Rosalind what the shape was when asked by her, he was able to show his understanding that a square has four lines. When she was shown the video footage, Rosalind commented:

Whatever he was seeing me doing, he would draw it. And you see how proud he is about what he's done. Whereas another child will draw it and I've noticed a lot of children would draw these amazing things and they would just move away. And he would actually want that interaction. So he'll show you, 'that's what I've done over here – this is what I've done – come and look at this,' you know? Even just by showing, it's a lot of his body language that he's using. So, there he drew the “square” shape and when I asked him, he didn't answer. I believe he did not know the word for the shape, but he showed his four fingers — the lines for the square shape. I'm glad that he could still associate the shape with the lines, just like when he first observed me drawing the triangle.

Rosalind also emphasised that Hyun-woo, unlike other children whom she observed could draw great drawings and move away, wanted to be engaged and acknowledged in his drawing through interaction with Rosalind. Rogoff (1990) claimed that assessment of a child's need for assistance by a skilled adult is an active process of adjustment to changes in skills and new evidence provided during social interaction. Therefore, Rosalind asked Hyun-woo to draw a shape of his own choice as she possibly had seen that Hyun-woo was able to draw a few shapes during the activity. When Rosalind asked Hyun-woo the shape that he had drawn and Hyun-woo did not answer, she then rephrased her question. However, Hyun-woo still could not answer her question, so she supplied Hyun-woo with the English label for the shape.

Rogoff (1990) suggested that a caregiver needs an idea of both how a specific task could be accomplished, and how the child is likely to manage the task. In the scenario, Rosalind possibly had an idea that Hyun-woo was able to draw the shape, but was unable to name the shape because he showed his fingers to indicate the four line for the square instead of giving Rosalind the name of the shape. When Hyun-woo paused before answering Rosalind's question about the name of the shape and later on gave a different answer,

Rosalind possibly took the pause from Hyun-woo as an indication that Hyun-woo did not know the answer. Therefore, the interaction between Rosalind and Hyun-woo demonstrated the characteristics of guided participation as Hyun-woo learned an English word.

Another example of transferring of responsibility in the context of guided participation occurred when I asked Razan about her approaches to support the ELLs as they acquired English. She commented:

Actually we don't do much. It's the peers that they [the English speaking peers] interact with so they role-model everything to them [the Asian immigrant ELLs] and they pick up the language, ways to socialise. But of course we observe them so we know what [has] to be done.

In the interview, Razan perceived that the teachers' roles in terms of supporting English acquisition for the ELLs through interactions were not as effective as the role that their peers played. Razan argued that the teachers' role was to observe the children so they could prepare for the children's activities.

However, Razan emphasised that the English speaking peers' roles were more influential than the teachers in developing their English. A scene between Razan and Masaru²⁰ demonstrated that she, as a teacher, indeed was able to offer good support. In the interaction, this took the form of a guided participation process where she adjusted her support along the way:

Razan was rearranging some of the learning stories files on the container. Masaru was looking at Razan, and then slowly approached her. Razan looked at Masaru and asked her whether she would like to look at her learning stories journal. Masaru nodded, smiling. She showed her the picture of her wearing a princess attire. Razan asked her:

²⁰ Masaru was a case study child of the second centre.

Razan: Look at you! What were you in this photo?

Masaru: Princess!

Razan: Nice, and look who's beside you?

Masaru: Princess' mum.

Razan: Is Sally (the name of the girl standing next to her in the picture) the queen?

Masaru: (Looking at Razan but not answering)

Razan: A queen is a princess' mum. The queen is wearing ... (pointing to the crown)

Masaru: Clown!

Razan: (smiling) Nice crown [emphasised the pronunciation of the word crown]...I like the crown, so many diamonds on the crown. Do you like the crown, too, Masaru?

Masaru: I like the crown (pointing at the crown) too.

Razan: I wonder what happened here (pointing at the picture of an apple on the table)

Masaru: Poison apple, Snow White, and... queen... (she looked hesitant when she said the word queen)

Razan: Oh, yes...you are Snow White, and the queen is the step mother, the witch...?

Masaru: (Nodded, smiling)

In the above scene, it was clear that Razan gradually adjusted her input and demands in the whole process of transferring responsibility to Masaru. Initially, Razan asked who the girl was standing next to her. Instead of telling the name of the girl, Masaru told Razan the girl was the “princess' mum”. Razan then, adjusted her input by asking whether the girl was a queen. However, when Masaru did not respond, Razan adjusted her demand by allowing Masaru to tell Razan that the queen was wearing a crown. Although Masaru was confident in calling it a crown, she possibly realised that the way she pronounced the “crown” was wrong because Razan had been repeating the word “crown” three times. Masaru seemed to reaffirm the correct way of pronouncing the word “crown”, instead of “clown”, by putting the word “crown” in a full sentence. When Masaru appeared to be getting more engaged in the conversation, Razan adjusted her demand by asking Masaru what happened in the picture, thus, requiring a more elaborate answer from Masaru.

Rogoff (1990) claimed that adult's judgment of children's skills and support of children's learning could not function without children clarifying the areas that need greater assistance. It was apparent that when Masaru was not able to say the word "queen" and pronounced the word "crown" incorrectly, Razan judged that Masaru was not sure of these words. Rogoff (1990) suggested that as children demonstrate enhanced abilities in handling a situation, a caregiver can offer or even require them to take greater responsibility. As was evident in their interaction, Masaru cooperated with Razan in managing their participation and level of responsibility. Towards the end of their interaction, Masaru appeared to start taking more responsibility for the situation by stating her preference when she said that she liked the crown and then by giving more information describing the symbolic play in the picture.

It was interesting to note that, Ming and Akiko claimed that children could take on the responsibility to manage their activities and the teachers would observe and participate according to the needs of the children during the activities. Ming commented:

From the early childhood curriculum, we learn we need to observe first. Observe – you don't get involved in their play a lot, because you would interrupt their play. So you observe first and then you know, 'oh, what they are doing now?' and then we will have shorter discussion or a teacher, just 'oh, I know what I need to do next.' So you would take parts of the information on, a message to colleague, and then you would prepare like [an] activity to gain their participation.

Ming's view highlighted that the teacher's role was to observe first, in order to understand what needed to be done so that they could prepare activities that of the children's interest based on that observation. She argued that she did not interrupt the children's play particularly because of her role in observing the children's play so that she could plan for activities related to the children's interest. When I asked Ming to give an example of her practice, she explained that she observed that the children loved the story book "The three billy goats gruff". Then, she brought the matter up in the staff meeting. The teachers, then, exchanged their ideas of how to extend the children's interest. Finally, Ming and the other teachers decorated a corner at the centre that resembled the scene in the book which has a

bridge. Ming claimed that the children, including the Asian immigrant ELLs, used the corner for their symbolic play.

In another scenario at the second centre, which I thought could have been a good opportunity for the teacher to structure the children's participation, it did not happen. The scenario was between Shin, Ji Hun, and Akiko, the bilingual teacher from the second centre:

It was a fine day. Shin and Ji Hun were playing at the playground. There were no other children playing nearby. Akiko, the bilingual teacher, was standing within close proximity to where Shin and Ji Hun were. As Shin and Ji Hun did not speak the same native language, they were playing with other without verbal interactions except when they were calling each other's name. They were lifting some rubber tyres to another spot which was closer to where Akiko was standing. It looked as if they wanted to stack the tyres. Akiko looked at them for a while and looked elsewhere. There were no verbal interactions between the Asian immigrant ELLs and Akiko although Akiko and Shin were from the same cultural background and they spoke the same home language. Shin and Ji Hun finally finished stacking the rubber tyres. Shin took a ball and tried to throw in the middle of the tyre. Then they had difficulties in getting the ball because the stack was higher than their heights. They both looked at Akiko, but did not say a word. Akiko absently nodded and continued to look elsewhere. Shin and Ji Hun looked at each other and left after a while, without taking the ball.

In an interview with Akiko, I showed her the video footage of the above scenario and wanted to find out what was her thoughts regarding the scenario. She commented in the following:

Sometimes you don't have to intervene. You just have to sit there and let them [Shin and Ji Hun], let them. By interference sometimes, we take away those opportunities for them to learn by themselves as well. So sometimes all you have to do is just sit and watch, do nothing. Children need those opportunities. They'll pick up English from friends, not from us all the time. Unless they get those

opportunities, how would they learn? And if things happen, then you are there to support them.

Similar to the views expressed by Ming and Razan, Akiko perceived that the teachers should observe, and should not interfere with the Asian immigrant ELLs' play unless there was a need to do so. She noted that the Asian immigrants ELLs needed the opportunities to acquire English from their peers. However, from the scenario, I observed that there were no verbal interactions between Shin and Ji Hun because both of them did not speak the same home language and they had limited proficiency in English. They were just calling each other's names and used nonverbal means of communication when they were playing together. When they had difficulty in getting the ball from the middle part of the stacking tyres, because it was taller than them, Akiko just nodded and did not interfere with their play. According to Rogoff (1990), effective transfer of responsibility should be assisted by sensitivity to children's competence in particular task so that responsibility was given to according to their skills. In the scenario between Shin, Ji Hun, and Akiko, it appeared to me that there was no effective transfer of responsibility due the lack of sensitivity of Shin's and Ji Hun's competency. Shin and Ji Hun were not proficient in English and they could not interact effectively when they had problem of getting the ball out from the middle of the stacking tyres. Therefore, it appeared to me that it was not effective to transfer responsibility to one of them because of both of them did not have competency in verbal interactions.

In summary, the examples in this section have demonstrated two different perspectives in their understandings and practice regarding transfer of responsibility for managing activities. Rosalind and Razan supported the ELLs as they acquired English through the transfer of responsibilities for managing the activities. The ELLs were able to interact in English as they were involved in the activities either with the teachers or their friends. Rosalind highlighted that she was aware of Hyun-woo's abilities, and in practice, and it was reflected that she was sensitive to Hyun-woo's abilities while she transferred the responsibility for managing activities to Hyun-woo. However, Razan, although perceived that the English speaking peers were more influential in supporting the Asian immigrant ELLs, in practice, provided the support for Masaru through the transfer of responsibility for Masaru to manage the interaction. Therefore, as the teachers transferred the responsibility to the ELLs to manage the activities, it provided support for the ELLs to acquire English. On the one hand,

Ming and Akiko, perceived and were observed to let the ELLs managed the activities without their intervention to support English acquisition when there were opportunities for them to do so.

7.3.3 Language adjustment in social interactions

Another way in which opportunities are structured for social interactions is through language adjustment. Like many children who attend early childhood education centres, the ELLs were still developing their social skills. These social skills were important for the children to help them engage in positive social interactions while playing together and interacting with the teachers. While the ELLs needed to acquire social skills, they also had to acquire English in order to interact positively with their peers and their teachers.

It was apparent in my study that Ji-min and Ji Hun, who were from the first centre and the second centre respectively, had challenges in socialising with their peers and their teachers due to their lack of social skills. They had difficulty getting along with other children mainly due to their limited proficiency in English which restricted their interactions with their peers. Their peers often ignored or rejected Ji-min's and Ji Hun's attempts when they wanted to participate in their play activities.

I noticed that Ji-min rarely played with other children except for Seo-yeon. Rosalind, commented on Ji-min's social skills:

At times when he [Ji-min] has a bit of difficult times with some of the children he would come and would just hold on to you. If he doesn't like you [referring to me], for example, I would ask him to say, "Maz, stop, I don't want to play with you". Maybe those words are too much. Then I will adjust, "Maz, no play." So, he'll say, "Maz, no play" which means he's starting to take on that learning, you know? He's trying to use his vocabulary, trying to build on that.

Rosalind suggested that Ji-min had difficult times with other children at the centre because he did not know how to express himself in English. Rosalind emphasised the ways in which she had provided Ji-min as an ELL with simpler language expressions so that he is able to express himself. She adjusted and simplified the expressions that were common for English

speaking children such as “Stop, I don’t want to play with you” to “No play” for Hyun-woo. Rosalind described the guided participation as part of her approach by structuring just the right level of support for Ji-min as he acquired skills to socialise and knowledge about how to use phrases in English.

During his socialisation with his friends, Ji-min applied the language model taught by Rosalind when he had difficulties with his friends, as in the following scenario:

Ji-min was playing with tricycles. He began to ride the tricycles around the pavement. Then, there was a boy, Jack, who stopped Ji-min, using a stick. Jack said to Ji-min, “Ticket, please”. Ji-min, however, refused to give ‘the ticket’ to Jack. Jack said, “No, you can’t pass this! Ticket, first”. Ji-min refused to give the make-believe ‘ticket’ and he said, “No play!” Jack, who stopped Ji-min for the ‘ticket’, was not really happy but let him go, anyway.

In the above scenario, Ji-min was able to express himself using Rosalind’s phrase. Ji-min spoke quite spontaneously without hesitation when he used the phrase “No play”. According to Rogoff (1990), word learning was an important aspect of children’s learning of social interactions. Ji-min was able to express himself by learning how to say simple words such as “No play” in the social interaction with Jack. I showed the video footage of the recorded scenario to Rosalind. Rosalind commented:

Oh! Did he say that? Yes, I remember that Ji-min would come to me and sometimes ended up crying whenever he had problems with other kids. It’s good to see he did learn to use his words to express his feelings. That’s what we encourage here [in the centre]. [Pause] It would be nice, though, if he could use more language to engage with his friends, I mean in a more positive way. I guess when he has more friends to play with he would naturally learn more words.

Rosalind noted that the children, including the Asian immigrant ELLs at the centre, were encouraged to use their words to express their feelings as discussed in my first findings section in Chapter 5. However, Rosalind stated that it would be nicer if Ji-min would be able to use English to express his feelings as well as engage in positive social interactions with his

peers. Rogoff (1990) argued that language acquisition required social participation as well as the child's natural inclination to learn language. In the scenario, Rosalind implied that Ji-min might be more inclined to acquire English when he participated more positively with his friends. Therefore, Rosalind's simplification of language for Ji-min was evident to mutually bridge the meaning between him and Jack.

There was evidence of guided participation offered by the teachers from the second centre for Ji Hun, who had challenges to engage in positive social interactions. Ming, Razan, and Angela described how they made adjustment in the interactions in order to support Ji Hun to engage in positive social interactions with his teachers and his peers. Ming shared her experience:

I use simple words. You don't need to make the sentence very long. You just say, like – 'Fire engine, oh, fire engine ne-noh-ne-noh' like that. I need to use very simple English to communicate with him [Ji Hun]. Sometimes, when I want to explain something to him, I use body language, different tone, you know, so that he understands, and I hope he can use the words himself. Sometimes, I have to say word by word, so that he can follow after me.

From my observations, it was evident that Ji Hun acquired English through interactions with Ming during the guided participation process as in the following example:

It was a cold winter afternoon. The children just had a visit from a few fire brigade staff. There was a brief talk session on fire safety and the children got the opportunity to see and explore how a fire engine worked. Right after the session, the majority of the children were excited about it, and they pretended to be fire fighters. The boys, mainly, pretended the trikes were the fire engines. However, there were not enough trikes for the boys. Ji Hun cried when he did not get a turn to use the trike.

Ji Hun: Fireman!

Ming: Do you want to be a fireman?

Jin Hu: (Nodded, and pointed at the trikes)

Ming: Come with me (Ji Hun followed Ming as she approached Jack who was riding a trike). Ask Jack, can I have a turn, please?

Jin Hu: My turn (looking at Jack)

Ming: Jin Hu, ask nicely “Jack, can I please...”

Jin Hu: ...have a turn

Ming: Jin Hu, would you like to ask Jack, yourself?

Jin Hu: Can I please...

Ming: ...have a turn?

Jin Hu: Can I please... have my turn?

Jack: Ok, one more round, I'll give it to you.

Ming: Is that ok Jin Hu? One more round, then your turn.

Jin Hun: One more, my turn.

Ming: Thank you, Jack.

Jin Hun: Thank you, Jack.

Ming: Well done, Ji Hun!

In the above successive turns, English acquisition occurred naturally during the process of functional communication for Ji Hun. Ming's guided participation process focused on modelling the interaction skills between Ji Hun and Jack. Rogoff (1990) claimed that early language use involved conversations and propositions that were developed in dialogue between people. Both Ming and Ji Hun adjusted their interactions to achieve better understanding of how to ask Jack's permission to use the trike. Ming facilitated Ji Hun's English acquisition by adjusting her language input according to Ji Hun's level.

In summary, Rosalind, Ming, Razan, and Angela all identified that Ji Hun and Ji-min had difficulties in social interactions with their peers at the centres. In this section, I have discussed how Rosalind and Ming were able to identify the developing social skills in Ji-min and Ji Hun, which could be contributing factors to the challenges faced by them. Rosalind and Ming were observed to provide guided participation for Ji-min and Ji Hun by adjusting the language so that Ji-min and Ji Hun were able to use the phrases and words learned in their interaction. Petty (2009) argued that to understand how guided participation might help young children develop the skills used for positive peer interactions, it is important to identify the social skills developing in children who have difficulty interacting, playing and getting along

with others. Therefore, it was important for the early childhood teachers to be able to identify the social skills lacking in the ELLs in order to improve their interactions with their peers.

7.3.4 Social interaction through symbolic play

The majority of the teachers noted that the ELLs acquired English during their play with the teachers and their English speaking friends. Razan and Heather specifically highlighted that they viewed symbolic play as a good opportunity to facilitate the ELLs as they acquired English.

Razan emphasised the benefits of symbolic play for the ELLs such as when she said “they can pick up some English words when they talk with their friends”, “they learn how to use the words in the right context because at home, maybe they don’t get the same experience to use the words they learn in pretend play”. Razan also noted that her role was mainly to observe the children during their symbolic play and intervene only when there was a disagreement. Bjorklund (2000) proposed that guided participation afforded by caregivers and other more experienced learners during symbolic play contributes to cognitive development. Similarly, Razan argued that symbolic play facilitated the cognitive development of the Asian immigrant ELL’s English acquisition because they learned English words in appropriate contexts.

In the example below, Razan, also used guided participation when Masaru²¹ was playing symbolic play with her English speaking friends. Masaru always appeared reserved when she was with her friends. Before Masaru and two of her friends, Nadia and Alice, started playing, they negotiated their roles. Apparently, the mother’s role was popular among the girls because all the girls wanted to become a mother. Nadia and Alice had an argument over who would become a mother during the play but Masaru just watched them. Razan was watching Masaru and her friends and she approached them at the “home corner”:

Razan: What are you playing, girls?

²¹ Masaru was a case study child of the first centre.

Nadia: We're playing mum and dad.

Razan: Nice...who's the Dad?

Alice: I don't want to be a dad. I am the Mum.

Nadia: But you always are the mum (referring to Alice). Not fair!

Razan: Erm, let's see. Who has never become a Mum before this?

Masaru: Me! (Both Nadia and Alice did not say anything.)

Razan: Why not we let Masaru be the Mum today, and maybe later, you can have your turn? What do you think (looking at Nadia and Alice)? Would you like to be the Mum this time?

Masaru: (Smiling, nodded)

Nadia: I can be Dad, Dad is strong!

Alice: I want to be Sister. I can help Mum.

Although Masaru kept quiet when Nadia and Alice argued about who would be playing the role of a mother, Razan suggested to the girls to let Masaru play the role of a mother since she had never had the chance to become one before. With Razan's intervention, Nadia and Alice finally agreed to let Masaru play the role of the mother. Razan viewed the video of the interaction and she explained her intentions and actions:

They [Nadia, Alice and Masaru] always play together at the home corner but I noticed that Masaru has never been chosen to take up a role as a mother in the play. I think it's quite frustrating for Masaru, you know, not to be given a chance. She does not always speak up, like if she wants something, she is — kind of waiting — she doesn't say it out loud. I think she's still a bit shy, or she doesn't have much language, but I think she should be given a chance.

Razan supported Masaru by providing an opportunity for Masaru to begin asserting herself more when she was playing with her peers. Asking questions like "Who has never become a Mum before this?" and "What do you think?" were the ways that Razan facilitated problem solving within Masaru's zone of proximal development (ZPD). Within the ZPD, the teacher usually provides opportunities for children to begin at a certain point and then to build their abilities by participating in meaningful activities (Petty, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) believed that a child can perform on a higher level in any type of social interactions:

interaction with peers as equals, with imaginary partners, or with children of other developmental levels within the child's ZPD. When Razan structured the activity of symbolic play differently, suggesting Masaru play the role of the mother, Masaru performed at a higher level, interacting more confidently and integrating her Asian culture into their symbolic play.

In addition to the guided participation by Razan, Masaru integrated her Asian culture during the meal times at the table. Masaru, being a "mother" in the role play set the table for the "family dinner", and she placed a pair of chopsticks beside each bowl. Alice, playing the role of the "daughter" asked Masaru:

Alice: Mummy, what are we having for dinner?

Masaru: Noodle (smiling at Alice).

Alice: But I don't know how to use these, Mummy (holding the chopsticks).

Masaru: Easy! Like this (Masaru is showing the way to use chopsticks to Alice and looking proud).

Alice: Hey, Dad! We're eating noodles tonight with these (showing Nadia the chopsticks) and like this (pretending to eat using chopsticks).

It was apparent that Masaru was extending her Asian traditions through her participation in the symbolic play with her peers. Rogoff (2003) claimed that children's engagement in play familiarises them with cultural practices. In addition, Rogoff (2003) suggested that children emulate adult and other community roles as they play by experimenting with and enacting cultural practices. In the above scenario, Masaru, in her role as a mother in the symbolic play, emulated an Asian mother's role preparing dinner in an Asian way. Alice seemed to be interested in how to use the chopsticks as she asked Masaru how to eat using chopsticks and emulated Masaru as she observed her. Later on, Alice called Nadia to show her how to use chopsticks for eating the noodles. In other words, Alice's reaction to the Asian cultural practice in eating showed her engagement in the play and facilitated her to be more familiar with the Chinese culture.

In another example of social interaction through symbolic play, Heather, an English speaking teacher from the first centre, expressed her view that the ELLs could benefit from symbolic play as they acquired English. She commented:

I find that they [the Asian immigrant ELLs] can engage quite ...very well, in fact, in pretend play and they learn quite a lot from it [pretend play]. Like yesterday, I read a book, “There was a woman who swallowed a fly” for mat time, and then, later on that day, I saw Emma was reading the story to Seo-yeon and Ji-min. Emma became the teacher, I think, because I saw her facing them [Seo-yeon and Ji-min]. I wasn’t quite sure what exactly happened but Emma was reading the book in English, and I heard some English words from Seo-yeon.

Although Heather did not describe in detail how symbolic play could support English acquisition, I happened to record the scenario described by her. The scenario illustrated how Emma, a Korean girl who was very fluent in English, provided guided participation for Seo-yeon and Ji-min to interact in English in the symbolic play as follows:

Seo-yeon and Ji-min were looking at pictures of a book entitled “There was a woman who swallowed a fly” on a sofa at a book corner. They were laughing when they looked at the pictures in the book and spoke to each other in Korean. Emma, was doing some craft work and looked at Seo-yeon and Ji-min when she heard them laughing and talking in Korean. Emma stopped doing the craft activity and approached them. She was talking to them in Korean. Then I saw Seo-yeon and Ji-min move from sitting on the sofa to sit on the carpet. Emma sat on the sofa, facing Seo-yeon and Ji-min, and started taking a role as a teacher as follows:

Emma: I’m the teacher, ok? Do you remember this book?

Seo-yeon: A fly...

Emma: Yes...but you need to put up your hand to talk, okay?

Seo-yeon: (put up his hand and repeated his answer to Emma’s question)... a fly

Emma: Yes ...look at this (pointing to the lady on the cover page). Ji-min?

Ji-min: (looking at Seo-yeon and not answering.)

Seo-yeon: (put up his hand and answered) Woman.

Emma: It’s “There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly”.

Ji-min: Lady...(making some sound) fly.

Emma: Yes. And she swallowed... (slowly turning the page where there was picture of a lady swallowing a fly).

Ji-min & Seo-yeon: A fly (answering without putting up their hand).

Emma: Yes, but you need to put up your hand, okay.

Ji-min & Seo-yeon: (looking at each other, nodded).

Emma: I don't know why she swallowed a fly, perhaps she'll die (laughing and pretending to "die"). Seo-yeon, next..?

Seo-yeon: ... (making some sound) a lady who a...

Emma: (slowly turning the page where the lady swallowed a spider.)

Emma: Swallow... erm.. (nodding).

Seo-yeon and Ji-min: Spider! (when they saw a picture of a spider).

Emma: Put up your hand, remember.

Seo-yeon: (put up his hand) and die! (He pretended to "die" and laughed.)

Emma: Good, perhaps she'll die ...(laughed).

Seo-yeon: (repeated after Emma) Perhaps she'll die.

In the above scenario, Emma was reading a book, which had been read by Heather that morning, to Seo-yeon and Ji-min. Seo-yeon and Ji-min were possibly familiar with some of words in the book because they were able to respond to Emma in English. For example, they said the word "spider" when they saw a picture of a spider on the page of the book. Taking a role as a teacher, Emma, who is fluent in English, provided guided participation for Seo-yeon and Ji-min as they interacted during the story book reading. Emma, being a more experienced peer, clearly had more experience in managing symbolic play than Seo-yeon and Ji-min. She understood how to interact with Seo-yeon and Ji-min, thus structuring the situation appropriately for Seo-yeon and Ji-min as they learned some phrases in English. For example, when Seo-yeon said the word "die", Emma repeated the structure of the sentence so that Seo-yeon was able to imitate her sentence. Such behaviours were supportive of Rogoff's proposition that a more experienced child can enhance a less able child's experience and skill acquisition through joint participation.

In order to get a more detailed view from Heather about how symbolic play as a mediational tool supported English acquisition for the Asian immigrant ELLs, I showed her the above scenario. She commented:

It's good to know they [Emma, Seo-yeon, and Ji-min] were able to extend their learning from what I introduced to them [talking about the book that she read during mat time was used by Emma]. Emma can speak both Korean and English fluently, so it's good to see that she's participated in it [the activity] quite well, you know, it seems that Seo-yeon and Ji-min learned some English phrases, some rules, from her, too, and there're not many children around, so there are more opportunities for them [Seo-yeon and Ji-min] to take part — looks pretty engaging. During mat time, there are many children, so I guess, may be Seo-yeon and Ji-min don't have the confidence yet to participate but with pretend play like this may boost their confidence.

Heather acknowledged Emma's role in supporting English acquisition for Seo-yeon and Ji-min's English development. Heather noted that Emma was a more experienced English speaker compared to Seo-yeon and Ji-min. Therefore, Seo-yeon and Ji-min learned some English phrases that were relevant for the book, such as practices in the centre during mat time such as putting up hands to speak. Rogoff (1990) suggested that interactions between peers provided more opportunity for the children to initiate and sustain the interaction. As it was apparent, the scenario of the symbolic play continued for a while before they decided to move on to other activities. When I asked Heather what she meant by "engaging" in her comment about the scenario, she explained that the children looked "more relaxed" and "enjoyed" the book reading in symbolic play compared with when she read the same book during mat time. Rogoff (1990) claimed that although children were aware of the adults' surroundings, the children were likely to treat a situation differently if they were in charge of it. As reflected in the scene, Seo-yeon and Ji-min as well as Emma were laughing and were more playful despite Emma constantly reminding them to put up their hands before answering her questions. In the second scenario, the guided participation was discussed in the context of the ELLs interaction with their peer, Emma, who was more experienced than they were, during the symbolic play. In Vygotsky's perspective, more experienced peers may serve a function like that of adults in interaction within the ZPD. Emma was observed to challenge Seo-yeon to give a more complete structure rather than just a one-word answer.

The examples in this section reflect Vygotsky's notion of a ZPD and Rogoff's idea of guided participation through symbolic play. The Asian immigrant ELLs, who interacted with a more experienced and skilled partner, structured the situation in the symbolic play for the ELLs to acquire English by appropriately providing them with opportunities to use English in the right context. While Razan facilitated problem solving within Masaru's ZPD, Emma supported interaction within So-yeon's and Ji-min's ZPD. These two interactions allowed the ELLs to have contact with English, and to be aware of what they knew and did not know about the use of English in social interactions.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed basic processes of participation which involved the ELLs and the teachers, the parents and their peers as they acquired English. These basic processes constituted the final theme of my findings which was 'Guided participation'. Two sub-themes that emerged from the main theme were 'bridging meaning using culturally existing tools' and 'structuring opportunities for ELLs to observe and participate'.

During the guided participation processes, the ELLs were engaged in varied ways that assisted them to acquire English through their social interactions. Discussion of my findings revealed that the processes of guided participation were based on mutually bridging meanings and mutually structuring the Asian immigrant ELLs' opportunities to acquire English through their social interactions.

In bridging meanings using culturally existing tools, there were two aspects that were relevant: words and gestures, and social referencing. These two aspects were relevant as they bridged understandings between the Asian immigrant ELLs and the teachers and parents as well as their peers. For example, words and gestures were used by Angela and Shin to bridge meaning in their interactions. In addition, social referencing was considered in the scenario between Seo-yeon's and Ji Hun's parents who provided Seo-yeon and Ji Hun with emotional cues about their situations and how to behave accordingly. There were some modifications made by the participants in the examples given in order to achieve the mutual understandings occurring in social interactions. The language that embedded the social interactions during the process of bridging meaning supported the ELLs as they acquire English.

In structuring opportunities for children, I have discussed relevant aspects such as children's opportunities to observe and participate, the transfer of responsibility for managing activities, language adjustment in social interactions, and social interaction through symbolic play. These aspects facilitated the ELLs to acquire English as they engaged in meaningful activities. For example, structuring children's opportunities to observe and participate occurred when Angela and Jennifer structured opportunities for Ji Hun and Hyun-woo so that they were able to participate in the activities.

In conclusion, this chapter reveals that guided participation is an important finding in my study. Guided participation is a valuable mediational tool for facilitating the ELLs to acquire English as they engage with others and materials and arrangements collaboratively managed by themselves and others (Rogoff, 1990). In the next chapter, I draw together findings from the previous three chapters and discuss these findings in the context of the sociocultural framework of my study.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

Exploring how ELLs acquire English in New Zealand early childhood education (ECE) centres without understanding how the teachers perceive and actually support the ELLs results in a limited contribution to the realm of knowledge. While several empirical studies in English acquisition among ELLs in New Zealand (Brierley, 2003; Guo, 2002; 2010; Hashimoto, 2009; Haworth et al., 2006; Schofield, 2011; Zhang, 2012) have emphasised the importance of supporting the ELLs' acquisition of English, it is only when we listen to the teachers who play a major part in the daily experience of the ELLs in the early childhood context and observe their practice that we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of English acquisition for the ELLs. This thesis explores the teachers' beliefs, which often shape their perception of how they can support ELLs to acquire English. I argue that, in order to make these beliefs explicit, they must be the subject of reflection. Discrepancies and alignments between the teachers' beliefs and practice are examined and discussed in this study. In addition, this study shows that when the parents of the ELLs are able to share their views and experiences regarding the value they place on English and on their home language then teachers are better able to recognise and meet the needs of ELLs.

The findings chapters offered insights from seven early childhood teachers on their beliefs and practices, and explored four Asian immigrant parents' views regarding support for their children as they acquired English. I analysed the teachers' beliefs and practices using a process of thematic analysis within the framework of sociocultural and other related perspectives on second language acquisition, such as acculturation and guided participation.

I began the findings chapters by presenting how an English dominant environment has an impact on the teachers' beliefs and practices, and on the ELLs and their parents. Within the English dominant environment, I focused on how the ELLs and their parents adapted themselves socially and culturally through acculturation strategies. Finally, I highlighted the ways in which teachers supported the ELLs through processes of guided participation, as they adapted themselves to the English dominant environment.

8.2 English acquisition is ‘natural’?

Many common beliefs about second language acquisition are perpetuated in early childhood education. It is commonly assumed that ELLs can just ‘pick up’ English without much effort or systematic teaching in English dominant educational settings. Several research studies in second language acquisition emphasise that language acquisition takes time and cannot be rushed because children need to digest their experiences as they acquire language through natural interactions with people in everyday settings (Drury, 2007; Tabor, 2008). Despite the common belief held by the seven teachers that English acquisition is ‘natural’, the teachers still struggled while they worked with the ELLs.

I argued that the seven teachers’ belief about English acquisition being natural is to a certain extent substantiated by SLA theory. This ‘natural approach’ is widely known and well accepted by second language acquisition (SLA) theorists, such as Krashen and Terrell (1983). The term ‘natural’ stresses that the tenets behind the ‘natural approach’ conform to the naturalistic principles found in successful SLA as discussed in Chapter Two. Paradise and Rogoff (2009) argued that informal learning, including language acquisition, which human beings naturally engage in, is often overlooked and undervalued in sociocultural practices and social institutions because it is considered as “less conceptual or cognitive than formalised school learning” (p. 102). Nevertheless, the concept of “natural” requires “intentional community participation” which is “beyond simply being present” (Paradise & Rogoff, 2009, p. 104). Therefore, it is important to note that the notion of “natural”, as understood by the teachers, does not mean that they can just ‘be there’ for the ELLs, but rather that there is a need for guided participation to support them as they acquire English. As discussed in Chapter Seven, Akiko was standing very close to Ji Hun and Shin as they played together. However, she did not interact with them at all, missing a good opportunity to engage them in an interaction that would have supported their English acquisition. Indeed, teachers should play an active role in encouraging the ELLs to interact with them and with their English speaking peers.

Naturally, the need for the ELLs to communicate during play with their peers is one important factor that paves the way for language acquisition to take place. Interactions during play do facilitate English acquisition but also affect the perception of ELLs towards their home language. For example, as Hyun-woo increased his English acquisition, he refused to

speak his home language even with his peers who shared the same home language. Hyun-woo's behaviour could lead to two interpretations. First, it could be interpreted that he possibly was displaying adaptive behaviour on the part of a child who is keenly motivated to learn the rules and "fit in" with his new context. ELLs can learn to differentiate which language to use in different contexts, which is typical behaviour of co-ordinate bilinguals who choose between different languages at their disposal according to whichever is appropriate in a given context. This usually reflects the manner in which they learn their two languages. Second, Hyun-woo's peer who was able to speak the same home language as Hyun-woo but did not use their home language in their interactions during play, might also shape the ELLs' perception towards the use of their home language. The ELLs might perceive that English is a dominant language in the ECE and that their home language can be used while they interact with their parents. This perception could be a contributing factor for the ELLs' preference to use English rather their home language at the ECE centres.

Amongst the seven teachers who shared the belief that English acquisition was 'natural' were three bilingual teachers, Ming, Razan and Akiko, who also seemed to accept that there was actually nothing much that needed to be done while the ELLs acquired English. Even when there were problems faced by the ELLs related to their limited English proficiency or when there were opportunities that could be optimised for English acquisition, the three bilingual teachers neither attended to the problems nor maximised the opportunities. In accordance with their beliefs, the bilingual teachers felt that they did not need to plan strategically to encourage the ELLs to participate in meaningful interactions. Most interactions which occurred between the bilingual teachers and the ELLs took place during pastoral care. This phenomenon was of particular interest because Ming and Akiko reflected that their own experience as bilinguals in New Zealand had been challenging. Ming, for example, shared a significant experience in which she had almost failed her early childhood teaching placement because she was regarded as "incompetent", primarily because of her English abilities. Therefore, the bilingual teachers' experiences suggested that they could have a better understanding of the importance of interactions for the ELLs in the process of acquiring English than the English speaking teachers.

These bilingual teachers' beliefs and practices were therefore somewhat dissonant in the sense that although they had experienced challenges themselves in adapting to an English

dominant work place due to cultural and language barriers, they seemed to take for granted the ways in which they could best support the ELLs with regard to their English acquisition. While their own lived experiences could have provided a valuable resource for supporting the ELLs as they acquired English, this resource was not apparently utilised. There is substantial research investigating bilingual teachers working in diverse early childhood settings (Harvey, 2011; Lynch, 2010; Riojas-Cortez, Alanís, & Flores, 2013); however, there is a research gap in data about the ‘realities’ facing bilingual teachers as they support ELLs’ English acquisition in English dominant ECE settings. My study addressed this gap by highlighting the ‘realities’ that the bilingual teachers from Asian backgrounds faced in their day-to-day working with the ELLs in the English dominant settings. Ming, Razan, and Akiko appeared to have lacked the confidence to employ strategies they perceived to be effective for the ELLs. For example, the bilingual teachers strongly articulated the belief that home language was important for the ELLs, yet they did not maximise the use of home language in their interactions. While bilingualism in early childhood is widely associated with either Pasifika or Māori, the issues of bilingualism pertaining to teachers from Asian backgrounds is not highlighted, even though there has been an increasing number of Asian children enrolled in New Zealand ECE centres. It is significant, therefore, to address this issue with bilingual teachers from Asian backgrounds in New Zealand ECE because this will be useful in supporting the Asian ELLs attending ECE services.

Gupta (2006) argued that the bilingual immigrant teachers’ experience and knowledge need to be taken more seriously in the practice and policies within ECE so that the growing number of immigrant ELLs can be educated equitably. It is worthwhile to understand Ming’s, Razan’s, and Akiko’s experiences regarding why they did engage in teaching practices based upon their own experiences when working with the children who had similar backgrounds to them. Sociocultural theories state that individuals socially construct knowledge and beliefs (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, Ming, Razan, and Akiko have constructed their knowledge and beliefs from their social experiences. They all had tertiary early childhood education training in New Zealand and started working in English dominant ECE centres right after they completed their studies. It was possibly their working experience in the English dominant environment that influenced these teachers to assume that they were not supposed to ‘do much’ to assist the ELLs because English acquisition is natural and the ELLs would eventually acquire English on their own. Because of this assumption, the ELLs were

left struggling to adapt themselves to the English dominant ECE environment without the necessary support from their bilingual teachers, who could have been more understanding of the ELLs' experiences than their English speaking teachers.

In contrast, the English speaking teachers, Angela, Heather, and Jennifer, and one non-Asian bilingual teacher, Rosalind, used more language acquisition strategies compared to the three Asian bilingual teachers, Ming, Razan, and Akiko. Schofield (2007) highlighted that English speaking teachers were more inclined to use strategies related to supporting English acquisition to make interactions comprehensible to the ELLs when compared to bilingual teachers. Despite stating that English acquisition was natural, these teachers seemed to focus on 'understanding' in their interactions with the ELLs. Many of the strategies described by the English speaking teachers appeared to be based on the "natural approach" theory (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), such as using gestures and providing comprehensible input. However, Ming, Razan, and Akiko did not appear to make similar efforts with the ELLs, possibly because they could always switch to the home language if needed to ensure the ELLs' understanding during the interactions. Therefore, because of their different linguistic and cultural background to the ELLs, the English speaking teachers appeared to make considerable efforts in ensuring that their interactions were comprehensible to the ELLs.

In summary, all teachers articulated their belief that English acquisition is natural and that ELLs learn best through a natural approach and informal learning. That belief was even accepted without question by the three bilingual teachers who were from Asian backgrounds themselves. The bilingual teachers neither attended to the problems nor maximised the opportunities to support the English acquisition of the ELLs. All English speaking teachers and one non-Asian bilingual teacher demonstrated that they used more strategies related to language teaching to support English acquisition for the ELLs, particularly in encouraging them to interact, and making their interactions more comprehensible for the ELLs.

8.3 Silent period

While all teachers recognised that the ELLs went through a silent period as they acquired English, they were conflicted about how to determine when there was a learning opportunity and when support was needed during the silent period. Angela, Akiko, Jennifer, Heather, and Razan demonstrated uncertainty with regard to their mediating role during the 'silent period'.

Due to lack of clarity about their mediating role, regarding when they should intervene or when they should not, much of the mediation appeared incidental and unintentional. Deldago-Gaitan (2006) claimed that early childhood teachers are not culturally responsive in their mediating roles during the silent period. For Asian children, silence is considered to be a virtue as it demonstrates caution and courtesy, implying a valued sensitivity to one's surroundings (Chen, Chen, Li, & Wang, 2009). Significantly, Bligh (2011) argued that acquiring a second language through the silent period for ELLs is revealed as both complex and 'messy' through a range of learning pathways. It was, therefore, difficult for these teachers to determine mediated learning for the ELLs during the silent period. From my observations, these teachers also struggled to determine their pedagogical practices during the silent period due to lack of understanding of the ELLs' cultural practices as well as knowledge about this stage of second language acquisition.

Moreover, the teachers' belief that 'English acquisition is natural' influenced how the teachers viewed the silent period. According to the teachers, the ELLs who acquired English in a natural, informal linguistic environment were usually quiet for a period of time until they were ready to use English to interact with their peers and teachers. This silent period is presented as a crucial time for learning, through a synthesis of close observation, intense listening and most significantly copying the practices of others (Bligh, 2011). Krashen (1985) claimed that the silent period is a pre-production stage of SLA that all second language learners go through which requires understanding and encouragement from teachers. Sociocultural perspectives claim that during the silent period, the child is actively participating through his or her inner thoughts using the home language (Vygotsky, 1986). While there has been research on the necessity of the silent period for ELLs (Bligh, 2011; Tabor, 2008; Drury, 2013), other studies have highlighted a range of challenges that teachers and ELLs encounter during the silent period (Parke & Drury, 2001; Safford & Costley, 2008). However, Roberts' (2014) review of twelve studies on the silent period in childhood SLA concluded that, contrary to what is widely believed by early childhood teachers, the extent and the quality of the research evidence for a silent period in SLA is limited. From this perspective, there are indeed impacts on the teachers and the ELLs when the teachers negotiate, discover and resolve the conflicts which occur during the silent period. In the context of my study, I argue that the teachers should make an informed decision as to how

best to deal with the silent period based on cultural and second language acquisition knowledge.

All teachers gave the ELLs plenty of time to quietly observe interaction when they first started at the early childhood centre. However, Angela, Akiko, Jennifer, Heather, and Razan appeared uncertain about when the ELLs were, or would be ready to participate in the interactions. In discovering the ELLs' readiness to interact, the teachers did not force the ELLs to speak before they were perceived to be ready because the teachers did not want to embarrass the ELLs by 'putting them on the spot'. There is much contradictory information regarding the acceptable duration of the silent period. Many studies emphasised that there are various factors which determine the length of the period such as the consequences of psychological withdrawal (Parke & Drury, 2001), self-assertion (Drury, 2007), and the adoption of early routines and patterns in transition from the silent period (Gibbons, 2006). During this silent period, the teachers claimed that the ELLs benefit from opportunities to participate and interact with the teachers and their English speaking peers in activities that involve gesture, physical movement, and single words or short phrases. The teachers' beliefs about the benefits of the silent period were reflected in some of their practices which indicated that the teachers viewed the silent period as a sign of learning. Nevertheless, from my observations, there were times when the ELLs were ignored when they could have been encouraged to interact or participate in activities.

It is also worth noting what the silent period meant for the ELLs. They were not forced or rushed to acquire English while they were settling in and adapting to the new environment. They had time to listen to interactions around them, to digest what they listened to, and to develop receptive vocabulary before they acquired knowledge of English linguistic structure, skills to interact, and confidence to use English with their English speaking peers and the teachers. When the ELLs were not under pressure to acquire English, they were able to attempt interacting in English when they felt ready to do so. Until they were ready to interact verbally in English, they did utilise the silent period. Bligh (2011) claimed that Vygotsky did not discuss the silent period, yet there are several indications in his writing (1978, 1986) that suggest that 'mother tongue' thinking is perhaps a result of the transformative act of internalisation. From sociocultural perspectives, during the silent period, one's home language (thought) is considered as a self-mediating tool through which young

bilingual learners acquire a second language (Bligh, 2011; Iddings & Eun-Young, 2008; Vygotsky, 1986). Based on my findings, I would argue that the silent period has its own benefits, but this also means that there can be missed opportunities within that silent period. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to check what it really means for the ELLs when they are in the silent period.

Despite what the teachers and the ELLs view as the benefits of the silent period, the teachers encountered challenges because of the silent period. In accordance with their belief that English acquisition was natural, the teachers did not feel the need to plan strategically to encourage the ELLs to participate in meaningful interactions. Paradise and Rogoff (2009) emphasise that children acquire knowledge, including language, through a nonverbal process by “watching, listening, and attending, often with great concentration, by taking purposeful initiative, and by contributing and collaborating” (p. 102). While it was natural for the teachers to interact with the English speaking children because both parties are able to communicate fluently, it is not natural for the teachers to engage in interaction with the ELLs because the ELLs have difficulty in expressing themselves. However, sociocultural theories view the role of more experienced adults as essential in assisting children to acquire a language (Lantolf, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Therefore, I believe that, despite the challenges faced by the teachers regarding the silent period of the ELLs, it is still the teachers’ role and responsibilities to actively support the ELLs to acquire English.

Understanding the silent period from the ELLs’ perspectives was complex. During the silent period, the ELLs found it challenging to interact in English because they did not have many opportunities to use English. When the ELLs were not confident at interacting within the ECE centre context, they were often ignored by the teachers and their English speaking peers. It appeared natural for the ELLs to remain silent or seem reluctant to use English. This made it even more difficult for the ELLs to enter into social situations where there were few opportunities for them to use English for meaningful interactions. In other words, the ELLs could not acquire English as they had limited opportunities to engage in interactions. Bligh (2011) too argued that if the importance of interaction embedded in the daily practices is disregarded, opportunities for acquiring a language are denied accordingly. This aligns with several research studies in second language acquisition which highlight the importance of providing varied opportunities for the ELLs to practise their English with assistance from

their teachers and English speaking peers, as well as independently (Brierley, 2003; Howes, Guerra, Fuligni, Zucker, Lee, Obregon, & Spivak 2011; Konishi, 2007; Piker & Rex, 2008). Teachers need to understand the challenges ELLs face and deliberately structure opportunities for the ELLs to interact with teachers and peers. Nonetheless, in the context of my study, Akiko and Razan appeared not to be aware of the challenges faced by Ji Hun and Shin, which thus affected the structuring of opportunities for Ji Hun and Shin to participate in interactions.

In summary, beliefs about the silent period both benefited and posed challenges to the teachers and the ELLs. On the one hand, this silent period need not be a negative experience and even has its natural advantages. One advantage is that there is no pressure for the teachers or for the ELLs to acquire English during the silent period. However, while ‘the silent period’ was regarded as necessary for the ELLs, there were challenges for the teachers and the ELLs as a result of the teachers’ beliefs. The teachers tended to miss out on opportunities to interact with the ELLs since they had no plans to encourage English acquisition during this period. The ELLs were also often ignored and prevented from taking opportunities to participate in interactions due to their limited English proficiency during the silent period. It appeared that the teachers’ belief in the existence of the silent period had important implications for the ELLs’ English acquisition; they need not be expected to engage in English oral interaction for some time after starting to attend the ECE centres, and they would begin to use English when they were ready as a result of having acquired sufficient English knowledge and skill as well as motivation to use English in their interactions.

8.4 Relationships

Striking in the seven early childhood teachers’ accounts are the differences in how they perceived relationships with the ELLs and their parents. Compared to the English speaking children and their parents, the English speaking teachers, Jennifer, Angela, and Heather, took longer to establish warm relationships with the ELLs and their parents who were not fluent in English. However, when the Asian parent was able to communicate in English, it made a positive difference to their relationship. For example, Seo-yeon’s mother, Subin, was able to communicate in English; therefore, these teachers perceived that they had a good relationship with Subin. Souto, Manning and Swick (2006) examined primarily English speaking teachers’ beliefs about their relationships with immigrant parents, and highlighted that “the chasm that often develops to create unhealthy dissonance between teacher and

parents/families is greatly influenced by teachers' beliefs" (p. 188). Similarly, Adair, Tobin, and Arzubiaga (2012) captured the English speaking teachers' sense of distance and disconnection from immigrant families due to the lack of communication between the teachers and the immigrant families. In the context of my study, the distant relationship between the English speaking teachers and the ELLs and their parents appeared to be caused by lack of communication. Therefore, it is important that these teachers work on finding ways to build a good rapport with immigrant parents, particularly, those who are not able to communicate in English.

Language acquisition is one of the important domains of development during early childhood. For ELLs, to acquire English in a dominant English environment can be a daunting experience. Relationships, therefore, play an important role in the process of acquiring a second language. Relationships constitute the first among four principles that provide the central ideas of the *Te Whāriki* approach (Lee, 2013) which emphasises that "children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 43).

Once the ELLs enter the early childhood environment, relationships with non-parental adults, specifically teacher-child relationships, become increasingly important as they first experience acquiring English in a new environment. Other than learning through relationships with teachers and their peers, the ELLs need time to learn through relationships with the artifacts that exist in the settings. The importance of relationships was continually highlighted by the teachers, and discussed in the context of relationships between teachers and the ELLs, teachers and Asian immigrant parents, and the ELLs and their peers. Vygotsky (1987) claimed that the integration of mediational tools does not merely facilitate action that could have happened without them. Instead, when the mediational tools are being included in the action, they change how the mind could have functioned to facilitate that action (Vygotsky, 1978). The understanding of the use of relationships as mediational tools has influenced the beliefs and practices of the English speaking and bilingual teachers as they support the ELLs and interact with the Asian immigrant parents. Therefore, it was important for the teachers to foster good relationships with the ELLs and their parents in order to support the ELLs as they acquire English.

In contrast, the bilingual teachers who were immigrants themselves and had Asian backgrounds perceived that they had close, warm relationships with the ELLs and their parents because they understood each other's culture. Some of the bilingual teachers and immigrant parents shared a home language. In addition, the bilingual teachers stated their beliefs that the ELLs and their parents preferred the teachers who could understand, and were able to interact in, their home languages. Sharing the same language and cultural background, the bilingual teachers were able to interact with the Asian immigrant parents and thus, understood their concerns and expectations regarding their children's English acquisition and development. However, the close, warm relationships between the bilingual teachers and the Asian parents did not appear to make much difference in terms of supporting the ELLs as they acquired English. According to Cabel, Drury, and Robertson (2009), bilingual teachers are identified as advocates for bilingual families. Schofield's (2007) study found that more of the strategies used by bilingual teachers in their work with ELLs are related to enabling the ELLs and their families to feel a sense of belonging at the centre, compared to the strategies used by English speaking teachers which are more related to language teaching.

From sociocultural perspectives, the bilingual teachers were able to play a mediating role between the English speaking teachers and children, and the Asian immigrant parents. Adair, Tobin, and Arzubiaga (2012) captured the conflict experienced by immigrant teachers between being culturally responsive and being professional. Instead of feeling empowered by being bilingual and bicultural, the immigrant bilingual teachers felt they were caught between their pedagogical training and their cultural knowledge (Clark & Flores, 2010). Likewise, the bilingual teachers often experienced a conflict between their identities as professional teachers and as members of the Asian community, although the bilingual teachers perceived they had close, warm relationships with the ELLs and their parents. For example, the bilingual teachers had difficulty convincing some of the Asian parents that learning was occurring during play, when the Asian parents expected more structured kinds of learning to occur at the centre. According to Jarvis, Brock, and Brown (2014), bilingual teachers need to highlight to Asian parents that as the ELLs play, they 'try out' different ideas and skills which can enhance the children's development cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

For the ELLs, the majority of time at the centre was spent playing with their peers. However, most of the ELLs did not have good, close relationships with the English speaking

children. They most often played with the Asian children whose English level of proficiency was either slightly better, on par, or worse than their own. Due to their limited English proficiency, it was difficult for the ELLs and the English speaking peers to engage in play activities. Because they seldom played together, opportunities to build positive social relationships with each other were limited. Nevertheless, as the ELLs gradually acquired English that enabled them to interact and engage in play with the English speaking children, the relationships with English speaking children became closer. However, it is important to note that social skills and styles are also important for the ELLs (Zhang, 2008). Seo-yeon and Shin were naturally social and interactive and they always sought out opportunities to engage with English speaking peers. Zhang (2008) suggested that personality, social competence, motivation, and attitudes influence a child's second language acquisition. If Seo-yeon and Shin were given greater opportunities to interact with the English speaking children, their English acquisition would most likely be facilitated. Therefore, it is important for the teachers to negotiate entry for the ELLs to interact with their English speaking peers.

My research was grounded in sociocultural perspectives which emphasised the socialising nature of language. From this perspective, language acquisition is seen not only as an internal process, but also as a social practice that enables an individual to become a member of a specific social group through apprenticeship. Having positive relationships with English speaking peers offered crucial opportunities for the ELLs to acquire English through their interactions as they played together. There have been substantial studies (Clawson, 2002; Degotardi, Sweller, & Pearson, 2013; Drury, 2007; El-Khater, 2010) which examined the relationships between non English speaking and English speaking friends. These studies found that support from English speaking peers through the establishment of positive relationships facilitated English acquisition for ELLs. Nonetheless, the ELLs had difficulty in establishing good relationships with the English speaking children particularly when the ELLs were still struggling to acquire English. For the ELLs, learning was more than just acquiring English; it was also about learning social rules so that they could establish good relationships with their peers and teachers. It is, therefore, paramount for the ELLs to have good relationships with their peers and teachers.

In summary, developing and being part of relationships is paramount as the ELLs acquire English. The English speaking teachers were aware of the distance in their

relationships with the ELLs and their parents but these teachers appeared not to be aware that their beliefs could actually influence their relationships. The bilingual teachers, who were immigrant themselves, faced dilemmas as they developed their relationships with the ELLs and their parents. The bilingual teachers felt trapped between their professional training and being a part of the community. For the ELLs, creating those relationships particularly with their peers was an important first step in their orientation to learning in New Zealand. In the early childhood community, relationships are based on negotiation of the language and culture of every member, so that “children and their families experience an environment where they know that they have a place” (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 58). Close, warm and positive relationships therefore develop a sense of belonging for the ELLs and their families which encourage the ELLs to develop confidence to acquire and use English in the early childhood setting.

8.5 Home language and its relation to English acquisition

While the teachers stated their beliefs about the value of the ELLs’ home language, this appeared to be mainly for cultural reasons such as for identity. The importance of home language for the ELLs is significantly related to cultural identity. However, there was a lack of understanding and knowledge amongst the teachers about the role of the home language in supporting English acquisition. A lack of knowledge has left many early years teachers with questions about the role of home language in learning English in educational settings (Michael-Luna, 2013). Garcia (2006) argued that teacher education has not supported teachers’ knowledge of bilingual language acquisition for English learners. It is important for the teachers to understand that by supporting the home language for the ELLs this would result in continued acquisition of their home language and a solid foundation to facilitate English acquisition (Clark, 2009; Genessee, Geva, Dressler, & Kamil, 2007; Tabor, 2008). Clark (2002) argued that as ELLs acquire the second language they draw on the background and experience they have available to them from the second language. The home language is a resource that ELLs can use both consciously and unconsciously to facilitate them to shift their home language data to second language input in order to perform effectively in the second language (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002). May (2005) and Clark (2002) emphasised the importance for the teachers of being well-versed in subject knowledge about language learning and bilingual development as part of effective practices with the ELLs. They argued that home languages must be viewed by teachers in a more holistic way which considers its

significance in cultural identity as well as in English acquisition. I agree with this view as my study reflected that the teachers appeared to support the home language of the ELLs mainly for cultural reasons. However, the role of home language to facilitate English acquisition was neither apparent in their views nor their practices.

I argue that it is important to understand why the teachers did not consider the role of the home language in facilitating English acquisition. There appeared to be a subtle conflict between their beliefs and their practice. In particular, the two bilingual Asian teachers who shared a home language with two ELLs did not optimise the use of their home language. These bilingual teachers only used their home language in minimal incidents such as in caregiving situations, but not for engaging with the ELLs during other interactions. The use of the home language could be considered as tokenism, thus, not giving the right status to the home language. To optimise the use of home language, Harvey (2011) proposed that personalised home language use mediates the identity of being bilingual and contributes to the shared positioning of bilingualism for children and bilingual teachers. In an English dominant environment, the bilingual teachers possibly did not feel comfortable to openly interact with the ELLs in their home language. When the bilingual teachers felt uncomfortable using their home language, they were in danger of subconsciously imparting an impression that it was more convenient to use English as the ELLs were acquiring English. Therefore, it is significant for the bilingual teachers to feel comfortable in using their home language first before encouraging the ELLs to use their home language as it might influence the perceptions of the ELLs in using their home language.

While the parents expected that their children would acquire English as they interacted with the teachers and the English speaking peers at the ECE centres, they also voiced their concerns about whether their children would value their home language and culture. Many studies highlighted Asian parents' expectations for the teachers either to support their children's English or home language while they attend ECE centres (Hu, Torr & Whiteman, 2014; Michael-Luna, 2013). Their expectations were important for teachers to know because these influence the teachers' own beliefs and practices. A lack of knowledge of the Asian immigrant parents' expectations had left the teachers with uncertainties about the role of home language and English for the ELLs.

8.6 Adaptation

While the teachers stated that they believe it is important to meet the needs of the ELLs and their families in the ECE setting, they seemed to overlook how these groups are affected during the adaptation process as far as English acquisition is concerned. During the acculturation process, the ELLs and their families had to adopt the basic values of the New Zealand ECE social environment. However, it was challenging for the ELLs to adapt to the new social environment with its different language, cultural rules and expectations. Sociocultural adaptation is a two-way process, as it involves an interaction between the immigrant and the host society (Monzo & Rueda, 2006). From this perspective, the ELLs and their families, and the teachers needed to understand how their interactions during the adaptation process could facilitate English acquisition. At the same time the New Zealand ECE teachers must be prepared to adapt New Zealand ECE to better meet the needs of the ELLs and their families.

However, the ELLs did not have the freedom to choose how they wanted to engage in interactions during their acculturation process. From a dominant group's perspective, the acculturation strategies can only be freely chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity (Berry, 2006). Berry (2006) claimed that integration strategies can only be pursued in societies that are explicitly multicultural, in which certain psychological pre-conditions are established. These pre-conditions include, "the widespread acceptance of the value to a society of cultural diversity", "a relatively low level of prejudice", "positive mutual attitudes among ethno cultural groups" and "a sense of attachment to, or identification with, the wider society by all individuals and groups" (p. 36). These pre-conditions are apparent in the New Zealand ECE curriculum as it advocates for cultural diversity. Therefore, in theory, the teachers, as a dominant group in the acculturation process, should support the ELLs to engage in interactions with the teachers and with their English speaking friends so that they will be able to acquire English. My study found a mismatch between the ideals of the curriculum and the reality of the practices in New Zealand ECE centres.

As the ELLs participated in joint activities with their friends and teachers within early childhood education (ECE) settings, they acquired new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture. From sociocultural perspectives, this interaction between the learners and the

experts is widely regarded as occurring within the ZPD. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that the ZPD is the central activity space in which learning occurs; and the context in which the interaction occurs is crucial. These acquired strategies and knowledge were observed to assist the ELLs to adapt themselves socially and culturally. Typically, this perspective was illustrated through the interactions between the ELLs and more knowledgeable others; for example, the teachers and their English speaking peers.

Yet, while the two mainstream ECE centres provided a language-rich context for English acquisition, there were, however, complexities, and challenges within the environment. These included the opportunities for the ELLs to participate in interactions, and the adaptation from the teachers, parents and the Asian immigrants. The opportunities for scaffolding through social interactions were often missed by the English speaking peers and teachers. Walqui (2006) claimed that creating contexts for linguistic and other learning in the ZPD occurs in part through the scaffolding of social interaction. The importance of context for learning has been emphasised in sociocultural theories (Vygotsky, 1978) and the natural acquisition theory developed by Krashen and Terrell (Krashen, 1985; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Learning is thought to take place only when there is understanding, so the context provided by an early childhood centre should be relaxed and rich in comprehensible language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Lake & Pappamihel, 2003). Therefore, in the context of my study, it is important that the teachers assist the ELLs in their understanding as they make attempts to interact with the teachers and their peers.

8.7 Participation

Participation is central to early childhood education. The New Zealand ECE curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, advocates that children develop through active participation in activities with collaboration from teachers and other children (Ministry of Education, 1996). Following one of the core notions in the ECE curriculum, the teachers emphasised the aspect of participation in their views. The teachers viewed that the ELLs did not participate well in teacher-led and free play activities because of their limited English proficiency. Tabor (2008) noted that children who are acquiring a second language are faced with a dilemma; in order to acquire a new language, they need to participate in activities, but, at the same time, to participate in activities, they are required to use the language. This dilemma was evident in my study because the ELLs experienced isolation when entering a new peer group at the centres.

Sometimes, the ELLs took so long observing activities that they ended up not participating because either they had no confidence to participate or they were not welcomed by their peers to participate. So, the teachers could play a more important role in supporting the ELLs by creating opportunities for them to participate in activities with their English speaking peers.

It is worth noting that the lack of participation of the ELL children who could not speak English was not merely a reflection of difficulty in understanding English. Sociocultural differences such as cultural values could hinder the active participation of the ELLs in teacher-led and free play activities. When the teachers regarded the lack of participation in activities from the ELLs as being caused by the language barrier only, they would employ strategies to involve the ELLs in activities which did not heavily rely on language, such as board games. This was one of the good practices that Jennifer and Angela highlighted in their reflections which demonstrated that there were avenues where the ELLs could still participate without relying on language abilities. However, what I found was missing from this aspect was the teachers' understanding about the sociocultural differences in cultural values. For example, Asian culture emphasises aspects such as respect to the teachers but the English speaking teachers, particularly, were not aware of these sociocultural aspects and misinterpreted them as lack of participation from the ELLs.

Taking a sociocultural perspective, people's beliefs about their environment are shaped by their culture, values, and beliefs about themselves and others (Chan, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). All the ELLs from East and Southeast Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea have a Confucian heritage (Chan, 2006). Central to the Confucian beliefs is the hierarchical structure of family relationships known as "filial piety" (Pearson & Rao, 2003, p. 138) which means that parents and elders, including teachers, wield greater authority and are to be treated with respect and obedience (Chao, 2002; Johnston & Wong, 2002). Raised by these cultural values, the ELLs possibly felt that listening and not interfering when the teachers were talking are expected of them during teacher led activities. However, the teachers misinterpreted this kind of behaviour as lack of interest.

Comparatively, the English speaking teachers perceived that the Asian immigrant parents did not participate in their children's learning as much as the English speaking parents. The Asian immigrant parents were reluctant to approach the English speaking

teachers, even if they had issues that needed to be dealt with concerning their children. As I have discussed in the 8.3 Relationships section, the factors that most likely accounted for the reluctance to participate were due to language and cultural barriers. Guo (2010) argued that the Asian immigrant parents might not participate in a centre's activities because they do not have the confidence to approach teachers, or to attend the centre's activities. In the Asian cultures, teachers stand for authority, deserve respect and know how to best support children's learning. Although the Asian immigrant parents had issues that they needed to sort out with the teachers regarding their children's learning at the centre, they still refrained from confronting the teachers in order to maintain the teachers' respectful image as the authority in their children's learning. In addition, the teachers assumed that the Asian parents did not participate as much as other English speaking parents because the Asian immigrant parents constantly seemed to be in a hurry or busy. Consequently, the teachers also felt reluctant to approach the Asian immigrant parents and assumed that they might not have time to participate in the children's learning particularly when it meant that the parents needed to stay at the centres. This conflicting perception between the Asian parents and the English speaking teachers negatively affected the ELLs in the sense that there was a gap in valuable knowledge for the teachers which prevented them from better supporting the ELLs at the centre.

8.8 Sociocultural understandings

Although sociocultural theories were used as the main lens to analyse and discuss the issues concerning the teachers' beliefs and practices while they supported the ELLs, it appeared that the teachers might not necessarily adopt sociocultural theories in their practice. Sociocultural theories are among the principal theories taught to early childhood teachers in New Zealand. Moreover, *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum, has been acknowledged for its sociocultural emphasis (Nuttall, 2003; Ritchie, 2010) in its boldly proclaimed statement:

The curriculum emphasises the critical role of socially and culturally mediated learning and of reciprocal and responsive relationships for children with people, places, and things. Children learn through collaboration with adults and peers, through guided participation and observation of others, as well as through individual exploration and reflection. (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 9)

Despite its emphasis in *Te Whāriki*, there have been limited empirical studies in investigating the teachers' understanding of sociocultural theories in their practices (Cullen, 2001, 2003; Ritchie, 2002, 2010). Using sociocultural theories as a theoretical lens in relation to *Te Whāriki*, there have been studies examining the inclusion of children with disabilities in the early childhood education (MacArthur, Purdue, & Ballard, 2003) and the influences that need to be taken into account as teachers co-construct their role in implementing sociocultural curricula (Nuttall, 2003). However, to date, there is a paucity of studies that investigated the teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting ELLs as they acquire English in New Zealand ECE centre. My study addressed this gap by highlighting that there is a need for the early childhood teachers to understand how to effectively apply sociocultural theories to guide their practices as they supported the Asian immigrant ELLs' English acquisition. Given the reality that there have been a significantly increasing number of ELLs in New Zealand ECE centres (Education Counts, 2013), it is important for early childhood teachers to address the theoretical issues pertaining to sociocultural theories, and their relevant pedagogical issues, as emphasised in the ECE curriculum. Although the teachers articulated the influence of sociocultural principles on their beliefs, some of their practices did not reflect their comprehensive understandings of sociocultural theories. The teachers' understanding of sociocultural theories emphasised issues relating to diversity in culture rather than how these theories could support ELLs as they acquired English. Addressing these issues requires teachers to be engaged in debate about theoretical and pedagogical issues. Fler and Robbins (2003) suggested that:

Many preschool teachers work within isolated settings with infrequent opportunities to come together as a collegial group outside their individual settings. As a result, the chance to engage in debate about philosophical and pedagogical issues is often lacking. Thus, for many teachers there are many taken-for-granted practices and implicit ways of thinking and acting that are perpetuated. (p. 11)

Therefore, access to appropriate professional learning opportunities was an important aspect in defining the teachers' awareness, understanding and use of sociocultural theories as they supported the ELLs to acquire English.

Cullen (2003) points out “it is not easy for teachers to recognise and support diverse cultural beliefs and practices. While this principle is encapsulated in *Te Whāriki*, its translation into everyday practices in an early childhood centre is not easy” (p. 6). Cullen’s (2003) statement echoed my study in the sense that it was challenging for the English speaking teachers to apply sociocultural principles as they supported the ELLs due to different cultural beliefs and practices. However, as previously discussed, it is also important to understand how bilingual teachers, who shared similar cultural beliefs and practices with ELLs, still found it challenging to adopt sociocultural theories in their practices. Hence, this has suggested the need for the teachers to attend professional development experiences that offer engagement with sociocultural theories rather than a simplistic adoption of their central idea (Edwards, 2007; Flear & Robbins, 2003, 2006)

8.9 Conclusion

This chapter draws together findings from the previous three chapters and discusses these findings in the context of the sociocultural framework of my study. Within this sociocultural framework, I have included second language acquisition theories, intercultural perspectives and guided participation processes within the discussion chapter.

My study shows how the teachers’ beliefs and practices were in conflict regarding the ELLs’ acquisition of English. These conflicts have impacted on the support for the ELLs as they acquire English. Although all the teachers were qualified and had early childhood related training, it was unclear exactly how much domain specific knowledge they held. Often their beliefs and practices were affected either by their knowledge or lack of knowledge. Herzog (2010) argued that assessing true domain specific knowledge for teachers at varying stages in their professional careers is difficult, if not impossible. However, sound pedagogical and theoretical knowledge as well as strategies for working effectively with the ELLs in English dominant settings appear to be a necessity for all teachers.

The teachers needed to understand how home language facilitates English acquisition so the ELLs could be supported to use their home language in an English dominant setting. What this means fundamentally for the ELLs is that their development of home language and English can work together symbiotically to enhance both languages (Krashen, 1985). Jones (2002) claimed that ELLs who are acquiring a second language after the age of three have

already learned a great deal in their home language. Vygotsky (1986) noted that a child comes to an educational setting “with a command of the grammar of his native tongue” acquired in an “unconscious” way (p. 184). Consequently, they will transfer their knowledge and concepts to English because once they have acquired the knowledge; they do not have to relearn it in English. They only need to learn how to communicate the knowledge in English (Genessee, Geva, Dressler, & Kamil, 2007; Tabor, 2008). Since communication is the primary reason for language, and language exists in a social world, second language acquisition is motivated by “communicative needs and functions” (Abrar-Ul-Hassan, 2011, p. 511). Therefore the ELLs need support from the teachers in terms of opportunities to engage in interactions because they already have a fund of knowledge in their home language.

Distinctive in my discussion was the impact of the beliefs and practices of the bilingual teachers and the English speaking teachers. Although both bilingual and English speaking teachers’ beliefs were challenged in some aspects, their cultural background and experiences influenced how they worked with the ELLs. The personal and professional challenges indicated that teachers need to be more informed about how they can best support the ELLs and how they can practise in an equitable manner.

The early childhood teachers in my study discussed their beliefs and their practices with regard to supporting the ELLs. Their beliefs and practices shaped their view of their influence in supporting the ELLs as they acquire English. The findings of my study, compared to other studies using the same perspective, highlighted that teachers’ beliefs and practices might align and/or contradict but they enable an understanding from sociocultural perspectives of how early childhood teachers can support the ELLs as they acquire English. In the ECE context, my findings are significant in terms of understanding the realities faced by bilingual teachers. This is important because there have been an increasing number of bilingual teachers in ECE settings. While other discussions in ECE have focused on strategies to support ELLs, my findings emphasised the role of teachers’ beliefs as being central in determining effective practices for successful English acquisition from sociocultural perspectives.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This study has explored New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs). My central focus was to analyse the teachers' beliefs, and discover how these beliefs influenced their practices in early childhood (ECE) settings. Using sociocultural theories as the main theoretical framework, this study has argued that there were dissonances between the teachers' beliefs and their practices in supporting the ELLs as they acquired English. The dissonances were discovered through the pre- and post-observation interviews with the teachers and through my observations in the two early childhood centres. They were: (1) English was natural yet it was challenging; the silent period was regarded as necessary for the ELLs yet it could be a missed opportunity for the teachers to engage them in interactions, (2) home language was important yet it was not given the necessary status to support English acquisition, (3) relationships with the ELLs and their parents were perceived as quite distant by the English speaking teachers but their beliefs were most likely the cause of these less than close relationships; the bilingual teachers had good relationships with the ELLs and their parents but they felt trapped between their professional training and their cultural identity as members of the same community as the parents, (4) the teachers were aware that the ELLs and their families had to adapt to the new environment but at the same time the teachers, themselves, overlooked the fact that they had to adapt New Zealand ECE to better meet the needs of the ELLs and their families, and finally, (5) the teachers stated their belief that participation from the ELLs was not active due to their limited English proficiency; however, in order to acquire English, the ELLs needed to participate in the activities. These dissonances were reflected in the three 'Findings' chapters and the 'Discussion' chapter.

My study did not set out to examine differences in beliefs and practices between the English speaking teachers and the bilingual teachers in the two early childhood centres. However, as these differences emerged from my study, they highlighted particular conflicts faced by the bilingual Asian teachers. These conflicts could be seen as being representative of the voice and role of bilingual teachers in New Zealand. These Asian bilingual teachers not only had to survive educational and working environments which were different from their background, they also had to learn how to thrive within these environments. They understood

how important their roles were, particularly to the ELLs and their families; however they still grappled with the contradictions between their beliefs and their practices in an English dominant ECE environment. Internationally, research investigating bilingual teachers, particularly from a Latino background, has emerged; however there is a scarcity of research investigating Asian bilingual teachers. In the New Zealand context, Harvey (2011) claimed that there is a significant lack of strategic planning and policy which acknowledges changing demographics and the increasing presence of bilingual teachers and children. Traditionally, bilingual teachers have always been associated with either Māori or Pasifika teachers. Therefore, I argue that it is important to explore the perspectives of Asian bilingual teachers in order to better meet the needs of the increasing enrolment of ELLs in New Zealand ECE settings.

9.2 Answering research questions

The main research question shaping this study was “*What are early childhood teachers’ beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners?*”

The present study and especially the data gathering process were guided by the following questions and a summary of the answer for each question is presented below:

1. What did New Zealand early childhood teachers state as their beliefs about supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)?

In Chapter Five, I highlighted that all teachers believed that English acquisition was natural yet it was challenging for them when working with the ELLs, mainly due to language and cultural barriers, and insufficient understandings of the theories and pedagogical practices regarding second language acquisition. In addition, in Chapters Five and Eight, the teachers stated that the ELLs went through the silent period yet the teachers were unsure how to determine when actual learning was occurring and when support was needed during the silent period.

2. Did New Zealand early childhood teachers vary in their beliefs about supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)? If so, how?

The teachers varied in their beliefs about the value and role of relationships in the language acquisition process, as discussed in Chapters Six and Eight. While the English

speaking teachers believed that they did not have close relationships with the Asian immigrant parents, the bilingual Asian teachers claimed that they did have close warm relationships with the parents. Their varied beliefs were influenced by their own language and cultural backgrounds. Another aspect which reflected the variation in beliefs was the use of home language and English. While all teachers emphasised their belief in the value of home language as a means of acknowledging the ELLs' culture and identity, in Chapter Five, two of the English speaking teachers felt that it was their responsibility to support English acquisition for the ELLs so that they were better prepared for schooling experiences. Therefore, these teachers contradicted themselves in the sense that they did acknowledge the ELLs' home language, yet they still felt that it was more important to support English to prepare the ELLs for school.

3. How did New Zealand early childhood teachers perceive that they support English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)?

The teachers perceived that they supported the Asian immigrant ELLs' English acquisition by using a range of strategies such as: by making interactions more comprehensible, as discussed in Chapter Five; by structuring opportunities for them to participate; and by bridging meaning through the use of gestures, as highlighted in Chapter Seven. In practice, some teachers did offer support as they perceived they would, but other teachers did not. In other words, their perceptions and their practice were incongruent.

4. How could New Zealand early childhood teachers support English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs) by using sociocultural approaches?

Within a sociocultural framework, social interaction is crucial in the learning process. Reflecting sociocultural perspectives, the teachers supported the ELLs as they acquired English by using mediational tools such as gestures and language, which included English and their home languages, and by using a scaffolding approach within the ELLs' zone of proximal development. Therefore, the teachers could support the ELLs as they acquired English by engaging in interaction. The teachers could also use a process of guided participation by mutually bridge meaning during the interactions, and mutually structuring opportunities for the ELLs to participate in activities in the ECE centres so that they could successfully acquire English while preserving their home language.

9.3 Significance and Contributions

The central significance of my findings is that through the exploration of New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices, important insights have been offered that have the power to improve educational practices in early childhood settings for immigrant children in relation to English acquisition. While some of the teachers' beliefs and practices may have a facilitative effect on English acquisition, others may hinder it.

My findings add to the existing body of literature on teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for ELLs, particularly for Asian children. In a New Zealand ECE context, my study provides a platform from which to consider how early childhood teachers in New Zealand could support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs, while valuing and supporting children's cultural backgrounds. In terms of methods, video-stimulated recall interviews served as a valuable means of encouraging and supporting teachers' reflective practice, as well as offering opportunities for pedagogical development in teacher-researcher collaborative research (Schmid, 2011). Sociocultural theories are well known to the early childhood teachers; however, how well they have integrated these theories into their beliefs and practices in the context of second language acquisition is implicitly discussed.

9.4 Limitations

Although my study initially set out to focus on the teachers, I believe that it was important to get a deeper understanding about Asian parents' perspectives regarding their children's English acquisition and home language. Understanding both parents' and the teachers' perspectives, based on mutual communication, is essential for positive parent and teacher relationships (De Gioia, 2013; Hu, Torr, & Whiteman, 2014; Hughes & MacNaughton, 2001, 2002; MacNaughton, 2004). It seemed to me that the interviews conducted with the Asian parents were not engaging enough due to language barriers. Coming from an Asian background myself, but not being able to speak the same language as the parents, limited my role as a researcher. For example, I had to use one of the teachers as an interpreter to get one parent's views because she was not able to converse in English. Although I was able to get the gist of the parent's views based on the interpreter's comments, being able to ask her and listen to her perspectives in her own language would, I believe, have added further understanding.

I initially intended to include a focus group meeting with the teachers from both early childhood centres so that, by providing more comprehensive views about teachers' beliefs and practices, my study would be more rigorous and more valid. Due to time constraints, this was unfortunately not feasible. I did, however, use a video-stimulated recall tool during our meetings to enable the teachers to critically reflect on the relationship between their beliefs and practices, to observe their and other teachers' practices and share their insights, and to reconceptualise their roles. As a researcher, I was able to watch the video recordings a number of times and found it interesting that I often arrived at different interpretations after each viewing. This is important for my findings because I was able to reflect deeply as I challenged my own thinking and understanding of each scenario. This ensured a more critical and rigorous analysis of my data.

9.5 Recommendations

At this stage, it is crucial to ask a fundamental question, "What's next?" The present study has explored the teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting the ELLs as they acquire English. It is my hope that future research will address issues pertaining to how well-equipped the ECE teachers, both bilingual and English speaking are in terms of theories, sound knowledge and pedagogies, regarding how they can effectively support Asian immigrant ELLs .

There are recommendations for future insights as presented below:

Firstly, there is a need to offer solid theoretical foundations in second language acquisition (SLA) from sociocultural theories, and SLA related theories in pre-service or professional development courses, to enable teachers to support successful English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELL students. The teachers in the present study were uncertain of how second language acquisition could be supported by sociocultural theories. Hence, relevant theoretical understandings will likely shape the teachers' beliefs and facilitate the teachers to support the ELLs.

Secondly, a mutual accommodation strategy is required for all teachers in educational settings, as well as for the ELLs and their parents while they adapt to each other, which will better help the teachers to meet the ELLs' and their families' needs in English acquisition.

During the acculturation process, the teachers and ELLs, as well their families, faced adaptation issues. Thus, a mutual accommodation strategy would assist the ELLs and their families to adapt to the mainstream culture, and to cultural maintenance, as well as assisting the teachers to adapt to the ELL's culture.

Thirdly, the teachers and Asian parents both need to be clear about the role of home language and English for the ELLs to avoid the competing values of both languages, and conflicting roles between the teachers and the parents. While the English speaking teachers could support the ELLs' English acquisition, the teachers could also acknowledge the use of home language at the ECE centres. The bilingual teachers could maximise the use of home language during interactions with the ELLs to demonstrate to the ELLs and English speaking children the diversity within the English dominant ECE centres.

9.6 Concluding comments

This study has broadened my horizons as an Asian parent and an ECE academic who has been teaching ECE pre service teachers in my own country (Malaysia). Although the focus of my study is on English acquisition for Asian immigrant ELLs, new issues emerged concerning the importance of home language and the role of bilingual teachers. While this study is not conclusive in exploring the early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in the New Zealand context, and the findings are not generalisable to other educational settings, it does offer helpful insights for teachers who work with children who are linguistically and culturally diverse in the complex terrain of contemporary early childhood education.

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Appendix A: Ethics approval



HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Lynda Griffioen
Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: 2012/08/ERHEC

16 March 2012

Mazlina Mustafa
School of Maori, Social & Cultural Studies in Education
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Mazlina

Thank you for providing the revised documents in support of your application to the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee. I am very pleased to inform you that your research proposal "New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)" has been granted ethical approval.

Please note that should circumstances relevant to this current application change you are required to reapply for ethical approval.

If you have any questions regarding this approval, please let me know.

We wish you well for your research.

Yours sincerely

PP 

Nicola Surtees
Chair
Educational Research Human Ethics Committee

"Please note that Ethical Approval and/or Clearance relates only to the ethical elements of the relationship between the researcher, research participants and other stakeholders. The granting of approval or clearance by the Ethical Clearance Committee should not be interpreted as comment on the methodology, legality, value or any other matters relating to this research."

Appendix B: Information letter for management of ECE centre

Telephone: 03-3642987 ext 43226

Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Date:



NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

Dear Teacher,

I am a PhD candidate at the College of Education, University of Canterbury, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Judith Duncan and Dr. Ronnie Davey. I have taught early childhood education courses at a tertiary level of the education system in Malaysia. I am currently interested in exploring New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLS) for my doctoral study. This will involve case study teachers and children and observations of your programme.

I am writing this letter to approach and invite your staff, parents and their children at your centre to participate in the study. I will spend about 4 – 6 weeks as an observer at (name of centre) An information pamphlet about the study is attached with this letter which will provide more details of the study.

If you decide to agree to the staff, the children and their parents at your centre to participate, please complete the consent form attached and return to me in the envelope provided (or alternatively fax me at (+6433484311) or e-mail me at mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) by (date). I would be happy to clarify any queries you may have in relation to this research. Should you wish to ring me, my number is (03-3642987 ext 43226) or my senior supervisor, Assoc. Prof Judith Duncan can be contacted at (03-3643466 or e-mail her at judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz).

Yours sincerely,

Mazlina Che Mustafa

Appendix C: Pamphlet for management

- No participants will have their names and photographs revealed by the researcher. Agreed substitute names will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.
- Any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used in publications and conference presentations relating to this project without identifying details.

How will I find out about the results?

All participants will be given a 2-3 page of summary results when it is completed and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications.

Who is the researcher?



Mazlina Che Mustafa is a doctoral candidate at University of Canterbury since 1 December 2010. She is an early childhood education lecturer at Sultan Idris University of Education, Malaysia. She has had some experience in undertaking research in early childhood education in Malaysia but very new to early childhood education in New Zealand.

Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about the study?

Mazlina Che Mustafa
Postgraduate Office
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3642987 ext 43229
Fax: +6433484311
Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Or

Asso. Prof Judith Duncan (My thesis supervisor)
School of Māori, Social and Cultural Studies in Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3643466
Fax: +6433484311
Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

This project has been received and approved by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee of University of Canterbury

Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800,
CHRISTCHURCH

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

RESEARCH STUDY

Information Pamphlet for Management of Early Childhood Education Centre

New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

UC
UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

What is the study about and why is it important?

The focus of this doctoral study is on analysing early childhood teachers' beliefs on how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and discovering how these beliefs influence their practice in early childhood education setting. By helping me study teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs, your centre will be helping to meet the needs of the Asian immigrant ELLs and their families in your centre.

The research questions shaping this study are derived from:

What are early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners?

This brochure is to inform you about the project and invite your centre's teachers, parents and children to participate in this project.

What does the study involve?

Over a period of a month, I will be observing the centre's teachers and the children and will be talking with their parents to explore

teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs. I will use a range of different approaches in carrying out this study and these will not interfere with your teachers' and your children's daily routines at the centre.

The criteria of the teachers involved in this study will be qualified teachers who have undergone formal training in early childhood education. The criteria for two Asian immigrant ELLs children will be aged from three to five who have limited proficiency in English.

If your centre agrees to participate:

- The teachers will suggest two children who have Asian backgrounds and may fit with the criteria of the research as case study children.
- The teachers will participate in pre and post-observation interviews on the beliefs and practices to support English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs).
- The teachers and children agree to be observed while the teachers are working with children during free play and teacher-led activities (sometimes using digital camera and/or video camera to record important moments for discussion with the teachers later on). The observations will be three to four times a week for the duration of 4 to 6 weeks.
- The teachers will record and reflect their

key moments with Asian immigrant ELLs with regard to their English acquisition.

- The parents' of the case study children will be interviewed on their children's experiences acquiring English.

If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to yourself or your family.

If for any reason the teachers, children or a family member disclose any information causing concern for the safety of the children, I will follow the procedures of the centre to protect the teachers and children.

If you have questions or comments at anytime throughout the study, feel free to contact me.

How will my privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

- I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- Only myself, as a primary researcher and the participating teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Appendix D: Management consent form

NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)

Consent Form for Management Body of Centre

- I understand the aims and purposes of the research study being undertaken by Mazlina.
- I have read and understood the information provided about this research and have been given an opportunity to ask questions about this research project.
- My centre doesn't have to participate in this study and I am free to withdraw my centre from the project without any disadvantage now or in the future.
- I agree to allow Mazlina to conduct her research at (name of centre) for a period of up to 4- 6 weeks in 2013. I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.
- I understand that the teachers', the children's and their parents' participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw at any stage without any disadvantage now or in the future.
- I understand that all the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- I understand that any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used in publications and conference presentations relating to this project without identifying details.
- I understand that no participants will have their names and photographs revealed by the researcher. Agreed substitute names will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.
- Only Mazlina, as primary researcher and the case study teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications. I have provided my email details below for this.
- I understand that if for any reason the teachers, children or a family member disclose any information causing concern for the safety of the children, Mazlina will follow the procedures of the centre to protect the teacher and children.
- I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Mazlina Che Mustafa and her supervisor, Assoc. Prof Judith Duncan. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project based on the understandings above.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____

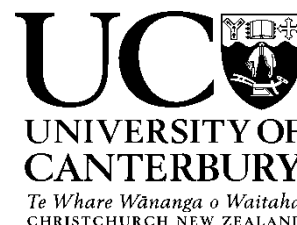
Please return this completed consent form to Mazlina Che Mustafa in the envelope provided by (date)

Appendix E: Information letter for case study teacher

Telephone: 03-3642987 ext 43229

Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Date:



NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

Dear teacher, (name of the teacher)

I am a PhD candidate at the College of Education, University of Canterbury, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Judith Duncan and Assoc. Prof. Ronnie Davey. I have taught early childhood education courses at a tertiary level of the education system in Malaysia and I am currently interested in exploring New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLS). This will involve case study teachers and children and observations of your programme.

I am inviting you to participate in the research study. The management of the centre have agreed that I may approach you for your consent or involvement in this research study. An information pamphlet about the study is attached with this letter which will provide more details of the study and what is required of you should you agree.

If you decide to participate, please complete the consent form attached and return to me in the envelope provided (or alternatively fax me at (+6433484311) or e-mail me at mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) by (date). I would be happy to clarify any queries you may have in relation to this research. Should you wish to ring me, my number is (03-3642987 ext 43229) or my senior supervisor, Asso. Prof Judith Duncan can be contacted at (03-3643466 or e-mail her at judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz).

Yours sincerely,

Mazlina Che Mustafa

Appendix F: Pamphlet for case study teacher centre

will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.

- Any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used in publications and conference presentations relating to this project without identifying details.

How will I find out about the results?

All participants will be given a 2-3 page of summary results when it is completed and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications.

Who is the researcher?



Mazlina Che Mustafa is a doctoral candidate at University of Canterbury since 1 December 2010. She is an early childhood education lecturer at Sultan Idris University of Education, Malaysia. She has had some experience in undertaking research in early childhood education in Malaysia but very new to early childhood education in New Zealand.

Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about the study?

Mazlina Che Mustafa
Postgraduate Office
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3642987 ext 43229
Fax: +6433484311
Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Or

Asso. Prof Judith Duncan (My thesis supervisor)
School of Māori, Social and Cultural Studies in
Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3643466
Fax: +6433484311
Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

This project has been received and approved by
the Educational Research Human Ethics
Committee of University of Canterbury

Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics
Committee
University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800,
CHRISTCHURCH

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix F: Pamphlet for Case Study Teacher

RESEARCH STUDY

Information Pamphlet for Case Study Teachers

**New Zealand early
childhood teachers'
beliefs and practices
in supporting English
acquisition for Asian
immigrant English
language learners
(ELLs)**

UC
**UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY**
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

What is the study about and why is it important?

The focus of this doctoral study is on analysing early childhood teachers' beliefs on how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and discovering how these beliefs influence their practice in early childhood education setting. By helping me study teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs, your centre will be helping to meet the needs of the Asian immigrant ELLs and their families in your centre.

The research questions shaping this study are derived from:

What are early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners?

This brochure is to inform you about the project and invite your centre's teachers, parents and children to participate in this project.

What does the study involve?

Over a period of a month, I will be observing the centre's teachers and the children and will be talking with their parents to explore

teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs. I will use a range of different approaches in carrying out this study and these will not interfere with your teachers' and your children's daily routines at the centre.

The criteria of the teachers involved in this study will be qualified teachers who have undergone formal training in early childhood education. The criteria for two Asian immigrant ELLs children will be aged from three to five who have limited proficiency in English.

If your centre agrees to participate:

- The teachers will suggest two children who have Asian backgrounds and may fit with the criteria of the research as case study children.
- The teachers will participate in pre and post-observation interviews on the beliefs and practices to support English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs).
- The teachers and children agree to be observed while the teachers are working with children during free play and teacher-led activities (sometimes using digital camera and/or video camera to record important moments for discussion with the teachers later on). The observations will be three to four times a week for the duration of 4 to 6 weeks.
- The teachers will record and reflect their

key moments with Asian immigrant ELLs with regard to their English acquisition.

- The parents' of the case study children will be interviewed on their children's experiences acquiring English.

If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to yourself or your family.

If for any reason the teachers, children or a family member disclose any information causing concern for the safety of the children, I will follow the procedures of the centre to protect the teachers and children.

If you have questions or comments at anytime throughout the study, feel free to contact me.

How will my privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

- I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- Only myself, as a primary researcher and the participating teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.

Appendix G: Case study teacher's consent form

NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)

Consent Form for Case Study Teachers

- I understand the aims and purposes of the research study being undertaken by Mazlina.
- I have read and understood the information provided about this research and have been given an opportunity to ask questions about this research project.
- I don't have to participate in this study and I am free to withdraw from the project without any disadvantage now or in the future.
- I agree to allow Mazlina to conduct her research at (name of centre) for a period of up to 4 – 6 weeks in 2013. I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.
- I understand that interviews will be recorded and I can ask the recording to be stopped anytime temporarily or permanently. I will be provided with a copy of interview transcript to check for accuracy.
- This project involves informal discussion and questioning where the precise nature of the questions (or what is discussed) is not known in advance but will depend on the nature of children's activities and interactions. If I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I can withdraw from the project without any disadvantage.
- I understand that ☐ all the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- I understand that any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used in publications and conference presentations relating to this project without identifying details.
- I understand that no participants will have their names and photographs revealed by the researcher. Agreed substitute names will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.
- Only Mazlina, as primary researcher and the case study teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications. I have provided my email details below for this.
- I understand that if for any reason the teachers, children or a family member disclose any information causing concern for the safety of the children; Mazlina will follow the procedures of the centre to protect the teacher and children.
- I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Mazlina Che Mustafa and her supervisor, Assoc. Prof Judith Duncan. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project based on the understandings above.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Email address: _____

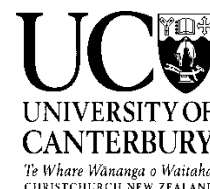
Please return this completed consent form to Mazlina in the envelope provided by (date).

Appendix H: Information letter for case study parent

Telephone: 03-3642987 ext 43229

Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Date:



NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

Dear Parent,

I am a PhD candidate at the College of Education, University of Canterbury, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Judith Duncan and Assoc. Prof. Ronnie Davey. I have taught early childhood education courses at a tertiary level of the education system in Malaysia. I am currently interested in exploring New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLS) for my doctoral study. This will involve case study teachers and children and observations of the centre's programme.

I am looking for children, who have immigrated to New Zealand from an Asian country, between three to five-years old, regularly attending early childhood education centre and still at the stage of acquiring English, to participate in this study. I have already discussed with the teachers at your kindergarten, and they have agreed to distribute this letter to parents of children who fit into the criteria of the study. The management of the centre and the teachers have agreed that I may approach you for your consent or involvement in this research study. An information pamphlet and a booklet about the study are attached with this letter which will provide more details of the study and what is required of you should you agree. I feel that this study will enable teachers to discover more about their beliefs and practices about how they can support your child and other children in acquiring English. I encourage you to talk with your child about the study and assist them in making an informed decision in relation to their participation in the research study.

If you decide to allow your child to participate in the study, please complete the consent form attached and return to me in the return address envelope provided (or alternatively fax me at (+6433484311) or e-mail me at mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz) by (date). If you certainly do not want your child to participate, please also return the consent form in the return address envelope by (date). I would be happy to clarify any queries you may have in relation to this research. Should you wish to ring me, my number is (03-3642987 ext 43229) or my senior supervisor, Asso. Prof Judith Duncan can be contacted at (03-3643466 or e-mail her at judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz).

Yours sincerely,

Mazlina Che Mustafa

Appendix I: Pamphlet for case study parent

- Any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used in publications and conference presentations relating to this project without identifying details.

How will I find out about the results?

All families will be given a 2-3 page of summary results when it is completed and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications.

Who is the researcher?



Mazlina Che Mustafa is a doctoral candidate at University of Canterbury since 1 December 2010. She is an early childhood education lecturer at Sultan Idris University of Education, Malaysia. She has had some experience in undertaking research in early childhood education in Malaysia but very new to early childhood education in New Zealand.

Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about the study?

Mazlina Che Mustafa
DE5 Dovedale Village
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3642987 ext 43226
Fax: +6433484311
Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Or

Assoc. Prof Judith Duncan (My thesis supervisor)
School of Educational Studies and Leadership
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3643466
Fax: +6433484311
Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

This project has been received and approved by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee of University of Canterbury

Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800,
CHRISTCHURCH

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Appendix I: Pamphlet for Case Study Parent

RESEARCH STUDY

Information Pamphlet for Parents of Case Study Children

New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

UC
UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

What is the study about and why is it important?

The focus of this doctoral study is on analysing early childhood teachers' beliefs on how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and discovering how these beliefs influence their practice in early childhood education setting. As have immigrated to New Zealand from an Asian country and your child/children are still acquiring English, you will be helping me you will be helping to improve the teachers' support for Asian immigrant ELLs as they acquire English.

The research questions shaping this study are derived from:

What are early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners?

This brochure is to invite you and your child/children to share with me some of your and your children's experience in acquiring English while attending the centre.

What does the study involve?

Over a period of a month, I will be observing in your child's centre, and would like to be

able to include you and your child in the observations, discussions and explorations of the ideas around teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners.

I will use a range of different approaches in carrying out this study and these will not interfere with the teachers' and your children's daily routines at the centre.

This involvement will indicate:

- that you and your child/ children grant me permission to observe interactions between your child/children and the teachers as well as the other children at the centre during free play and teacher led activities. These observations will be three to four times a week for a duration of 4 to 6 weeks. I will be taking written records and some visual recordings (photos and videos) for discussing with you and the teachers only —not to be made public.
- that you would be willing to share with me your experiences since your child/ children enrolled at the centre.
- that you are willing to participate in an interview regarding your expectations and your child/children's experience in acquiring English at the centre.

If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw yourself and your child/children from the study at any time without disadvantage to yourself or your child/ children.

If for any reason, you, or a family member disclose any information causing concern for the safety of your child, I will follow the procedures of the centre to protect you and your child.

If you have questions or comments at anytime throughout the study, feel free to contact me.

How will my privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

- I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- Only myself, as a primary researcher and the participating teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- No participants will have their names and photographs revealed by the researcher. Agreed substitute names will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.

.....



Appendix J: Case study parent's consent form

NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs)

Consent Form for Case study Parents

- I understand the aims and purposes of the research study being undertaken by Mazlina.
- I have read and understood the information provided about this research and have been given an opportunity to ask questions about this research project.
- Myself and/or my child/children don't have to participate in this study and I am free to withdraw myself, and my child/children from the project without any disadvantage now or in the future.
- I understand that Mazlina will conduct her research at (name of the centre) for a period of up to 4 – 6 weeks in 2012. Myself and/or my child/children understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.
- Myself and/or my child/children can ask that recording and observation of my child can be stopped temporarily or permanently at any time.
- I understand that all the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- I understand that any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used in publications and conference presentations relating to this project without identifying details.
- I understand that this project involves informal discussion and questioning where the precise nature of the questions (or what is discussed) has not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interviews and the project develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I can decline to answer any questions and may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage.
- I understand that no participants will have their names and photographs revealed by the researcher. Agreed substitute names will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.
- Only Mazlina, as primary researcher and the case study teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications. I have provided my email details below for this.
- I give consent for the researcher to notify the Senior teacher of the centre if my child discloses any information causing concern for the safety of my child.
- I have discussed the project with my child and s/he has had the information booklet read to him.
- I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Mazlina Che Mustafa and her supervisor, Assoc. Prof Judith Duncan. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

I agree to participate in this project:

Yes/No

I agree that my child/children can participate in this project.

Yes/No

Child's name: _____

Parents' name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Email address: _____

Appendix K: Information letter and consent form for all teachers and staff

Telephone: 03-3642987 ext 43226

Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz



Date:

NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

Dear teachers and staff,

I am a PhD candidate at the College of Education, University of Canterbury, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Judith Duncan and Dr. Ronnie Davey. I have taught early childhood education courses at a tertiary level of the education system in Malaysia and I am currently interested in exploring New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLS).

The management of the centre and the teachers have agreed that I may approach you for your consent or involvement in this research study. I intend to observe three children who have Asian backgrounds, between three to five-years old, regularly attending early childhood education centre and still at the stage of acquiring English. I am approaching parents with children in the targeted age group for the study to ask permission for their child to participate. I am writing this letter to inform you, as a staff, at the centre about the study, as while you have not been chosen as a case study, I will be taking notes, photographs and limited video recordings where there is a possibility that you will appear although I will not specifically focus on you. This is due to the likelihood of you being close to the children whom I will be observing.

I will spend about 4 to 6 weeks as an observer at (name of centre). An information pamphlet about the study is attached with this letter which will provide more details of the study.

If you certainly do not want any photographs or observations to include you, please indicate this at the back of this letter and return in a provided envelope to (name of Head teacher) by (date). Otherwise I will assume that you have no objection with this. I would be happy to clarify any queries you may have in relation to this research. Should you wish to ring me, my number is (03-3642987 ext 43226) or my senior supervisor, Assoc. Prof Judith Duncan can be contacted at (03-3643466 or e-mail her at judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz).

Yours sincerely,

Mazlina Che Mustafa

Consent Form

**NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN
SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)**

I agree to being included in any photographs or recordings during the observations at (name of centre).

Staff's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I DO NOT agree to being included in any photographs or recordings during the observations at (name of centre).

Staff's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix L: Pamphlet for all teachers and staff

How will I find out about the results?

All families will be given a 2-3 page of summary results when it is completed and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications.

Who is the researcher?



Mazlina Che Mustafa is a doctoral candidate at University of Canterbury since 1 December 2010. She is an early childhood education lecturer at Sultan Idris University of Education, Malaysia. She has had some experience in undertaking research in early childhood education in Malaysia but very new to early childhood education in New Zealand.



Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about the study?

Mazlina Che Mustafa
Postgraduate office
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3642987 ext 43229
Fax: +6433484311
Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Or

Asso. Prof Judith Duncan (My thesis supervisor)
School of Māori, Social and Cultural Studies in Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3643466
Fax: +6433484311
Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

This project has been received and approved by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee of University of Canterbury

Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800,
CHRISTCHURCH

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

RESEARCH STUDY

Information Pamphlet for All Staff

New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

UC
UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

What is the study about and why is it important?

The focus of this doctoral study is on analysing early childhood teachers' beliefs on how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs) and discovering how these beliefs influence their practice in early childhood education setting.

The research questions shaping this study are derived from:

What are early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners?

By helping me study the early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices, you will be helping to improve the teachers' support for Asian immigrant ELLs as they acquire English.

The management of the centre have agreed that I may approach you for your consent or involvement in this research project.

What does the study involve?

Over a period of a month, I will be observing the case study teachers and the children and will be talking with their parents to explore teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant ELLs.

I will use a range of different approaches in carrying out this study and none of these will interfere with the teachers' and children's daily routines in the centre, nor violate you and the children's privacy.

This pamphlet is to inform you, as a staff, at the centre about the study, as while you have not been chosen as a case study, I will be taking notes, photographs and limited video recordings where there is a possibility that you will appear although I will not specifically focus on you. This is due to the likelihood of you being close to the children whom I will be observing.

You have the right to withdraw yourself from the study at any time without disadvantage to yourself or your family.

If for any reason you, or a staff member disclose any information causing concern for the safety of the children, I will follow the procedures of the centre to protect the children and/or family member.

If you have questions or comments at anytime throughout the study, feel free to contact me or my thesis Supervisor, Assoc. Professor Judith Duncan.

How will my privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

- I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- Only myself, as a primary researcher and the participating teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- No participants will have their names and photographs revealed by the researcher. Agreed substitute names will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.
- Any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used in publications and conference presentations relating to this project without identifying details.

Appendix M: Information booklet for all parents

Telephone: 03-3642987 ext 43229

Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Date:



NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

Dear Parent,

I am a PhD candidate at the College of Education, University of Canterbury, under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Judith Duncan and Assoc. Prof. Ronnie Davey. I have taught early childhood education courses at a tertiary level of the education system in Malaysia and I am currently interested in exploring New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLS).

The management of the centre and the teachers have agreed that I may approach you for your consent or involvement in this research study. I intend to observe two children who have Asian backgrounds, between three to five-years old, regularly attending early childhood education centre and still at the stage of acquiring English. I am approaching parents with children in the targeted age group for the study to ask permission for their child to participate. I am writing this letter to inform you, as a parent, at the centre about the study, as while your child has not been chosen as a case study, I will be taking notes, photographs and limited video recordings where there is a possibility that your child will appear although I will not specifically focus on your child. This is due to the likelihood of your child playing or being close to the children whom I will be observing.

I will spend about 4 to 6 weeks as an observer at (name of centre). An information pamphlet and a booklet about the study are attached with this letter which will provide more details of the study.

If you do not want any photographs or observations to include your child, please indicate your consent or wish to withdraw your child from the research by completing the form at the back of this letter and return to the (name), Head teacher, (name of centre). I would be happy to clarify any queries you may have in relation to this research. Should you wish to ring me, my number is (03-3642987 ext 43229) or my senior supervisor, Asso. Prof Judith Duncan can be contacted at (03-3643466 or e-mail her at judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz).

Yours sincerely,

Mazlina Che Mustafa

Consent Form

NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

I agree to my child/ children being included in any photographs or recordings during the observations at (name of the centre).

Child/Children's name: _____

Parent's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I DO NOT agree to my child/ children being included in any photographs or recordings during the observations at (name of the centre).

Child/Children's name: _____

Parent's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix N: Pamphlet for all parents

How will I find out about the results?

All families will be given a 2-3 page of summary results when it is completed and may contact Mazlina at any stage to receive copies of articles or publications.

Who is the researcher?



Mazlina Che Mustafa is a doctoral candidate at University of Canterbury since 1 December 2010. She is an early childhood education lecturer at Sultan Idris University of Education, Malaysia. She has had some experience in undertaking research in early childhood education in Malaysia but very new to early childhood education in New Zealand.



Who can I contact if I wish to ask questions or find out more information about the study?

Mazlina Che Mustafa
Postgraduate office
College of Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3642987 ext 43229
Fax: +6433484311
Email: mazlina.chemustafa@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

Or

Asso. Prof Judith Duncan (My thesis supervisor)
School of Māori, Social and Cultural Studies in Education
University of Canterbury
Phone: 03-3643466
Fax: +6433484311
Email: judith.duncan@canterbury.ac.nz

This project has been received and approved by the Educational Research Human Ethics Committee of University of Canterbury

Complaints may be addressed to:

The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee
University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800,
CHRISTCHURCH

human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

RESEARCH STUDY

Information Pamphlet for All Parents

New Zealand early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

UC
UNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY
Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha
CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners (ELLs)

What is the study about and why is it important?

The focus of this doctoral study is on analysing early childhood teachers' beliefs on how they can support English acquisition among Asian immigrant ELLs and discovering how these beliefs influence their practice in early childhood education setting.

The research questions shaping this study are derived from:

What are early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners?

By helping me study the early childhood teachers' beliefs and practices, you will be helping to improve the teachers' support for Asian immigrant ELLs as they acquire English.

The management of the centre and the teachers have agreed that I may approach you for your consent or involvement in this research study. This pamphlet is to inform you about the project at the early childhood education centre that your child/children attend.

What does the study involve?

Over a period of a month, I will be observing the centre's teachers and the children and will be talking with their parents to explore teachers' beliefs and practices in supporting English acquisition for Asian immigrant English language learners.

I will use a range of different approaches in carrying out this study and these will not interfere with the teachers' and your children's daily routines in the centre, nor violate you and your child's privacy.

I will carry out observations of the teachers working with children in the centre during free play and teacher led activities. These observations will be three to four times a week for a duration of 4 to 6 weeks.

This pamphlet is to inform you, as a parent, at the centre about the study, as while your child has not been chosen as a case study, I will be taking notes, photographs and limited video recordings where there is a possibility that your child will appear although I will not specifically focus on your child. This is due to the likelihood of your child playing or being close to the children whom I will be observing.

You have the right to withdraw yourself and your child/children from the study at any time without disadvantage to yourself or your family.

If for any reason you, your child or a family member disclose any information causing concern for the safety of your child, I will follow the procedures of the centre to protect you and your child.

If you have questions or comments at anytime throughout the study, feel free to contact me or my thesis Supervisor, Assoc. Professor Judith Duncan.

How will my privacy be protected and how will information from the study be used?

- I will take particular care to ensure the confidentiality of all data gathered for this study. All the data will be securely stored in password protected facilities and locked storage at the University of Canterbury for five years following the study. It will then be destroyed.
- Only myself, as a primary researcher and the participating teachers will have access to any personal identifying details of the participants and centres in this study, and these will be destroyed at the completion of the study.
- No participants will have their names and photographs revealed by the researcher. Agreed substitute names will be used. Photographs and video footage will be used for analysis purpose only.
- Any information or opinions the teacher, the children and their parents provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and that excerpts from the transcripts of the interviews, written records, and observations will be used

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Appendix O: Information booklet for case study children

The Choice is Yours



A booklet to assist children decide if they want to participate in a study about teachers' beliefs and practices when supporting Asian immigrant children as they acquire English.

Hi, thank you for reading this book. This book is written for you to help you choose whether you want to share your story with me. If you don't understand, you can ask the grown up who is reading this book to you. If they don't know the answer, they can contact me and get the answer for your question.



You may want to get to know me better before you want to share your story with me. My name is Mazlina. This is the photo of myself.



I am from Malaysia, a country like New Zealand. I learn at a university in Christchurch, a school for grownups.



I came to New Zealand to learn how to teach people to become good teachers.



It is important for me to watch how your teachers play with children like you at the centre so that I can learn how to teach other teachers to be the teachers you like best.



I will visit your centre for five days a week over the next month to watch you playing with your friends and your teachers.

During this time, everything will be just the same - you don't have to worry as nothing will change and you can play as usual like any other days at the centre with your friends and your teachers.



I can learn from you in many ways.

I can learn from you when you play with your friends and your teachers.

Sometimes I need to take videos and photos of you, your friends, and your teachers so that I remember how you play at the centre.



Sometimes I may just watch you play, and write some notes in my book so that I remember too.

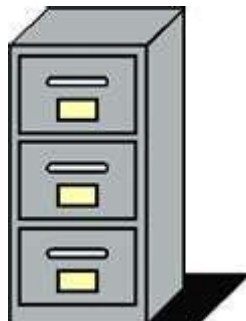


After I have finished learning about you and your teachers, I will be writing about the things that you do at (name of the Centre) and other people will get to read about this - just like reading a story in a book.

I will give a special code name for you and your centre in my story when I tell about the story to others.



I will keep the story in a safe place.



Please tell me if it is OK with you.



Even if your mum or your dad, or your teacher, says it's OK, but you might not want me to talk to you, or take photos or video you or watch you when you play. That's fine.

If you choose not to share your time with me you can just say NO THANK YOU.



If you choose to share some of your time with me then you can just say YES PLEASE.



If you say OK and then change your mind and don't want to share your time anymore that's fine.



You just need to say NO THANK YOU.



If you have any questions you can ask your mum or your dad, or your teacher, at (name of centre), or Mazlina (me).





Bye-bye. Thank you for reading.

Dear Parents and Caregivers

The Choice is Yours! has been written to let your child/children understand that there is a research project undertaken at the centre and how they are involved in the project. This booklet was at first designed by Dr. Paul Watson, of CPIT, for a study about what it is like for young children to be sick. The idea of this booklet was later adapted by Asso. Prof Judith Duncan, of Uni. of Canterbury and Dr Sarah Te One, of Victoria University of Wellington, for a study on child's learning. Their booklets proved to be effective means to help children to make decisions about their participation in the research project. I thank them for the use of the booklet ideas which I have adapted for this project.

Similarly to the information pamphlet created for you, this booklet has been written to give your child sufficient information for him or her to understand how they are involved in the research project.

I encourage you to read this booklet to your child and clarify any points when it is necessary for your child. When you have finished reading **The Choice is Yours!**, and talking about the research with your child, please fill in the consent form and inform the Head teacher.

Thank you.

Kindest regards,

Mazlina Che Mustafa

Appendix P: Case study children's consent form

NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

CONSENT FORM FOR CASE STUDY CHILDREN

Mazlina wants to find out about how my teachers help me and my friends learning English.



If I want to join Mazlina's project, I can say YES PLEASE.



If I don't want to join Mazlina's project, I can say NO THANK YOU.



If I say OK and then change my mind, I can say NO THANK YOU.

If I want to help Mazlina with her project, she will:



take photos and video record me and my friends.




watch me when I am playing at centre with my friends

If I don't want Mazlina to take photos and watch me and my friends playing, or I want to find out more about the project, I can ask or tell my mum or my dad,

or my teacher or Mazlina. **Please tick**  **in the box, if:**

I want to join this project. 

☐

I don't want to join this project. 

☐

My name is _____

(my mum or dad or teacher can help me writing my name)

Appendix Q: Information booklet for all children

Hewlett-PackardThe



A booklet to assist children decide if they want to participate in a study about teachers' beliefs and practices when supporting Asian immigrant children as they acquire English.

Mazlina Che
Mustafa

Hi, thank you for reading this book. This book is written for you to help you choose whether you want to share your story with me. If you don't understand, you can ask the grown up who is reading this book to you. If they don't know the answer, they can contact me and get the answer for your question.



My name is Mazlina. This is the photo of myself.



I am from Malaysia, a country like New Zealand. I learn at a university in Christchurch, a school for grownups.



I came to New Zealand to learn how to teach people to become good teachers.



It is important for me to watch how your teachers play with children like you at the centre so that I can learn how to teach other teachers to be the teachers you like best.



I will visit your centre for four days a week over the next month to watch you playing with your friends and your teachers.

During this time, everything will be just the same - you don't have to worry as nothing will change and you can play as usual like any other days at the centre with your friends and your teachers.



Sometimes I need to take videos and photos of you, your friends, and your teachers so that I remember how you play at the centre.



Sometimes I may just watch you play, and write some notes in my book so that I remember too.



After I have finished learning about you and your teachers, I will be writing about the things that you do at (your centre) and other people will get to read about this - just like reading a story in a book.

I will give a special code name for you and your centre in my story and when I tell about the story to others.



Please tell me if it is OK with you.



Even if your mum or your dad, or your teacher, says it's OK, but you might not want me to talk to you, or take photos or video you or watch you when you play. That's fine.



If you choose not to share your time with me you can just say NO THANK YOU.



If you choose to share some of your time with me then you can just say YES PLEASE.



If you say OK and then change your mind and don't want to share your time anymore that's fine. You just need to say NO THANK YOU.



If you have any questions you can ask your mum or your dad, or your teacher, at (name of the centre), or Mazlina (me).





Bye-bye. Thank you for reading.

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The Choice is Yours! has been written to let your child/children understand that there is a research project undertaken at the centre and how they are involved in the project. This booklet was at first designed by Dr. Paul Watson, of CPIT, for a study about what it is like for young children to be sick. The idea of this booklet was later adapted by Asso. Prof Judith Duncan, of Uni. of Canterbury and Dr Sarah Te One, of Victoria University of Wellington, for a study on child's learning. Their booklets proved to be effective means to help children to make decisions about their participation in the research project. I thank them for the use of the booklet ideas which I have adapted for this project.

Similarly to the information pamphlet created for you, this booklet has been written to give your child sufficient information for him or her to understand how they are involved in the research project.

I encourage you to read this booklet to your child and clarify any points when it is necessary for your child. When you have finished reading **The Choice is Yours!**, and talking about the research with your child, please fill in the consent form and inform the Head teacher.

Thank you.

Kindest regards,

Mazlina Che Mustafa

Appendix R: All children's consent form

NEW ZEALAND EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING ENGLISH ACQUISITION FOR ASIAN IMMIGRANT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS)

CONSENT FORM FOR ALL CHILDREN

Mazlina wants to find out about how my teachers help me and my friends learning English.



If I want to join Mazlina's project, I can say YES PLEASE.



If I don't want to join Mazlina's project, I can say NO THANK YOU.



If I say OK and then change my mind, I can say NO THANK YOU.

If I want to help Mazlina with her project, she will:



take photos and video record me and my friends.



watch me when I am playing at centre with my friends

If I don't want Mazlina to take photos and watch me and my friends playing, or I want to find out more about the project, I can ask or tell my mum or my dad, or my teacher or Mazlina.

Please tick  in the box, if:

I want to join this project.

☐

I don't want to join this project.

☐

My name is _____

(my mum or dad or teacher can help me write my name)