Social Skills Development in Bilingual Preschoolers : A Case Study

Tayebeh Sohrabi, Memorial University, Canada

Kimberly Maich, Memorial University, Canada

Abstract: This article presents a case study of bilingual preschoolers' social skills development in dimensions of communication, cooperation, emotional management, and problematic behaviours. This study utilized non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews for collecting data. Five bilingual preschoolers and two early childhood educators (ECEs) participated in this study. The results indicate that the main reason for the exclusion of bilingual children in group activities in childcare is their language limitations rather than their appearance or other factors that would contribute to them being considered as an outsider. The main barrier in the social skills development of bilingual children surrounds negative feelings, such as frustration and hesitation in their relationships with others. These feelings and experiences inhibit them from interacting with others. The role of ECEs, peers, and parents was significant to the development of children's social skills.

Keywords: Social Skills Development, Communication, Cooperation, Emotional Management, Problem Behaviour, Bilingual Preschooler.

Introduction

This article is a case study of social skills development in the areas of cooperation, communication, emotional management, and problem behaviours in bilingual preschoolers. These terms are important for understanding the research presented, and thus they are defined in below table (Table 1). Social skills are behaviours that enable people to interact in interpersonal relationships (Marinho-Casanova & Leiner, 2017). The development of social skills is essential to achieve optimal growth in social, educational, and professional areas and navigate many social issues (Ryan & Edge, 2012). Their development in early childhood is the foundation of social skills in adulthood (Halle et al., 2014).

Table 1. Definitions of Frequently Used Terms

Term	Definition
Cooperation	"Acting together, in a coordinated way at work, leisure, or in social relationships, in the pursuit of shared goals, the enjoyment of the joint activity, or simply furthering the relationship" (Argyle, 2013, p.15).
Communication	The expression and exchange of ideas and information that help children feel safe and connected to those around them (Alanis, 2011).
Emotional management	A conscious, effortful, and reflective response to stimulation (Blair & Raver, 2016).
Problem behaviour	Some children who do not develop social skills may learn other behaviours that contribute to the establishment of negative interactions between them and other individuals (Marinho-Casanova, & Leiner, 2017) that are considered problem behaviours.
Bilingual/dual lingual	Children who are learning English as a second language while using their mother tongue at home, which is a minority language in that society. They begin to learn the majority language when they attend either childcare or kindergarten (Hopp, Vogelbacher, Kieseier, & Thoma, 2019).

Children from immigrant families are the fastest-growing segment of the Canadian population (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2018). This trend has profound policy implications for meeting the needs of these children. It is widely recognized that childcare and schools are crucial arenas of socialization (Marmot, 2010). Among various levels of education, from early childhood to graduate degrees, early childhood education plays a significant role in a child's development since it is the starting point of their education (Kasture & Bhalerao, 2014).

Despite the significance of this period to child development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), most of the existing studies focus on social skills development in disabled children (Ben-Itzchak, Nachshon, & Zachor, 2019; McCollow & Hoffman, 2019; Mpella, Christina, & Eirini, 2019). Given the dearth of research on immigrant children during this period (Takanishi, 2004), the purpose of this study is to qualitatively examine bilingual preschoolers' social skills development.

The questions that guided this research were:

- How do bilingual preschoolers develop social skills?
- How might early childhood educators' (ECEs) interactions with bilingual preschoolers lead to their social development?
- What are the barriers and facilitating factors that bilingual preschoolers experience when communicating with their ECEs and classmates?

Setting & Participants

This study took place in two preschool classes in a childcare center in an urban area of eastern Canada. A homogeneous purposeful sampling strategy was used to identify research participants, who were immigrant bilingual preschoolers, including five immigrant bilingual children and two ECEs. Information-rich cases refer to those from which we can learn a great deal about key issues of a research topic. Purposeful sampling aims to select information-rich cases that will clarify the questions under study (Creswell, 2012). In homogeneous sampling, researchers purposefully sample individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup with defining characteristics (Creswell, 2012). Five bilingual preschoolers and two ECEs participated in this study.

Data Collection & Analysis

A descriptive case study approach was adopted for this study. According to Punch and Oancea (2014), case studies focus on "understanding the case in-depth, and in its natural setting, recognizing its complexity and its context" (p. 148). Descriptive case studies are focused and detailed, and questions about a phenomenon are carefully articulated at the beginning of the research (Mills et al., 2010).

This study had two sources of data. First, the primary source of data was observing ECEs' and preschoolers' daily activities, and recording both structured observations on a data sheet along with open-ended field notes. The data sheet included multiple aspects of social skills (see Appendix A), including communication, cooperation, emotional management, and problematic behaviours. The elements for each skill were adopted from the *Teacher Report—Part II SSRS-T Form* (Karatas, Sag, & Arslan, 2015) and the *Kindergarten Social/Emotional Checklist* (Illinois Learning Standards, n.d.). The data sheet also included an indicator of each social skill area and spaces for anecdotal notes and the frequency of each behaviour, designed according to criteria outlined by LeBlanc, Raetz, Sellers, and Carr (2016). Some participants' quotes were recorded during observations under the anecdotal notes in the data sheet (see Appendix A), which were integrated into the below findings to make them more transparent.

Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two ECEs (see Appendix B). Audiotaped and transcribed interviews were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data" (p. 79). Six steps were undertaken: becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and reporting on the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings

Observational Findings

Observations took place over a time frame of three weeks for a total of eighteen days in summer 2019. During this phase of data collection, five bilingual children were observed. All of them were five years old except for Amina, who was four years old. Aryan was from India and according to his ECEs, his English was fluent. Vihan was from Sri Lanka and his English was fluent. Adel was from Russia and his ECEs indicate he is fluent in English. Della was from Germany and her English was intermediate. Amina was from Saudi Arabia. Her English was at a beginner level.

This subsection provides the results from the observations. The findings for each participant are presented separately (pseudonyms are used throughout).

Participant 1: Aryan

Problematic behavior. There was no evidence of interrupting other people's conversations or getting angry quickly. For instance, one of Aryan's classmates interrupted Aryan's conversation and interfered in his work, but Aryan stayed calm and tried to avoid him. During observations one day, he played alone all day. On that day both of his close friends were absent.

Communication. Initiating conversations with other children was the most observed factor and offering encouraging comments to others was the factor observed least often. Aryan communicated nonverbally, for example she waved bye, or noddle her head to show her agreement. He also listened to others when they spoke and initiated conversations with others. For instance, when the ECE injured her finger, Aryan asked her, "What happened?" and started a conversation. Aryan was good at finding friends. For instance, once he was playing, he asked a girl to join them. Aryan said nice things about others and himself.

Emotional management. Saying "No" to protect himself was the most frequently observed behaviour, as opposed to identifying methods to resolve conflict and asking questions about unfair rules, which were not observed at all. He responded appropriately when he was pushed or hit by others. He could also handle bullying. When his classmate pushed the toys he was playing with, he told him in a loud voice, "Stop!" Aryan stayed calm with other children and got along with peers who were different. For instance, several times one of Aryan's classmates interrupted Aryan's work or said inappropriate things, but Aryan always tried to be friends with him. Whenever this classmate joined in activities that Aryan was doing, Aryan always welcomed him.

Cooperation. During the observation, Aryan paid attention to his classmates' ideas about group activities and usually cooperated in activities without being encouraged. He was also a volunteer helper in the classroom. For example, when the ECE asked who could help her set up math materials, he volunteered.

Participant 2: Vihaan

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

Communication. Communicating nonverbally was the most observed factor, while introducing himself to new people was not observed at all. The second most observed skill was initiating a conversation with others. For instance, one day, he explained to his friends about a character in a book he had read, and, in doing so, he initiated a conversation. Vihaan sometimes listened to others when they spoke, but sometimes he did not. Vihaan found friends quickly. His relationship with his classmates was good, and he joined other groups of activities quickly. He said nice things about himself.

Emotional management. The most observed skill in this area was staying calm with others. There was no behaviour related to asking questions about unfair rules. He could say "No!" to protect himself from an unsafe situation, as one of his classmates wanted to use his water bottle. He said, "No, it is mine. You are not allowed to use it." Vihaan got along with peers who were mentally and physically different. He responded appropriately when he was pushed or hit. Vihaan developed skills to resolve conflict situations. One day, when two of his friends were arguing, he asked them to stop and then changed the conversation subject to help resolve the situation. He controlled his temper in conflict situations.

Cooperation. The most observed behaviour was paying attention to peers' ideas in group activities and cooperating with peers without being told. When one of his classmates was looking for something, Vihaan helped her find it. Vihaan was sometimes a volunteer for classroom tasks and joined in group activities without prompting.

Participant 3: Adel

Problematic behaviour. The only factor observed was interrupting other peoples' conversations. For instance, when a group of Adel's classmates spoke about a movie they had seen, Adel interrupted their conversation and started talking about what he ate the night before.

Communication. The most observed behaviour was initiating conversations with other children. For example, a new student came to the class, and she asked, "Where is the bathroom?" Adel responded, "Follow me," and then started a conversation with her. The least observed element was saying encouraging comments to others. Adel referred to himself positively. Adel used nonverbal elements for communication and listened to others carefully. Adel found friends quickly and he introduced himself to new people without prompting.

Emotional management. The most observed behaviour was getting along with peers who are different. There was a child in the class who could not speak English, and she was frequently alone. On several occasions Adel tried to talk with her and invited her to join him. There were no observed behaviours regarding controlling temper in conflict situations, developing skills to resolve conflict situations, and handling bullies. During the observation, Adel did not have conflicts with anyone. Although he asked many questions about various topics, he did not ask any questions about rules that may be unfair. Adel could say "No" to protect himself.

Cooperation. The most frequently observed skills were paying attention to peers' ideas in group activities and volunteering for classroom tasks. For example, after playing a game, Adel helped clean up the mess. The frequency of cooperating with peers without prompting and joining ongoing group activities without being told was equivalent. He joined ongoing activities without prompting. For example, his classmates pretended they were shopping in a market, and he joined them.

Participant 4: Della

Problematic behaviour. The most frequently observed behaviours included preferring to be alone and avoiding emotional expression. One day, most of the children were participating in group activities. Della went to the sand area and looked at the children for a while from a distance. Then, she sat alone and observed them.

Communication. The most observed skill was communicating nonverbally. She also listened to others when they spoke and introduced herself to new people. Furthermore, she said nice things to others. For example, she told a boy who made a painting, "It is beautiful." There was no observed behaviour of Della saying nice things about herself.

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

Although Della could sometimes handle aggression appropriately, other times she could not. Della did not show conflict resolution skills, as whenever something happened to her that made her sad, she did not do anything. However, Della, did control her temper in conflict situations appropriately. Della asked questions about rules that might be unfair. For example, Della sat beside her friend while the ECE read a book for students. The ECE asked her not to sit so close to her classmate. Della asked, "Why?" The ECE replied, "It is respectful of other people's space." Della pointed to some of her classmates that were close to each other and said, "They are close to each other."

Cooperation. The most observed skill was joining ongoing group activities without being told. The second most observed skill was volunteering for classroom tasks. Della cooperated with her peers without prompting. For instance, Della and her peers played the role of family members. The children cooperated while preparing what they needed to play. Della mentioned, "I can make a space for the baby." Paying attention to her peers' ideas for group activities was the skill observed least often.

Participant 5: Amina

Problematic behaviour. The most observed behaviour was preferring to be alone. Most of the time, Amina played alone. She sometimes stayed in a group of children, but she did not play or speak with them. Several times, she followed other classmates and wanted to play with them, but others did not accept her. Another observed behaviour in this area was emotional expression. On one occasion, Amina fell and cried. It was not a severe incident, but it made her upset.

Communication. Communicating nonverbally was the most observed behaviour. There were no instances when Amina said nice things about herself or other people, introduced herself to new people, or found friends quickly. During the observation, she once tried to initiate a conversation, but was unsuccessful. One of her classmates was building something with blocks, and Amina went and said something to him. The boy did not reply, or he might not have understood what Amina told him.

Furthermore, Amina did not listen to others when they spoke. One day, some children went to the back room, which was a storage area for the class where students were not allowed to go. The ECE went there and explained to the students why they were not allowed to go in there. Amina did not pay attention to her ECE's words, and when her ECE was speaking, Amina left that area, while other children stayed until their ECE asked them to go and play.

Emotional management. The only observed behaviour was Amina saying "No" to protect herself. She did not have any conflict with her peers and mostly played alone. On several occasions during the observation, students took Amina's toys while she was playing with them, but she did not say anything and went to play with another toy instead. However, one day, while Amina was playing with a doll, another student tried to take the doll. Amina did not give her that doll and told her, "No, no, no."

Cooperation. Volunteering for classroom tasks was the most observed behaviour. Amina also cooperated with her classmates without prompting. Moreover, Amina sometimes joined ongoing activities without being told, but sometimes she did not. One day, while all the children were sitting around a table and waiting for lunch, one boy closed his eyes, pointed at one of the children and asked, "Is this Jack?" Amina replied, "No," and this game continued. One day, it was one of her classmates' birthdays. All the girls told her "Happy Birthday" and hugged her, except for Amina. Furthermore, Amina did not pay attention to her peers in group activities. Once, she and some of the girls sat around a table. One of the girls pretended to take pictures. She asked Amina several times to smile, but Amina did not pay attention to her.

Interview Findings

Two ECEs were interviewed. Sarah worked as an early childhood educator for twelve years. She was working in the childcare centre where the study took place for ten years. She holds a level-two diploma in early childhood education. Mary worked with children for 23 years and for 18 years in the present childcare. She holds a level-two early childhood education diploma. By applying a thematic analysis, which is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke's, 2006), three themes and three subheadings were formulated: Themes include: creating a classroom of acceptance and care, everyone has a role, and communication hurdles. Everyone has a role has three subthemes including: early childhood characteristics, peers, and parents. When referring to specific ECEs, pseudonyms are used.

Creating a Classroom of Acceptance and Care. This theme centres on creating a welcoming classroom concentrating on the background, culture, and needs of students. In their classrooms, ECEs used multicultural resources, such as international music, books, pictures, and toys, which indicates their acceptance of diversity. Giving attention to the traditions and culture of bilingual students demonstrates ECEs' acknowledgment of multiculturalism. Both ECEs mentioned that they try to incorporate the culture of international students into their class. For example, according to Sarah, they have a multicultural day, when parents bring objects related to their culture and ECEs display them around the classroom.

Everyone Has a Role. This theme describes how people's interactions with bilingual children facilitated their adjustment in the new situations, and their communication and skills development. This theme has three subthemes: early childhood characteristics, peers, and parents**.**

Early childhood characteristics. By adopting appropriate strategies, ECEs can help build trust in bilingual children sooner. The first strategy is speaking with the children's parents to gain an idea about their English fluency. Then, in initiating a conversation, ECEs tend to learn some essential words from other languages, such as bathroom, hungry, and thirsty. Then, they use those words to teach their English equivalents. Furthermore, both respondents underlined the necessity of using body language, gestures, visuals, schedules, and directions.

According to the participants, a play-based approach was key to facilitating communication and developing social skills. The play-based approach helps children feel more comfortable, as there are no expected outcomes, such as having conversations about specific topics. This approach allows the students to explore, communicate, and develop social skills more naturally. Moreover, ECEs needed to adjust their methods and expectations according to the children's levels of skill development.

Peers. Sarah believed that most children were more comfortable with developing a relationship with someone their own age. Children learn from each other by looking at what other children are doing and by imitating each other. Relationships with peers help bilingual children feel more comfortable in new situations. Sometimes there are language speakers in the class who can facilitate communication with bilingual students.

Parents. Parental cooperation with ECEs can facilitate children's adjustment to new situations and social skills development. For example, according to Sarah, when a task required a detailed explanation, and it was not easy for the ECE to explain it to a child who cannot understand English, they usually asked the parents to explain it to their child. Furthermore, when parents play an active role in preschool events, their children feel more secure.

What Impediments or Barriers Stood Out? This third theme focuses on the barriers or difficulties that exist in children's social skills development. One issue mentioned by both ECE participants was spending more time with bilingual children. Bilingual children might need additional help, such as directions, gestures, or visuals to help them say something. Another difficulty the ECEs noticed was the negative emotions that bilingual children experience, such as frustration. Mary believed children get frustrated if they cannot communicate with their peers. Hesitation can be another significant barrier to a bilingual child's communication. According to Mary, building strong friendships and connections with other children took longer for bilingual children because they were more hesitant to have conversations with others, since they do not have the same level of language skills. This hesitation can cause bilingual children to experience loneliness. Adding to this, according to Mary, bilingual children might feel upset or insecure, mainly when they are first introduced, as they may not know anyone and may be unable to communicate with others.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine social skills development in immigrant bilingual preschoolers. The analyzed data provided evidence that a significant factor in a child's social skills development is proficiency in the English language. Social skills development occurs in the context of relationships with others (Chen & Rubin, 2011; Halle et al., 2014), and language is a significant factor in creating relationships. Moreover, the feedback that native English speakers received from immigrant bilingual children influenced their willingness to communicate. When native English speakers tried to interact with bilingual children and did not see signs of feedback, they became reluctant to try again. According to findings from interview, this can cause loneliness and exclusion for bilingual children. This finding is consistent with Cervantes' (2002) findings. He argued that bilingualism is a challenge for social skills development, mainly when children's language is not fluent yet. Whereas the findings of current study and Cervantes study demonstrate that language limitations are a barrier in social skills development in bilingual children, the results of the study by Han and Huang (2010) revealed that dual-language children tend to develop a higher level of social skills and lower levels of problem behaviours compared to English-speaking monolinguals.

Besides language, the main barriers in the social skills development of immigrant bilingual children were negative feelings. When bilingual children cannot communicate with other people, they might experience frustration, hesitation, insecurity, upset, and loneliness. The current study supports Dawson and William's (2008) study, which indicated that bilingual children with limited language proficiency were more likely to experience negative emotions. These emotions also provoke more problem behaviours such as preferring to be alone. However, findings of a study by Vaughan van Hecke et al. (2007) concluded that language limitations do not play a substantial role in influencing problem behaviours at 30 months of age. It seems that part of the reason for the conflicting findings in these studies is due to the various methodologies used in these studies. Our study benefited from a case study, while Vaughan van Hecke et al. (2007) used a longitudinal methodology during infancy to toddlerhood.

The findings from our study indicate that ECEs, parents, and peers play a significant role in facilitating social skills development in bilingual children. This is in line with the findings of the study by Stuhlman and Pianta (2002), which found that the quality of emotional support and classroom organization provided by early childhood educators were related to the development of social skills in bilingual children. Chen and Rubin (2011) argued that relationships with others can facilitate children's social skills development. Halle et al. (2014) also concluded that the parental role is foundational to the establishment of bilingual children's social-emotional well-being. Moreover, a study by Fabes, Gaertner, & Popp (2006) indicated that a higher level of peer relationships predicts a higher level of social skills development. The findings of the current study support Vygotsky's (1980) socio-cultural theory of learning. Under Vygotsky's model, teachers, parents, and peers as members of a community work in parallel towards the common goal of developing children's skills. The findings of our study also showed that ECEs, peers, and parents can have a significant role in social skills development among bilingual preschoolers.

One component of starting relationships with bilingual children is paying attention to immigrant bilingual children's background and culture. As Cervantes (2002) argued, bilingualism is equivalent to biculturalism, and educators need to pay attention to the culture and background of bilingual students. For example, ECEs can use some international items in their classroom such as international books, music. Findings of a study by Stuhlman and Pianta (2002) support current study's findings as it showed that the using multicultural items in classroom organization and arrangement was negatively related to bilingual learners' problematic behaviours. Using gestures, directions, and learning some essential words from a child's first language are other possible methods that ECEs can adopt. Chang et al. (2007) stated that the use of the child's home language by ECEs in childcare appears to be a significant way to create a close relationship with bilingual children.

Conclusion

This study investigated the social skills development of immigrant bilingual preschoolers. The findings revealed that a crucial factor in the social skills development of bilingual children is their limitation in English language development. The most significant barriers and difficulties that bilingual children face in social skills development are the negative emotions they experience in their relationships with others, such as frustration and hesitation.

In terms of limitations, the study population is a small sample and cannot be a representation of the sample domain; however, further study is possible through replicating the methods implemented in other contexts. Furthermore, one of the data collection methods was interviews with ECEs, which could be considered a limitation of this study, as participants could have been uncomfortable with expressing negative opinions in a face-to-face manner. To mitigate this limitation, member checking occurred by sending the interview transcript to ECEs and asking them whether they wanted to add or omit any parts of the interviews.

Some suggestions for further research are recommended. There is a lack of attention given to social skills development by researchers compared to other aspects, such as cognitive development. Halle et al. (2014) suggested that the focus of studies on bilingual children has been on the development of their language and cognitive abilities rather than on the development of their skills, including their social-emotional skills. Furthermore, one group of participants that can have a significant role in bilingual children's social skills development is their parents. Future studies could examine how cooperation between parents and ECEs can facilitate immigrant bilingual children's social skills development. The findings of this study could provide some tentative recommendations on how educators can pay attention to the needs of this growing population when they are preparing a multicultural environment in their classrooms.

REFERENCES

Alanis, I. (2011). Learning from each other: Bilingual pairs in dual-language classrooms. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, *39*(1), 21-28.

Argyle, M. (2013). *Cooperation (psychology revivals): The basis of sociability*. London, UK: Routledge.

Ben-Itzchak, E., Nachshon, N., & Zachor, D. A. (2019). Having siblings is associated with better social functioning in Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *47*(5), 921–931.

Blair, C., McKinnon, R. D., & Family Life Project Investigators. (2016). Moderating effects of executive functions and the teacher–child relationship on the development of mathematics ability in kindergarten. *Learning and Instruction*, *41*, 85-93.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101.

Cervantes, C. A. (2002). Explanatory emotion talk in Mexican immigrant and Mexican American families. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *24*(2), 138-163.

Chang, F., Crawford, G., Early, D., Bryant, D., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., ... & Pianta, R. (2007). Spanish-speaking children's social and language development in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Early Education and Development*, *18*(2), 243-269.

Chen, X., & Rubin, K. H. (Eds.). (2011). *Socioemotional development in cultural context*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dawson, B. A., & Williams, S. A. (2008). The impact of language status as an acculturative stressor on internalizing and externalizing behaviors among Latino/a children: A longitudinal analysis from school entry through third grade. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *37*(4), 399-411.

Fabes, R. A., Gaertner, B. M., & Popp, T. K. (2006). Getting along with others: Social competence in early childhood. In K. McCartney & D. Phillips (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of early childhood development* (pp. 297–316). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Halle, T. G. Whittaker, J. V., Zepeda, M., Rothenberg, L., Anderson, R., Daneri, P., … Buysse, V. (2014). The social–emotional development of dual language learners: Looking back at existing research and moving forward with purpose. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *29*(4), 734–749.

Han, W. J., & Huang, C. C. (2010). The forgotten treasure: Bilingualism and Asian children's emotional and behavioral health. *American Journal of Public Health*, *100*(5), 831-838.

Hopp, H., Vogelbacher, M., Kieseier, T., & Thoma, D. (2019). Bilingual advantages in early foreign language learning: Effects of the minority and the majority language. *Learning and Instruction*, *61*, 99-110.

Kasture, P. B., & Bhalerao, P. D. (2014). Social intelligence of pupil teachers. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies, 2*(14), 1912-1923.

Illinois Learning Standards. (n.d.) *Kindergarten Social/Emotional Checklist*. Retrieved from http://www.roe40.com/uploads/1/4/9/8/14985484/ksocialemotional.pdf

LeBlanc, L. A., Raetz, P. B., Sellers, T. P., & Carr, J. E. (2016). A proposed model for selecting measurement procedures for the assessment and treatment of problem behavior. *Behavior analysis in practice*, *9*(1), 77-83.

Marinho-Casanova, M. L., & Leiner, M. (2017). Environmental influence on the development of social skills in children. *Extensio: Revista Eletrônica de Extensão*, *14*(26), 2-11.

Marmot, M. (2010). *Fair society, healthy lives: Strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010*. London: Institute of Health Equity.

McCollow, M. & Hoffman, H. (2019). Supporting social development in young children with disabilities: Building a practitioner's toolkit. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *47*(3), 309–320.

Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research* . Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mpella, M., Christina, E., & Eirini, K. (2019). The effects of a theatrical play programme on social skills development for young children with autism spectrum disorders. *International Journal of Special Education*, *33*(4), 828–845.

Punch, K. F., & Oancea, A. (2014). *Introduction to research methods in education*. London: Sage.

Ryan, V., & Edge, A. (2012). The role of play themes in non-directive play therapy. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *17*(3), 354-369.

Stuhlman, M. W., & Pianta, R. C. (2002). Teachers' narratives about their relationships with children: Associations with behavior in classrooms. *School Psychology Review*, *31*(2), 148-163.

Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early child development.* Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences.

Takanishi, R. (2004). Leveling the playing field: Supporting immigrant children from birth to eight. *The Future of Children, 14(2*), 61–79.

Karatas, Z., Sag, R., & Arslan, D. (2015). Development of social skill rating scale for primary school students-teacher form (SSRS-T) and analysis of its psychometric properties. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *197*, 1447-1453.

The Canadian Magazine of Immigration. (November 23, 2018). *Indian immigrants: The largest foreign-born group in Canada.*

Vaughan van Hecke, A., Mundy, P. C., Francoise, C., Block, J. J., Delgado, C.E. F., Parlade, M. V., … Pomares, Y. B. (2007). Infant joint attention, temperament, and social competence in preschool children. *Child Development*, *78*, 53–69.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1980). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tayebeh Sohrabi is a Ph.D. in Education student at Memorial University in St. John's, NL. She completed her second master's degree at Memorial. Previously, she was a vice principal and teacher in Iran where she conducted her first master's thesis on students' social skills development. Her research interests involve inclusion in elementary curriculum and social skills development in bilingual children.

Dr. Kimberly Maich is Professor in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University in St. John's, NL. As an Ontario Certified Teacher, Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (Doctoral), and Registered Psychologist (master's-level, provisional), she enjoys researching and teaching in various areas of special education, including ASD, behaviour, and assistive technology.

APPENDIX A

Observational Checklist

Skills	Indicators / Evidence	Anecdotal Note	Frequency
Problematic behavior	-Emotional expression -Interrupts conversations of other people. -Shows anxiety in a group of children. -Gets angry easily and rapidly. -Prefers to be alone.		
Emotional management	-Practices saying "no" to protect herself/himself from unsafe situations. -Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by peers. -Controls temper in conflict situations with other children. -Develops skills to resolve conflict situations. -Develops appropriate skills to handle bullies. -Identifies appropriate methods to resolve conflict. -Stays calm with other children -Asks questions about rules that may be unfair. -Gets along with peers who are different.		
Communication	-Communicates nonverbally with others (e.g., smile, wave, or other appropriate gestures). -Listens to other classmates when they are speaking. -Initiates conversations with other children. -Makes friends easily. -Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told. -Makes encouraging comments to others. -Says nice things about himself or herself when it is appropriate.		

Cooperation

-Pays attention to peers' ideas for group activities.

-Cooperates with peers without prompting.

-Volunteers for classroom tasks, for example, helping others, helping set up, cleaning up and passing out materials.

-Joins ongoing group activities without being told.

APPENDIX B

Early Childhood Educator Interview Questions

- How do you deal with a dual lingual kindergartener who has difficulties in communication in the classroom because of their language limitation?
- What have you done to facilitate communication with dual lingual kindergarteners?
- What are barriers in communication with dual lingual students?
- How do you work with students from diverse populations?
- How do you help dual lingual students to adjust themselves better in the classroom?
- How do you help dual lingual children socialize?
- Have you ever tried to use some resources related to the background of international students to engage them more in the class? Please explain.
- How do you individualize instruction for students whose English is not good enough?
- In what ways, both formal and informal, might you help a student with limited English fluency to be sure the student is truly learning social skills?
- What kinds of strategies do you use to enhance dual lingual students' social skills development?
- How do you think the race of dual lingual kindergarteners might affect their interaction with others?