BILINGUAL EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TEACHERS:

APPLYING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

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BILINGUAL EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION TEACHERS:

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study was exploratory in nature. The goals were to examine: (a) if and how bilingual early care and education (ECE) teachers perceived their personal second-language learning experiences to have informed their practices in the classroom, and (b) to explore the teachers' experiences working in classrooms with children who spoke multiple home languages. The following research questions were addressed: (1) What are bilingual ECE teachers' teaching practices with children who are dual language learners (DLL)? (2) In what ways do bilingual ECE teachers' second language learning experiences influence their teaching practices with DLL children? The nine female ECE teachers participating in this study were bi- or multilingual, had completed a college-level degree, and had at least 3 years of experience working in ECE. Data sources included a Participant Demographic Questionnaire, two observations, an interview, a reflection activity, and follow-up letters. Results identified the use of several best practices for working with DLLs, and classroom practice was found to be empathetic, inclusive, and encouraging of children to maintain their home language. Overarching findings showed the importance teachers placed on providing a seamless experience for DLL children, the need for additional training specific to teaching DLL children, and the importance of preparing DLL children for future success. Research, practice, and policy implications are: (a) draw on bilingual teachers and their personal experiences and practical knowledge, (b) implement policy changes at the state level that would create a new certification, and (c) address the content of higher education degrees and ECE training.

Keywords: bilingual teachers, early care and education, dual language learners, personal experiences, classroom practice

DEDICATION

A mis padres, Guadalupe y Carmen Almaraz, por todo su amor y apoyo.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"I want my gaw-gaw," Alby cried to me repeatedly, but I had no idea what his "gaw-gaw" was. Only 20 minutes into this new job, it had become painfully clear that my ability to speak Spanish was not going to do much good in a preschool where the second language was primarily Cantonese. An interaction like mine with Alby is what hundreds of early care and education (ECE) teachers experience—one day being able to communicate easily with all of the children and their families and on the next day, when there is a change in the child population, being able to communicate only with difficulty or hardly at all.

At the moment of Alby's plaintive request and my hampered response, my eyes were opened to how differing linguistic backgrounds affect classroom interactions, either facilitating or limiting the ECE teacher's ability to respond appropriately and sensitively to children and families. This experience underscored the inadequacy of common practices in the ECE field, which require little or no specific training focused on language at any level of preparation, let alone training and support for understanding second language acquisition and its implication for classroom practice. Since ECE teachers come to programs with different skills, experiences, and interests, as well as different linguistic backgrounds and competencies, it is irresponsible to assume that all will have the same professional development needs. Having worked as a teacher in an ECE

program where I did not speak the dominant language, I know how difficult it is to find

the professional support to apply what one knows about child development when faced

with such a circumstance.

California has over 2.5 million children between the ages of 0 to 5 (U.S. Bureau

of the Census, 2010) and two fifths (40%) of California's kindergarteners are English

language learners (ELLs) (Children Now, 2010). In fact, across the nation, ELL students

start kindergarten with over 400 different language backgrounds (Goldenberg, 2008),

with more than half of the pre-kindergarteners in some areas of the country coming from

homes where English is not spoken (Karoly, Ghosh-Dastidar, Zellman, Perlman, &

Fernyhough, 2008). California alone has 60 different languages spoken (California

Department of Education, 2013). Children at this young age are increasingly more than

just ELLs; they are also dual language learners (DLLs)[1], simultaneously learning their

home language and the English language (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & McLaughlin, 2008).

These demographics and current research support the view that providing ECE in

a language that children and their families can understand is important not only for the

purpose of teacher-child communication, but also for establishing a relationship that will

be the foundation to facilitate future academic success (Espinosa, 2013; Gonzalez-Mena,

2008; Nemeth, 2009, 2012). Yet when DLL children attend preschool, they often face

teachers who hold deep-rooted misconceptions about teaching English language learners

and about the children's ability to learn both languages simultaneously, and thus engage

in inappropriate classroom practices (Espinosa, 2013; Harper & de Jong, 2004). All

teachers, and especially those who work with DLL populations, should be trained to

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[1] For the purpose of this dissertation, I will use the designation DLL because the children being cared for by the study participants are preschool age and likely to be learning both languages simultaneously.

"understand basic constructs of bilingualism and second language development… the role of first language and culture in learning, and the demands that mainstream education places on culturally diverse students" (Clair & Adger, 1999, p. 3). In fact, there is very limited training in dual language learning and bilingualism available for those working directly with preschool age DLLs (Whitebook, Bellm, Lee, & Sakai, 2005).

Of particular interest for this study is a preschool teacher who is bilingual or multilingual and therefore has had the personal experience of learning more than one language. How do these teachers apply that experience in the classroom with DLL children who do not always speak a common language with the teacher? To date, a fair amount of research on teacher-child relationships has focused on the effects on academic outcomes. There is no research that explores how an ECE teacher's bilingual experience influences the teacher's classroom behavior, which ultimately may be an important issue for children's whole development, including social and emotional development as well as cognitive and academic behaviors. It is also possible that bilingual teachers' language experiences make no difference in their teaching practices or in their establishment and maintenance of relationships with DLL children, but we can only know for certain by focusing greater attention on this topic.

In the last two decades, many areas in the country have experienced an influx of immigrant children, who tend to be DLLs (Fry, 2008). As a result, the number of immigrant children in ECE program classrooms has also grown. Researchers feel that this is a prime opportunity for ECE teachers to expand their knowledge of cultures, traditions, and languages (Barnett, Yarosz, Jung, & Blanco, 2007; Gonzalez-Mena, & Stonehouse, 2008). Others express more concern about the large learning curve in

building this knowledge in the ECE teacher population, and fear that the needs of far too many DLL children and their families will continue to be poorly met (Facella, Rampino, & Shea, 2005; Keat, Strickland, & Marinak, 2009; Lin, 2005). For these reasons, this research would be of particular interest to those who are working with and for DLL preschool children. In addition, those who are interested in developing appropriate curricula for ECE teacher training and looking to strengthen their ECE workforce would also benefit from learning what bilingual teachers have to say about their practice with DLL children. Furthermore, research is needed specific to multilingual language development in the context of pre-kindergarten programs and how teachers' language ability influences their practices, and this study could be the starting point for conversations on this subject.

The purpose of this study is to address the following research questions:

1. What are bilingual ECE teachers' teaching practices with children who are DLL?

2. In what ways do bilingual ECE teachers' second language learning experiences influence their teaching practices with DLL children?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I reviewed several strands of research that had some bearing on the experience of DLL children in ECE classrooms, such as: (a) dual language development; (b) critical period for language acquisition, (c) the current knowledge of language and social-emotional development; (d) the role of culture in ECE settings; (e) factors in forming teacher-child relationships; and, (f) current classroom practices to address the experience of DLL children. These are discussed below.

Dual Language Development

Dual language development can occur in two different forms, successively or simultaneously. Successive development occurs when a child speaks and has a solid foundation of one language (L1, home language) for the first years of life, and is later exposed to a second language (L2), once he or she begins socializing in settings outside of the home such as preschool or elementary school (Genesee, 2010). ELLs are defined as "children attending school in the United States who come from a home where a language other than English is spoken" (California Department of Education, 2009, p. 125). Children experiencing simultaneous language development, often referred to as DLL, are immersed in multiple languages concurrently (Genesee, 2010). The distinction between these categorizations depends heavily on the age of the child when he or she starts learning the second language.

Critical Period for Language Acquisition

For most of the 20th century, the accepted hypothesis about a critical period for first language (L1) acquisition was that it occurred from infancy until puberty, after which learning a language become progressively more difficult with age (Lenneberg, 1967). Likewise, Lenneberg (1967) argued that second language acquisition after puberty is difficult.

Designating the critical period for second language acquisition is less straightforward, as various factors can affect the learner's experience (Hakuta, 2001). At an older age, children are likely to have a well-established home language and to use it as a scaffold for learning the second language. This distinction is often blurred at younger ages, when children do not necessarily have a solid foundation in a home language before or when they are learning the second. Although not currently the objective of the U.S. public-school system, for which English proficiency is the sole target, the ability to speak fluently in more than one language can be beneficial for the child's future success.

Current Knowledge of Language and Social-Emotional Development

Research that examines the link between language and social-emotional developmental processes has been done primarily, if not exclusively, on ELLs at later stages in life, and not during the preschool years when it is more likely that a child is a dual language learner (DLL). Because of the lack of research specific to DLLs and social-emotional development, this examination of the literature focuses on ELLs. Although these findings cannot be overtly generalized to DLLs, it is also recognized that in the progression of language development, DLL children may have many overlapping experiences with ELL children.

Social-emotional development of ELLs. Healthy social and emotional development in all children is vital to their future personal and academic success (Smith, 2008). It is important to note that there are no overwhelming differences in social-emotional development for ELLs as compared to monolingual children. For those learning more than one language, an additional component to positive social-emotional development is making sure that the children continue to feel connected to their home language and culture (Garcia, 1995). Wong Fillmore (1991) described the breakdown of oral communication between parents and children as a factor in the deterioration of family dynamics and expectations. Adolescents' ability to communicate with their parents has been found not only to improve their relationships with their parents but also to improve their self-esteem and mental health (Han & Huang, 2010). In younger children, better ability to communicate with parents has also been found to be cognitively advantageous in areas of reasoning and concept formation (Garcia, 1995).

An essential component of healthy development is becoming socially competent. Benard's (2004) definition for social competence involves being able to develop positive attachments and relationships. Espinosa (2010) stated that, "For young children who are ELLs, the relationship between their social-emotional development and personality characteristics and English acquisition is reciprocal" (p. 79). In other words, social competence and acquisition of a second language have mutual influence on each other. If children are not emotionally supported and have difficulty communicating with teachers and peers at an early age, they are more likely to have difficulties in their future social and cognitive development (Smith, 2008).

Challenges for ELLs. As mentioned earlier, ELL children typically experience their social-emotional development similarly to monolingual children, but there are several more components that ELL children might encounter that can affect their healthy development. When ELL children are not supported in dealing with these components, the children may find themselves tackling some personal challenges.

The child's acquisition of a second language can be stymied by a perceived loss of identity, both personal and cultural (Pappamihiel, 2002). As stated by Genesee, Paradis, and Crago (2004) "dual language children are particularly at risk for both cultural and linguistic identity displacement" (p. 33). Children at a young age often find that the skills they have learned through the cultural context of their home language do not apply to the second language and this can lead to much distress (Diaz & Klinger, 1991). In addition, a negative self-perception, including factors that Krashen (1981, p. 56) has termed "affective filters," can also have a strong effect on the process of learning English. These filters include motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, which when triggered due to negative experiences, complicate the process of mastering a second language. When the child's existing knowledge of when and how to speak, and to whom, vary from the home and school setting, these "affective filters" can quickly divert the child (Espinosa, 2006).

Anxiety has been found to be one of the foremost challenges for ELLs. Cognitive development is contingent on social interactions and when these interactions are hindered by anxiety, second language development is also obstructed (Pappamihiel, 2002). This is partially due to the fact that when children are anxious, they attend to their sense of anxiety instead of the task of learning the second language.

ELL children are more likely to display withdrawn behavior than monolingual children (Spomer & Cowen, 2001). When ELLs are experiencing difficulties learning a second language, they are also more prone to limiting their interactions with monolingual English speaking peers and teachers, and less often participate in classroom activities which would expose their lack of mastery of English (Pappamihiel, 2002). Those around them often mistakenly assume that these children are shy and overlook the fact that their social interactions with same language speaking peers are appropriate for their age. In reality they are withdrawing from any form of interaction that entails speaking English, and in turn are limiting their opportunities to practice speaking the language (Ash, 2009). This perpetuates a cycle: ELL children do not practice their English because they are withdrawing from interactions, and they are not interacting because they are afraid to practice their English.

Lastly, as in all children, outside stressors also create challenges for ELLs. Factors such as socioeconomic status, family structure, and physical health can create stress that affects cognitive and social development (Shonkoff & Philips, 2000). ELLs have unique stressors that are not typical for their monolingual peers, such as stress related to acculturation and discrimination (Araujo Dawson & Williams, 2008). The pressure to acculturate to a form of socializing that often does not fully mesh with the home language and culture can be very daunting to a child who is both sorting out the logistics of this out-of-home culture and also learning a second language. It is also very likely that ELL children will encounter some discrimination from their peers due to their inability to communicate fully in English, and because DLL children's communication styles differ from what their peers consider the norm (Araujo Dawson & Williams, 2008).

The Role of Culture in ECE Settings

Cultural experience provides us with a subconscious, narrow lens through which we view and interpret everything: from how we eat meals to appropriate styles of communicating and acceptable forms of interpersonal contact. Appropriate forms of communication vary between and within cultures. Language, also strongly woven into our core sense of self, is a major vehicle for transmitting culture and is used to determine how to associate with others and interact in social settings (Gilliard, Moore, & Lemieux, 2007).

As adults, we have established our own definitions of the "correct" way to relate to others, but children are in the process of sorting out and defining what is appropriate, acceptable, and valued. These tasks are more challenging when there is a distinction between what is valued at home and what is valued in other settings, including the preschool classroom. Children may be confused when their teachers and parents have culturally different and conflicting communicative styles that carry very different messages about what is acceptable behavior at home and at school.

Facilitating children's identity development in culturally pluralistic settings requires preschool teachers to be vigilant about honoring each child's home culture (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). Even while socializing the child into the culture of the classroom, it is of paramount importance that preschool teachers not disregard or belittle the significance of a child's home culture. Part of the teachers' responsibility is to make sure children are allowed to develop their cultural pluralism, meaning they are allowed to maintain their unique identity while being part of a larger social structure (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008).

A child's healthy development of cultural pluralism is facilitated by a strong relationship with all adults in their lives, including their teachers. A significant indicator of the strength of the relationship is the attachment that the child has to his or her teacher. It is possible that attachment may be related to cultural differences occurring when a child and teacher speak different languages. Class or ethnic differences may also contribute to divergent cultural expectations in many situations. However, the degree of difference may be slight, and it should not be assumed that the development of attachment is a simple process that results from having similar backgrounds. A shared language is not a guarantee of alignment of cultural expectations. Findings on the impact of a similar or divergent cultural and linguistic background between the child and preschool teacher are ambiguous, making it inappropriate to assume that just because the child and teacher share the same language, culture, and ethnic background means that they have the same degree of association to that particular group (Lynch & Hanson, 2004). The research spans a variety of conclusions: Saft and Pianta (2001) found that a match in background was negatively associated with conflictual behavior, but Burchinal and Cryer (2003) found no differences in cognitive and social outcomes among children whether or not teachers and children shared the same ethnic background. More recently, Ewing and Taylor (2009) found no difference in teacher-child relationships regardless of whether or not the two shared the same ethnic background.

Despite this lack of consensus in the current literature, there is growing professional and community pressure for teachers, particularly those who are monolingual English speaking, to build stronger skills that will enable them to communicate with all the children in their classroom (Gillanders, 2007). Many argue that

teachers should be of the same linguistic backgrounds as the children in their classrooms, although this is an unrealistic expectation considering the vast array of home languages spoken by children entering kindergarten (California Department of Education, 2013; Goldenberg, 2008). However, it is not out of the realm of possibility to expect all teachers to know how to connect to the children in their classrooms—whatever their linguistic, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds—in a respectable and appropriate way. Consequently, more research is required to determine the ways in which language, ethnicity, and culture relate to the development of teacher-student relationships and, ultimately, children's development into healthy, productive individuals.

Embracing differences. Writing about how teachers establish meaningful relationships with children of backgrounds that are different from their own, Gay and Howard (2000) argued that the most important barrier that most teachers face is not a language or cultural barrier but instead the fear of bringing these differences to the forefront. For many teachers the simplest way to address the issue of caring for children who are culturally or linguistically different is to treat them all the same, as individual members of this larger group of children who are all equal in their classroom (Kurban & Tobin, 2009; Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull, & Garcia, 2009). While this may appear egalitarian in theory, this approach neglects a powerful underlying dynamic experienced by children who do not share the teacher's culture, namely that the children's own cultural and linguistic identity is overpowered by the dominant language and culture in the classroom and may be diminished or extinguished (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008; Kohnert, Yim, Nett, Kan, & Duran, 2005; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Combining this experience of loss with the "feelings of mourning, nostalgia, hopefulness, disappointment,

accomplishment, bitterness and anger which [immigrant] parents, whether they mean to

or not, transmit to children and which children bring with them to school" (Kurban &

Tobin, 2009, p. 33) leads to a potentially toxic mix for the child who is in the process of

defining what is appropriate, acceptable, and valued. As Kurban and Tobin (2009)

pointed out, "immigrant children are more aware than we tend to give them credit for of

the struggles their cultural group is facing in the larger society" (p. 32).

Thus, to ensure that cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences between the teacher

and child are not an obstacle to establishing the attachment necessary for the child's

healthy development, teachers must have a disposition toward and be taught an

assortment of strategies to value each child and his or her culture. For example,

Gillanders (2007) found that when the non-English language became part of the everyday

routine in the classroom, the English speaking children began to desire the skill to learn

and speak the non-English language. In this way prestige and empowerment were

afforded the children who already spoke the language, who otherwise might have

experienced their language as lower-status. Garcia (1999) stated that it is possible for

ELL children to learn a second language as long as the first is used as a scaffold. The

second language can be promoted as long as it is not at the expense of the home

language. Children have the cognitive ability to accomplish this, but a sense of pride in

the use of their home language is essential for promoting their self-esteem. When a

child's culture and language are integrated into the classroom environment whenever

possible, the child receives the necessary support to thrive (Burchinal & Cryer, 2003).

Shifting beliefs. Developing the ability and willingness to embrace children's

cultural beliefs and expectations is not an easy task because it forces the teacher to put

aside his or her own beliefs (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008; Lynch & Hanson, 2004). This becomes a bigger challenge when these new approaches contradict what the teacher has been taught are developmentally appropriate teaching practices (Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009). Part of the problem is that these practices are based on years of research on children who are culturally, linguistically, and ethnically different than the children who are now populating the preschool classroom. Only relatively recently has cultural sensitivity in ECE been considered in the definition of program quality and efficiency. For example, although the prevalent Environmental Rating Scale (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998) has become one of the primary tools used to measure quality in early care and education programs, it disregards issues of linguistic match; a program could receive an excellent-quality rating in settings where there are no adults who can communicate with children in their home language (Harms et al., 1998; Sakai, Whitebook, Wishard, & Howes, 2003).

Given the relatively recent shift in values about cultural sensitivity in the early childhood field, it is unfair to hold teachers entirely at fault for following these practices that oppose or dismiss the cultural beliefs of the children, particularly if teachers were trained with the old assumptions about culture and language. According to a definition given by the Bureau of Health Professions (n.d.), in a culturally sensitive program, both the teaching staff and program philosophy offer the flexibility to adjust perceptions, behaviors, and practices effectively to meet the needs of ethnically or racially diverse children and families. Optimal care includes an understanding of the cultural and belief systems of the child, parent, and communities that may assist in effective delivery of care (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

The early care and education field has tended to consider a training session or two on multiculturalism in the classroom (or even dual language learning) as sufficient for giving teachers the skills to address diverse populations. However, such limited training should only be viewed as a foundation of a developmental process of acknowledging the multiple layers of cultural complexities that each child carries. The teacher's willingness to be self-reflective and self-critical is an enormous leap; it meets a necessary precondition for acknowledging classroom imbalances of power between those of the dominant culture and language and the children who are not of that group, for letting go of the false sense of security that stereotypes bring, and for being able to offer mutual respect to each child. As Gonzalez-Mena (2008) eloquently stated, "If you continue to follow just your own ideas about what's good and right for children and their families, even if those ideas are a result of your training, you may be doing a disservice to children whose parents disagree with you" (p. 6).

As mentioned before, a significant step in this process is refusing to see all children as "the same" because doing so devalues their differences, something of which children are acutely aware. The natural development of the teacher-child relationship is disrupted when these differences are not acknowledged and respected. Thus this recognition is a pivotal factor in how the child's relationship with the teacher progresses.

How then do we address these cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences in the preschool classroom in a way that will strengthen the relationship between the teacher and the children who have different backgrounds? First we must focus on broader aspects of inclusion, not just language (Gillanders, 2007). Gay (2002) offered valuable suggestions by exploring which differences have direct implications for teaching and are

thus the most important to deliberately attend to. She prioritizes three different areas for consideration: (a) whether the ethnic group values an interdependent or autonomous approach to problem-solving; (b) variations in beliefs about appropriate child-to-adult interactions; and (c) variations in approach on gender-role socialization. Understanding these basic but fundamental perspectives can mean the difference between a teacher's always believing that the parent's approach is wrong, versus recognizing that other beliefs are simply different than their own and accepting these differences in that context (Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009).

Given that it has become commonplace to have numerous cultures, languages, and ethnicities represented in one classroom, it is easy to see how cultural and linguistic differences are significant in early care and education settings and how complex it is to address them. If culture and language are so fundamental to sense of self, and if social-emotional development is important to cognitive development and academic success, then teacher preparation requires far more emphasis and sophisticated in-depth focus than a workshop can offer. It also requires that the adults involved make a conscious personal shift in beliefs in order to prioritize the needs of the child even if that means establishing a new definition for what constitutes appropriate practice.

Factors in Forming Teacher-Child Relationships

Most of the existing research on ELLs and DLLs and their relationships with teachers is based on studies conducted in kindergarten and elementary school (Birch & Ladd, 1997, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). These children are older than those in ECE programs and have different classroom experiences. Yet since a large part of the ECE classroom's pedagogy typically emphasizes

socialization, the importance and success of teacher-child relationships may be pivotal in terms of the child's later success in classroom settings.

Relationship dynamics. Research about negative teacher-child dynamics provides some insight into how facing communication challenges (due to a lack of a common language) may place ELL children at greater risk than their counterparts who speak the same language as their teachers. According to Birch and Ladd (1997), teachers define children's negative attitude by the level of disagreement they experience with particular children; teachers who rate their relationships with children in their classrooms as conflictual are more inclined to report these children as having a negative school attitude. This raises the question as to whether ELL children are less likely to develop positive relationships with their teachers because of perceived conflicts, which may in fact not be conflicts at all but may reflect lack of successful communication in the teacher-child dyad because of language barriers.

Other child behaviors that affect the teacher-child relationship are the level and quality of engagement. Children who are perceived as antisocial are more likely to have had a larger number of unfavorable interactions with teachers and peers (Birch & Ladd, 1998). In addition, children who are rated as less shy and as having lower language abilities are also found to be more conflictual (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). This is troubling in a multi-language setting since ELL children are more likely to be perceived as having lower language abilities; indeed, there is a long history of miscategorizing children whose home language is not English as developmentally delayed. This possible association of unfavorable or disengaged behavior with conflictual relationships is troublesome when considering that DLL children's behavior

might be a result of frustration due to not being able to fully communicate with their

teachers.

Overall, research tends to show that children with positive or close relationships

with their teachers adjust better to elementary classroom settings, while children with

more negative or poor relationships find adjustment more challenging (Birch & Ladd,

1997, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In addition, Howes, Phillipsen, and Peisner-

Feinberg (2000) found that children who were perceived as having problem behaviors in

ECE settings were more likely to have that perception follow them into kindergarten and

elementary settings. Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, and Essex (2005) also found that

behavioral problems in young children tended to grow with each passing year.

The absence of a common language between child and teacher in the classroom

creates greater potential for incidents of misunderstanding between the child and the

teacher, and perhaps even more negative interactions with a child's peers if the child's

level of frustration is high. This can, in turn, be used to label the child as poorly adjusted

or as having relationships fraught with disagreement. Thus, an important area for further

research involves the observed dynamics in teacher-child dyads in which there is no

common language.

There is a distinction to be made between cultural differences between children

and their teachers and linguistic differences. As mentioned earlier, Ewing and Taylor

(2009) found no difference in the teacher-child relationship regardless of whether the two

shared the same ethnic background, meaning that it is not necessary to share ethnic

backgrounds in order to form a strong connection. What this boils down to is that a high

quality program will integrate the child's culture into the classroom environment and in

that way allow the child to flourish (Burchinal & Cryer, 2003). This is because the teacher and program are taking into consideration what is "high quality" for this child. Since children come with their own familial and cultural experiences and expectations of what are appropriate relationships, they will interpret their teachers' behavior towards them accordingly. Teachers need to make a conscious effort to fold these values into the values of the classroom and ensure children are receiving appropriate responses to their needs.

As stated earlier, another promising outcome from Burchinal and Cryer's (2003) research was that there was no difference in the child's cognitive and social outcomes even when the teacher and child did not share the same ethnic background. This might suggest that as long as the teacher-child relationship is positive, then child outcomes will be favorable. The only caveat is that often, in order for teachers really to embrace the values of all of the children in the classroom, they must become aware of their own biases towards these values. For middle-class White teachers specifically, their emphasis on individuality and autonomy can clash with the more collectivist home values of children from different backgrounds (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Birch & Ladd, 1997). When it comes to language, there is still much more to learn about how teachers can create positive relationships and experiences for children with whom they do not share a language.

Teacher-child relationship and academic outcomes. In addition to relationship dynamics, there is a large body of work that concentrates on the impact of the teacher-child relationship on the child's future academic outcomes. Burchinal et al. (2008) found that:

Children's academic gains were related to the extent to which [pre-kindergarten]

teachers interacted positively with students….Children appeared to learn more

and sustain their achievements [in kindergarten] when PK [pre-kindergarten]

teachers encouraged children to communicate and use language to develop

reasoning skills, interacted frequently with children, provided clear and positive

discipline and supervision, developed concepts coherently, and provided feedback

clearly and positively. (p. 150)

Likewise, Baker (2006) found that a positive teacher-child relationship was

associated with positive adaptation to the elementary school years. "The teacher-child

relationship holds promise as a developmental context that can provide nurturance and

coherence for children as they navigate the social world of school" (p. 227).

It is evident that the teacher-child relationship in the preschool classroom sets the

foundation for the child's future academic success (Baker, 2006; Howes et al., 2000).

Garner and Waajid (2008) found that children with a positive relationship with their

teachers were more likely to be perceived as competent and were more apt to overcome

academic difficulties.

In contrast, Jung et al. (2009) found that a conflictual teacher-child relationship

was related to the child's English oral-language competency. The authors concluded that

a combination of relationship dynamics with a difference in language spoken by the

children and in the classroom might have led to teachers' inadvertently misinterpreting

children's level of competency. Similarly, children with academic problems are less

likely to have close teacher-child relationships (Baker, 2006). In my research, I found

that children in classrooms without a linguistic match between the child and teachers

were more likely to interact verbally with other children and less likely to interact

verbally with their teachers than children in classrooms where all the children could

speak to at least one of the teachers (Almaraz, 2007). It is quite possible that language

barriers inhibit the development of close teacher-child relationships, which in turn

influences academic performance and could contribute to the achievement gap identified

among children with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is important to

ferret out how much this dynamic is a function of teachers misclassifying ELL children

as academically challenged due to limited communication skills and/or due to teachers'

lack of knowledge, and perhaps motivation, about how to navigate the challenges of

relationships with children with whom they do not share a common language.

Current Classroom Practice to Address the Experience of DLL Children

There is very limited training available for those working directly with preschool

age ELLs. Yet for the first time in U.S. history, the number of preschool age children

being cared for outside of the home outnumbers those who are cared for in the home

(Espinosa, 2010), heightening the need to delve deeper into the workings of out-of-home

care, specifically in ECE classrooms.

At first look, ECE classrooms would appear to be comprised of the same

components as any elementary school classroom: a teacher, a group of children, and an

environment that allows for stimulated development and academic growth. But a closer

look reveals major differences between classrooms for younger and older children. The

foundations of children's future social and academic success are cultivated in these early

years. Specifically language, cognitive, and emotional development are occurring

simultaneously in this phase of the child's life (Trawick-Smith, 2013). These multiple

and interrelated processes, as well as the importance of children's attachment to their

caregivers, necessitates a nurturing setting with key features of a home environment

rather than an elementary school classroom. Yet as with any educational setting, ECE

classrooms are expected to meet the diverse needs of all children.

  The current state of teacher training to work with ELL children. Rothstein-

Fisch et al. (2009) reported that teachers often felt overwhelmed by the daunting task of

learning about all cultures, and instead opted just to treat all children as individuals.

While at face value this might seem a reasonable strategy, in a large number of immigrant

communities an individualistic approach is contrary to their collectivist orientation and

therefore leads to a classroom climate that impedes rather than supports learning in some

children. In fact, the instructional climate in the classroom has been found to be pivotal

in engaging children in active communication. Unfortunately, Howes et al. (2008) found

that positive teacher-child relationships were not the norm, which was detrimental to all

children, but more serious for children who are ELL and/or low income.

  Beyazkurk and Kesner (2005) found that those developing teacher training

programs needed first to understand cultural variations in childcare practices. This would

facilitate the incorporation of the child's cultural needs as well as help to mold the

teacher-child relationship style that would best suit the dyad. Similarly, Gillanders

(2007) mentioned the importance of teachers learning to observe their classrooms and

adjust their practices and environments to assist with, and make accessible, the transition

from home to school of children who do not speak the dominant language.

  Less than one third (29%) of California's community colleges have an entire ECE

course in working with and/or teaching ELLs (Whitebook et al., 2005). Not surprisingly,

according to the *California Early Care and Education Workforce Study* (Whitebook et al., 2006), the vast majority of center-based teachers working in licensed settings have not participated in credit-bearing or non-credit-bearing training focused on dual language learning.

Across the nation, figures for early care and education teacher preparation programs are more dismal with only 13% of Associate's-degree programs and 15% of Bachelor's- degree programs requiring a full course in working with bilingual children (Maxwell, Lim, & Early, 2006). According to Lim, Maxwell, Able-Boone, and Zimmer (2009), these teacher-preparation programs that provide diversity coursework are more likely to be concentrated at or near communities where there is more linguistic, ethnic, and racial diversity. The training tends to focus only on surface cultural elements such as food, holidays, and historical figures, and is limited in including beliefs and values that highly affect appropriate practices with children (Johnson, 2002; Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009). This raises the question of limited planning for future child populations in areas of the country which still have low numbers of ELL children. The ECE field is operating in a reactive mode instead of taking a proactive approach, even though the experience of the last decade has made abundantly clear that immigrant populations are now ubiquitous, not just concentrated in select areas of the country.

Current classroom practices to address the needs of ELL children. To provide quality early care and education services, it is increasingly recognized that it is essential to have professional development for teachers and providers that is targeted to understanding dual language development in children and developing strategies to make classrooms responsive to the needs of children who are learning English as a second

language. A growing body of research seeks better to understand not only current but also best or most promising practices. Buysse, Castro, and Peisner-Feinberg (2009) looked at the effects of a professional development program, *Nuestros Niños*, designed to promote language and literacy skills in all children in general, and ELL Latino children specifically. The researchers found that the teachers who received the training were more likely to set up their classroom environment and implement activities in ways that were more supportive for the ELL children. However, just focusing on language and literacy may not be sufficient. Baker (2006) found that interventions focused on improving teacher-child relationships are only effective when they are part of a comprehensive approach. This suggests that it is not enough just to change the classroom environment to be more inclusive, but teachers must reexamine their pedagogical philosophy and approach to relationship-building as well.

Effective professional development programs and interventions are needed throughout the country to assist teachers whose classrooms include those speaking multiple languages and those of various cultures. Given that it will take time to make such training more widely available, it is important to look to existing research to inform how to improve teacher-child relationships. Gillanders (2007) found that it was possible to develop positive teacher-child relationships when the teacher was responsive to the child, offered individualized attention, and was consistent with his or her routine and responses. This consistency and support is essential to all children, but even more so for ELL children because that establishes some predictability, which in turn encourages the children to interact with and feel part of the classroom. These children may also feel more comfortable using the teacher as a resource (Birch & Ladd, 1997).

Providing different outlets for children to express themselves in ways other than orally might also prove to be a viable solution to developing a strong teacher-child relationship. Keat et al. (2009) provided preschool immigrant children with disposable cameras and the instruction to take pictures of what was important to them. The teachers found this to be an extremely rich method to find out what the child valued and also to clarify the best strategies for enhancing the child's communicative abilities.

Similarly, Harrison, Clarke, and Ungerer (2007) asked children to draw their relationships with their teachers, and they found that the drawings correlated with the teachers' reports of the relationships, whether positive or negative. Since misinterpretations can take place when there is no cultural or linguistic match between the teacher and child, this approach can be very useful because the child's drawing might bring to light something negative that teachers are unaware that they are doing.

Limitations with early care and education teacher preparation. Very few states require early care and education educators to complete more than basic training in child development (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). In particular, California requires one course for a Child Development teacher-level permit, and this only applies to teachers in state-funded preschools (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, n.d.). After the teacher obtains the permit, only professional growth hours are needed to renew it every 5 years, and there is nothing specifying that these hours must be on current developmental issues. This is not to say that teachers do not seek opportunities to enhance their education. In fact, many in the early care and education workforce have more training and education than is required of them and are pursuing higher education for their own professional development (Whitebook et al., 2006, 2008).

Yet, it is important to note that this additional training and education is sought out but not necessarily required to continue working in the ECE field, nor is it rewarded with any additional compensation.

Another issue ECE educators face is significant limitations in their training to work with DLL children who are learning two languages simultaneously (Chang, 2006). In K-12 programs, teachers receive specialized training and certification in working with ELL and DLL students, and must have the right credentials before ever stepping into a classroom. In contrast, there is very limited training available for those working directly with DLL and ELL preschool children (Whitebook et al., 2005).

Regardless of the ages of the children they teach, many educators also lack preparation in current knowledge of the developmental sciences, i.e., "science of child and adolescent development as well as cognitive science and neuroscience" (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010, p. 1). This is a twofold concern: ECE educators deal with the multi-faceted rapid development of children at preschool age, and do so with very limited incentives to continue formal education.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education ([NCATE], 2010) recently published policy recommendations for preparing educators to improve student achievement by increasing the teacher's knowledge of the developmental sciences. These recommendations are relevant to educators of all ages, but are particularly applicable to those in the preschool classroom because of the magnitude of developmental growth that occurs during those first years of life. NCATE identified principles in the social-emotional domain that are appropriate to the inner workings of an ECE classroom: (a) knowing the child in a cultural, developmental, and individual

context; (b) acknowledging that children are influenced by their environment; and (c) recognizing that emotions and learning are strongly connected. Examining these principles in the ECE classroom sheds light on similarities and differences between teaching younger and older children.

Knowing the child in context. A teacher should first and foremost become familiar and comfortable with children in the context not only of the classroom and their peers but also in the context of their families, their communities, and their cultures. In the preschool years it is essential to get to know the family on their terms because in order to understand the child it is crucial to understand the family. This includes learning about variations in child rearing practices and forms of communicating (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005) which can often be outside the limits of the teacher's comfort zone. This process facilitates understanding that parents are not wrong in their ways of educating and socializing their children; they just have a different approach than that of the teacher (Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009).

Because language development is heightened at this age, it is also essential to know children in the context of their linguistic growth. This includes understanding the basic concepts of the neurological differences between monolingual and bilingual language acquisition, as well as the role and importance of code-switching in the child's daily life both in and outside the classroom (du Plessis & Louw, 2008). Equally important is knowing that what may appear as a delay in language development is more likely to be a result of DLL children's cognitively negotiating which of their two languages is most appropriate to use for the particular situation (du Plessis & Louw,

2008). The child's experiences cannot be viewed as isolated incidents inside the ECE

classroom, but are part of a larger collection of experiences that make up the whole child.

     Acknowledge the influence of the environment. Every child arrives to the ECE

classroom with his or her own home and communal cultures, which can often both

enhance and obstruct growth. Similar to knowing children in context, acknowledging the

influence of children's environment is vital if the ECE teacher is to understand the lens

that children use to view the world around them. Whether children are surrounded by an

individualist or collectivist culture outside the classroom setting will deeply affect their

abilities to assimilate to the culture and routines of the ECE classroom. It is the

responsibility of the ECE teacher not only to become familiar with the approach but also

to incorporate it into the classroom. Children need to learn what works for them in the

broader context of the classroom and the teacher must facilitate this learning process.

Children's environmental contexts can obstruct their development when there is an

impenetrable difference between their experience with the outside world and with the

classroom. It is the teacher's responsibility to bridge these differences and make sure

children are receiving the support needed to establish a solid foundation for what is

appropriate for them. At a later age, children can, and inevitably will, learn different

styles more independently, but for the first few years of life, when all the foundational

work is being established, it is critical to have the teacher's support in this process.

     Recognizing the link between emotions and learning. Research has repeatedly

demonstrated that children who feel comfortable and have established good relationships

with their teachers also perform better academically and are more apt to overcome

academic challenges (Burchinal et al., 2008; Garner & Waajid, 2008; Pianta & Hamre,

2009). When there is a positive relationship with the teacher, children are more often perceived as competent. Thus, it is necessary for preschool children to feel emotionally comfortable if they are to absorb the knowledge and opportunities the teacher provides.

This can be a delicate issue when the child speaks a language different than that of the teacher. It is quite possible that language barriers inhibit the development of close teacher-child relationships, resulting in emotional unease which can in turn influence cognitive development and academic performance. This raises the question as to whether DLL children are less likely to develop positive relationships with their teachers because of perceived conflicts, which may in fact not be conflicts at all but may reflect lack of successful communication in the teacher-child dyad because of language barriers (Birch & Ladd, 1997).

Professional development and preparation for all preschool teachers must incorporate the three NCATE (2010) social-emotional principles if teachers are to create an environment that emulates that of the child's home and create the comfortable setting that is essential for the child to be prepared for the future. It is possible to develop positive experiences in all aspects of the ECE classroom when the teacher is responsive to the child, offers individualized attention, and is consistent with his or her routines (Gillanders, 2007). This is true for teaching regardless of the age of the child. The developmental principles that NCATE presents hold true for babies, preschoolers, K-12 students, and adults to some extent. Yet, the educational community and larger culture do not seem to recognize that educating young children is similar to educating K-12 children; there is a deeply engrained misunderstanding of the "care" aspect in early care and education. In the eyes of the larger society, the "care," which unquestionably is a

very important component of the education of young children, leads to devaluing the way

the ECE classroom and teachers prepare the child for future social and academic success.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study was to explore whether preschool teachers who are bilingual apply their personal language experiences in the classroom with DLL children who do not always speak a common language with the teacher, and also to investigate these teachers' teaching practices with this population. In order to tackle these questions, different factors had to be taken into account. First and foremost was teachers' personal experience with language learning and, to a certain extent, their knowledge relating to dual language learners. This encompassed teachers' practice in the ECE classroom and with children in their care, as well as their personal familiarity with the experience and their professional knowledge. Second, it was important to ask about the context in which the exchanges were taking place. A classroom setting creates a different dynamic for DLL children to experience interactions with teachers and peers than a home or community setting does. Likewise, there are a plethora of social-emotional factors that can facilitate or obstruct the establishment and maintenance of relationships. Last was ECE teachers' willingness and ability to reflect on not only their practice but also on the dynamics of their interactions with children and how language played a role in both of these.

With knowledge of everything that might affect their practice, how were ECE teachers expected to put it all in a context that would inform their personal theory of how

to conduct themselves in the ECE classroom with DLL children? This study explored

how these factors intersect to frame ECE teachers' practice by looking at how teachers'

personal language learning experience informs their interactions and practice in the

classroom with DLLs. Specifically, the framework was expected to allow for an

examination of whether bilingual teachers' personal language learning experience

informed their understanding of DLL children in their care. It was presumed that

teachers would be able to scaffold their reflections on their classroom practice from both

a personal and a professional perspective. An illustration of this framework follows

(Figure 1).

Bilingual teacher's experience

Personal experience with language learning

Professional knowledge of DLL development

Bilingual teacher's practice

Teaching **practice**

Reflection on practice with DLLs

Interactions with DLL preschoolers in their care
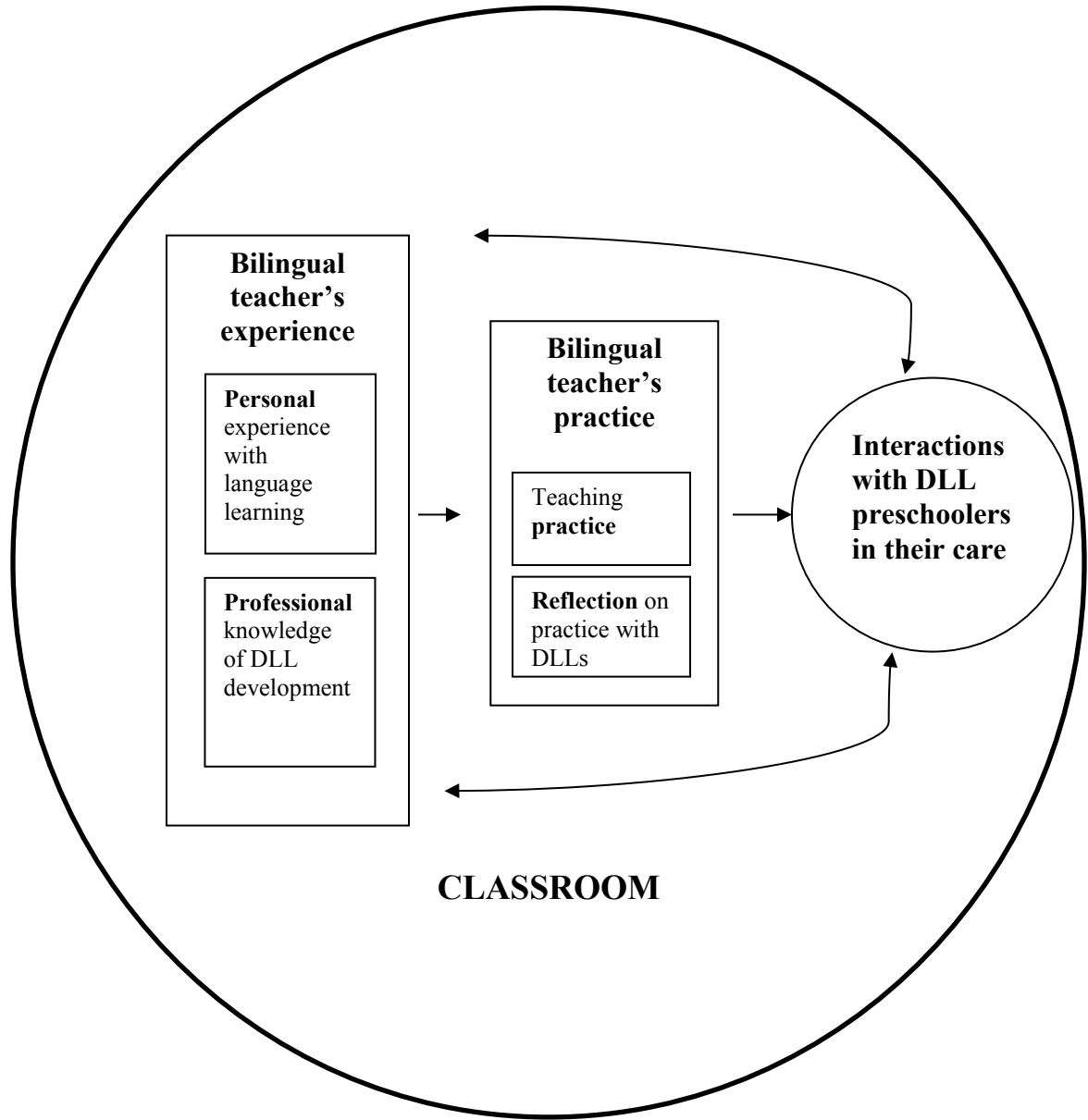
CLASSROOM

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for How Teachers Who Are Bilingual Apply Their

Language Learning Experience to Their Classroom Practices

The key components of this conceptual framework are the bilingual teacher's personal and professional experiences with language learning, and the reciprocal way the teacher's experience triggers interactions with the DLL preschooler's experience and vice-versa. The classroom context provides the platform for bilingual teachers' experiences to inform their teaching practices and their work with children who are DLL. All this continues to feed teachers' approaches to interactions that help shape the DLL preschooler's language learning experience.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was exploratory in nature (Maxwell, 2012). The primary

goal was to examine if and how ECE teachers who were bilingual perceived their

personal second language learning experiences to have informed their practices in the

classroom. A secondary goal for this study was to explore the teachers' experiences

working in classrooms with children who spoke multiple home languages. I was

interested in how bilingual ECE teachers' bilingualism and their experience learning a

second language affected their interactions with dual language children.

Research Questions

The study was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What are bilingual ECE teachers' teaching practices with children who are dual-
   language learners (DLLs)?

2. In what way do bilingual ECE teachers' second language learning experiences
   influence their teaching practices with DLL children?

As is typical in qualitative research, the research questions evolved as the process

of data collection and analysis got underway (Maxwell, 2012). I started with wide-

ranging questions that made it more difficult to delineate my population of interest and

the specific practices that would inform my research. Once the questions were clearly

defined, so was the focus of the study and the best approach towards data collection.

Recruitment

The sample for this study was drawn from teachers who worked in licensed ECE center-based settings in a large urban county in the western United States. In August 2011, I sent an email message describing the purpose of the study to 51 ECE program directors and colleagues who worked closely with program directors. The message requested suggestions of ECE programs that employed teachers who were bilingual who taught dual language preschool age children. I received suggestions for 15 programs and contacted the directors via email explaining the purpose of the study; eight directors replied stating that they had teachers in their programs that met the requirements.

Directors were asked to prescreen potential teacher participants based on the following criteria: (1) self-identified bilingual or multilingual in English and another language, with English not being their first language, (2) completed a college-level degree in ECE or related field, and (3) at least three-years' experience working in early care and education settings. The reason for the last two criteria was to ensure that participants had both academic knowledge and hands-on experience in the ECE field. Three directors employed teachers in their ECE programs that met all of the criteria.

In early September, I met with all three directors to answer any questions they had about the study or data-collection procedures. During that meeting, we discussed the languages spoken by teachers and children in each classroom. The directors also gave me a brief description of their programs, the programs' approach to teaching DLLs, and what training, if any, their staff had for working with this population.

Once a possible participant was identified by the director, the teacher was provided with a one-page description of the study (Appendix A). Teachers were asked to

notify the director if they were interested in talking to me about the study. Once teachers

expressed interest, I visited them in their classroom and answered any questions they had

about the study. Each potential participant was given a consent form (Appendix B) and

was asked to notify their directors if they continued to be interested in participating.

Directors were then asked to notify me if anyone in their programs had expressed

interest. Thirteen teachers were initially identified as potential participants.

Eleven teachers from four licensed ECE center-based settings agreed to

participate. Of the 11 teachers interviewed, one did not meet the educational or tenure

criterion at the time of data collection and a second teacher had learned English as his

first language. Both of these teachers were subsequently excluded from the data analysis.

Two of the sites were bilingual English/Spanish programs. The remaining two

sites were not bilingual-by-design, which was more representative of the typical ECE

program.

Data Sources

Data collection entailed five data sources. These were administered in the

following sequence: the Participant Demographic Questionnaire, two observations of the

teacher in the classroom, one interview, a reflection activity on a common scenario, and

follow-up letters sent to directors and participants asking clarifying questions.

Participant Demographic Questionnaire. Each teacher participant completed

the Participant Demographic Questionnaire on the day of the first observation (Appendix

C). The questionnaire was used to collect general information about the participant's

workplace and children in his or her care. In addition, the instrument asked about

participants' ethnicity, first language, additional language(s) spoken fluently, when they

learned their additional language(s), and highest level of education. The responses were verified during the interview and were used to expand on the interview questions.

Observations. Each participant was observed for approximately 1.5 hours on two separate mornings, totaling 3 hours of observation per participant. The purpose for the observations was twofold. The first was to record the participant's social interactions and activities with DLL children in their classrooms and quantify what was observed using the principles identified by Nemeth (2009, 2012) as best practices for working with DLLs. The second purpose of the observations was to attempt to gather real-life examples of events or interactions that could be used during the reflection-activity portion of the interview, described below.

Field notes were taken that consisted of running records of teachers' behavior and social interactions with the children, with special attention given to activities where language differences between the teacher and children might come into play. To orient observations, I used Nemeth's (2009) typography of strategies to support DLL and coded teacher behavior for the presence of events observed, such as use of body language, use of key words in the child's language, and opportunities to communicate with others in the classroom.

Interviews. After both observations were completed, teacher participants were interviewed in the workplace during nap time, lunch breaks, or after the end of the workday. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, depending on the preference of the participant, and lasted 1 hour on average. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Interview questions were open-ended and intended to explore the relationship between the teacher's language learning experience and teaching practices (Appendix D). Questions were developed based on the constructs that emerged from the literature review and explored the following themes: participants' personal experiences being bilingual and how that influenced their work with DLL children; strategies they used while working with children who speak different languages; their educational experience specific to early care and education and working with DLLs; past experiences working with DLL children; what teachers did to maintain the child's home language; and rewarding or frustrating aspects of working in classrooms with multiple DLL children.

Reflection activity. The reflection activity was included as part of the interview. It was intended to gather evidence of what participants would do to engage children in their care who did not speak the same languages spoken by the participants.

Whenever possible, to facilitate the reflection, real interactions observed in the classroom were used; these included instances in which the participant had difficulty communicating with children because they did not speak the same languages. If no usable interactions were observed, the following vignette (Appendix E) adapted from the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework: Volume 1* (California Department of Education, 2010) was used:

> You are a teacher in an early care and education classroom with a child who speaks only Hmong. No one else in the classroom or your program speaks Hmong. How would you approach this? What might be some of the challenges that this situation would create? Can you think of any benefits in this situation? What are important ideas, principles, research, or information that would help you

think about how best to handle the incorporation of these children in your

classroom? (Appendix E)

Follow-up letters. Two follow-up letters were sent after the completion of all the

observations and interviews. The first follow-up letter was to site directors (Appendix F),

who were asked to verify participants' job titles, years of employment at the site, and

highest level of ECE education completed by the participants.

The second follow-up letter (Appendix G) was mailed to participants; it gave a

brief overview of the study thus far and asked clarifying questions that were missed in the

Participant Demographic Questionnaire and interview, including birth year, when they

came to the U.S., how old they were when they learned their second language, and if they

had any children of their own and what languages their children spoke. In addition, the

vignette for the reflection activity was included in an attempt to discover whether

responses would differ if participants were allotted time to think about their responses.

Data Collection Procedures

Observations and Participant Demographic Questionnaire. Observations were

intended to begin in September 2011, as close as possible to the start of the school year,

in an effort to capture the early social interactions between bilingual teachers and

children who did not speak the same language as the teacher. All site directors requested

that the commencement of classroom observations not occur until at least 1 month after

the first day of the school year. Directors wanted children and teachers to be comfortable

in their environments and to have time to establish their routines. This would also help to

avoid the observations taking place during the adjustment period in which children would

be doing a lot of listening to a new language in a new environment (Nemeth, 2009;

Tabors, 2008). The timeline for observations was adjusted accordingly. Observations

were scheduled and completed between October and November. All participants

completed the Participant Demographic Questionnaire on the day of the first observation.

All observations were initially meant to be of individual participants, but several

of the participants shared classrooms. This resulted in half of the observations being

performed on all classroom interactions, with particular attention being paid to the

participants when they interacted with children with whom they did not speak a common

language. Lastly, all participants were at ease with the observations because all the

programs were either lab schools, had regular observation built into their program

structure, or were practicum sites for local community colleges.

Interviews and reflection activity. Interviews (including the reflection activity)

took place in November and December. The original interview protocol included 13

questions (Appendix D), of which six were deemed essential to ask of all participants,

and the remaining were considered secondary, only to be asked if time allowed or if the

topic surfaced naturally during the conversation. The six essential questions addressed

participants' experiences being bilingual; their education; strategies or approaches used

while working with children who spoke a different language than those the participants

spoke; their experience working with DLL children; what they did to help the children

maintain their home language; and whether they thought their personal experience

influenced their work with DLL children. After the first three interviews, a seventh

essential question was added: what participants did when parents wanted their children to

use English only. This addition was made because the topic organically came up in the

first three interviews.

For seven participants, examples surfaced during the course of the observations and interviews that allowed for the reflection-activity to be conducted based on a real-life experience. Only two participants did the reflection activity using the vignette adapted from the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework: Volume 1* (California Department of Education, 2010, Appendix E) which asked participants to reflect how they would approach communicating with children who did not speak the same language.

Follow-up letters. Follow-up letters to site directors and participants were sent out in April and May of the following year. One of the directors oversaw two of the programs so I also had to make contact with the on-site-director at each program. These follow-up letters requesting clarification were not part of the original participation agreement. Consequently, I had to ask directors if they would be willing to respond to the clarifying questions and would be willing to distribute the follow-up letters and self-addressed stamped envelopes to the participants. Only seven of the participants returned their responses to the follow-up clarifying questions.

Data Analysis Procedures

Observations. Observations were analyzed using principles identified by Nemeth (2009, 2012) as best teaching and classroom practices for working with young DLLs to categorize observed events and social interactions. The principles were abridged as follows:

1. Learn words/phrases in the child's home language;

2. Expose the child to English throughout the day;

3. Represent the child in the classroom environment;

4. Create a comfortable environment for the child;

5. Use the talents of others who speak the child's home language; and

6. Use body language and gestures to enhance communication.

All observed uses of teaching and classroom practices that reflected one of the principles were recorded, as were any mentions of teaching and classroom practices (during the interviews and reflection activity) that suggested one of the principles. Using grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I then categorized data into the six principles and coded, interpreted, and re-categorized when applicable (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2009).

Interview. Using a deductive process, I then thoroughly read interview transcriptions for broad categorizations of themes (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). A preliminary set of codes was developed based on these themes. Each interview question was then examined using these overall themes. The applicable themes were then applied to each interview question for further examination for differences across all participants, as well as for shared experiences. Direct quotes of responses for each question were organized based on the applicable codes and further themes identified.

Refection activity. Data analysis for the reflection activity involved coding responses into recurring categories and folding this into analysis of the strategies questions of the interview. The coding schemes were based on themes articulated by participants and on principles identified by Nemeth (2009, 2012) as best practices for working with DLLs.

Due to the small sample size, data analysis was not stratified by individual teacher or workplace characteristics, but instead was analyzed as a whole for the entire group of

participants. Data from various sources were accumulated throughout the duration of the study. Table 1 presents the data sources for each of the research questions.

Table 1

Data Sources for Each Research Question

Research Question	Data Sources
RQ1: What are bilingual ECE teachers' teaching practices with children who are DLL?	Observation Interview Reflection activity
RQ2: In what way do bilingual ECE teachers' second language learning experiences influence their teaching practices with DLL children?	Participant Demographic Questionnaire Interview Follow-up letter

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

In this chapter I present the findings of the study, starting with a description of the centers where the participants were employed to provide context for the classrooms in which they worked. I also describe participant demographics, educational background, and employment history. Next, I report findings in order of the research questions: (1) What are bilingual ECE teachers' teaching practices with children who are DLLs? and (2) In what way do bilingual ECE teachers' second language learning experiences influence their teaching practices with DLL children?

Centers

Participants were employed at four center-based settings. Two centers were private, not-for-profit. The remaining two centers were Head Start programs that were part of a community-based, non-profit organization.

At least two participants worked in the same classroom in two of the four centers. In the remaining two centers, participants worked in two separate classrooms but shared interactions with the same group of children because they had a common outdoor play time (see Appendix H).

Participants at all centers were used to being observed, as the sites were laboratory schools, had observation built into the program structure, or were practicum sites for community college courses. Two of the centers were English-Spanish bilingual

programs. The remaining two centers were not bilingual by design and were

purposefully selected in an attempt to reflect the more common experiences of most ECE

centers and classrooms (see Table 2).

Table 2

Participants Employed in Bilingual ECE Centers

Participant	Bilingual ECE center
Carmen	No
Tiffany	No
Megan	No
Irene	Yes
Caroline	Yes
Mari	Yes
Claudia	Yes
Mayra	No
Laurie	No

Participants

Teachers participating in this study met the following criteria. They (1) were self-identified bilingual or multilingual in English and another language, with English not being their first language, (2) had completed a college-level degree in ECE or related field, and (3) had at least 3 years of experience working in early care and education settings.

Teacher participants were all females of at least 18 years of age. All participants were born outside of the United States. Four came to this country at elementary school age, and five arrived either as teenagers or adults. Six countries of birth were represented including Afghanistan, Bosnia, China, India, Mexico, and the Philippines.

For the purpose of this study, it was imperative that participants had personally experienced learning a second language. Only one participant was simultaneously bilingual, meaning she had learned both languages since birth. Six participants learned their second language at elementary school age and two learned it as adults (Table 3).

All nine participants self-identified as fluent in English, and at least one other language. First languages for participants included Cantonese, Farsi, Malayalam, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, and Tagalog (Table 3).

Table 3

Languages Spoken by Participants

Participant	L1	L2 - L5	Age for L2 acquisition *
Carmen	Cantonese	English, Vietnamese, Mandarin	Young
Tiffany	Malayalam	English, Hindi	Birth
Megan	Farsi	English, Hindi, Pashto, Kashmiri	Young
Irene	Serbo-Croatian	English, Spanish	Young
Caroline	Spanish	English	Adult
Mari	Spanish	English	Young
Claudia	Tagalog	English, Spanish	Adult
Mayra	Spanish	English	Young
Laurie	Tagalog	English	Young

Note: All names are pseudonyms. L1: first language, L2-L5: other languages learned

* "Birth:" ages 0-1, "Young:" ages 4-12, "Adult:" ages 24-37

All participants had a college-level education in an early childhood related field (Table 4). Four participants had an Associate in Arts (A.A.) degree in either Child Development or Early Childhood Education, and two held Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degrees in Child and Adolescent Development. One participant had completed a Master's degree in Education with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education. The remaining two participants were trained in the Montessori Method. While all participants had completed coursework that addressed cultural sensitivity, only four had received any training specific to working with young DLLs.

Table 4

Education of Participants

Participant	ECE degree	Major	DLL-specific training
Carmen	Bachelors	Child and Adolescent Development	No
Tiffany	Associates	Child Development	No
Megan	Associates	Early Childhood Education	No
Irene	Bachelors	Child and Adolescent Development	Yes
Caroline	Associates	Child Development	Yes
Mari	Masters	Education, Early Childhood Education emphasis	Yes
Claudia	Associates	Child Development	Yes
Mayra	Montessori	Montessori Method	No
Laurie	Montessori	Montessori Method	No

All participants cared for an average of 23 (SD = 6.58) preschool age children, ranging from 3 to 5 years of age. Four participants worked in classrooms where at least two thirds of the children spoke another language in addition to English. Only one participant worked in a classroom where less than half of the children spoke another language in addition to English.

At the time of the interview, participants had an average of 8 years (SD = 3.10) of experience teaching in an ECE setting, and 6 years (SD = 2.49) in their current center. Three participants held the job title of Teachers, two were Associate Teachers, and the remaining four were Master, Lead, or Supervising Teachers (Table 5).

Table 5

ECE Experience of Participants

Participant	Children in classroom	% Bilingual children	Years in ECE	Years in current center	Job title
Carmen	24	63	7	5	Teacher
Tiffany	19	58	10	10	Master/Lead/ Supervising
Megan	19	58	10	10	Teacher
Irene	17	100	3	3	Teacher
Caroline	17	100	4	4	Associate Teacher
Mari	34	97	11	5	Master/Lead/ Supervising
Claudia	34	100	7	7	Associate Teacher
Mayra	24	50	7	5	Master/Lead/ Supervising
Laurie	23	26	12	7	Master/Lead/ Supervising
Average	23	72%	8	6	

Research Question 1

The first research question, "What are bilingual ECE teachers' teaching practices with children who are DLLs?" was addressed by using the observations, interviews, and reflection activities. First I presented a count of the number of principles used by each participant in her classroom practice. Next, I provided an in-depth explanation of what these principles looked like in practice.

Principles identified by Nemeth (2009, 2012) as best teaching and classroom practices for working with DLLs were used to perform the initial analysis for the first research question (Table 6). Data gathered from the interviews, observations, and reflection activities were used to determine the principles used by each participant. This was done in an effort to triangulate the data and reduce the possibility that one data source would outweigh the others (Maxwell, 2012).

Table 6

Principles Used by Participants

Participant	Learn words/ phrases in child's home language	Expose the child to English throughout the day	Represent the child in the classroom environment	Create a comfortable environment for the child	Use the talents of others who speak the child's home language	Use body language and gestures to enhance commun-ication
Carmen	1	2	1	2	2	2
Tiffany	2	3	3	1	3	3
Megan	2	2	1	3	2	3
Irene	3	2	3	3	3	3
Caroline	3	3	1	2	2	2
Mari	2	2	3	1	3	0
Claudia	3	2	3	2	3	2
Mayra	1	3	0	1	2	2
Laurie	1	2	2	2	1	0
# of participants	9	9	8	9	9	7

Note: Credit was given when teachers were (1) observed practicing a principle, and (2) mentioned a principle during (2) the interview, or (3) the reflection activity. Therefore, a score of 3 means the teacher mentioned the principle in the interview and in the reflection activity, and was observed practicing it.

Participants who were employed in bilingual programs and had received DLL-specific training reported, or were observed, using an average of 14 (*SD* = 2.58) principles. Those who were in programs that were not bilingual by design or who had not received specific DLL training showed an average of 11 (*SD* = 2.92) principles.

Learn words/phrases in the child's home language. The most common practice was to use the families as resources and ask the parents for a list of key words in an effort to incorporate these into daily conversations and facilitate the child's transition into the preschool classroom. As articulated by Nina, "I force myself to learn one word here, one word there. Over the years I learn to communicate… using basic [words]." In addition to the parents, some teachers used other sources such as interpreters when available, bilingual dictionaries and picture books, or technological resources, such as YouTube and Google, to learn correct pronunciations.

Expose the child to English throughout the day. Continual exposure to English was the second principle practiced consistently by all the teachers. Asking questions is an expected occurrence in a preschool classroom regardless of the number of DLL children present. A unique element to questions asked by these particular teachers was that, whenever possible, the questions were paired with a translation in the children's home language or were paired with a body gesture that reinforced what was being asked. Likewise, frequently used classroom phrases such as "let's wash our hands" and "line up to go inside" were repeated throughout the day and often accompanied by a translation. Mari clarified her thought process for continually applying this practice when she explained, "It's really hard to … talk English only to the children when you know that

they are not understanding what you're saying… I guess it's just my experience… he's not going to understand, let me say it in Spanish."

Narrating activities and naming objects and materials were commonplace and purposeful in these classrooms. In some cases, parents were asked to continue the exposure to English at home by introducing common phrases used in the classroom. In these cases the teachers cautioned that their suggestion not be misinterpreted as replacing the home language with English, but instead would be used as an opportunity to continue the classroom routine of saying a word or phrase in the child's home language and then repeating it in English. The purpose for this was that teachers believed consistency in the manner in which new English words were introduced at school and at home would facilitate the child's learning.

Represent the child in the classroom environment. All but one teacher had artifacts in the environment that represented the diversity of the children in their classroom, but the number and types of artifacts varied by classroom and program. These classrooms had between two and seven types of artifacts that represented the children in the classroom (see Appendix I). The most common artifacts were either photos of the children with or without their families or books that represented a variety of cultures, including those of the children enrolled. Furthermore, the artifacts available were intentionally selected to help children see themselves reflected in and as part of the classroom environment.

Create a comfortable environment for the child. All nine of the teachers in this study recognized and mentioned the comfort of a DLL child as a priority in their teaching. Teachers understood that when children were comfortable in their learning

environment, it facilitated the child's learning process. Teachers' first approach was learning words and phrases in the student's home language. In their interviews, all teachers indicated that they learned some basic words in order to raise students' comfort level and sense of the teacher's approachability. Similarly, they said it was important to allow children to acclimate themselves to the new environment, peers, and teachers at their own pace. This included permitting children time to explore and familiarize themselves with the daily routine and not obligating them to speak, either in their home language or in English, until they were willing to do so. One common strategy was to create opportunities in which the child could participate in classroom activities, such as group-singing during circle time, which did not require the child to be singled out. Likewise, another frequent strategy used was allowing children to communicate in their languages with other children during free and dramatic play without the pressure of having to speak English. Lastly, the teachers worked at making sure that the parents were comfortable with leaving the children in their care because teachers believed that children would be more at ease when they recognized that their parents were content.

Use the talents of others who speak the child's home language. Some teachers also asked other bilingual individuals to help, and uses of these individuals were in the expected form: teachers had something they wanted the child to know and they asked the bilingual person to repeat it in the child's home language. Still, teachers were adamant about not being completely dependent on other people and would exchange strategies that might be helpful. One strategy was to pair the child with children who spoke the same language and could help them acclimate to the classroom routine. If the children were in

separate classrooms, the teachers would make an effort to overlap the free play and outside time so the children could spend some time together.

Story time was also an opportunity to incorporate others. Parents were regularly asked to come into the classroom and read stories in both their home languages and English. This allowed for all of the children to experience the same story in various forms. Also, when stories were read, bilingual children were often asked to point out items in the illustrations so as to give other language options for naming the same item.

If children kept repeating an unfamiliar word or phrase, teachers would not only ask the bilingual person to translate for them, but teachers would also make an effort to learn the phrase and incorporate it into the classroom routine when appropriate. Likewise, teachers would take the opportunity to include songs in the child's language during circle time, and would play recorded music from the child's home during free play and naptime. In this way the teachers both acknowledged that there were children in their classrooms that spoke other languages and they made the other languages a normal part of the classroom environment for all of the children present.

Use body language and gestures to enhance communication. One thing that was specifically mentioned by several teachers was facial expressions and cues. As one teacher put it, "expressions are universal in every language" (Tiffany). This was something that the teachers reported consciously doing, often in exaggerated forms, when communicating with DLL children because "with a smiling face, they know you are happy to see them" (Tiffany).

One final thing that was observed in at least half of the classrooms was other children using gestures to communicate with their DLL peers. This was most apparent

during free play when children were sharing materials, as was the case when one child

tapped another on the arm, pointed at the rolling pin being used by the other child, then

pointed at himself, and finally pretended to use an imaginary rolling pin, all the while

asking, "Can I use that rolling pin next?" Although it may be speculative, it is reasonable

to assume that the first child trying to communicate with a DLL peer had observed and

learned from their teacher in communicating using more than words.

Research Question 2

Responses from two open-ended interview questions were used to address the

second research question, "In what way do bilingual ECE teachers' second language

learning experiences influence their teaching practices with DLL children?" The

interview questions were as follows:

1. Tell me about your personal experience being bilingual; and

2. Do you think your personal experience influences your work with children who

   are DLL?

Each of these questions was then used to extrapolate whether the participants reported

having an easy or difficult time learning a second language. Lastly, the responses to

these interview questions, in addition to information gathered from the Participant

Demographic Questionnaire and the follow-up letters, were used to distinguish themes of

how the participants thought their work with DLL children was influenced by their

personal experiences.

The first question was intended to familiarize me with the teachers' personal

stories and allow me to make note of emerging themes that might inform their responses

to the following question. The second question encouraged the teachers to tie their

experience(s) into their practice. This section begins with discussion of the participants'

personal experiences, followed by the way themes from their experiences related to their

classroom practice.

Personal experience. As expected, each participant had a unique story. (See

Appendix J for a synopsis of each participant's personal story.) Some participants

recognized their practice was directly related to their own experiences and how they liked

or would have liked that experience to have been as they learned a second language.

Carmen candidly shared:

> I feel it, every time I see a child walk in… I feel so sorry for the child… I feel that
>
> it's very frightening to walk into a room or an atmosphere where you feel like…
>
> the alien. You're such a stranger to them. You don't know what's going on. You
>
> don't know these people at all. You don't know these kids, and the worst part is
>
> you're being left alone [without your parents].

Others did not make this deliberate link, but their description of what they did with DLL

children mirrored what they liked or would have liked for their own experiences. Such

was the case with Mayra who indicated that, "You don't want them [the children] to feel

like left out or different [because they speak a different language]."

Participants were asked about their experience being bilingual. Four of the

participants described the experience as difficult for various reasons. One of these

reasons was a deep feeling of isolation. Claudia emotionally depicted this when she

described her lack of feeling welcome in this country because nobody spoke to her or

understood her language.

Others described having teachers who were unsupportive of their speaking their home language, being teased for and feeling self-conscious about speaking their home languages, and learning a second language at an older age (see Table 7). For instance, Mari had experienced several of these difficulties: she articulated her angst with a homeroom teacher who did not allow youth to converse in Spanish and with high school classmates who teased her and her friends for speaking Spanish. As Mari stated, "It was really frustrating [to not be allowed to] communicate with others to find out what was going on [in class].… They laughed at us for speaking Spanish like it was something weird. So it was really rough."

Four participants described an easier experience, such as growing up in communities where speaking multiple languages was commonplace, so that the experience of making the transition from home to school was seamless. Others expressed having supportive teachers who helped scaffold their learning of the second language. These teachers' support ranged from staying after school to help with the students' reading and writing, to taking them on weekend trips to practice mundane tasks, such as ordering food in English.

One participant, Tiffany, was familiar with both extremes of the experience. She had had an easy experience learning L1 and L2 because she had learned them simultaneously since birth and typically kept to speaking one of these two languages. When learning L3, she had difficulty and still feels uncomfortable using it, which she conveyed when she stated, "I found Hindi difficult because it's not as easy as English," and "I don't consider myself to be a wonder in Hindi."

Table 7

Personal Experience Being Bilingual

Participant	Difficult experience	Easy experience	Age of L2 acquisition*
Carmen	Yes	No	Young
Tiffany**	Yes	Yes	Birth
Megan	No	Yes	Young
Irene	No	Yes	Young
Caroline	Yes	No	Adult
Mari	Yes	No	Young
Claudia	Yes	No	Adult
Mayra	No	Yes	Young
Laurie	No	Yes	Young

* "Birth:" ages 0-1, "Young:" ages 4-12, "Adult:" ages 24-37

** Endured both difficult and easy experiences.

Participant's classroom practice. Participants gave more intentional responses when they were explicitly asked if they thought their work with DLL children was influenced by their personal experiences. Using the lens of a direct or indirect link between the teachers' personal experiences and teaching practice, I found that several themes emerged from the responses to this question. All responses from the interviews and reflection activity that suggested one of the themes were recorded. I then used the grounded-theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to categorize themes into several groupings, interpret, and re-categorize when applicable (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2009). The themes often overlapped and clear distinctions were difficult to make, which complicated the grouping of responses. Consequently, three general categories were created as follows:

1. Empathy;

2. Inclusion/comfort; and

3. Maintenance of language.

Empathy. Teachers relayed empathic reasons that their personal experience influenced their work. All but two made statements that made the direct tie, such as, "The way they are learning now is kind of the same thing that I went through" (Irene), and "I felt the same way [as the children] when I started learning the language" (Laurie). Others recounted having more patience with DLL children based on their own experiences.

Comfort. As previously discussed, creating a comfortable environment was an essential principle for all of the teachers. Expressions of comfort were not as explicit as those of empathy, yet the participants' statements suggested that what they did with the

children was a result of what worked for them or what they would have liked to have experienced when they were learning their second language. As a result of filtering the teacher responses using the viewpoint of their experiences influencing their practice, two themes emerged: inclusion and creating a comfort zone.

For the first, inclusion, expressions of inclusion in the classroom took many shapes. These included everything from learning words in the child's language and incorporating them into the daily routine to strategically pairing children with peers who spoke the same language and providing activities in which the children could participate with all of their classmates. The desired outcome was always to make sure that the children did not feel like spectators in the classroom, but instead seamlessly integrated themselves into the program.

The second group of responses was associated with creating a comfort zone for the children. As the comfort zone identified by teachers was often closely tied to language, this zone entailed the children's feeling no pressure to adapt into communicating in English until it came naturally to them. Again, creating a comfortable environment with same language speaking peers was important, but so was forming a pleasing relationship with the parents and families. As Caroline assured me, "Para que el niño esté feliz, la mamá debe estar feliz. [In order for the child to be happy, the mother needs to be happy.]" As expected, the most common approach towards creating this comfort zone was to learn the child's language, be it fluently or with only a few words. As Carmen stated, "at least enough for them … to get through the day."

Maintenance of home language. All participants described their classroom practices as including principles of encouraging the children in their classrooms to

maintain their home languages. Irene talked about her fear of losing her own home language because it was not a language commonly spoken in her community, and how this played a role in her desire to assist children in maintenance of their own languages.

In spite of this, none of the participants was able to give more comprehensive examples, beyond their usual practice, of what they did specifically to maintain said languages. Even when participants spoke to the children in their home language (if they spoke the same language as the child), the primary purpose was for the child to understand what was currently happening in the activity or routines. The communications were never intended uniquely to maintain the home language. Likewise, when the children and participants did not speak the same language, the teacher would learn words, provide books and music, and celebrate holidays, but the deliberate intent was for the child to feel welcome and comfortable. In all programs, children were permitted to communicate in the language they were most comfortable speaking.

Most teachers encountered parental concern about their children not learning English. More often than not, the parent's favored solution was to have the teacher speak only English to the child. Most of the teachers voiced the need to educate the parents about their children's dual language learning and its importance at this stage in their development. What seemed to drive the message home for parents was reminding them that the children needed to learn English simultaneously as they learned their home language, not instead of learning their home language. Mari provided an example of a typical exchange with parents that was also described by many of the teachers:

The parents come in and say, "I want you to talk only English to my child." And then I ask them, "If I talk English to your child, they're going to learn [only]

English. Are you going to be able to communicate with them?" And then they

stop and think, and they are like, "No."

Teachers assured parents that their children would naturally pick English up at preschool,

and certainly learn when they got to elementary school where, in most cases, English

would primarily or exclusively be spoken.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

In this chapter I discuss the key findings from the data collected. Three overarching themes emerged from the analysis of findings: (a) providing a seamless experience for DLL children, (b) the need for additional training specific to teaching DLL children, and (c) preparing DLL children for future success.

Providing a Seamless Experience for DLL Children

The participants' approaches to creating a welcoming experience in their classrooms for DLL children were aligned with the current literature (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008; Nemeth, 2009, 2012). The most prominent theme that wove through the participant interviews and practices was that of a conscious attempt to provide DLL children in their care with a seamless experience in making the transition from home to school. The teachers' desire to do so was influenced predominantly by their personal experiences and to some extent by their academic knowledge of preferred classroom practice. Whatever the influence on their motivation, teachers emphasized the desirable practice of developing positive relationships with the children in their care, with the underlying objective of easing children into their new environment and aiding them to feel comfortable using the teacher as a resource (Birch & Ladd, 1997).

All participants recognized the importance of having certain essential components as part of their daily teaching routines, such as using both English and the children's

home language, representing the child in the classroom, and creating a comfortable environment for the children. They understood that learning words and common phrases in a child's home language served several purposes beyond communication. It also facilitated positive and culturally relevant interactions with parents while creating a comfortable and welcoming social environment for the child (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Espinosa, 2010; Tabors, 2008). Likewise, incorporating the child's home language into the classroom's daily routine exposed the children's peers to the new language and helped to make a multilingual environment more commonplace (Gillanders, 2007). Similarly, integrating the children's culture and language into the classroom environment was essential not only to give value to what was familiar to the child, but also to promote the child's comfort in this new setting (Burchinal & Cryer, 2003; Pappamihiel, 2002). The teachers recognized the difference between incorporating diverse artifacts in the classroom as a demonstration of quality in ECE classroom (Harms et al., 1998) and being intentional in their creation of environments in which children could see themselves included and represented.

All the while, participants recognized that using the home language as a framework for the second language (for example, translating commonly used classroom phrases during routines) was an effective approach to exposing DLL children to English throughout the day without creating undue anxiety about learning the language (Garcia, 1999; Pappamihiel, 2002). Through their personal experiences, teachers were familiar with the desire to withdraw from situations in which their lack of mastery of English would be revealed, a practice that is often exhibited by children when they are around monolingual English speaking peers and teachers (Pappamihiel, 2002). Teachers

recognized that children often withdraw from interactions that require them to speak English, thereby limiting their opportunities to practice speaking the language (Ash, 2009), so participants would encourage the DLL children to interact with other children and staff who spoke the same language. This also demonstrated to the children that their own language was not to be overpowered by English, the dominant language in the classroom (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008; Kohnert et al., 2005; Wong Fillmore, 1991).

Need for Additional Academic Preparation Specific to Teaching DLL Children

It is important to recognize that the participants in this study had completed far more formal education than what was required for their positions, and therefore were well-versed in ECE. They were eloquent about the how and why of their classroom practice, and furthermore had the ability to critique the field in a way that might not be commonplace for other teachers. It is possible that based on their education, the participants' academic knowledge provided a different context for articulating their experiences and furthering their understanding of their practice.

As confirmed by the data, the classroom practice of all participants reflected what Nemeth (2009) identified as best practices for working with DLLs. Participants who were employed in bilingual programs and had received training specific to DLL reported doing slightly more of Nemeth's practices than those who were in programs that were not bilingual by design (see Table 6). The training provided to these participants was developed by a local county office of education that recognized the needs of the teachers in their community and was not tied to credit-bearing coursework. This suggested that even minimal training could make a difference in teachers' understanding of and practice with, DLL children. This finding is comparable to that of Buysse et al. (2009) who found

that teachers who received directed training were more apt to implement changes in their classroom and practice that would be more supportive for English language learners.

Despite the participants' formal education and incorporation of Nemeth's (2009, 2012) principles, they still reported feeling they would benefit from more extensive academic preparation on the subject of DLL, particularly to expand their breadth of knowledge so as to inform their practice beyond simply aiding the children to understand routines and activities. These findings speak to the current research that supports the training of all teachers in a basic understanding of second language development (Clair & Adger, 1999).

Beyazkurk and Kesner (2005) reported on the need for teacher training programs first to address cultural variations in child care practices. Others have reported that most training available is limited to superficial cultural elements, and does not include beliefs and values that could contribute to a more fitting approach to teaching practices (Johnson, 2002; Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009). Participants in this study had already achieved what is considered foundational knowledge and recognized that they needed something beyond that. By all accounts, participants had the motivation to deepen their understanding of other cultures, traditions, and languages (Barnett et al., 2007; Gonzalez-Mena, & Stonehouse, 2008). They would be prime candidates for potential new training models which would, as suggested by Gillanders (2007), incorporate more purposeful observation, reflection, and intentionality in the adjustment of their practice to further DLL children's preparation for future academic success.

Preparing DLL Children for Future Success

All participants were aware that their work was important to DLL children's future academic success, and they took this charge very seriously. Participants recognized that the children would eventually develop a learning style that worked for them, but in the interim, it was the teacher's obligation to support the child's progression. Several participants illustrated what could be interpreted as an ongoing internal negotiation between their personal language policies and those of the programs where they were employed. This was demonstrated by Laurie, who stated that regardless of what she knew was helping children thrive in their dual language development, inevitably she would have to do what the parents wanted and the program required, which in this case was to speak English to the child. The internal struggle with which Laurie and others grappled revealed that these teachers weren't just performing their classroom practices to follow policy but took an active role in thinking about what was at stake. Ultimately, participants understood their overarching responsibility to prepare the children for future success was twofold: help the children maintain their home language and assist them in learning English.

Maintaining home language. Participants recognized the importance of helping children maintain their home language. This was not only because the ability to communicate in the home language is a crucial aspect of continuing the relationship with parents and extended families but also because it positively affects children's self-esteem and social-emotional development to continue to feel connected to their home language and culture (Garcia, 1995; Han & Huang, 2010).

Participants were also purposeful about working in partnership with families to nurture strategies meant to ease the transition between home and school. There was a great deal of deliberate work done with the parents to inform them about the benefits of being bilingual to their children's future success.

Helping children learn English. From personal experience, participants also understood the stress related to learning a second language and aimed to ease that learning curve for all the DLL children in their care. They also understood that one key element for children to succeed in future social and academic environments is the ability to communicate with their teachers and peers (Smith, 2008). Participants approached exposure to English by using a naturalistic approach; they made the language part of their normal interactions, be it during routines or group activities, and eased the translation of common terms into daily interactions. The intention was always to make the new language less intimidating and to encourage the children to recognize that they could use whatever language felt comfortable.

Enduring Questions

The participants in this study lived and worked in a diverse urban region of the country where they have continuous exposure to multiple languages and cultures. In addition, their communities have resources that may not be available in other communities throughout the country, especially those that have a new influx of immigrant families. It is problematic to imply that all ECE teachers would have the same approach to their teaching practices with DLL children in their care, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the practices presented through this study and these participants could apply to other communities. This assumption can only be addressed by

further research that includes participants from varying geographical regions where there are more homogenous populations and fewer resources for ECE teachers and programs; such regions might provide a more representative sample of the typical ECE classroom.

All participants seemed comfortable during the observations and interview. Still, this only allowed for three opportunities to interact. It is possible that the participants would have extended more insightful responses if I had developed a closer rapport with them. On a related note, during the interview, when participants were asked specifically if they thought their personal experience influenced what they did in their classroom practice, it is possible that they would not have made these connections without the prompting questions, and as a result may have overstated the connection. It is recommended that related research allow participants a lengthier period of reflection. For many of these teachers, participation in the interview for this study was likely the first opportunity they had to meditate on their practice in relation to their personal journeys. Such insight and adjustment of perspective should be fostered by the researcher, but also allowed to come about organically from the participant.

The study was intentionally designed to complete observations first, followed by the interview and reflective activity, with the notion that the observation would generate real interactions to be used to facilitate the reflection. Some overlap existed between what was observed and what was reported in the interview and reflection activity. Additional follow-up observations should have been planned to determine if the participants actively practiced what they reported during the interview and reflective activity. Future investigations could benefit from the development of a measure that

would help in determining the level of overlap between what is reported and what is practiced.

Because of the small sample, it was also difficult to decipher how much of the reported practices were due to the nature of the participants' work caring for and educating young children or to their personal experiences making an impact. Nonetheless, the initial findings from this study suggest that to some degree personal experiences do determine practice. Future studies could include a larger number of participants with more targeted questions geared towards the participants' personal stories and journeys, in addition to inquiring about teachers' stories through the lens of their teaching practices.

Implications of Study

The present study findings lend themselves to several research, practice, and policy implications. These are stated below.

Research. Using the key principles identified by Nemeth (2009, 2012), comparison studies of bilingual and monolingual ECE teachers could be carried out. In determining future needs of the diverse population of children, it will be important to examine whether monolingual teachers incorporate the same number of principles into their teaching practice as bilingual teachers do. In addition, this would help clarify the level of training necessary for monolingual teachers or those who do not have as much experience working in classrooms with a diverse child population.

A large-scale investigation of bilingual and monolingual teachers should also compare those who have received some DLL-specific training versus those who have only received basic cultural training (i.e., food, holidays, and historical figures). As

reported, the few participants who received DLL-specific training reported using slightly more of Nemeth's practices than those who did not receive such training. Although the small sample size of this study does not allow for generalizability of this finding, a larger-scale study could inform the argument regarding the need for more in-depth training.

Lastly, further examination should be conducted on the impact of higher education degrees on the practice of both bilingual and monolingual ECE teachers; such a study should also investigate the content of the programs offering these degrees. This would vastly inform the development of ECE course content for the next generation of teachers. As demonstrated by the preliminary findings of this study, teachers with higher levels of formal education have the capacity to think critically about their practice and serve as models of what we can expect when course content intentionally focuses on working with young DLL children.

Practice. The current practice in ECE classrooms in regards to DLL children is to make them comfortable in their environment and in the process of learning English. Future practice should take into account the maintenance of the home language. Ideally, the practice would evolve naturally out of trying to accommodate the child's needs. Institutionalizing a system of formal training to instruct all teachers, both bilingual and monolingual, on second language acquisition could enhance the existing practice. We have a pool of bilingual teachers that bring their personal experiences and practical knowledge to the ECE classroom. They would be well suited to inform the development of such formal training.

It would also behoove monolingual ECE teachers to pursue opportunities that would allow them candidly to experience learning a second language or being a language

minority. Based on these experiences, teachers would not necessarily fully understand the bilingual person's capacity to navigate the world where multiple languages are part of one's identity, but instead teachers could appreciate how difficult it is to go through this experience. This would allow monolingual teachers to gather a broader understanding of what DLL children are experiencing and could make them more aware of their own practice in the classroom.

Policy. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) had the authority to issue a Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development (CLAD) Certificate or English Learner Authorization to teachers who demonstrate competency in teaching English learners (CCTC, 2011). A similar certification should become available for all ECE teachers obtaining their teacher-level permits who demonstrate that they have the additional set of skills needed to teach DLL children.

An in-depth examination should also be made of the higher education degree programs that offer ECE or related coursework. Currently, for example, there is a discrepancy between A.A. degrees in ECE or related fields which have a heavy emphasis on classroom practice and policy as compared to B.A. degrees in liberal arts or child development which focus more on theory. When shaping undergraduate degree programs, the coursework should meet the growing need of future teachers for whom it will be essential to know how to work with DLL children. Policy changes should be made at the state level so as to facilitate the inclusion of this coursework at both community colleges and four-year institutions in order for this work to move forward.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to address the following research questions:

1. What are bilingual ECE teachers' teaching practices with children who are

DLL?

2. In what ways do bilingual ECE teachers' second language learning experiences

influence their teaching practices with DLL children?

During a 9-month period in which interviews, observations, and follow-up

interviews were conducted, the study participants demonstrated that they often used their

personal second language learning experiences to inform their practice with DLL

children in their care. There was no shortage of examples exhibiting a direct connection

between what had worked for teachers as they learned their second language to what they

did in the classroom. Also, the participants had intuitively incorporated many of the

essential principles identified by Nemeth (2009, 2012) into their teaching practice,

revealing that these practices were both on target and innately part of easing the second-

language learning experience.

What also became clear during this time was that participants had a strong desire

to learn more about the topic of second language acquisition. Given current changes in

the child population in this country, there is an urgent need for professional development

opportunities to expand ECE staff's knowledge beyond cultural food, holidays, and

historical figures (Johnson, 2002; Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009). In many cases, the participants felt that they had outgrown the currently available training and were primed to go further. Yet they felt stymied in their attempts to find courses or professional development opportunities because what is currently available is geared more towards a K-12 population. The ECE field needs to invest in expanding the mechanisms available to provide this type of training for the ECE teaching population.

The participants in this study gave a glimpse into possible rich internal resources that are available within the ECE field if we draw on the knowledge of current teachers. Bilingual ECE teachers have a great deal to contribute to the enhancement of training: they can both help determine the baseline of what is currently being done and can guide the field to shape the next level of training and professional development so as to meet the needs of our country's increasingly diverse young population.

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APPENDIX A

ONE-PAGE DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

Bilingual Early Care and Education Teachers:

Applying Personal Experiences to Classroom Practice

Hello,

My name is Mirella Almaraz and I am a graduate student at the Mills College School of

Education. I would like to invite you to participate in my dissertation research study.

I am interested in examining how bilingual teachers use their personal experiences when

teaching preschool children who are dual language learners. My interest in doing this

study grew from my own experiences as a preschool teacher in a classroom where I did

not speak the same languages of the children.

The specific tasks I would like you to participate in are as follows:

- **Two 1–1.5 hour observations at your workplace; and**

- **An approximate 1-hour interview which will be audio-recorded.**

Your participation is greatly appreciated! If you have any questions, please feel free to

contact me at 415-244-7405 or mirella.almaraz@gmail.com.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Teachers who are bilingual and preschool children who are dual language learners: How the teachers apply their language learning experience to their classroom practices

I, _____, state that I am over 18 years of age and that I voluntarily agree to participate in a research project, *Teachers who are bilingual and preschool children who are dual language learners: How the teachers apply their language learning experience to their classroom practices*, conducted by Mirella Almaraz, graduate student at Mills College School of Education.

The research is being conducted in order to explore how a bilingual teacher's personal experiences with language learning influences teaching practices with preschool age children who are dual language learners. The specific task I will perform requires an approximate 1-hour, in-person interview and reflection activity, and two (2) observations at my workplace. I understand that there is a chance that reflecting on my personal experiences and practices can cause some discomfort, but I also understand that the researcher will take all reasonable precautions to minimize that risk. If I choose to do so, I will be given an opportunity to debrief with the researcher about any topics that may have come up during the interview or reflection activity.

I acknowledge that Mirella Almaraz has explained the task to me fully; has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without prejudice or

penalty; has offered to answer any questions that I might have concerning the research procedure; and has assured me that any information that I give will be used for research purposes only and will be kept confidential. In addition, I have been notified that all identifying information will be removed prior to data analysis and reporting, and the findings will only be discussed with the project advisor.

I understand that any use of the audio-recording that results from my participation in this study will not be used for purposes that are not directly related to research venues, such as presentation in meetings or conferences open to the public or press, without my further written consent. I understand that individuals associated with this research may request now or at some time in the future an extension of the permissions for the use of this information that I consent to here.

I also understand that I may contact Mirella Almaraz at 415-244-7405 or her dissertation chair Dr. Tomás Galguera, Mills College School of Education professor, at 510-430-3252 if I have questions about this study at any time during or following my participation.

_____   _____

(Signature of researcher)   (Signature of participant)

_____   _____

(Date signed)   (Date signed)

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1.   Name: _____

2.   Classroom name/number: _____

3.   How many years have you worked caring for children in an ECE setting?

   _____

4.   What percentage of your work time is spent directly with children? _____%

5.   Number of children in your classroom?   _____

6.   Ages of children in your classroom?   _____

7.   Number of children in your classroom who speak a language other than English?

   _____

8.   How do you identify yourself in terms of race or ethnicity?

   _____

9.   What language(s) can you speak **fluently**? By fluently, I mean being able to

   communicate with children spontaneously and with ease on a daily basis.

   (List all that apply)

   _____

   a.   If you speak more than one language, which one was your first language?

      _____

   b.   When did you learn your second language?

         _____ Learned both languages at the same time.

         _____ Learned second language in elementary school.

         _____ Learned second language in middle or high school.

_____ Learned second language as an adult.

_____ Other, please explain:

_____

_____

10.   What is your highest level of education? _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1.   Tell me about your personal experience being bilingual.

2.   How comfortable are you using your second language?

3.   *Tell me about your educational experience.

4.   *What strategies or approaches do you use to help you work with children who speak different languages than those you speak?

5.   *Tell me about your experience with working in classrooms where there are DLL children.

6.   Tell me about your experiences working with X child(ren) in your classroom who speak(s) the same language as you.

7.   Tell me about your experience working with X child(ren) in your classroom who speak(s) a language different than the ones you speak.

8.   How do you use your language(s) when working with the children?

9.   Tell me about how you work cooperatively in your classroom with other staff to support DLL children.

10.   *What do you do to help maintain the home language?

11.   What are your concerns and frustrations with working in classrooms where multiple languages are spoken?

---

* Essential question asked of all participants.

** Additional essential questions added because the topic organically came up in the first three interviews.

12.   What are the positive and rewarding aspects of working in a classroom with DLL

children?

13.   *Personal experience influences how you work with children?

14.   **What do you do when parents want you to speak only English to their children?

APPENDIX E

REFLECTION ACTIVITY

The reflection activity will consist of providing the participants with scenarios of events that might happen in their ECE classroom. Whenever possible, activities observed during the observation will be used instead of the pre-determined written vignettes. In the case when no usable events were observed, one or two written vignettes will be used. This will allow for all the participants to have the opportunity to reflect on a familiar experience. The following is an example of a written vignette:

- You are a teacher in an early care and education classroom with a child who speaks only Hmong. No one else in the classroom or your program speaks Hmong. How would you approach this? What might be some of the challenges that this situation would create? Can you think of any benefits in this situation? What are important ideas, principles, research, or information that would help you think about how best to handle the incorporation of these children in your classroom?

APPENDIX F

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO DIRECTOR

Hi [director name],

I hope this finds you well. As I was going through my notes, I realized I forgot to ask the participants to verify this information.

1. What is their job title?

2. How long have they worked at the center?

3. What is their highest level of ECE education?

Can you please provide me with this information? I would greatly appreciate it. Just to remind you, these are the people who participated from your program:

[Names of participants from this center]

Thanks again! -Mirella

APPENDIX G

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANT

Hi [Participant name],

I hope this finds you well. As you can imagine, I am deeply immersed in writing the findings for my dissertation. Your interview, as of those of all the participants, was so honest and valuable. I am truly grateful that you were willing to open up to me about your experiences.

I would like to give you a brief overview. I interviewed 11 participants born in 7 countries, who spoke 10 different languages. Participants worked in 4 programs, and 70% of the children in their care spoke a language other than English at home.

As I was going through my notes, I realized I missed some basic questions. I also forgot to ask most participants to explain what they would do in the scenario described below. If you have time, could you please respond to these questions? It would be very helpful and I would deeply appreciate it. I don't need an extensive response for the scenario. A few sentences would be fine.

I am enclosing a self-addressed envelope so you can mail me your responses at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you again.

-Mirella Almaraz, 415-244-7405, mirella.almaraz@gmail.com

QUESTIONS:

What year were you born?   _____

What year did you come to the US?   _____

How old were you when you learned your second language?   _____

Do you have any children?   YES   NO

If YES…

Are there any language(s) that your child(ren) understand but DO NOT speak fluently?

Which ones?

_____

Which language(s) do your child(ren) understand AND speak fluently?_____

Do you have an email I can use to contact you in case I need more clarification?

_____

SCENARIO:

You are a teacher of a child who speaks only the Hmong language. NONE of the

teachers, staff, or other children in your classroom or program speaks Hmong.

How would you approach this? What might be some of the challenges that this situation

would create? Can you think of any benefits in this situation? What are important ideas,

principles, research, strategies, or information that would help you think about how best

to handle the inclusion of this child in your classroom? (Feel free to use the back of this

page if needed to respond to scenario.)

APPENDIX H

CLASSROOM AND PROGRAM BY PARTICIPANT

Participant	Program 1 Room 1	Program 1 Room 2	Program 2 Room 3	Program 3 Room 4	Program 3 Room 5	Program 4 Room 6	Program 4 Room 7
Carmen	X						
Tiffany		X					
Megan		X					
Irene			X				
Caroline			X				
Mari				X			
Claudia					X		
Mayra						X	
Laurie							X

APPENDIX I

ARTIFACTS PRESENT IN CLASSROOM BY PARTICIPANT

Teachers	Center	Room	Pictures – Children only	Pictures – Children & families	Pictures – Local community/ people	Pictures – Traditional foods	Books representing various cultures	Artifacts/ items on display	Labels in different languages	Globe and/ or Maps	Daily schedule using pictures	TOTAL
Carmen		1	X	X			X	X				4
Tiffany Megan	1	2		X			X	X				3
Irene Caroline	2	3		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		7
Mari	3	4		X	X		X		X		X	5
Claudia	3	5		X		X	X		X		X	5
Mayra	4	6										0
Laurie	4	7	X							X		2
TOTAL			2	5	2	2	5	3	3	2	2	

APPENDIX J

SYNOPSIS OF THE PARTICIPANT'S PERSONAL STORY

Carmen

"If I was this child, what would I be thinking? How would I want the teacher to help me?"

Carmen described feeling alienated at age 8 when she first started school in this country. Although she arrived with a very basic understanding of English, she was not used to the large number of children in the classroom and felt excluded. Carmen's description of her work with the DLL children was a constant attempt to make them feel comfortable and included.

Tiffany

"I want them to be successful. I know some of them will learn [English] but they are sort of scared to try."

Tiffany revealed that she learned her first two languages simultaneously, but had difficulty learning the third. She disclosed that her mother also learned the third language along with her and described their struggle with succeeding in learning to read and write Hindi, the dominant language of her childhood community. To this day, she does not feel completely confident speaking Hindi but values the spectrum of languages spoken in her community as she appreciates the diversity and feels that there is always something new to learn.

Megan

"We don't get frustrated with the [various] language[s] because it's part of our job to be flexible and to respect the child's language and their culture."

Megan shared that she spoke five languages as a result of living in various countries, and learned them at various stages of life: her first language at birth, two during her school years, and two as an adult. She emphasized the use of gestures and body language with the children as a form of communication that she found helpful when she was learning her subsequent languages. She also prided herself in figuring out ways to comfort the children and expressed great respect for the different cultures, languages, and religions represented by the diverse group of children in her program.

Irene

"It's so easy to forget your home language. Not that I completely forgot it but it's harder to communicate in your home language because you're not around it all the time."

Irene reported coming to this country at age 10 not knowing a word of English. She drew a direct parallel between her experience and that of the children in her classroom learning English. Irene was also very aware of the ease of losing your first language and was a strong proponent of children's learning and maintaining their home language.

Caroline

"Pero me defiendo. [But I defend myself.]"

Caroline came to this country as an adult and was determined to learn English because she wanted to be self-sufficient and did not think it was fair for her children to spend their playtime translating for her. Caroline was a strong advocate of children maintaining their home language while learning English because she personally experienced the value of being able to navigate both worlds and thinks it will only benefit the children's future success.

Mari

"It's really hard to… talk English only to the children when you know that they are not understanding what you're saying… I guess it's just my experience…he's not going to understand, let me say it in Spanish."

Mari recalled being very frustrated when she arrived in this country roughly at 11 years of age. Her first teacher did not allow her or her siblings to communicate in Spanish even when they were attempting to understand what they were being asked to do during their lessons. In a later year, Mari had a teacher who used her personal time to give her and her siblings "real life" experiences so they could practice their English, such as taking them to restaurants and encouraging them to order their own food. Mari made it a point to state things both in English and Spanish in order for all children to understand what was happening throughout the day.

Claudia

"We try to put them together so they can communicate and feel like they are at home."

Claudia admitted to feeling very isolated when she arrived in this country as an adult. She did not have anyone from her community to talk to in her home language, and was not able successfully to communicate with those who spoke English. She felt like she was still learning English and could relate to parents and children for that reason. She made every attempt to learn the children's language and also encouraged them to communicate among themselves in their own language.

Mayra

"You don't want them [the children] to feel like left out or different [because they speak a different language]."

Mayra explained that she was 6 years old and very shy when she first arrived in this country. While she was learning English she felt more comfortable writing it than speaking it. She found the experience challenging but also fun to help the teacher figure out what she needed. In her work, she did her best to make sure that all children were included in the classroom activities regardless of the language differences and wanted to make sure that children were not left out.

Laurie

"I felt the same way when I started learning the language… If you are not that confident in speaking the language it's really hard to share and join the class discussion."

Laurie came to this country as an adult, fluent in English, and very conscious of her accent. She expressed concern about not feeling comfortable with her pronunciation and described how she overcame the hesitation of speaking when she realized several accents were present in her classroom. She prides herself in modeling different ways in which the children could be helpful and supportive of the language learning process of their peers.