

**VIEWS OF YOUNG SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS ON BUILDING
RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM SETTING**

by

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Abstract

School communities are becoming more diverse in many countries around the world and are including children who are learning in a language that is not their first (2LL). Little is known about the experiences young 2LLs have when they enter early childhood settings for the first time. The aim of this study was to investigate in what ways being a 2LL may impact peer relationships according to the views of young children who learned or are learning English as a second language. The participants of this study were five children, ages 5-8, from an Arabic community near a large urban center in western Canada. The children's parents responded to an advertisement on an Islamic school's communication board. Data collection included two individual interviews held in each child's home and one group interview carried out at the children's school. All interviews involved a persona doll and were audio recorded and transcribed. The interview data were analyzed for reoccurring themes throughout the children's responses. The findings were organized under the headings: the children's feelings on their first day of school, the children's thoughts on the persona doll's (a 2LL) feelings on her first day of school, and the children's suggestions to help the doll learn English and socialize in the classroom. Overall, this study indicates that young children point to support from bilingual peers and/or teachers as valuable for the second language learner's acquisition of the new language. In addition, results of this study support previous research that has explored effective strategies for teaching young 2LLs.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Worldwide, school systems include children who must learn a new language in addition to their primary language if they are to succeed socially and academically. According to Soderman and Oshio (2008) this is the result of two factors: (1) an increase in international migration of families for economic and political reasons and (2) a new emphasis in schools on multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual education. According to Canadian statistics, Vancouver's visible *minority* population is on its way to become the *majority* over the next two decades (Hansen, 2010). Hansen (2010) reported in The Vancouver Sun that the minority groups will account for 59 per cent of the total population by the year 2031. Visible minorities are defined as "persons other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in color" (p.A4). Though Vancouver's Arab population is small compared to other minority populations it is predicted to experience the strongest growth of any visible minority group in the region from about 8,000 to 35,000 by 2031 (Hansen, 2010). These figures are disconcerting for educators as the pressure increases for schools to provide high quality education for all students including those learning English as a second language.

Language development is considered to be the foundation for building literacy skills and academic success (Tabors 2008), yet the empirical literature regarding second language development for early childhood is minimal at best compared to older children (Johnson, 1991; Saunders & O'Brien 2006). In order to develop appropriate practices to support children learning a second language, it is important that early childhood educators have knowledge of current theories of language learning. Educators need to be aware of the challenges their students face in classrooms and the strengths and short comings of curricula.

In the past four years of my teaching experience in early childhood I came to realize a lot about the challenges children from different language backgrounds were facing in my classroom. I taught English as a second language for four years in Turkey. Being a multilingual person myself, I had first hand experience in learning more than one language. My schooling from kindergarten to grade 12 was in Arabic. My home languages were both Arabic and Turkish but my Turkish was always stronger since it s my mother's language and the more dominant language in our home context. I still remember the frustration I felt when I was not able to answer a question in Arabic on a test yet I knew the answer in Turkish. I also remember my teacher's disappointment when she gave me hints to help me answer the question and I was still unable to find the answer in Arabic. She tried to help me but she did not understand my dilemma.

There have been a number of studies undertaken to understand how children learn a second language in the early years, such as Drury (2000) who did a case study of a bilingual child, and Clarke (1999) who investigated second language acquisition in preschools. Researchers like Drury (2000) have chosen to observe children learning a second language in their environment and have recorded the stages they went through until they had a grasp of the new language. Other researchers, such as Uuch and Mayr (1999) and Gillanders (2007), conducted interviews with, and observations of teachers teaching in a classroom where children are learning a second language. They reported on effective teaching strategies and on the challenges teachers face. Researchers like Fassier (1998) and Gertner, Rice, and Hadley (1994) reported on the importance of peer relationships and interactions in helping children acquire a second language. They also reported on the difficulties second language learners have in building these relationships with their peers.

Unfortunately, there are a limited number of studies in the field of early childhood education which investigate children's voices and their views on issues that affect them. Cannella (1998) writes: "The most critical voices that are silent in our constructions of early childhood education are the children with whom we work. Our constructions of research have not fostered methods that facilitate hearing their voice" (p.10). It is only through the direct accounts of children that we can accurately portray aspects of childhood, and begin to meet their needs (Cremin & Slatter, 2002). Consulting with children and respecting their views and opinions are linked to the rights of the child. Children have a right to be heard in educational decision making (Cremin & Slatter, 2002; Hancock & Mansfield, 2002). Hancock and Mansfield (2002) add that there are more reasons why educators and practitioners should give children a voice other than it being their right. One reason is that children gain personal and psychological benefits when they feel that their opinions and feelings matter to their teachers. Furthermore, school life and the curriculum will be enriched if children have an opportunity to influence it (Hancock & Mansfield, 2002). In addition to the benefits gained by the children, educators can better understand the qualities and short-comings of institutions, and teachers in particular have a chance to gain valuable feedback about their teaching and how school is experienced when children's voices are heard. According to Birbeck and Drummond (2005) children's voices have not often found their way into research, because of concerns of their cognitive ability, ethical difficulties and powers of communication. However, if one engages children appropriately then they are able to make significant contributions (Birbeck & Drummond, 2005). Indeed, children have their own ideas which they can share with adults given that they are asked in a developmentally appropriate way (Cremin & Slatter, 2004).

Supporters of children's inclusion in research advocate designing studies based on children's abilities rather than concentrating on what they are unable to do (Birbeck & Drummond, 2005). Children's responses gain more reliability when they are asked about matters that are relevant and meaningful to them. The quality and quantity of responses can also be enhanced by developing a supportive accepting environment (Birbeck & Drummond, 2005).

Cremin and Slatter (2004) conducted a case study with six four-year-old children to compare what the children said to be their favorite part of nursery and adult's views of the children's preferences. Children in this study were interviewed about what areas of the nursery they liked best; they were asked to take photographs of what they liked; and they were also asked to pick from pictures what they liked best. The researchers also observed the children and noted where they played the most and the kinds of play they engaged in. To find out what the adults identified as the children's preferred areas, the teachers and parents of the children in the study were interviewed. The children's responses matched those of the adults' perceptions most of the time. More importantly for the purpose of the current study, these researchers found that it is possible to consult with such young children about what they like. Thus, such studies as Cremin and Slatter (2004), Hancock and Mansfield (2002), and Birbeck and Drummond (2005) demonstrate the importance of giving the children a chance to speak about their opinions and ideas when it comes to issues that affect them.

Statement of the Problem

Initial school entry is a stressful time for young children. Anxiety over parting with parents and being in a new environment is experienced by many young learners as they begin their journey in education. School adjustment and helping the children feel safe and secure are two of the many vital responsibilities early childhood educators have. Children from diverse language backgrounds, however, are faced with more unique adjustment challenges. Second language learners (2LLs) recognize that an entire new language is required with a new set of vocabulary and grammar rules in this new classroom environment (Tabors & Snow, 1994). This realization and the effort that is needed to acquire the new language present the children with both social and cognitive challenges (Tabors & Snow, 1994). That said, little is known about the experiences young 2LLs have when they enter early childhood settings for the first time. The majority of research is on understanding *how* children acquire a second language. Studies have shown that children from a different language background than the language of instruction suffer from loneliness and isolation upon school entry. What are these children's experiences and views as they are learning a new language? What do they see as a challenge when building friendships?

Purpose of the Study

Studies done on understanding the acquisition of a second language and the challenges faced by young 2LLs have used methods such as observations and interviews with parents and teachers. There are only a limited number of studies which investigate the children's voices and their views on issues that affect them (Birbeck & Drummond, 2005). My searches of various databases failed to uncover any studies that examined the views of young second language learners on this issue.

The purpose of this study was to investigate in what ways being a second language learner may impact peer relationships according to the views of children who learned or are learning English as a second language. In other words, the goal of the study is to carry the voices, feelings, and social experiences of children learning English as a second language in the context of an early years classroom.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study:

What are the views and experiences of young second language learners on building relationships with peers in a classroom where the language of instruction is English?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in many ways. Children's voices are given limited attention in research and this study provides a model for future researchers to consider involving children as active participants in research rather than just as subjects to be studied. This study seeks to shed some light on the experiences and challenges reported by young second language learners upon entering a new peer group. Many researchers who have done work in this area suggest that acquiring a second language is partly related to the personal attributes of the children. This study will give some examples on how young second language learners experience being a second language learner.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Background on Second Language Acquisition

When a preschool child enters an environment where a new language is being used, it is important for that child to adjust to the new situation. In this situation the child soon realizes that an entire new language is required and is faced with both social and cognitive challenges in an effort to acquire this new language (Genesee, 1994). Drury (1997) supports the notion that second language learners are faced with many challenges in addition to the challenge of learning a new language. Each classroom has its own set of established norms such as: appropriate ways of behaving, styles of learning, ways of speaking and interacting with others, and understanding and accepting teacher expectations (Clarke, 1999; Drury, 1997). Children learning a second language present a challenge to schools because their language use, socialization and cultural experience often do not match the cultural norm teachers expect to build on (Drury, 1997; Meyer, Klein & Genishi, 1994). Many teachers are aware of the challenges second language learners (2LLs) bring to the classroom; however, there is a lack of informed guidance for teachers working in multilingual classrooms in the early years setting (Drury, 1997).

Clarke (1999) and Tabors (2008) described the developmental stages children go through when acquiring a new language. According to Clarke (1999) there was no ready framework to guide teachers teaching children learning a second language. However, such a framework, as described in Tabors (2008), emerged from Clarke's (1999) study which aimed to identify, describe, and interpret the English that Vietnamese children learned in a preschool context and to explore whether aspects of the preschool environment shaped the nature of second language acquisition in the course of a year. According to Soderman and Oshio (2008) Priscilla Clarke was one of the first researchers who documented specific stages of acquisition of English as a

second language, noting that children differed in their personalities and levels of motivation in terms of their entry into a second language. In addition, Clarke (1999) and Tabors (2008) outlined some of the difficulties experienced by children, that is, isolation, loneliness, lack of learning opportunities, as they progressed through the following stages:

- (1) continued use of the home language in the new language context;
- (2) a period of silence (Tabors, 2008)
- (3) use of non-verbal communication;
- (4) use of repetition and language play;
- (5) use of single words, formulae and routines;
- (6) development of more complex language (Tabors, 2008; Clarke 1999).

Furthermore, according to Tabors (2008) and Soderman and Oshio (2008) five factors influence children's progress through these six stages:

- (1) The age factor – young children are at an advantage when it comes to learning a second language because the cognitive demand for what they must know is low and they are not expected to use language in a sophisticated way as older children are (Tabors, 2008). However, they are also at a disadvantage because “their cognitive capacity is not as great as that of older children” (p. 78). Accordingly Tabors (2008) posits this is the reason why younger children move more slowly on the developmental pathway than older children.
- (2) The aptitude factor – some people are simply more talented in language acquisition (Soderman & Oshio, 2008).
- (3) The social factor – some people are more outgoing and more willing to take risks in acquiring second languages (Soderman & Oshio, 2008). Similarly, Clarke (1999) found that the children in her study differed in their choice of interactions with peers, in their participation in groups and in

their use of English with peers and teachers. Thus it would seem a child's personality plays a big part in learning a second language (Tabors, 2008). Some children are shy and others are more outgoing and social. Depending on where a child is on a personality continuum ranging from shy to outgoing we can see an impact on the speed in which the child acquires the second language (Tabors, 2008).

(4) The psychological factor – some people are more motivated because they want to function like or become like the people who speak the language they are trying to learn (Soderman & Oshio, 2008). According to Tabors (2008), being exposed to the new language is not enough. To successfully acquire the language children need to be motivated to take on the cognitive challenge and to communicate with people speaking that language (Tabors, 2008).

(5) Low anxiety in the learning environment – while low to moderate stress can be a motivator to respond to a demand, high stress has been documented to deter learning capacity (Soderman & Oshio, 2008).

As our schools and communities become more diverse, it becomes increasingly important for teachers to be well prepared for teaching and learning in cross-racial, cross-ethnic, and cross-cultural situations (Lee, Butler, & Tippins 2007). Teachers who are teaching in these multicultural settings need to be sensitive to the diverse sociocultural backgrounds of children. According to Lee, et al. (2007) to successfully acquire the L2 (second language), the social context must contain three components: learners, who realize they must learn the L2 and are motivated; speakers of the L2, who know the L2 well enough to provide access to the language and help the learner learn it; and social setting, situations that bring learners and speakers into frequent contact. Here the teacher plays a crucial role in providing the children with opportunities to communicate with their peers (Clarke, 1999). Since the children may have

difficulty communicating in the new language the teacher plays an important role in assisting L2 children to engage in interaction and scaffold the children's English production (Clarke 1999).

Although English as a Second Language pedagogy is said to have had little attention in research because of the assumption that young children pick up language naturally (Drury, 1997; 2000) there has been some research on the teaching and learning strategies of second language learners. Research, like one study done by Lee, Butler, and Tippins (2007), investigated a teacher's perspectives on working with second language learners. The teacher in this study was a first grade teacher working with children learning English as a second language. Two face-to-face interviews were conducted focusing on this teacher's experience in working with language learners. According to the researchers this study examined the ways to work effectively with linguistically diverse children by understanding an experienced teacher's practical knowledge about culture and linguistic differences. They discussed that a teacher's positive attitudes of acceptance, understanding and willingness to learn about other cultures are important to help students learning a second language feel welcome and loved.

According to Saunders and O'Brien (2006) 2LLs develop language competencies over time regardless of the program type or instruction methods. Drury (2000) refers to this notion as the "osmosis effect" and argues that the process of learning a second language is complex and is related to a number of factors. For example teachers impact their student's English language production through the teacher's language use and teacher qualifications (Lee, Butler, & Tippins, 2007). Wong Fillmore (1991) illustrated how four kindergarten teachers' use of English influenced how much English the students in each classroom acquired. She demonstrated that the language opportunities were more important than the structuring of instruction. Although teacher interaction has a positive effect on children's language development, the more the children

interacted with English-speaking peers, the more English proficient the English language learners became. Lee, Butler and Tippins (2007) revealed that children who come from different cultural backgrounds and speak little English were found to participate less frequently than their peers in classroom activities. The teacher in this study reported that children with limited English fluency were quiet and shy about participating in large group activities even though they had peers who spoke their first language (Spanish); “They were very unsure of themselves. Even when most of the children in my class did speak Spanish and had that experience, they were still in that quiet stage” (p.45). The teacher added that the lack of participation of children who cannot speak fluent English is not merely a reflection of their difficulties with language comprehension. She also acknowledged that sociocultural differences can block their active participation (Lee, Butler & Tippins, 2007).

Although a case study of this one teacher working with linguistically diverse children provides valuable insights, the sample size poses a limitation and studies with more participants or more case studies are needed to capture common experiences and challenges teachers generally face in such classrooms.

Similarly, Onchwari, Onchwari, and Keengwe (2008) also suggest that 2LLs may be quiet and withdrawn in the classrooms as they try to understand their environment and develop confidence to initiate activities and express ideas. This is a challenge for the 2LL who will acquire the L2 by interacting with native speakers (Tabors, 2008). Teachers should take note of this and be committed to acknowledging children’s fears of participating in group activities and help them build confidence that is primary to their survival in the new environment (Onchwari, et al., 2008). Furthermore, recent research suggests that the mere exposure to an English-speaker, or speaker of the second language, is not as important as the nature of this interaction (Saunders

& O'Brien, 2006). Teachers have an important role of facilitating positive interactions between 2LLs and their peers.

The challenges young 2LLs face when it comes to interacting with peers and building friendships have been illustrated by Drury (2000), who studied a four year old girl's experience in learning English as a second language. In her case study, Drury highlighted aspects of language socialization for children at an early stage in their learning of English by observing Samia in her classroom and home settings. Upon entering the nursery, Drury reported that Samia went through the stages that were highlighted by Tabors (1997) and Clark (1999) when learning English as a second language. Samia went from the initial stage of insecurity and silence in a new environment to a more confident stage where she was able to attract the teacher's attention (Drury, 2000). According to Drury, Samia's limited understanding of English caused her acculturation in the setting to include times of stress and difficulty for her. She was observed to be socially isolated in the classroom. Samia was unable to successfully interact with her peer group during her first developmental stages of learning English. Other children were observed to be playing near her and talking to each other but Samia was mostly ignored. Samia's restricted formulaic utterances were not responded to by her peers. As a result Samia was seen to have very limited opportunities to develop her second language and become socially accepted in nursery (Drury, 2000). Drury referred to this situation as a 'double bind' (p.46). Samia was socially isolated and silent much of the time. She was not included in play or initiated into conversations which are important in learning a second language. Motivation and language learning are closely linked with social interactions and with the need to construct an identity that is acceptable in socio-cultural settings in the nursery (Drury, 2000). When observed in her home context Drury found that Samia practiced her new language while playing with her baby brother. Samia showed

greater confidence in using English with her willing partner at home. Drury added that Samia was also freed from the appropriateness of language that applies to the nursery. In addition, Samia also had the opportunity to code switch and use her mother tongue when interacting with her sibling.

In their study, Piker and Rex (2008) observed Spanish speaking children learning English as a second language in a head start classroom. The aim of the observations was to understand the interactions that took place between these children with their peers and teachers, one of whom was a Spanish speaking bilingual teacher. As a result of the cross-case comparison, they ascertained that the Spanish speaking children's acquisition of English appeared to be influenced in particular ways by their social interactions with their peers and teachers. Evidence in the study confirms that the children attended, mimicked, and acted according to how English was understood by their classmates in order to participate appropriately. For example one of the participating children was observed to watch her peer's reactions to requests by the teachers and display similar responses. According to the authors the language the children understood was more a code of authority and obedience. Although the children in the study did develop their English skills, Piker and Rex remained uncertain whether or not the children learned enough to be successful in English-only kindergarten classrooms.

Background on Play and Peer Relationships in the Early Years

Theories on child development and education have long guided and informed the practice of early childhood professionals. There are a number of theorists that have made a lasting impact in the field of early childhood and are still referred to today to better understand child development. In this section Piaget's cognitive theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory will be presented as a foundation for understanding the social experience of second language learners.

From a Piagetian perspective children are seen to make sense of and organize knowledge in the adult world in ways that are qualitatively different than adults. According to Onchwari, et al. (2008) immigrant children bring a different set of experiences and ways of understanding the world into the classroom. A teacher who is unfamiliar with the child's experiences may incorrectly assume that the child is falling behind on the developmental continuum. For example, when a child is presented with a fruit he is not familiar with during a task of classification he will, according to Piaget's theory, find himself in a state of disequilibrium. The child needs to assimilate the new fruit into his preexisting schema of what constitutes fruit (Onchwari, et al., 2008). This process of assimilation is the compensation resulting from the subject's active response to new information (Piaget, 1968). The state of disequilibrium is the central force that propels children through the stages of cognitive development. Thus, teachers need to understand that the second language learners in their classrooms may appear to be more withdrawn or shy as they experience this state of disequilibrium (Onchwari, et al., 2008).

Piaget (1962) outlined three stages of play for children in the early years: practice play, symbolic play, and play with rules. The first stage, practice play, appears in the child's first 18 months. Practice play is the repetition of manipulating objects for the pleasure derived from

mastering the skill. Symbolic play appears next, around the age of two years with the development of representation and language. For Piaget's third stage, play with rules, articulated speech is necessary to convey rules and therefore construct them. This stage of play marks the transition to the play of the socialized individual and rarely occurs before the period of 4 to 7 years (Nicolopoulou, 1991).

Although Piaget's theory presents an individualistic constructivist approach to development it is still valuable to consider when investigating 2LL's experiences in building relationships with peers. Children practice language and social skills on an individual level as well as a social level. By observing and imitating these skills, such as new words or phrases, children begin to form their own understandings. This is important to consider in order to understand what 2LLs may be experiencing during their quiet or silent stage of learning a new language.

According to Nicolopoulou (1991) there is a wide spread sense of limitations to Piaget's cognitive theory. A growing range of criticism is evident among developmental scholars. One criticism is that the Piagetian framework pays insufficient attention to the social and cultural elements in cognitive development (Nicolopoulou, 1991). Research on play which emphasizes social and cultural influences has grown. The framework that unifies these influences is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of mental development (Nicolopoulou, 1991). Vygotsky's approach is an alternative to Piaget's cognitive theory which, according to Nicolopoulou (1991), places play squarely in the context of cognitive development. For Vygotsky (1978), play is always a social symbolic activity and typically involves more than one child. In his theory, Vygotsky gives culture and socialization a key role in development.

The understanding that children from different cultural backgrounds bring different sets of experiences and knowledge is also relevant to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. According to Vygotsky children come into the classroom with previous knowledge and it is up to the teacher to build on this preexisting knowledge. In his theory Vygotsky talked about "the zone of proximal development" where culture and social interaction play a big part. He defined this zone as the difference between the child's actual development level and the potential developmental level a child may reach with the guidance of an adult or a more capable peer. In addition, Vygotsky (1978) stressed the social nature of human development and the importance of play in the development of language which is the tool of thought.

Psychological research on Vygotsky's perspective concluded that play is an essential form of social activity, primarily involving an interaction between infants and care givers and later on developing into an interaction with siblings and peer groups (Nicolopoulou, 1991). According to Nicolopoulou (1991), interactions with siblings and peers through play are important in the development of early communicative language, turn taking, conversational skills, and the acquisition of other social skills.

Importance of Play in the Development of Language

Play was declared as a child's basic right along with rights such as nutrition, housing, health care and education in the United Nations Declaration of The Rights of the Child in 1948 (Scales, Almy, Nicolopoulou, & Ervin-Tripp, 1991). Many adults consider play as a mere time filler and not a necessary part of healthy development. On the contrary, researchers and educators believe that play is a special activity with features that set it apart from other activities. Self directed interest, active engagement, and experimentations with possibilities in the physical world and in relationships with peers are some of the special and important features of play

(Scales, et al., 1991). In their play children generate rules of conduct, establish roles and plots, and negotiate with their play partners. Play formats include solitary play and social play with others or objects (Fromberg, 2002).

Researchers have found that young children's play positively influences their development of social competence, language, and cognition (Fromberg, 2002). Children who play with one another learn that others have views that may differ from their own. They also learn that others have feelings similar to their own. Therefore, through play they are building their "theory of mind" and the notion that others have their own ideas and views (Fromberg, 2002). In particular, theory of mind has been studied during sociodramatic play when children take on the role of someone else. According to Fromberg, during their play children interpreted and predicted the behavior of others while they achieved a sense of self-awareness.

Importance of Play and Peer Interactions in the Development of Second Language

Authentic communication provides a real social context for learning communicative functions of the new language (Genesee, 1994). Through play children gain opportunities to learn language from each other and to practice what they have learned elsewhere. This process of learning affects all levels of language: sounds, vocabulary, syntax, the verb system, social markers and stylistic features and organized routines (Ervin-Tripp, 1991).

Developmental theorists suggest that young children begin to use their emerging language skills to coordinate their imaginative constructs with a friend by linking their expanding social knowledge with features of the interactive play experience through conversation (Fraver, 1992). Interactions with peers and adults in a social context are sources of language input for the development of children's communication skills (Johnson, 1991). Indeed, one and two-year-old children develop rhythms and sounds of language which they practice

through peer play. Between the ages of three and four children develop conversational skills in negotiating object play with each other. At ages four and five children's speech is a lot more mature as they begin to adopt play roles such as a 'doctor' or 'daddy' (Ervin-Tripp, 1991). As mentioned by Saunders and O'Brien (2006) the method of instruction is not the major predictor of language development in 2LL. The interactions children have with peers who speak the new language and the quality of these interactions play a big part in learning a new language (Johnson, 1991). Many researchers such as Onchwari, et al. (2008) and Lee, Butler and Tippins (2007) mentioned that 2LLs experience isolation when they enter a new peer group. Tabors (2008) also described how children learning a second language face a dilemma: in order to learn the new language the language learners must be accepted by their peers, but, at the same time, to be socially accepted they are required to speak the language.

Interactions with peers who speak the new language may contribute to the 2LLs in a number of ways (Fassier, 1998): 2LLs would have many sources of input for the new language other than the teacher or adult, and thus, many more situations for talk with children and an opportunity to practice the language (Enright, 1991). Peer interactions also help children organize their thoughts and make sense of their experiences. Enright (1991) described this type of language input as comprehensible, immediately useful and interesting to the 2LL. Much of the talk among children gives opportunities to use forms of language that would not be used with the teacher (Fassier, 1998). In addition, peer interactions may be less anxiety-provoking for second language learners than interacting with their teachers (Johnson, 1994).

The ideal L2 learning environment should have to meet two major criteria. First, the classroom should be a social environment where both children and teachers have a mutual desire to communicate and be understood (Fassier, 1998), and there are many authentic opportunities to

use language (Fassier, 1998). Second, in order for L2 learners to learn the second language through social interaction, they need exposure to L2 proficient speakers who adapt their language to make themselves understood (Fassier, 1998). In a natural context where children form natural interactions with one another through play, 2LLs have a valuable source of language input (Ervin-Tripp, 1991). A study carried out by Hirschler (1991) provides an example of children supporting their 2LL peers in learning a new language. In this micro-ethnographic study five preschool children were trained by the researcher to give support to the 2LL in their classroom as they played. Target children were taught five strategies on how to interact more frequently and more optimally with 2LLs. These strategies were: initiation, reinitiation, slower rate of speech, better enunciation, requesting clarification, and recasting and expansion. Interactions between native speakers and 2LL were audio-taped and examined closely by looking at their duration, language modifications and the locations of the interactions in the classroom. Hirschler found that native speaking children could act as valuable language resources if they were persuaded and trained to interact with 2LL. The intervention she designed proved that awareness of native speakers of how to interact with their peers who were learning English as a second language increased the contact between the 2LL and native speakers, which in turn increased the 2LL's exposure to the new language. The significance of this study lies in its explicit examination of the role of native speakers in promoting language development for peers who are learning a second language. Although a large number of researchers have studied the interactions of the 2LLs with their peers and teachers, Hirschler trained the native speakers, and subsequently recorded their interactions with the 2LLs. Therefore, Hirschler readily captured effective strategies these children employed.

Fassier (1998), on the other hand, looked at peer support for “getting into English” in an ESL (English as a Second Language) kindergarten classroom where the children came from eight different language backgrounds and the teacher was the only native speaker. She carried out her study in an urban public elementary school in a classroom of 31 ESL children and a monolingual English speaking teacher. Over a period of 6 months of participant observation using qualitative, sociolinguistic methodology, the researcher documented the range of contexts in which 6 children came to use English. At the beginning of the school year Fassier reported that the students formed isolated islands of home language where children who shared a language sat together and used their home language to converse. As the study continued the researcher reported that children started to use a number of different strategies to establish a conversational loop that overcame barriers of home language background. Some of these strategies, which were also reported by Ervin-Tripp (1991), are: imitation, talk about contexts such as the objects the participants are playing with, and predictable talk schemata (predictable routine of talking on the phone). In her study Fassier (1998) demonstrated a 2LL trying to match his phrases to that of a native speaking peer through imitation of structures.

Igna (Native) – Jerry (2LL): (pointing repeatedly at Jerry’s writing) I don’t like that. I don’t like that. I don’t like that.

Jerry- Igna: (Grinning pointing back at hers) I don’t like this. I don’t like this. I don’t like this.

Igna- Jerry: I like mine. I don’t like yours.

Jerry – Igna: So I don’t like/ I like mine, not/not you! (Igna laughs). (p.379)

Fassier (1998) added that the children’s abiding interest in each other’s business led to spontaneous language practice, during which a spontaneous pool of vocabulary circulated among peers. Fassier (1998) claimed that early childhood classrooms in which instructional contexts are limited only to alternating cycles of teacher directed group times and the isolating quiet of

independent seatwork will not accommodate collaborative strategies for getting into the new language. Similar to the children in Fassier's (1998) study where 2LLs from similar backgrounds supported each other's language learning, Meyer, Klein, and Genishi (1994) also looked at the effects of having peers from the same linguistic background learning English as a second language in the classroom. They conducted an ethnographic study of four Korean girls over a year beginning with entrance into preschool. Children who lack peers from the same ethno linguistic background may spend months unable to join in social games with other children in the classroom (Tabors & Snow, 1994). Instead, the four Korean girls in this study were observed to engage in role play activities where Korean culture was evident. According to Meyer, et al. (1994) other newcomers into the class oriented themselves to the teacher; however the four girls depended on each other to guide their own process of participation. The girls jointly explored the new setting where the language and culture were different from their own and found ways to guide each other's participation (Meyer, et al., 1994). They did not go through the silent observation stage with little interaction which is typical of many preschool second language learners.

Second Language Learners Acceptance by Peers

Children's tendency to seek social interactions with their peers is a critical developmental competency that begins to establish early in life (Brown, Odom, & Conroy, 2001). These essential interactions increase in frequency and complexity throughout their early years. Researchers have noted that young children's successful peer interactions have a major role in the development of their social, cognitive and language competencies (Brown, et al., 2001). According to Piaget's (1962) socialization theory there are two types of socialization. One is between a child and an adult, where the child is guided to the norms and expectations of society.

Another is the interaction between two children who both present their own understanding and are equal agents and recipients of meaning. The latter is important because the child builds a sense of self and begins to understand the boundaries that separate self from others. On the other hand, children who have difficulties in developing interactions with peers and who fail to build positive relationships with their peers are at risk for behavioral and social maladjustment later in life (Brown, et al., 2001).

There are many reasons why children may struggle to gain peer acceptance. One reason may be that they are unable to use language effectively. Preschoolers use their communicative competence to build friendships. Thus, if children show signs of poor communicative skills they will often be denied access to their peer groups (Howes, 1988). Howes (1988) investigated the peer interactions and friendships of children between the ages of one and six. She found that children's experiences with peers in general were related to individual differences in social competence. In her study, Howes (1988) also found that children who struggle with peer acceptance and building friendships tend to become less positive within their relationships with peers over time. It was found in a number of studies that children with limited language encounter a number of social consequences such as not being fully incorporated into peer interactions. A study done by Hazen and Black (1989) investigated the relationship between social status and discourse skills in normally developing preschool children. Each child in the classroom received a Liked or Disliked score based on the combination of positive and negative nominations he or she received. Results from this study indicated that the socially accepted children had better skills than less socially accepted children for initiating, maintaining and reinitiating coherent discourse across interaction contexts. The authors concluded that having the ability to respond effectively to the initiations of others is an important factor for the social

acceptance of preschool children and school aged children. Moreover, Fromberg (2002) discussed the importance of play for the development and practice of the social skills Hazen and Black (1989) referred to as a requirement for social acceptance among peers.

Children who were sought out as preferred conversational partners by peers in an integrated preschool setting were generally those with normally developing language skills rather than children with speech and language impairments or those learning a new language in the classroom setting (Gertner, Rice, & Hadley, 1994). Gertner and colleagues examined children's peer relationships in a preschool classroom attended by children with varying degrees of communication ability. They compared three groups of children: children with normally developing language skills, children with speech and/or language impairments (S/LI), and children learning English as a second language (ESL). The purpose of their study was to examine the relationship between children's ability to use language skillfully and their acceptance among peers. The subjects in their study were 31 children who were enrolled in the Language Acquisition Preschool. Children were placed in one of the three language status groups according to each child's performance on a test and descriptive language measures. Of the 31 children 10 were ESL; 9 were normally developing and 12 were children S/LI. The children were asked to point to three pictures of peers they liked to play with and three they disliked to play with. The results of this study indicated that limited language ability is associated with lower levels of social acceptance among peers. The children with language limitations were least likely to be identified as preferred peer playmates. Gertner and colleagues (1994) suggested that the findings of this study support the idea that verbal abilities contribute to peer acceptance. Children with language limitations are indeed at risk for the negative consequences of unpopularity, among other things. For example, children who are not accepted by their peers may develop low self-

esteem which may contribute to future adjustments in patterns of conversational interaction (Gertner, et al., 1994).

Over time and with appropriate teacher intervention, Clawson (2002) believed that minority children can and do engage in increasingly more complex play with others. In her qualitative study, Clawson looked at the play experiences of language minority children in nursery. Six preschool 2LLs were observed (4 spoke Arabic, 1 spoke Korean and 1 spoke Malay as a first language) during free play time for 30 minutes on four different visits. Results from this study indicated that language differences initially served as a barrier to social play between 2LLs and native English speaking peers. However, over time and with appropriate teacher intervention, such as facilitating interactions between 2LLs and English speaking children, both groups of children appeared to be more receptive to play with the other. Clawson added that this was possibly due to an increase in English proficiency on the part of the 2LLs. She concluded that free play may initially serve as a context where linguistically diverse children choose to play separately from one another and added that it is necessary for teachers to facilitate play between peers from different language backgrounds.

Howes, Sanders, and Lee (2008), in a study similar to the Clawson (2002) study but with a larger sample size, looked at the play interactions of children who lacked peers with a shared ethnic heritage (minority children) and children who spoke a different language at home than the language most often used in the classrooms. These children appeared to be struggling with peer interaction six months after entry into the peer group. In their short-term longitudinal study Howes et al. (2008) examined changes over time in social competence with peers as a function of child and classroom characteristics. They observed one hundred and seventy ethnically diverse low-income children, all new to their peer groups, at entry and six months later. Children

were randomly selected from 17 different programs in a large, urban, and ethnically and racially diverse city to participate. The researchers used the revised Peer Play Scale developed by Howes and Matherson (1992) to measure the complexity of play. Across all classrooms in the study, Howes et al. (2008) found that children became less anxious over time when they had at least one peer who spoke their home language and were able to build relationships with their peers more effectively. Findings of this study indicate the importance of play with peers from similar backgrounds in the development of language.

According to Howes et al. (2008), children new to a peer group who have peers who share their language and/or race/ethnicity can rely on commonly understood ways of interacting as they form new relationships, or may be less anxious because something in this new environment is familiar. It is important for early childhood practitioners to understand the role of inter-ethnic/racial relations and young children's development of competence with peers.

In contrast, Gillanders (2007) looked at the implications of the teacher-child relationship for second language learning. The teacher observed in the study was a prekindergarten teacher who had taught 2LLs for several years but with no formal training for teaching 2LLs. Her school was located in an urban area with a high number of Latino children. At the time of the study 16 four year old children were enrolled in her classroom: 11 African American, 1 Asian, and 4 Latino children. The researcher observed the teacher's interactions with the Latino children, the Latino children's behavior, and interactions of other children with the Latino children 2 to 3 times a week over a year. To determine the children's progress over the year, formal and informal assessments were conducted with the Latino children. The researcher reported that at the beginning of the year, the interactions among the Latino children and the English speaking children were short and immersed in activities that did not demand a significant amount of

language. As the year progressed these interactions became longer. Gillanders (2007) mentioned that one might expect that low proficiency in English would limit the Latino children in being full playmates with the English speaking children, but that was not the case in this study. All four Latino children actively played with the English speaking children. By observing the teacher's communication style with the 2LLs and her teaching strategies the researcher found that the English speaking children in the study mirrored the teacher's nurturing relationship with the Latino children, and viewed them as desirable children to include in their play. They also found ways of interacting with the Latino children even though these children did not have a strong command of the English language. From the findings of this study Gillanders (2007) concluded that teachers who are sensitive to children's emotional needs might be able to transcend the language barriers and create social environments in which these children are accepted by their peers and have more opportunities to become full participants in the community of the classroom without losing their native language. As demonstrated in this study, positive teacher-child relationships can increase the opportunities children learning a new language have to interact with children who are native speakers of that language (Gillanders, 2007). To become a member of a sociocultural group means one must acquire the skills, language, and behaviors that are part of that language community (Gillanders, 2007). A child's social status in the classroom defines the opportunities she or he will have to participate in the community and the frequency and quality of interactions with other children. During such interactions children who are more competent in the language support the language learners by extending their skills and knowledge (Fassier, 1998).

As research has shown, children learning a second language may need extra support during peer interactions and building friendships in the classroom as they struggle with learning

the new language. In order for educators to understand how to better support 2LLs we need to understand the challenges they face including their needs in the classroom. In my review of research I have not come across studies where young second language learners were asked about their views regarding the challenges they face. The majority of researchers have studied this issue by observing young children and/or interviewing their teachers. This indicates that there is a lack of research which aims to carry the voices of young 2LLs. The current study aims to fill this gap by listening to the views, experiences and feelings of 2LL children to gain an important perspective regarding their needs. Through inquiring about the challenges of being a second language learner we can better understand how to support them. This exploratory study seeks to inform future studies with respect to the inclusion of young participants' perspectives.

Chapter Three: Method

In order to explore young children's views regarding the effects of being a second language learner on building relationships with peers, interviews with five second language learners were conducted in their homes and one group interview with all five participants was held at the children's school. Parents of the participating children provided demographic information by completing a questionnaire developed by the researcher. In addition to demographic information the questionnaire also included questions regarding the children's language and social development. Interview transcripts were analyzed to determine common themes and provide examples of experiences of these young second language learners to answer the research question: what are the views and experiences of young second language learners on building relationships with peers?

In this chapter, the setting and participants, as well as a rationale for the design of the study and procedures utilized in this study are described in detail. Finally, the method of data analysis is explained.

Design of the Study

A qualitative design was chosen for the present study. The focus of the study is listening to the voices of the children and discovering their experiences as second language learners. For this reason interviewing children was found to be an appropriate method for collecting data. Observing the children in their environment, like many researchers such as Clark (1999) and Clawson (2002) have done, would allow the researcher to observe the types of play they engage in and the duration of their play according to the researcher's own interpretation of what is observed. Observation does not, however, necessarily give insight into the children's feelings or their views about building relationships with children, when they do not speak the same

language. During all interviews a persona doll was used to give the children a familiar context to talk about and at the same time help them feel less vulnerable. Persona dolls are not regular dolls or puppets. Practitioners create individual personas for the dolls and change them from inanimate objects into ‘people’ with individual personalities, family, cultural and class backgrounds, names, gender and ages. The persona doll in this study was named Merve. Merve provided the children a comfort zone that allowed them to share experiences and feelings without feeling pressured. According to Brown (2001) persona dolls help children feel more comfortable when interacting with others including helping children deal with their anxieties and fears. Persona dolls also help practitioners raise challenging issues with children that they might be reluctant to talk about (Brown, 2001). Brown added that using persona dolls in research with young children helps the researcher avoid imposing his or her own ideas on children. Using a persona doll to tell a story allows us to step back and let the children identify with the doll’s feelings and think critically. Researching with persona dolls also enables us to hear from the children what they think and feel about themselves and other people (Brown, 2001). Some children may need processes other than ‘talk’, which is the formal processes of interviews, to be able to describe their experiences. This is true especially for young children who have language delay, an emotional block, or communication difficulties (Cameron, 2005). Cameron suggested the use of books, pictures, dolls, and puppets to put the child at ease as the interview unfolds.

Procedure of Obtaining Consent and Assent

The administration of an Islamic school near a large urban center in western Canada was contacted to gain permission to post an advertisement (see Appendix A) for recruitment on the school’s parent communication board. Four parents volunteered to participate in the study. All volunteer families were contacted by phone to provide information regarding the study. Detailed

consent letters explaining the purpose, procedure and duration of the study (see Appendix B) were provided to parents and an interview date and time was scheduled with parents who provided consent. All letters of consent stated that participation in the study was voluntary and each individual had a right to withdraw from the study at any time. An assent statement (see Appendix C) was also read to each participating child before the first interview ensuring that they understood the procedure of the study. Each child was notified in age appropriate language that they had the choice to decline to participate in the study.

Once all individual interviews were completed the researcher contacted the participant's parents once again seeking consent for a third interview to take place at school. The purpose and procedure of the interview was explained to parents in a second consent form (see Appendix D). After obtaining consent, school administration was contacted to gain permission for conducting a group interview at the school. A letter of consent was also provided for the school administration (see Appendix E). A time and place for the interview was arranged with the school administration ensuring that intrusion to children's daily routine was minimal.

Setting and Participants

The setting for the study was, principally, the home of each participant. The researcher visited each student in their home on two occasions, at times arranged with parents. Individual interviews were carried out in a quiet area of the home. At least one parent was present in all the homes interviews. During the interviews only the researcher and the participant were in the room while the parents went about their routines in the home or waited in nearby rooms. Two months after all home interviews were completed, a group interview was held at the school in an empty classroom.

The participants of this study were five children from a non-English language background (see Table 1). The children were volunteers from the Arabic community in a large urban center in western Canada. Children from an Arabic background were sought for the study because the researcher's first language is Arabic, she was thus, able to understand the children during the interview and switch to Arabic when they appeared to struggle speaking in English or felt more comfortable speaking Arabic.

The participating children's ages ranged between 5 and 8 years of age and they were all female. Two of the children were siblings who were two years apart in age. All children had experienced learning English as a second language within the past 18 months.

Table 1

Description of participants

<i>Participant's Names</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>First language</i>	<i>Months in English classroom</i>
<i>Halah</i>	5	Arabic	6 months
<i>Maryam</i>	6	Arabic / Turkish	11 months
<i>Reem</i>	7	Arabic	15 months
<i>Manal</i>	7	Arabic	15 months
<i>Hind</i>	8	Arabic	19 months

As discussed earlier, the rationale behind recruiting students from an Islamic school was to ensure a sufficient number of participants who spoke the same language (Arabic) as the researcher. However, it became apparent after the first set of individual interviews that the Islamic school context itself, wherein a majority of students and teachers shared the same L1, strongly influenced these children's experiences and views of building friendships as 2LLs.

Since the original purpose of the study was intact and ecological generalizability was still achievable, no other settings or participants were recruited. However, I felt the unanticipated nature of this finding needed to be revealed prior to its discussion in later chapters.

Collection of Data

Data collection for this study was carried out in the form of two interviews held in the children's homes and one group interview carried out at the children's school. The procedure of the interview was explained in an age appropriate manner to each child indicating the duration and purpose of the interview. After explaining to each participant that they had a choice to withdraw from the study at any point children were asked to print their names on the assent form indicating they understood. Prior to the first interview, the researcher spent half an hour building a relationship with each child. Each interview took place in a quiet room in the child's home. In order to ensure the children felt comfortable participating in this study the half hour before the first interview was devoted to helping the children get acquainted with the researcher and help them feel at ease during the interviews. Children need time and space to get to know adult motives and personalities in order for them to trust the curiosity of the interviewer (Hancock & Mansfield, 2002). Creating supportive environments with uncritical acceptance of the children's responses is crucial in attaining valuable data (Hancock & Mansfield, 2002). This time was also valued as a period of free narrative which facilitated the child's settling in stage and the interviewer's grasp of the child's communication style. While the researcher spent time with each child building rapport, the parents were asked to complete a short questionnaire. This questionnaire asked parents to provide demographic, language development, and social development information (see Appendix F). The first interview began with the researcher reading a storybook titled 'Splat the Cat' to each child. The book describes feelings of fear and anxiety

on the first day of school experienced by a cat named Splat. In the book it is Splat's first day of school. The book begins with Splat getting ready for school and different ways he tries to avoid going to school. The book then goes on to describe the events of Splat's first day at school. The book ends positively with Splat in bed excited about his next day at school. After reading the story in English, each child was asked about their first day of school. Children were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences and feelings.

Following a short discussion of their first day at school children were introduced to the persona doll that was dressed in a traditional Turkish dress. The story of the doll in this study was of a Turkish student named Merve. The children listened to the story of Merve and how she arrived in Canada. The researcher explained to each child that Merve did not speak English and that it was her first day at kindergarten here in Canada (see Appendix G). Once the story was complete, each child was encouraged to talk about their opinions regarding Merve's feelings on her first day of school. The researcher aimed to elicit the children's views on what they think the experience of a 2LL would be on the first day of school. Questions such as: "How do you think she feels on her first day? Why?" "Will she be able to play with the other children?" "What can her teacher and friends do to help her?" were asked of each child. The interview script provided in Appendix G was used as an outline for the interviews. To allow children flexibility during the interviews, the script was not used verbatim. Questions were used as prompts to guide the discussions and were shaped depending on the responses given by the children. At the end of the interview the researcher thanked each child for his/her help and indicated that she would return the following week to talk more about Merve. The persona doll was reintroduced in the second interview, which was also audio-tapped, and the children were asked to recall her story. Once the story was reintroduced, the researcher asked each child their opinion on how Merve felt after

being in school for a week. They were encouraged to discuss their opinion of a 2LL's experience.

Two months after all individual interviews were completed a group interview was held at the children's school. All five participants were seated around a round, adult sized, table with the researcher in a quiet room at the school. During the group interview children were encouraged to talk about the persona doll for a third time with the presence of the doll (for details of the group interview protocol see Appendix H). Children were asked to recall Merve's story and talk about her first day at school. Later children were asked to talk about what they believed would cause the 2LL (Merve) to feel bad at school and what would cause her to feel good. The researcher also drew on some points from the individual interviews without revealing who had suggested them. Throughout the interview the students were reminded to raise their hand when they wished to speak and to wait for their turn. The children seemed very comfortable with the flow of the discussion and rarely interrupted each other. The researcher reminded the children that the audio recorder might not pick up everyone's answers if they all spoke at the same time. It seemed that the children understood this very well and were excited to hear their voices played back once the interview was completed.

Analysis of Data

All audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim in their entirety and any translations were done literally. Gestures and intonations were not noted since the focus of this study was on what the children said rather than how they said it. As might be expected, these semi-structured interviews with 5-8 year old children unfolded in the form of conversations. As the researcher and children conversed together they built an understanding of the experiences of second language learners. At times then the researcher unwittingly posed some leading

questions. Interestingly, many of the participants did not change their responses when this occurred. In addition, during the analysis, the possible influence such leading questions may have had on the children's responses was considered in depth.

Analysis of the interview data involved the researcher carefully studying each interview transcript. The raw data were organized in accordance with the key parts of the interview.

Children's responses were grouped under the following categories: the children's feelings on their first day of school, the children's thoughts on the persona doll's (a 2LL) feelings on her first day of school, negative feelings for the 2LL, positive feelings for the 2LL, and the children's suggestions to help the doll learn English and socialize in the classroom. The researcher studied each child's responses accordingly, and any mention of feelings and experiences related to being a 2LL was highlighted in each interview. Children's responses to each question were then compared in order to document the similarities and differences of their experiences and their views.

Chapter Four: Results

As indicated earlier, the research question which guided this study was: what are the views and experiences of young second language learners on building relationships with peers? In this section, the participants' responses are shared under the following categories: the children's feelings on their first day of school, their children's thoughts on the persona doll's (a 2LL) feelings on her first day of school, negative feelings for the 2LL, positive feelings for the 2LL, and the children's suggestions to help the doll learn English and socialize in the classroom.

Overview

My expectation as a researcher was that the children would link their own personal experiences to that of the doll's. They did not form this connection explicitly; however, most did provide similar answers when they expressed how they felt on their first day and what they believed were the doll's feelings on her first day of school.

Children's Feelings on their First Day of School

Children reported feeling afraid and nervous on their first day for a number of reasons, yet none reported explicitly on issues regarding being a second language learner. Most of the children articulated being in a new environment and meeting new people as a cause for how they felt on the first day of school.

The data indicate that on their first day of school most children in the study shared similar feelings. Three children reported that they were '*scared*' and '*nervous*' while the other two children said they were '*shy*' or felt '*worse than weird*'. When questioned about the reason for their feelings, four of the children stated that it was a result of not knowing the children in their classrooms. It was apparent from their responses that the most distinct memory the children had of their first day of school was meeting new people. Halah (all names are pseudonyms), for

example, said: *“Because I didn’t know the names of the children”* while Hind answered, *“Because I didn’t know who were my classmates and who was my teacher.”* Manal and Reem also reported that the reason why they felt scared and shy was a result of meeting strangers.

Maryam’s feelings, however, differed from the other children. Maryam talked about being afraid of everybody on her first day. She went on to describe her fear by indicating that she was pointed out to be physically smaller than the other children. Her responses suggest that she was cast as being different for her physical appearance. It was not clear from the data whether it was other children who labeled her as ‘tiny’ or adults around her.

First individual interview – Maryam (age 6)

Interviewer: How did he (the cat in the storybook) feel before?

Maryam: Um, weird.

Interviewer: Weird? Ok. How did you feel on your first day of school?

Maryam: Worse.

Interviewer: Worse? Why?

Maryam: I was afraid of everybody.

Interviewer: You were afraid of everybody?

Maryam: They were saying I’m so tiny! Even now they say I’m so tiny.

Interviewer: Even now they say you are tiny? But you’re not so tiny.

Maryam: (laughs)

Interviewer: You are a perfect size.

Maryam: Medium.

Interviewer: Medium? I am a bit tiny. My sisters are bigger than me.

Maryam: Everybody is um...what they call it? Um...small.

Interviewer: Everybody is small?

Maryam: Yeah because the giants most of them are bigger than them.

It seems, then, that Maryam was self conscious about her size when she started school. As she has stated, her size was pointed out to her causing her to feel 'weird.' Like the other children, she did not talk about being in a new environment where people around her spoke a new language. It appears that, if at all, language was not her main concern.

Halah had a different reason why she felt afraid on her first day. However, the interviewer's prompt when she asked about 'being scared', may have unduly influenced Halah's answer. That said, Halah was able to provide reasons for being afraid, namely, because she did not know the children and was not able to complete the homework given at school. Whether or not this fear was related to being a second language learner or simply a fear of the homework task, however, was not clarified. Halah's indication that she was now able to complete her homework is still ambiguous and may suggest that it was the new concept of homework that she was worried about previously, where as now she felt more competent. Yet another plausible interpretation is that her language skills developed and she was now capable of completing the tasks. However, as illustrated in the following excerpt Halah's fear was at no time explicitly related to learning a new language.

First individual interview – Halah (age 5)

Interviewer: When you went to school the first day were you scared?

Halah: (nods)

Interviewer: Yes?

Halah: (nods)

Interviewer: What were you scared of?

Halah: Because I didn't know the names of the children.

Interviewer: Oh, because you didn't know the names. What else? Anything else? You can tell me anything you want.

Halah: Because I didn't know how to do the homework.

Interviewer: Because you didn't know how to do homework. Ok. What about now? Do you know how to do homework?

Halah: Yes.

Interestingly, during the group interview, when the researcher asked about the issue of homework, as was mentioned in Halah's individual interview, Manal did explicitly connect Merve's (a 2LL) lack of English to not being able to complete the homework task. In addition, Manal quickly followed up with several solutions to support the 2LL. She indicated that a learner's parents would be able to help her *'if they know English.'* She also suggested that having a bilingual person, who speaks both English and Turkish, could help her understand. Finally she added that it would be helpful for the 2LL if her teacher spoke some of her first language (Turkish).

Group interview

Interviewer: Some of you said that she just won't know how to do the homework and that's why she will feel sad. Does anybody think that she won't be able to do homework?

Maryam: No.

Hind: I think so because she is not able to.

Manal: Yeah because she doesn't know the words in English but if her mom knows English and her dad they could help her.

(Children talking together unclear)

Manal: She will have... but when she gets used to the language she will hear everyone talk and then she will.

Manal: Even if she finds someone who speaks um what is it called?

Interviewer: Turkish?

Manal: Yeah Turkish she could ask them what are you saying 'what does that mean?' Then she will learn.

Interviewer: Yeah very good.

Manal: Also if the teacher talks Turkish.

Interviewer: So if her teacher talks Turkish it will help?

Manal: (nods affirmatively)

Manal's responses then concur with Halah's belief that 2LLs would have difficulties with homework but unlike Halah, Manal did state that the 2LL's difficulty is a result of incompetence in the language of instruction.

Children's Views on the Persona Doll's Feelings

After the book activity and the discussion regarding the first day of school the researcher proceeded to introduce the persona doll named Merve. The goal was to see whether or not the children would relate their own experiences when talking about the persona doll. Most of the children did not state that the doll would feel the way they felt on their first day of school; however, the answers they provided regarding how they felt were very similar to their responses on how they thought the doll would feel. So as it was for them personally, it seems that the issue of being in a new environment and not knowing peers and teachers was a concern for Merve, the doll, including not speaking the language of instruction. Three children reported that the doll would feel scared and shy as a result of not speaking the language in addition to not knowing the people in the new environment. These were the same three children who reported that they were nervous and/or scared because they were also not familiar with their peers and teacher. Such commonality is illustrated in Hind's first individual interview, where she stated that the doll would feel shy because she will meet new people on her first day, which is similar to why Hind said she was nervous on her first day.

First individual interview – Hind (age 8)

Interviewer: How did you feel on your first day of school? Do you remember your first day of school?

Hind: I was nervous.

Interviewer: You were nervous? Why were you nervous?

Hind: Because it was the first day. Because I didn't know who were my classmates and who was my teacher.

Interviewer: How do you think she (the persona doll) feels?

Hind: Shy.

Interviewer: Why do you think she is shy?

Hind: Because she doesn't know anybody and she can't talk to them because they don't know how to speak her language and she doesn't know how to speak with them.

In the parent questionnaire, which was provided to parents of all participants, Hind's mother also reported that Hind was shy and timid when it came to building friendships. She elaborated that her daughter's struggle was a result of a lack of fluency in English. Although Hind gradually learned English, according to her mother, being a 2LL caused her to develop a shy personality.

Table 2 summarizes the responses given by the participants on how they felt and how they imagined the doll would feel on her first day of school. As this table illustrates, the children indicated language to be a secondary issue for the doll but did not indicate language to be a problem for themselves. However, the similarities between the children's discussions of how they felt on their first day and how they believed the doll would feel on her first day may be seen as evidence that the children elaborated on their own feelings when they spoke of the doll's feelings.

Table 2

Summary of the children's and the persona doll's feelings

	<i>Child's feeling</i>	<i>Why?</i>	<i>Doll's feeling</i>	<i>Why?</i>
Maryam	Worse than weird	Afraid of everybody	Happy	_____
Halal	Scared	Didn't know the children's names Didn't know how to do homework	Scared and sad	Doesn't know the names Doesn't know how to speak English
Hind	Nervous	Didn't know teacher or classmates	Shy	Doesn't know anybody Doesn't know the language
Manal	Scared and nervous	Didn't know the people	Scared and nervous	Meeting new people and doesn't know the language
Reem	Shy	Didn't know anybody	Shy	Didn't know anybody

Note. Maryam did not disclose a reason to why she believed Merve would feel happy.

Maryam was the only participant out of the five who reported that Merve would feel happy on her first day of school. According to Maryam not knowing, the language would not be an issue because the students could communicate nonverbally. When the interviewer asked Maryam whether or not the other children would play with Merve she indicated that they would. When the interviewer then asked her *“how they would play because the doll does not speak English”* Maryam illustrated the use of body language, in this case moving the doll's head. Although this question was leading in the sense that the interviewer implied that 2LLs would face challenges when playing with their peers, Maryam maintained her original stance and demonstrated how play could occur under such circumstances. Unfortunately Maryam did not elaborate and her affirmation of the researcher's summary may result from either: the researcher correctly interpreted her response or Maryam agreed in order to please the adult.

First individual interview – Maryam (age 6)

- Interviewer:* Maryam, how do you think Merve feels about going to school?
- Maryam:* Um...she feels happy?
- Interviewer:* Happy? OK.
- Maryam:* Oh she has a small eye (pointing to the doll's eye).
- Interviewer:* Mhmm...do you think all the kids are gonna play with her?
- Maryam:* Yeah.
- Interviewer:* How do you think they are gonna play with her? She doesn't know any English.
- Maryam:* Like this (nods head up and down then left and right).
- Interviewer:* They just nod their head to say no? They don't have to speak the same language?
- Maryam:* Yeah.

Interestingly during the second interview, Maryam offered two different stories regarding a 2LL's experience. In her first story she narrated a positive experience for Merve, the 2LL. Later Maryam narrated a second version using her own doll that was not as positive as the first. In her second narrative Maryam commented that her doll felt sad and did not have friends, which according to her was a result of not knowing the language.

Second individual interview – Maryam (age 6)

- Interviewer:* Do you think she (Merve) was able to speak with her friends?
- Maryam:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* How did she talk to her friends?
- Maryam:* She could go like this (nods her head to say yes and no).
- Maryam:* (lifting up her doll) mine doesn't know English.
- Interviewer:* Oh yours doesn't know English? How does she feel?
- Maryam:* Sad.
- Interviewer:* Why?

Maryam: *Because she didn't have any friends.*

Interviewer: *Why doesn't she have friends?*

Maryam: *Because she can't speak English.*

Interviewer: *Oh that's too bad. How can her friends help her not feel sad?*

Maryam: *By kids helping her by being nice.*

There could be many interpretations to why Maryam presented two different stories for a 2LL. When talking about the persona doll Maryam's response was more positive than when she talked about her own doll. It is possible that Maryam gave this response regarding the persona doll because she saw it as the "right answer" or the expected answer to please the adult. However, when talking about her own doll's experience as a 2LL she expressed a less positive experience.

Another explanation for Maryam's differing response may be a result of the interviewer's leading question during the first individual interview '*How do you think they are gonna play with her? She doesn't know any English.*' During the first individual interview with Maryam, Maryam expressed that the doll would be able to communicate with her friends by nodding. This leading question may have given Maryam the sense that her response, when describing the persona doll's feelings, was not what the researcher was looking for so she chose her own doll to give a new answer during the second interview. According to Maryam, Merve would not have any difficulty communicating with her friends; however her own doll was unable to make friends and as a result was sad. Other children, Maryam suggested, could help her doll feel better by "*being nice*".

Yet another interpretation may be that Maryam was constructing a self narrative using her doll when she went on to narrate an episode from school. Linking her own experience to what she narrated about her doll could be an indication that her narrative was about her when she

talked about her own doll. Yet when she talked about Merve her responses were optimistic and hopeful. She began this narrative by disclosing that her own doll's experience was similar to her own: *"By kids helping her by being nice."* *"That's what happened to me."* Maryam implied that she was having trouble building friendships with her peers. She recalled being ignored on the bus by other children. She also talked about another student who was frequently called on by the teacher to answer. Maryam then disclosed that she was called names and teased by another student. It seems that for Maryam, being accepted by peers and treated well was most important when it comes to making friends.

Second individual interview – Maryam (age 6)

Maryam: That's what happened to me!

My first day of school I was sitting in the front / back in the bus.

It was oh boring. Two boys and two girls were ignoring me.

The boy always say "I can say"

His name is Abdallah. He knows everything.

He always shout "I know" (Maryam raises her hand).

The teacher always ask him.

And today Sarah was too mean.

She said bad words on my face.

And I didn't like it and I told the teacher on the bus.

She said don't play with her. She did it to me.

Interviewer: Is that why you think (interrupted by interviewee)

Maryam: I hate school. I wish no one was mean.

Interviewer: How do you think Merve feels now after one week of school?

Maryam: She feeled nice and happy because of this nodding.

Maybe she get tired this nodding.

In contrast, Manal seemed to relate her own experience to the persona doll's experience. During the first individual interview, when Merve was introduced, Manal stated that she also did not know English when she started school. She mentioned that she learned English by listening to others talking around her. She did not disclose any further information about the process of learning English and only said she was "*a little scared*" when the interviewer posed the question "*did you feel scared at all?*" It is acknowledged that by asking the young participant if she felt "scared" the interviewer may have shaped the respondent's answer and given her the sense that she should have been scared.

First individual interview - Manal (age 7)

Manal: Even me. When I went to Jordan I came back I didn't know a word of English.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you didn't know English and you were gonna go to school?

Manal: I heard the people talking and then I knew the words.

Interviewer: Did you feel scared at all?

Manal: A little.

The one student who reported that she did not feel sad like the persona doll when she started school was Halah. During the first interview, the interviewer asked Halah how she thought Merve would feel on her first day of school when she did not speak the same language as her peers. Halah's response was that the persona doll would feel sad because all the children spoke English and she did not. As the interview carried on Halah was asked whether she felt like Merve on her first day of school.

First individual interview – Halah (age 5)

- Interviewer:* Were you sad like Merve when you went to school?
- Halah:* No.
- Interviewer:* What did you do on your first day at school?
- Halah:* We played.
- Interviewer:* You played? With who did you play?
- Halah:* Leena.
- Interviewer:* With Leena? Does Leena speak Arabic?
- Halah:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Did you play with anyone else?
- Halah:* Laila.
- Interviewer:* Laila? You played with her as well? Do they both speak Arabic?
- Halah:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Do you play with kids who don't speak Arabic or do you only play with kids who speak Arabic?
- Halah:* Who don't speak Arabic.
- Interviewer:* Do you play with them?
- Halah:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Do you speak with them in English?
- Halah:* Yes.
- Interviewer:* Who do you like to play with more?
- Halah:* With Leena.
- Interviewer:* Why do you like to play with Leena?
- Halah:* Because we know her.

Halah did not feel sad on her first day of school the way she thought Merve would feel.

When asked about her first day she talked about playing with her friends Leena and Laila. Both

of the friends she mentioned are peers who speak Halah's first language (Arabic). Halah did not elaborate on her reason for preferring to play with Leena other than stating she knew her. As can be seen below, Manal, Halah's sister who also was one of the participants of this study, confirmed that Halah did not speak English when she started school and so she spoke with Leena in Arabic.

Second individual interview – Manal (age 7)

Interviewer: What about now at school, do you have anyone that doesn't speak English?

Manal: (shakes head left and right)

Interviewer: No? Everybody knows?

Manal: Oh yes! My sister.

Interviewer: Oh yes your sister. So how was she at school?

Manal: When she first went she was talking to Leena because she's in her class. She talked with her in Arabic and then Leena started talking in English to her and then Halah was understanding English and then she knew.

Having a bilingual friend in the classroom environment seems to have helped Halah in her adjustment period. According to Manal, not only could Halah and Leena communicate in Arabic, but Leena also exposed Halah to English by talking to her and helping her understand this second language. In the parent questionnaire, Halah and Manal's mother reported that both her daughters 'experienced difficulty' in building friendships with peers who did not speak their first language. According to the mother this difficulty did not last long as the girls became more competent in English.

Through these individual interviews the researcher was able to collect valuable data and insights on the children's thoughts and views as second language learners. During the group

interview context, however, the children were also able to listen to these views and discuss them with each other. In the following sections the data from the group interview are presented.

Group Discussion on the Negative Feelings of Second Language Learner

During the group interview participants were asked about their thoughts on what might cause a 2LL to feel bad in the classroom. Two children responded by saying that '*not knowing the language*' could be a cause to have negative feelings. Manal added that the 2LL might feel bad '*because some people might make fun of her*'. Maryam supported Manal's idea that the 2LL would be '*made fun of*' because '*she didn't know how to speak and was shy*'. When asked about how she would be made fun of Hind added that children would tease the 2LL by saying '*Merve doesn't know English. Merve doesn't know English.*' Although this concept of being teased did not come up in the individual interviews, many of the participants seemed to agree that a 2LL may struggle with peer acceptance.

Group interview – Part 1

Interviewer: So what do you guys think might make her feel bad in school? Think about it. Let's take a minute and think about it and then you can raise your hands. Think if you were Merve why would you feel bad in school? Or just think of Merve why would she feel bad on her first day?

Ok let's start this way and then go around (pointing at one side of the table)

Reem: Um because she didn't know how to speak English.

Interviewer: That would make her feel bad? Not knowing the language?

Reem: Yeah.

Interviewer: Ok.

Hind: That's what I was gonna say.

Interviewer: You can say it again. You can say it in your own words.

Hind: It's the same thing I was gonna say.

Interviewer: Ok. What do you think Manal?

Manal: Um people might make fun of her cause it's her first day.

Interviewer: Oh, people might make fun of her cause it's her first day?

Manal: Yes.

Maryam: And the people were making fun of Merve.

Interviewer: They will make fun of Merve?

(Interrupted by student)

Interviewer: Hold on and we will come back to you. Ok?

Maryam: Because she didn't know how to speak and she was shy.

Interviewer: Oh so you are thinking they will make fun of her because she doesn't know how to speak?

Maryam: (Nods)

Interviewer: And she is shy? Ok. How do you think they will make fun of her? What will they make fun of?

Hind: They will say "Merve can't speak English" "Merve can't speak English" teasing something like that.

Interviewer: They will be teasing her because she can't speak English?

Hind: Yeah.

Four of the five children mentioned, during the group interview, that the 2LL would face challenges due to a lack of proficiency in English. Only one student, Halah, reported that the 2LL would experience negative feelings caused by an issue other than being a second language learner. Halah felt that Merve would feel negatively due to “*not knowing the names of the children*” in her class. This is the same response she gave for why she felt afraid and why Merve would feel afraid on the first day of school during her individual interview. Following this discussion the children were asked to talk about a 2LL’s positive feelings in the classroom.

Group Discussion on the Positive Feelings of Second Language Learner

When the question ‘What would make the 2LL feel good at school?’ was presented to the children, Maryam responded ‘*She knows how to speak English and everybody was not teasing her*’. Manal agreed with Maryam and suggested that as time passes the 2LL would improve her English and that is when she would feel better. Here children continued to talk about the issue of language when it comes to peer acceptance. Manal added that learning the names of her classmates would also result in positive feelings for the 2LL.

Interestingly Hind suggested that having the ability to speak a different language is a reason for the 2LL to feel good. Maryam added that being able to speak Turkish could be her ‘*secret*’. What is intriguing about Maryam’s comment is that she is a refugee from northern Iraq where Turkish, in addition to Arabic, is spoken among many families. Upon arrival at Maryam’s home for the first interview I was surprised and delighted to hear her speak Turkish with her mother. It is possible that Maryam feels that Turkish is her ‘*secret*’ language. It makes her different than the rest of the children who have an Arabic background. Reem added that the 2LL would feel good when she teaches her peers some of her language and they teach her English.

Group interview – Part 2

Interviewer: Ok. So what do you think might make her feel good in school? Take a second and think about it. What will make her feel good? Ok let’s start this way and go around (asking children to answer clockwise around the table).

Maryam: Um like she knows how to speak English and everybody was not teasing her.

Interviewer: When she knows English everybody will stop teasing her and that will make her feel good?

Maryam: (nods)

- Interviewer:* Ok. Very good answer. Hind do you have anything to say? No?
- Manal:* After week after week she will know how to speak English so people will stop teasing her and making fun of her and then she could make friends because also after week after week she could memorize the names.
- Interviewer:* Oh very good. So after weeks pass and after every week she will learn more and then they will stop making fun of her?
- Manal:* Yes.
- Hind:* Um she knows how to speak that language and they don't.
- Interviewer:* Oh ok she knows how to speak Turkish and they don't so that will make her feel good?
- Hind:* Yeah.
- Maryam:* Yeah she will have a secret.
- Interviewer:* She will have a secret language?
- Maryam:* (Giggles nodding affirmatively)
- Reem:* Ah she is gonna teach them Turkey and they are gonna teach her English and then they are gonna be happy.
- Interviewer:* That is very good too! So she is gonna feel happy when she is able to teach them?
- Reem:* Yeah.
- Interviewer:* And they are gonna teach her?
- Reem:* Yeah.

Two of the children gave value to the first language in this discussion. It is fascinating to see that even at a young age some of the children recognized the first language as a positive feature while one student, Maryam, seemed to believe it is something to keep hidden. It is noteworthy here to point out that Maryam was the student who talked about peer acceptance, being different, and being 'bullied' during the individual interviews.

Suggestions to Help the Second Language Learner

When asked about ways to support Merve, the 2LL, learn English all the children had interesting suggestions. Using sign language, playing games where there is no need for language, peer support to help familiarize the 2LL with the new environment and people, and finally peers who speak the L1 were some of the suggestions the children reported in the individual and group interviews.

The role of peer support was not only evident in the support bilingual children may give their classmates but also support from native speakers who may help the 2LL adapt to the new environment. When the children were asked about how other children could help Merve feel more comfortable in her new classroom three children talked about support from peers. While Maryam only mentioned that other children could help by being ‘nice’ to the 2LL (Second individual interview - Maryam), Manal and Hind gave specific suggestions of ways children may be helpful. In Manal’s discussion she first focused on helping the new 2LL meet everyone. As she had mentioned earlier, not knowing people in the new school environment was one of her first concerns. Here she pointed out that a way to help Merve is by introducing her to others in the new environment. Only when the interviewer reminded her that Merve does not speak English and would not be able to communicate with the people she meets did Manal talk about teaching her English. She responded that others could help her learn English by “telling her the words.” This may be connected to how she mentioned she learned English during the first individual interview (see page 45) where she talked about not knowing English but then heard the words around her. As seen below, the children talk about helping the second language learner adjust and learn to speak the new language.

First individual interview - Manal (age 7)

Interviewer: How would you play with her (Merve)?

Manal: Ah walk around with her and introd...intro...I don't know how to say it

Interviewer: Introduce her to everybody?

Manal: Yeah, and the school and the teacher and the principal. I don't know who else.

Manal: And the teacher too. And her classmates.

Interviewer: And her classmates. But she doesn't know how to speak to them in English. How can we help her?

Manal: Um...help her to learn English?

Interviewer: Yeah...how can we help her learn English?

Manal: Tell her the words.

First individual interview – Hind (age 8)

Hind: Um...her (Merve) friends and her teacher could help her

Interviewer: How can they help her?

Hind: By teaching her how to speak English.

Interviewer: So what can they do? How can they help her?

Hind: Um they say some words and then she helps them and they help her so they can know what that means and she can know what that means. So if she doesn't know any English she tell them in Turkish then they teach it to her in Turkish.

When the children in this study were asked to talk about games they could play with a 2LL many of the responses indicated that games where there would not be a dependence on language were preferred. Activities such as sports were repeated in three individual interviews. Communicating by using sign language and nodding were also suggestions from two other children.

Second individual interview – Hind (age 8)

Interviewer: Can you think of games that they can play when they don't speak the same language?

Hind: Um sports like tag.

Interviewer: Yeah sports where they have to move?

Hind: They can teach it to her by showing her.

Second individual interview – Manal (age 7)

Interviewer: How do you think they can play with her if they don't know the language?

Manal: By hand sign.

Interviewer: Oh yeah! They can use body language and hand sign, sign language its called right?

Manal: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah they can use that to talk to her and show her what things are.

Manal: Yeah.

Manal suggested the use of sign language as a way to communicate with peers however, she did not clarify what she meant by “hand sign.” The interviewer is the one who elaborated on the use of sign language while Manal only agreed. Even though the idea of using some kind of gestures or “hand sign” is what Manal suggested, her views on the implementation of this suggestion were not stated.

Interestingly, participants in the current study, suggested that the 2LL teach some of her first language to her teacher and peers. Most teachers focus on teaching the language minority child the dominant language and may not realize the impact that the teacher learning a few phrases of the child's language may have on the child's self-esteem. One of the effective strategies of a teacher working with 2LL, as reported by Gillanders (2007), was to learn some of her student's first language. This strategy proved to have positive effects in building relationships with the students and gaining their trust. In the excerpts both Reem and Hind's

suggestions are similar to what were found by Gillanders to be effective teaching strategies.

Although the discussion in the first excerpt took place during the group interview, Reem verbalized this idea of the 2LL teaching her teacher some of her first language during her individual interview as well.

Group interview

Interviewer: Do you have any more ideas?

Reem: Yeah. The teacher can help her (Merve) by...the teacher can help her by um tell her how to speak English and she could help her speak Turkey.

Interviewer: Oh yeah! That is a very good idea. So you are saying that the teacher can teach her some English and then she can teach her some Turkish.

Reem: Yeah.

Interviewer: And they can both use the languages together?

Reem: Yeah.

First individual interview - Hind

Hind: Um her friends and her teacher could help her.

Interviewer: How can they help her?

Hind: By teaching her how to speak English.

Interviewer: So what can they do? How can they teach her?

Hind: They say some words and then she helps them and they help her so they can know what that means and she can know what that means. So when if she doesn't know any English she tell them in Turkish and they teach it to her in English.

Interviewer: So are you saying that she teaches some of her language to them?

Hind: Yes.

Second individual interview – Reem

Interviewer: Did you have an idea about how she can learn English

Reem: Yeah. The teacher can help her by sh/ the teacher can help her by um tell her how to speak English and she could help her speak Turkey.

Interviewer: So you are saying that the teacher can teach her some English and then she can teach her some Turkish?

Reem: Yeah.

Interviewer: And they can use both the languages together?

Reem: Yeah.

This chapter highlighted key points from individual and group interviews with the participants of the study. Although the children did not directly link their own experiences to the persona doll's experience as was anticipated by the researcher, they provided valuable insights regarding this experience and ways to support a 2LL. Many of their suggestions are present in previous studies which have looked at strategies of learning and teaching a second language in early childhood. In the following section the findings of this study are be discussed in accordance with some of these previous studies.

Chapter Five: Discussion

School entry has always been an important time for me as a teacher and for my young students as they coped with separation from their parents and tried to understand the new environment at school. Children are faced with many challenges as they meet new adults, new friends and a new physical surrounding. Being a 2LL in this new environment can only add to the challenges children face when trying to make sense of this experience. However, not all children have the same experiences. A lot depends on factors such as the child's personality, social characteristics, motivation, and the environment (Tabors, 2008). Over the past 25 years studies have found that children are anxious and not competent in peer interactions at school entry (Howes, Sanders & Lee, 2008). In their study Howes, et al. (2008) found that one third of their 170 ethnically diverse, low-income young participants were anxious and aggressive at classroom entry. Immigrant children especially have been said to experience panic, loneliness, fear, and conflict with teachers, and have difficulty understanding expected social behavior (Congress & Lynne 1994). It is not surprising then that the children in the current study reported not having positive feelings on their first day of school. However, their feelings of fear and nervousness appeared to be mild when compared to what has been described in previous research. Overall, the children, in the current study did not seem to view being a second language learner as much of a concern as the challenges of being in a new environment. Most children talked about meeting new people as a reason for being shy, nervous and scared. These feelings were also a result of being unfamiliar with the school and the classroom. Entering a new environment where a new language was spoken does not seem to have been as problematic for the children in this study as was anticipated by the researcher.

The five children reported building relationships with peers as a positive experience. It is possible that the reason for this positive attitude was a result of the environment of their school. All children in the study were from an Arabic speaking background and they all attended a Muslim school. Even though education in this school is in English, Arabic is the liturgical language of Islam so the majority of the people in the school speak Arabic or are familiar with the language. For instance, during the group interview Manal indicated that finding someone who speaks the student's first language would help her learn the second language. She then added that the teacher's knowledge of the first language would also be beneficial for the 2LL. For this reason it is likely that the children did not feel isolation due to language barriers. It seems plausible then that most of the children reported a positive and stress free experience when they started out as 2LL because many of their teachers and peers were bilingual (Arabic/English). On the other hand, the persona doll in this story was a young Turkish girl coming to Canada for the first time. When they were asked about the doll's experience on her first days of school, 4 of the 5 children said that she would feel scared and/or shy because she does not speak English and is meeting strangers. It could be that the children believe the Turkish speaker would face more challenges than an Arabic speaker in their school context, because Turkish is not a language widely used in the community.

Children learning English as a second language prefer to play using their native language (Clawson, 2002). One out of the five children in this study demonstrated this preference of selecting linguistically similar playmates. Although the student reported playing with children who do not speak Arabic after acquiring English, the names of playmates she provided were indeed of Arabic speakers. Fassier (1998) studied peer support in helping children learn a new language and found that children from similar ethnic backgrounds formed isolated groups and

conversed in their home language. With time she found that the children began to use strategies to communicate which helped the 2LLs gradually acquire the new language. Although only one child explicitly reported on her choice of same linguistic background playmates, two participants discussed, during the group discussion, the benefits of having peers who speak the 2LL's first language. According to these two students, the 2LL will need peers to expose her to the new language and use her first language to explain new words to her. Thus these children's perspectives regarding 2LL's peer preferences concur with previous studies such as Clawson (2002) and Fassier (1998).

Support from native peers, who speak the 2LL's new language, have been found to assist the 2LL in language acquisition (Clawson, 2002; Fassier, 1998; Hischler, 1991). However, in order to play with their peers who speak the new language children need to develop language skills on one hand, and in order to develop language skills 2LL need to socialize and play with their native speaking peers, on the other hand (Drury, 2000). Children who lacked peers from similar language backgrounds were found to be still struggling in developing social interactions with their classmates six months after entering the new peer group (Howes, et al., 2008). The children in this study however, seem to have benefited from having bilingual peers and adults in their school to help them learn English.

The value of the teacher's knowledge of her student's first language was verbalized by some of the students in this study. Two of the older participants in the study gave the teacher some responsibility to learn some of the 2LL's first language. Many teachers focus on teaching the language minority child the dominant language and may not realize the impact learning a few phrases of the child's language may have on the child's self-esteem. According to Lee, Butler and Tippens (2007) minority children should be included in an environment where people from

all cultures respect one another and are open to learning from one another. When the teacher of language minority children demonstrates an effort to learn about the different cultures and languages in her classroom she encourages her students to do the same. One of the effective strategies of a teacher working with 2LL, as reported by Gillanders (2007), was to learn some of her student's first language. This strategy proved to have positive effects in building relationships with the students and gaining their trust. It is noteworthy then that at least two of the participants in the current study made suggestions that are similar to Gillanders (2007) effective teaching strategies. When Reem suggested that the 2LL would '*feel good*' when she can teach some of her language to her teacher and friends while she acquires the new language, she seems to be alluding to a classroom culture which gives children a sense of pride and allows them to feel like they are capable and have knowledge others do not.

Implications for Educators

As mentioned previously, one of the implications of the current study for practitioners is for teachers to find ways to learn about the diverse cultures in their classrooms. Making an effort to learn some basic phrases of their student's first language will help the 2LLs in his/her classroom feel included. This effort will also set a good example for other students in the classroom to respect and try to understand different cultures and languages.

Another implication for teachers that can be taken from this study is to plan activities which include all children and do not have a language focus. Examples of activities that do not require much language competency are music and movement games where children could join in and learn how to play by watching others. Examples provided by the children in the current study were ball games and tag. Games that teachers and peers can '*teach her (2LL) by showing her*'.

Peer support, as it has been discussed throughout this study, is important when it comes to helping 2LLs. Not all children have peers from similar language backgrounds like Halah did, however teachers need to consider ways they may provide such support. If there are older children in the school who share the same language background as the new 2LL it may be helpful to introduce them and have the older student help out the younger. This kind of pairing could be beneficial for both sides, giving the older the responsibility and the younger the support. If no children with the same language background are available, teachers may try to compensate by giving the students in their class responsibilities to help the 2LL. For example a teacher could pair her 2LL student with a native speaker and give the native speaker some guidance in how she or he can support their peer. This is an extension to what was suggested by Manal during her first individual interview (see page 53).

Future Research

The participants of this study were five children from an Arabic language background who are enrolled in an Islamic school. As mentioned earlier the majority of the school population either speaks Arabic as a first language or value Arabic as it is the language of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. Even though English is the language of instruction for this school, Arabic speakers are not a minority. It is possible that this characteristic of the school is one of the reasons why children in this study did not report experiences such as loneliness, isolation or withdrawal that have been reported by previous researchers who examined 2LLs at school entry. This became apparent when children's responses demonstrated the positive impact of having peers and teachers from a similar language background on the acquisition of a second language. Yet it would be interesting and informative to conduct a similar study with 2LLs who are enrolled in public schools where there might be an insignificant number of people who share the

same language background. Such a study may provide a different set of experiences and challenges 2LL children may face.

The size of the sample for this study was small. Children were recruited from volunteer participants who replied to the advertisement for the study. Out of the seven volunteer families only four agreed to participate (two of the children in the study are sisters). Having a researcher come to their homes for interviews was seen as an inconvenience for two families with full time working parents. A different location may have increased the number of participants. Due to the small number, however, findings can not be generalized to all second language learning situations. Inappropriate generalization has been and continues to be a problem in second language acquisition (Johnson, 1994). Thus, future research which includes larger samples, or which adds more case studies, on this topic is warranted.

Another significant factor to point out is the fact that all participants in this study were female. Gender difference may account for how children experience peer relationships and the ways in which they describe them. The inclusion of male students in future studies may provide a better representation for students of both genders.

According to Holstine and Gubrium (2008) interviews are co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee. This suggests that information provided by the interviewee may be a derivation of questions asked during the interview. Naturally interviewers have their own assumptions about the topic as they begin the interview. These assumptions may result in formulating leading questions during the interview that shape or guide the interviewee's responses. Taking this possibility into account during the analysis phase of the data is worthy for interpretation. The impact of leading questions on the children's responses in this study appear

minimal, since when children were presented with leading questions their answers were not altered from previous responses.

Unlike what was found in some previous studies on 2LLs, the children in this study did not seem to have experienced loneliness and isolation. Although the children reported that the 2LL would face difficulty when socializing with native (L2) peers, their responses suggest that having bilingual peers and teachers who speak the 2LL's first language would support their acquisition of the new language. This seems to have been the case for the children in this study since their first language is a language widely spoken in the community. Another explanation for the children's positive attitude may be the teaching strategies employed by their teachers at the school. As was found by Gillanders (2007), effective teaching strategies help 2LL's adaptation process and provide a positive model for children to mirror. It would prove to be beneficial then for future studies to take into account the teacher strategies and school dynamics when investigating the experiences of young second language learners.

As this study demonstrates, young children were indeed able to provide valuable insights regarding issues that affect them. The participants in this study shared their experiences and views regarding second language learning and learners. Their insights confirmed what was found by previous researchers on effective strategies for teaching second language learners. As was mentioned by Hancock and Mansfield (2002) there are many benefits gained from giving children a voice in research. By listening to our students and children we can better understand the strengths and short comings of our curricula and programs.

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Appendix A
Study Advertisement

I Need Your Help!

Dear Parent,

My name is Leyla El-Khater. I am a master's student at the University of British Columbia in the program of early childhood education. For my research I will be interviewing young children (ages 5 to 7) who have experienced learning a second language. This study will benefit educators and professionals working with second language learners to understand the children's perspectives and the challenges they may face. If you are interested in learning more about the study or in participating with your child please fill in your contact information and place it in the envelope attached to this advertisement or send me an email and I will provide you with a detailed letter of consent.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at:

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Thank you!

Leyla El-Khater

Appendix B

Parental Letter of Consent for Individual Interviews

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5422 Fax: (604) 822-4714

Parental Letter of Consent

Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting

Dear parent,

I, Leyla El-Khater, am a graduate student currently enrolled in the Masters program (Early Childhood) at U.B.C. This letter is a request for you and your child to participate in a study I am conducting for my thesis, with Dr. Ann G. Anderson.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate in what ways being a second language learner may impact social development according to the views of children who learned or are learning English as a second language. In other words the goal of this study is to carry the voices, feelings, and social experiences of children learning English as a second language in the context of an early year's classroom.

Time commitment: To carry out this study, I need permission to visit your home at your convenience on two separate days, approximately one week apart. The first visit will require a maximum of one hour and the second visit will last about one half hour. In total, your child will spend 1.5 hours and you will spend 0.5 hours in this study.

Procedure: If you approve of your and your child's participation in this study, on my first visit to your home I will ask you to complete a short questionnaire. The questionnaire asks about your child's demographic information, your child's social competence, and your child's language background.

While you are completing your questionnaire, I will build a rapport with your child, so that your child can feel comfortable talking with me and will be at ease during the interviews. Once your child is ready and has given assent, I will begin the first interview by reading an age-appropriate story book, followed by some related questions about the character's and your child's first day at school. Next, I will introduce your child to a persona doll and share a narrative about the doll, in order to ask your child some questions about the doll's feelings about making friends. A week later I will return to your home for a second interview, again involving the persona doll, in order to inquire how your child thinks about the topic after some time has passed. Both interviews will be audio taped.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Principal Investigator;

Ann G. Anderson at

Or the Co Investigator: Leyla El-Khater

If you have any concerns about your child's treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604 822 85 98.

Confidentiality: Your and your child's identity will be kept strictly confidential. All documents will be identified only by code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet. Subjects will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. All audio taped recordings and the secondary data storage device onto which password protected computer files will be saved will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the thesis and in future publications or conference presentations. When audio excerpts are used in presentations, no identifying material will be used.

Consent: Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you, he or she may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Please indicate your decision by marking the appropriate statements below:

- () I consent to my and my child's participation in this study.
- () I do not consent to my and my child's participation in this study.
- () I consent to the use of audio taped excerpts for presentations of findings
- () I do not consent to the use of the audio taped excerpts for presentations of findings

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Parent's Signature

Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Statement of Informed Consent (copy to return)

Title of the project: “Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting”

Principal Investigator: Ann Anderson

Co Investigator: Leyla El-Khater

Please fill out the information below.

Be sure to keep p. 1 and 2 for your own records and to return the signed copy of page 3 (Statement of Informed Consent).

I have read and understand the attached letter regarding the project entitled “Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting” I have kept copies of both the letter describing the project and a consent form.

My signature below indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

Please indicate your decision by marking the appropriate statements below:

- () I consent to my and my child’s participation in this study.
- () I do not consent to my and my child’s participation in this study.
- () I consent to the use of audio taped excerpts for presentations of findings
- () I do not consent to the use of the audio taped excerpts for presentations of findings

Child’s Name: _____

Parent’s Name: _____

Parent’s Signature

Date

Appendix C

Child Assent

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Faculty of Education
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Assent Form for Young Children

Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting

The following will be read to each child by the co investigator before the interview:

(Child's name), I will tell you a story about a little girl using a doll. After you listen to the story I will ask you some questions and we will talk about the girl in the story and her friends. I will record our conversations so I can remember what you said when I go home. After the interviews I will write a report and talk about your answers. I will not use your name in my report or else where and no one other than us will know who you are. Your answers will be very helpful for teachers teaching students who do not speak English. Remember that you can choose not to be in the study when ever you want to.

Do you want to talk with me?

Yes _____ No _____

Child's name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Parental Letter of Consent for Group Interview

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5422 Fax: (604) 822-4714

Parental Letter of Consent

Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting

Group interview

Dear parent,

I, Leyla El-Khater, would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for participating in this study with your child. This letter is a request for a third interview to be conducted at Iqra school. This will be a group interview with all the children who have participated in the study. Due to the characteristic of this interview I can not ensure confidentiality of the participants. All five participants will come together for the interview. However, with regard to publications and presentations confidentiality will be kept. Pseudonyms will be used when reporting findings of this study and participant identities will only be disclosed to children taking part in the group interview.

Purpose: The purpose of this interview is to talk with the children about their experiences and views of learning a second language.

Procedure: If you approve of your child's participation in this interview I will contact the school and arrange a common time for the children to meet with me. The interview will not take away from the children's valuable learning times or from their free time. I will consult with the school administration to find a common time for all children to participate. The interview will be audio recorded and last about 15 to 30 minutes.

Please indicate your decision by marking the appropriate statements below:

() I consent to have my child participate in this interview

() I do not consent to have my child participate in this interview

Child's Name: _____ Parent's Name: _____

Parent's Signature

Date

Appendix E
School Letter of Consent

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5422 Fax: (604) 822-4714

School Letter of Consent

**Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English
Classroom Setting**

Group Interview

Dear,

I, Leyla El-Khater, am a graduate student currently enrolled in the Masters program (Early Childhood) at U.B.C. I had advertised my study through your school in November, 2009. As an extension to my study I would like to conduct a group interview with the children who have participated. I believe that listening to the children in a group setting will enrich my data on their views of learning a second language.

This letter is a request for permission to conduct a group interview with the five children at your school. The interview will take 15 to 30 minutes in a quiet room at the school. Time and space for the interview will be arranged by consulting with the school administration to insure that there will be minimal disruption to school activities for the participants and their peers. Parental letters of consent will be given to each parent containing details of the interview.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Principal Investigator;
Ann G. Anderson at

Or the Co Investigator: Leyla El-Khater

Please indicate your decision:

() I give permission for this interview to be carried out at the Iqra Islamic School

() I do not give permission for this interview to be carried out at the Iqra Islamic School

Name: _____ Signature : _____

Date: _____

Appendix F
Parent Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
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Parent Questionnaire

Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting

Section 1:

Child's name: _____ Age: _____

Number of siblings: _____

Language(s) child is fluent in:

Language(s) spoken in the home:

Language(s) spoken at school or daycare: _____

Number of months child has spent in school and/or daycare: _____

Section 2:

If the language used at school is different than what is used at home please indicate whether or not your child was fluent in this language when starting the program?

Please circle where you would say your child is exposed to English:

Television / school – nursery / home / play ground / play dates / other

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Section 3:

Faculty of Education
Department of Curriculum Studies
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-5422 Fax: (604) 822-4714

Looking back at your child's first experience in school, do you feel your child struggled in expressing himself or building relationships? If yes please give examples of how.

Briefly explain your child's social competence. Would you say he/she is social?

Do you think being a second language learner has effected or shaped your child's relationship with friends? Explain.

Appendix G
Individual Interview Protocol

Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting

First Interview

I will start the first interview by playing with the child for some time to build a positive relationship while the parent fills out the questionnaire. Once the rapport is established I will introduce a story book titled “Splat the Cat”. I have chosen this book because it describes feelings of fear and anxiety on the first day of school. In the book it is Splat’s first day of school. The book begins with Splat getting ready for school and ways he is trying to avoid having to go to school. The book then goes on to describe the events of Splat’s first day at school. The book ends positively with Splat in bed excited about his next day at school.

After reading the book I will lead the book discussion with questions such as:

- *How did you feel on the first day of school?* (I will ask him/her to explain)
- *Can you tell me how Splat felt on the first day of school?*
- *Why do you think he felt that way?*

Following the book activity I will introduce the child to my persona doll by giving some information about who the doll is, where she is from, and some of her personal characteristics.

“I would like to tell you another story.

I have someone here to help me.

Would you like to meet her? (pause for child to respond)

Her name is Merve. Merve is a little shy so she asked me to help her tell her story.

Merve is five years old. She likes to play with puzzles and blocks. She also likes to paint, especially with bright green. She wants to know what your favorite color is.”

(pause for child to respond)

“Merve is new in Canada. She just came from Turkey. Turkey is very far from here. Do you know how Merve and her family came to Canada?”

(pause for child to respond)

“That’s right they came on an airplane!”

Merve wants me to tell you that she does not speak English. She only knows Turkish.

Do you speak any language other than English?”

(pause for child to respond)

Merve wants me to tell you that just like Splat the cat tomorrow is her first day at kindergarten.

How do you think Merve feels about her first day?

(pause for child to respond)

Do you think the kids in the class will talk to her?

(pause for child to respond)

Do you think Merve is able to talk with her friends?

(pause for child to respond)

Do you think they will play with her?

(pause for child to respond)

Would you play with Merve if she was in your class? How would you play with her?

(pause for child to respond)

Do you know how we can help Merve when she starts school?

(pause for child to respond)

What can her teacher do to help Merve on her first day at school?

(pause for child to respond)

What can her friends in her class do to make her feel more welcome?”

(pause for child to respond)

End:

“Merve says she is very happy to meet you. She also says thank you for listening to her. You were really helpful. She would like to come visit you again soon and talk to you more about how her school is going. Would you like to talk to her again?”

Second Interview

I will begin the second interview by greeting the child and asking questions to see if he or she remembers me and what we talked about when I last visited. I will reintroduce Merve ‘the persona doll’. I will ask the child if he or she remembers how Merve felt on the first day of school and why.

Answers provided by the child in the first interview will shape the questions and the discussion on the second interview. Questions in the second interview will be along the lines of the following question:

“Do you remember who this is?”

(pause for child to respond)

This is Merve.

What do you remember about Merve?

(pause for child to respond)

Remember Merve told us that she came from a country far away. She came from Turkey.

Do you remember how she felt on the first day of school?

(pause for child to respond)

Before I tell you how things went for her at school since we last talked can you guess how you think things went?

(pause for child to respond)

How do you think she feels now?

(pause for child to respond)

Do you think the kids in her class are playing with her more now? Why or how?”

(pause for child to respond)

End: *“Thank you for talking to me today! You were very helpful!”*

Appendix H
Group Interview Protocol

Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting

Group Interview

Hi guys. I have asked you all to come here today so we can talk about Merve one last time. I wanted us all to talk together because you all had some great ideas. I wanted to see if you would have any more thoughts you would like to share with me. We can listen to each other and share what we think.

Who remembers Merve's story?

And what was her first day at an English school like?

Who would like to tell us Merve's story so we can all remember?

What do you think will make her feel bad?

What do you think will make her feel good?

Now that we are all here sitting as a group can we think of what kind of support Merve needs when she goes to school?

Appendix I

Certificate of Approval – Minimum Risk Amendment



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C.
V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK AMENDMENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Ann G. Anderson	DEPARTMENT: UBC/Education/Curriculum and Pedagogy	UBC BREB NUMBER: H09-01539				
INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:						
<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Institution</th><th>Site</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>N/A</td><td>N/A</td></tr></tbody></table>			Institution	Site	N/A	N/A
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N/A	N/A					
Other locations where the research will be conducted: subject's home and Iqra Islamic School						
CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Leyla El-Khater						
SPONSORING AGENCIES: N/A						
PROJECT TITLE: Views of Young ESL Children on Building Relationships with Peers in an English Classroom Setting						

Expiry Date - Approval of an amendment does not change the expiry date on the current UBC BREB approval of this study. An application for renewal is required on or before: November 2, 2010

AMENDMENT(S):	AMENDMENT APPROVAL DATE: March 17, 2010																									
<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Document Name</th><th>Version</th><th>Date</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td colspan="3">Consent Forms:</td></tr><tr><td>Parental Consent (group interview)</td><td>2</td><td>February 2, 2010</td></tr><tr><td>School consent (group interview)</td><td>2</td><td>February 2, 2010</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Assent Forms:</td></tr><tr><td>Group interview assent</td><td>1</td><td>February 2, 2010</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:</td></tr><tr><td>group interview protocol</td><td>2</td><td>February 2, 2010</td></tr></tbody></table>	Document Name	Version	Date	Consent Forms:			Parental Consent (group interview)	2	February 2, 2010	School consent (group interview)	2	February 2, 2010	Assent Forms:			Group interview assent	1	February 2, 2010	Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:			group interview protocol	2	February 2, 2010		
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The amendment(s) and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.																										
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:</i></p> <div style="text-align: center;"><hr/><p>Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair Dr. Ken Craig, Chair Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair</p></div>																										