‘Supporting the social needs of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in an Early Years setting’

By Andrianna Photiou

Abstract
This study investigated how practitioners at early year’s settings are able to support the social needs of children who have English as an additional language (EAL). The literature highlighted that children who have EAL need effective support and care from practitioners and regular engagement and social interactions through role play with children who are able to speak English. Relevant literature also expressed the importance of practitioners having detailed knowledge about EAL and the theory around it. The data was triangulated using interviews, observations and the analysis of the settings policies in relation to my research questions. Overall, this study found that the outcomes of children with EAL can be improved through setting policies and high quality training and knowledge of EAL for practitioners that can lead to effective strategies put in place to ensure that children’s social needs are met and to overcome any barriers that they may come across.

Introduction
There are many policies and legislations in the UK that now consider children who do not speak English as their first language. They give advice and support to practitioners who work with children with EAL in terms of how they are able to develop their social skills and language development. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children (UNCRC) (1989) which is an international human rights treaty for all children, states that all children have a right to learn and use their family language and customs even if the majority of people in the country do not. In addition The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (Department of Education, 2012), which is a statutory guidance for all early year’s practitioners in England, accords with the UNCRC (1989) and encourages practitioners, and parents, to ensure that the child’s home language is supported in the setting, through play and learning, and at home as this enables them to build the foundations to acquire a new second language. This is statutory for all early years’ providers to follow and to ensure that children with EAL reach a good standard in English during their early year’s period (Department for Education, 2012).
This research project will focus on how practitioners are able to meet the social needs of children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The aims of this research is to find out how, at a local private day nursery, the practitioners support and assist children with EAL with their social development, and how they encourage the social interaction between children who have EAL and those who do not. The project will also focus on how much knowledge practitioners have around the topic of EAL. In order to find this information out, I will base my project on three research questions:

- To what extent do practitioners effectively meet the needs of children with EAL in the setting?
- How do practitioners meet the social needs of children with EAL?
- Are practitioners aware of the theory and research related around the topic of EAL, such as the Silent Period?

The private day nursery that has been chosen as the setting for the research aims to ensure that all children are included and feel equal. Although the setting does not specifically have an EAL policy, it has an equal opportunities policy and a festivals and countries policy, both easily accessible to parents and practitioners. These policies make it clear that the diversity of all children is respected and children are taught about different cultures and languages through singing songs and rhymes, reading books and participating in cultural festival days such as Chinese New Year, which ensures that all children feel included. Although there are very few children who have EAL in this setting, the Ofsted report makes it clear that the nursery supports its children with EAL effectively and this is also due to the very strong attachments with key persons who support them sensitively, as stated by Ofsted.

This report will provide an in-depth understanding and critical analysis on the issue of the social skills and development of children with EAL. It will take into account a methodological and ethical approach when considering how practitioners meet the social needs of children with EAL. The issues and findings in relation to the aims of the enquiry will then be critically analysed and discussed.

**Literature Review**

Much of the research that has focused on EAL acknowledges the importance and relevance of the ‘silent period’ (Drury, 2013, Guilfoyle and Mistry, 2013 and Fumoto *et al*, 2007). The silent period is a non-verbal stage where children with EAL will listen very intensively to the new
language that they are surrounded by. A child with EAL will enter this phase when they find that their home language is no longer useful. This period is the most active period, cognitively, in bilingual children where they are able to make cultural and linguistic connections to their first language using what they already know about language such as tones, facial expressions and gestures (Datta, 2007).

Although researchers have found that the silent period is a very important stage for a child with EAL, it can cause children to not interact, initially or for a period, with other children, not call out for attention or speak out loud and this may lead to misinterpretations of the child’s intentions and behaviour (Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2000). Therefore, it is highly important for practitioners to ensure that they build a trusting relationship with children who have EAL and ensure that they make them feel comfortable, reassured and encouraged, whilst also encouraging English speaking children to include them in their play.

Vygotsky (1962) examined how social environments influence learning processes and strongly believed that children can develop and learn language from social interactions with others. Researchers, such as Tabors (1997), have confirmed that there is a dependence between language acquisition, and social interaction around appropriate language use in the host language, known as a ‘double bind’. Moreover, the Social Dominance theory (Garnica, 1983), explains the possibility that some children may be verbally neglected and socially isolated from other children. This suggests that, due to the nature of the silent period, children who have EAL and enter a setting with limited English may find themselves to be isolated from social interactions with their peers using the host language which will negatively affect their language development and their social skills.

Play has been emphasised as very important for the development and learning of children (Piaget, 1970). Guilfoyle and Mistry (2012) found within their research that role play is an effective strategy which expanded the interaction and language use between children with EAL and English speaking children. As role play is often based on real life, shared experiences and children will tend to use a greater and more complex vocabulary during role play which benefits their language development effectively. (Guilfoyle and Mistry, 2013 and Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke, 2000). Clarke (1996) has also expressed the relevance of repetition and language play and how this allows the children to practice their new language acquisition as well as their social skills and interactions with others. This idea is also supported by Tabors (1997) whose research has found that there are clear links between the principles and practice behind role play and good effective practice for children to develop their speaking, listening and communication skills. All the research suggests that supporting the speaking, listening and
communication skills of children with EAL in activities of role play, enables them, in time, to improve upon their English language.

Although the silent period is well-covered in research related to EAL, research also indicates that practitioners are not wholly aware of what the silent period is (Fumoto et al, 2007). This is supported by Drury (2013) who found that a practitioner in their assessment of a child with EAL, had concerns around the child’s silence and described the child as ‘reluctant to communicate in English’. Guilfoyle and Mistry (2013) also found that practitioners often find it difficult to support children with EAL, more than children who do speak English as their first language, when developing the language for basic academic and social purposes, due to their limited understanding of English. This research suggests that teachers may not have enough knowledge concerning the strategies children use in order to acquire English as an additional language.

The research of Fumoto et al (2007) however shows that, although children with EAL may go through the silent period at the beginning of joining a new early years setting, they still have the ability to communicate their feelings and experiences with their practitioners with adequate spoken English by the end of an academic year. A study by Ogilvy et al (1992) found that Asian children are more likely to be disadvantaged than their English speaking peers because of miscommunication with the early childhood professionals. This research shows that in order for practitioners to effectively meet the needs of children, the teachers must show sensitivity and appreciation when a child with EAL shows intentions to communicate, however they manifest themselves, which Hobson (2002) describes as a basis for meaningful communication.

In the work of Fumoto et al (2007) it has been found that there is a clear link between the relationship of a practitioner and a child and the language development of that child. Therefore it can be suggested that, if practitioners have an effective bond with their key child, they are likely to recognise if their key child is going through the silent period and will therefore accommodate the child’s needs. Practitioners however need to be aware and show sensitivity towards the varied ways that children with EAL can communicate. To do this they must be provided with and have sufficient knowledge and support about EAL for them to have this understanding.

On the contrary, research also indicates that practitioners may misinterpret children who are going through a silent period as a child who may be going through learning difficulties or may be finding it difficult to adjust to the new setting (Hall, 2001). Hall (2001) explains that a child with actual learning difficulties could be misinterpreted as them going through a silent period, which essentially means that valuable learning opportunities could be disregarded. This piece of research shows the relevance of how valuable it is for teachers to understand effectively what a
Methodology

The overall method of this research project is a singular case study that takes a qualitative stance. The purpose of undertaking a singular case study is to explore the particularity and the uniqueness of the single case (Simons, 2009, Yin, 2009). As the size of my project is small scale, focusing on a singular case has enabled me to use my time efficiently. Traditionally, Gerring (2007) explains, case studies are associated with qualitative methods of analysis which makes this research design more suitable for my project, however there must be thorough and detailed description in the case study to give the reader a good sense and feel of the topic under investigation (Roberts-Holmes, 2005). The reason I have chosen to use a case study is because I will be focusing on gathering the opinions of practitioners who work at the setting in order to evaluate and analyse their views on the chosen topic.

The epistemological stance that I have acquired is an interpretivist one. An interpretivist approach takes into consideration the experience, insight, feelings, beliefs and reasoning's of the participants rather than a positivist approach, which seeks to find a particular truth (Jarvis et al, 2012). As my research is interpretivist and focuses on one early years setting and the practitioners who work there in detail, my findings are not reliable enough to generalise and are only valid to the early years setting that has been researched, however they may be relatable. The findings that I may find may echo or reinforce findings that other studies have found and may also be found in other later studies that focus on similar topics.

According to Hughes (2001) triangulation will make my interpretivist research more valid as it compares and combines different sources of evidence to gain a better understanding of the topic (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). To achieve triangulation, I have used observations, semi-structured interviews and have looked at government documentation, literature and the chosen settings policies about EAL. Three practitioners who are key workers to children who speak English as an Additional Language have been interviewed and observed. The manager of the setting has also been interviewed to find out what their philosophy and ethos is on the topic of children with EAL and what the early years setting strive to do in order to support these children that is also included in the settings policies. This has made my sampling a purposive one as I have specifically chosen my participants. Interviews allow participants to give detailed responses about the chosen topic based on the researchers questions, however, researchers
must ensure that they do not ask leading questions that may affect the participants’ interview answers as well as the overall findings (Mukherji and Albon, 2010). Observations will then allow me to see if the participants practice what they believe is beneficial for a child who has EAL.

According to the British Educational Research Association (2011), which provides ethical guidelines for educational research, it is vital for researchers to take into consideration the rights of the participant. Each participant has been asked for their consent and have also been explained that they are able to withdraw at any point they wish. Further ethical considerations have been considered in the ethics form.

**Findings and Analysis**

The research questions driving this study were based upon the silent period, the extent to which practitioners effectively meet the needs of children with EAL and how the social needs of children with EAL are met effectively. Drury (2013) found in her study that practitioners needed to understand the role of the ‘silent period’ within young bilinguals in order for them to understand how they learn and meet their needs. It was recognised that many practitioners did not have enough knowledge on this topic (Drury, 2013, Guilfoyle and Mistry, 2013, Fumoto et al, 2007) and the participants, to some extent, indicated this when asked what they knew about the silent period:

*Manager: ...I know it’s a stage where children are silent...*(slight laughter). *I assume it has something to do with their confidence maybe? And probably the fact that they do not have the vocabulary to actually speak to us, that obviously plays a part.*

In other example, a practitioner showed some knowledge about the silent period and what it entails:

*Practitioner B: Well it’s a stage where children are silent but I’m sure it’s a stage where they are erm… you know… kind of taking into consideration this new language that is being used around them.*

It seems from these comments that the manager has little knowledge about the silent period but is aware that the limited vocabulary of a child with EAL may exempt them from speaking and interacting with others, which matches the ‘double bind’ theory by Tabors (1997). Although it may be deemed as a problem if the manager of a setting does not know about the silent period, it seems that the practitioners at the setting observe and have recognised the silence of the children with EAL when they first enter a setting. This is an advantage as it will allow the
practitioners to find suitable strategies to support children with EAL in their speaking and listening skills. Practitioner B showed the most knowledge about the silent period and recognised that during this period, a child will take into consideration the language that is being used around them which again, coincides with the findings of Drury (2013).

Drury (2013) recommended that early years practitioners must understand the role of ‘silence’ within young bilinguals and for practitioners, who work with young bilinguals, to be provided with ‘explicit and detailed’ guidance. The participants showed that Drury’s (2013) recommendations are correct and when asked about whether they think early year’s practitioners should be given more training in relation to EAL, all participants said yes. Most of them also linked back to the silent period, with the manager stating: ‘Yes I do. Especially now that you’ve mentioned the silent period and I haven’t given the best answer!’

Fumoto et al (2007) found that, in order to provide the best outcomes for children with EAL, a positive and trusting relationship must be established between a practitioner and the child. The bar chart below shows the amount of times each practitioner interacted with their key child who has EAL and the amount of times they interacted with a child who speaks English.

![Practitioner interactions chart](image)

The chart shows a clear difference between the number of interactions between the practitioner and their key child who has EAL and another child who speaks English. To understand this difference, participants were asked if they thought there were any barriers when it came to building a relationship with their key child who has EAL:
Practitioner C: ‘...it definitely helps being able to speak the same language if you’re trying to build a relationship with someone’.

The answers from all participants stated that the language barrier was the most common cause for concern when attempting to build a relationship with children who have EAL, which corresponds with the research of Guilfoyle and Mistry (2013) and Fumoto et al (2007), who found that practitioners agreed that a limited understanding of English can be an obstruction when building relationships.

Practitioner A: it’s not that I don’t want to talk or support the children who have EAL but sometimes it does seem like they don’t want us… they won’t listen as much… so it’s kind of hard to try and support them or even build a relationship.

When asked about how they think these barriers could be dealt with, many of the practitioners suggested that more training around EAL would be beneficial for them so they learn different strategies, however the manager also made it clear that staff are encouraged to ask for certain words that are used at home to support the practitioners when attempting to build a relationship with their key child who has EAL. There is however, no policy setting focused primarily on EAL to state that this is the expectation of this setting, and practitioners may not be wholly aware that this is the managers expectations.

Although the bar chart shows that the participants interacted a lot more with the child who spoke English, when participants A and B interacted with their key children who have EAL, they were very sensitive and encouraging towards them. The approach that is used by the participants towards their key children with EAL corresponds with Hobson’s (2002) meaningful communication description. This shows that the relationship between the practitioners and the children with EAL can form and expand through facial expressions and gestures, which relates to the findings of Datta (2007).

The research of Guilfoyle and Mistry (2013) found that practitioners found it more difficult to work with and support children who have EAL, which was indicated by the participants during the research project. Practitioners at this setting, who have expressed concerns about language barriers and limited knowledge on EAL, interact more with children who speak English, and this may limit their chances of building a trusting relationship with children who have EAL, which is very essential according to Fumoto et al (2007). It could be suggested that a setting policy, which specifically relates to EAL and the practice expected at the setting, may be of use to practitioners when it comes to supporting and providing them with relevant details, knowledge and strategies around EAL.
Guilfoyle and Mistry (2013) have expressed the view that role-play assists children who have EAL with their speaking and listening skills and the participants involved, when asked how they think children with EAL best learn, stated the same.

Participant B: Of course socialising in general will help children pick up their new language and the best way to do that, I think, is through role play and kind of adult structured activities.

The manager stated that planning activities, such as circle time, allows children to be able to speak and listen to each other and this promotes social skills and language development.

Manager: …during circle time we might sing songs and nursery rhymes… read books about different cultures and religions… overall play is the best way.

At this setting, free flow play and exploration is favoured and children are provided with many costumes and props to support them with their role-play. It was noticed during the general observations that the practitioners supported all children whilst they played but in addition ensured that the children with EAL were not isolated, coinciding with Garnica’s (1983) Social Dominance theory. They did this by engaging and involving the child into the activity and this, ultimately, heightened the interaction between all children, which supports the social skills of children with EAL.

It is also clear through the policies that the settings will plan group activities based on cultural and religious festivals and celebrations:

‘Children also have the opportunity to participate in relevant play such as dressing up, role play…’

This policy can be seen in practice, as practitioners will dedicate a day celebrating events such as Chinese New Year, where children are able to dress up, have books read to them about the particular event and in general, learn and acknowledge the diversity of all children in the setting. This ensures that all children interact and socialise with each other, which is beneficial for the social skills of children with EAL. Their equal opportunities policy and EYFS (DfE, 2012) also makes it mandatory practice for practitioners to include and involve all children and to dismiss any kind of prejudice or discrimination against children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it seems that the participants at the nursery used within this research project, have a good understanding of EAL as a whole. It would seem however, with more explicit and detailed guidance and training on EAL for the practitioners, the practice at this setting towards
children with EAL could be highly improved. This would result in better outcomes for the children with EAL in terms of their social skills. When asked about the silent period in the interviews, overall, the participants showed little knowledge on this topic, even though research suggests that it is important for practitioners to understand and have knowledge about the silent period (Drury, 2013, Guilfoyle and Mistry, 2013 and Fumoto et al, 2007). It is evident that the nursery uses necessary effective strategies when it comes to supporting children with EAL and this was evident through the interviews and observations, where participants mentioned the use of circle time and role play as favourable strategies to effectively support the social needs of children who have EAL (Guilfoyle and Mistry, 2013).

It is also apparent through the settings policies that an inclusive approach is adopted for all children of all backgrounds, ultimately resulting in more group social interactions for all children involved. Although participants use effective strategies to support children with EAL, all participants recognised language difference as the biggest barrier when attempting to form relationships with children who do have EAL and it was apparent through the observations that the participants would interact more with English speaking children, contrasting with the research of Fumoto et al. (2007). It would seem that a setting policy that focuses on EAL would give practitioners a better understanding of what the setting expects them to adhere to in terms of EAL as a whole. This could ultimately result in better social outcomes for children who have EAL. The findings from this research can be relevant and useful to other future research that may be conducted around the topic of EAL. The research findings however would not generalised to every other private day nursery, as this was a small scale research project conducted in a local area.

References


Appendices
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student Name:</strong> Andrianna Photiou.</th>
<th><strong>Student id:</strong> S11705750</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Title</strong> <em>(This may be a working title)</em></td>
<td>Supporting the social needs of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in an Early Years setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research questions</strong> <em>(Probably two, maybe three, be specific and cautious about whether these are answerable- again these will be refined)</em></td>
<td>My main question will be ‘How can practitioners effectively meet the social needs of English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners?’ I will also focus on questions such as ‘what resources do you have available in your setting in order to support the social needs of children with EAL?’ and ‘Do you specifically plan any activities to accommodate the social needs of children with EAL?’ These questions will allow me to gain a clear understanding of how the practitioners at the nursery try and aim to support children with EAL and will also give me an insight as to how they actually put this into their planning and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short Literature Review</strong> <em>(Using literature justify your area of research)</em></td>
<td>There are many relevant research studies and articles concerning children with English as an additional language (EAL). These articles show that most theorists are concerned with how English can be learned and taught as an additional language in a mostly English speaking early years setting. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) highlights the importance of supporting and developing the home languages of children with EAL, which plays an endless and significant role in acquiring additional languages (DfE, 2012). For children who...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have English as an Additional Language, it is very important for them to be able to socialise and communicate with those who are able to speak English. By listening and communicating with English speaking children, it gives non-English speaking children an opportunity to take in and acquire the new language (Bruner, 1983).

The ‘silent period’ is a non-verbal stage that children with EAL may find themselves in when they enter a setting where their home language is no longer helpful (Drury, 2013; Guilfoyle and Mistry, 2012). Although for other children and also early years practitioners, this may seem that the children with EAL are distancing themselves and are not willing to participate (Fumoto et al. 2013), Clarke (1996) found that actually, throughout this non-verbal stage, a child will listen intensely to the language that is being used in order to absorb and build up their comprehension. Drury (2013) however, found that early years practitioners described the child’s silence as them being ‘reluctant to communicate in English’ which shows that there is a misunderstanding within this area.

Although Clarke (1996) found that the silent period is a stage where children are listening and absorbing their newfound language, Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2000) found that the silent period might lead to the child being
isolated within the setting. This will exclude them from social English interactions and will have an impact on their social development (Guilfoyle and Mistry, 2012; Fumoto et al, 2013). Brodie (2014) however has suggested that children with EAL can learn through the use of sustained shared thinking with the practitioners to share concepts and ideas. This does not necessarily have to be in verbal language, but can be done with gestures and objects. Guilfoyle and Mistry (2012) also highlight the importance of role-play for children with EAL. This provides opportunities for children with EAL to engage in social interactions between their English speaking friends and also their practitioners.

My research will be carried out in a nursery setting, specifically looking at children who are between the ages of one and three. I will focus on this age group, as this is the age where most children are able to start communicating their first words. I will focus on the key persons of the children who have EAL focusing particularly at the key persons of three children who do not have a community language and also the manager.

For my research, I will be using a case study, making my research quantitative. The methods that I will use will be observations and interviews. I will interview each key person in order to gain an understanding of each practitioner's knowledge of EAL and what he or she aim to do in order to support
| What are the ethical considerations and how will I address them?  
(Brief outline only, a full Ethical Approval Form will be completed in detail later) | One of the ethical considerations that I will have to take into consideration will be consent. I will need consent firstly from the setting itself to ensure that I am able to proceed with my research in their setting. In accordance with the BERA guidelines I will ensure that all participants involved will be aware that they have a right to withdraw if they do not feel comfortable. I will ensure that the information I collect will be kept privately and protected. I will gain my consent by writing a letter, explaining the topic. |
| What support is needed?  
(Be honest here to help tutors plan appropriately) | The support that I will require will be to make sure that my time plan is appropriate within the time range that we have. I will feel more comfortable and confident if I am able to visit my cluster mentor a few times during the duration of the research project. If I am able to review the work that I have done just to ensure that I am on the right track with my cluster tutor, I feel that this will give me a lot of confidence and comfort during this project. |
Appendix two: Ethics form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Full name</strong></th>
<th>Andrianna Photiou</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Module number and title</strong></td>
<td>EDU6090 – Research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Proposal title</strong></td>
<td>‘Supporting the social needs of children with English as an Additional language (EAL) in an early</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Devise a Time plan
Showing when and how you are going to complete the project. Include:
- Contact Setting
- Ethical Approval
- Draft Methodology
- Design Research Tools
- Draft Literature Review
- Pilot Research Tools and Revise
- Field Work – Data gathering
- Analysis of findings – review progress
- Present findings
- Initial Conclusions
- Edit Methodology
- Edit Lit Review
- Edit Findings and Analysis
- Draft Abstract
- Final Edit of project

Submission Date:

I will be in contact with my setting before the end of December. My ethical approval will also be gained by December. The draft methodology will be completed by December and my research tools will be designed by January. My literature review will be drafted by January ready for my cluster group meeting in February. I will pilot my research tools and improve upon anything by February. I will be able to then start gathering my data in February. This will give me the opportunity to analyse, review and then present my findings by the beginning of March. During March I will be edit my methodology, my literature review and improve upon my findings and analysis. My abstract will also be completed by the end of March and the final edit of my project will be in April, ready for submission on the 27th April 2015.
This will be a research project based on the topic English as an Additional Language (EAL). The research project will focus directly on the practitioners and not the children of the setting. My research will be based on the research questions:

‘To what extent do practitioners effectively meet the needs of EAL children in the setting?’

‘How do practitioners meet the needs of social needs of children with EAL?’

The project will focus on what support children, who have EAL, gain from their practitioners or key persons in their setting and how this allows them to socialise and communicate with other children who do speak English as their first language.

The methods that I will use in order to gain this information are observations and interviews. I will interview the manager and also the practitioners who have key children with EAL. I will observe the practitioners during their practice throughout my time at the early years setting. This will make my research qualitative.

The ethical issues that I will have to take into consideration will be consent from the gatekeeper. I will write a letter of consent to the manager which
how these will be addressed. will explain who I am, what I am doing and why I will need access to the setting. I will also make it clear to participants that they will be able to withdraw at any given time they wish if they feel uncomfortable or do not want to participate any longer in the research study. Confidentiality is another ethical issue I will take into consideration. I will explain to all participants that their names and the name of the setting will not be used in order to achieve anonymity. For data protection I will ensure that all participants are aware that the evidence I gather will be used in my work which the assessor will have access too.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please indicate any issues that may arise relating to diversity and equality whilst undertaking this research and how you will manage these.</th>
<th>The practitioners who I will be observing and interviewing may feel under pressure or uncomfortable during the duration of the research project so I will make sure that I do not discriminate anyone or make them feel uncomfortable in any way.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate how participants will be de-briefed about their involvement in the research process and or provided with opportunities for reflection and evaluation</td>
<td>I will debrief those who are involved in my research project when the research is completed with a brief meeting. I will give them truthful information about my research, what I have found and if any misconduct has taken place throughout the research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following questions by circling or highlighting the appropriate response:

1. Will your research project involve young people under the age of 18?
If yes, do you have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate from the Criminal Records Bureau?

Yes  No

Will your research project involve vulnerable adults?

Yes  No

For which category of proposal are you applying for ethical approval?

Category  A  B

Appendix three: Consent letter.

Birmingham City University
City North Campus
Birmingham
B42 2SU
United Kingdom

20/1/2015

To the manager/practitioners,

My name is Andrianna Photiou and I am in my final year at Birmingham City University studying BA (Hons) Early Childhood Education Studies. As part of the ‘research project’ module that I am currently studying, I must conduct a piece of research that focuses on an Early Years topic. The early years’ topic that I have decided to focus on is English as an Additional Language (EAL). I will particularly focus on how practitioners support children with EAL in terms of their sociability and communication skills with other children within the Early Years setting.
I have decided to choose your nursery to conduct my research as I feel that your setting will provide me with a great opportunity to find exactly what I am looking for. With your culturally diverse setting, I will be able to see how your practitioners work with children who do not speak English as their first language in the setting and how these children socialise and communicate with children who do speak English as their first language.

In order to conduct my research I will need access to your setting two times a week for three weeks. This will allow me to collect detailed observation notes and will also allow me to conduct interviews with practitioners. I will collect my information by conducting interviews with the manager and three of your key persons who have key children with EAL. I will see how the key persons work with their key children in order to support their social skills and how they encourage children with EAL to communicate and socialise with the other children.

The data that I will collect will be used only in my assignments which the assessor will have access to. In order to keep the participants anonymous, I will not be using the names of the setting or of the participants involved in this study for confidentiality reasons.

If you have any questions or queries regarding this research study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Andrianna Photiou

CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

I give permission and agree to participate in this research study as a participant.

Print Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date 12/02/2015
Appendix four: Practitioner interview questions.

1) What do you know about the settings policy around EAL?

2) On a scale of one to ten, 10 being the highest, how would you rate your EAL knowledge?

3) What strategies do you use to effectively build a relationship with your key child who has EAL?

4) Do you feel that there are any barriers when it comes to building a relationship with your key child who has EAL?

5) How do you think that these could be dealt with?

6) How do you ensure that your key child with EAL is included and not excluded from his English-speaking peers?

7) In your opinion, what do you think helps and supports develop a child’s social skills and language development?

8) Imagine you are in a scenario where a child with EAL speaks no English at all. The child does not socialise nor interact with anyone, however you notice that they thoroughly enjoy playing with cars. How would you use the child’s interest to support their interaction and social skills with others?

9) How do you implement this into your practice?

10) Are you aware of research and theories around EAL, for example the silent period?

11) If so, what do you know about it?

12) Would you be interested in learning more about EAL and do you feel it would benefit your job role?

Appendix five: Manager Interview transcript

Researcher: Okay so first question, I would just like to know what your philosophy and ethos is around the topic of EAL?

Participant A: Right... so my philosophy? Erm... I believe that children who don’t speak English as their first language need to be able to hear the language and socialise effectively within the setting for them to be able to pick it up and learn the new language. Play is vital for children who
have EAL... you know, when they play with the other children they are engaging and interacting with each other which is good and I think that’s very helpful in terms of their language development. In any activity that is conducted, I believe that an opportunity is made for children with EAL to be socially involved with the other children who can speak English.

Researcher: So how do you promote EAL within your setting?

Participant A: In terms of promoting it... well although we specifically do not have an EAL policy, our other policies ensure that we do take into consideration equality of all children within the setting, so you know we celebrate the different religious and cultural festivals that the children celebrate at home as well. We also have posters of the different ways in which you can say ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’ in different languages around the setting. Books as well.. we have books which promote different languages and cultures. In the pre-school room we say ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’ in different languages which the children really enjoy doing. I also like my staff members to ask parents for words which they use at home in their language which they’d be able to use in the setting with the child.

Researcher: How do you encourage your practitioners to build an effective relationship with their key children with EAL?

Participant A: When a child first comes to the nursery, we actually allow them to pick their own key person which I think is nice, it gives them that freedom of choice. The staff member will spend as much time as they can with that child just so that they’re able to get to know the child properly and then from there, they’re able to meet their needs, essentially building that relationship. In terms of children who are already in the setting and need to make that transitional move to the next room up… we do this by allowing them to spend some time in the new room with their old key person and this is where they are introduced to their new key person… so yeah, I’d say it definitely works.

Researcher: Have you recognised any barriers when it comes to practitioners attempting to build a relationship with children who have EAL?

Participant A: Yes, I’d say there are barriers but I think you are still able to form that bond with a child who doesn’t speak the same language as you, just as much as with a child who does speak the same language. I suppose it’s a lot harder if you’re trying to communicate with
someone but you can’t… This is why I encourage my staff members to learn certain words from parents who speak another language,.. if they use the home language of the child with them there’s more of a chance that they will be able to build an effective relationship and bond that we strive for here. I think that is something that definitely helps..

Researcher: So how do you think you could overcome the barriers?

Participant A: well this is exactly why I encourage my staff members to learn certain words from parents who do speak another language you see… if they use the home language of the child with them there’s more of a chance that they will be able to build an effective relationship and bond that we try and strive for here. I think that is something that definitely helps. Another way I try to overcome barriers is by ensuring that my staff members get the relevant training on EAL... I think overall, if staff members have sufficient knowledge about EAL then they are able to work around the barriers that may occur when working with children with EAL.

Researcher: How do you ensure that children who have EAL in your setting are and feel included with their English-speaking peers?

Participant A: I think planned activities are probably the best way in which we can get all children interacting with each other… you know, allowing children time to play as well on their own. I understand children who do have EAL are more likely to play on their own maybe so this is why it’s important to ensure that we plan activities and work in small groups of children so they have that opportunity to interact and socialise with each other. I know some children will not talk to children who don’t have a lot of English vocabulary and I think it’s because they think they can’t talk...

Researcher: In your opinion, how do you think a child with EAL is best supported in developing their social skills and language?

Participant A: I believe that a child who has EAL must firstly have a good relationship with their key person in order to feel comfortable... having that emotional bond really helps when supporting children overall. In terms of social and language skills, I think the best way is through play and planned activities which is what we do here. Circle time is also another way in which we promote social skills and language… so we might sing songs and nursery rhymes… we might read books about different cultures and languages... but I do think overall play is the best
way in which children can learn and pick up a new language, by listening to others and picking up these new words, children are able to do that at their age.

Researcher: Are you aware of research and theories around EAL, for example the silent period?

Participant A: I have come across the silent period, yes... I know it’s a stage where children are silent obviously (quiet laughter)... I probably don’t know as much as I should though if I’m honest.

Researcher: That’s alright, what is it you do know about the silent period?

Participant A: Well it’s a stage where children are silent… seeing children with EAL who have come into the setting, they do tend to be more quiet at the beginning anyway and I assume it has something to do with their confidence as well and probably the fact they don’t have the vocabulary to speak.

Researcher: Do you think, in Early Years, more emphasis should be placed on the topic of EAL?

Participant A: Yes I do. Especially now that you’ve mentioned the silent period and I haven’t given the best answer! (laughs) But yes, I think that early year’s practitioners definitely need to know about EAL as much as they can as that’s obviously the best way in which they can then meet the needs of children who do have EAL. I also think that if more emphasis is placed on EAL, then practitioners will find it easier to overcome barriers that link to EAL like building relationships with the children or getting them to involve themselves and participate with the other children... and maybe the other way round as well so finding ways in which children who do speak English as their first language can interact with children who don’t.

Appendix six: Observation sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practitioner</th>
<th>Number of times practitioner interacted</th>
<th>Number of times practitioner interacted</th>
<th>General observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>with child with EAL.</th>
<th>with child who speaks English.</th>
<th>Practitioner ensured that their key child with EAL was not left alone by interacting with child. The practitioner ensured that all children were playing together by involving herself in the play and ensuring that the other children were also involved. When child with EAL was playing on their own she invited him to join in when she was reading a book to a group of children.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>TOTAL: 47</td>
<td>TOTAL: 105</td>
<td>Practitioner interacted very well with the children. I noticed that this practitioner, when conducting activities, would take away small groups of children. Spoke to them and allowed them to speak in turns about the activity that they were going to do. The child that had EAL was very quiet in comparison to the other children who can speak English. The practitioner asked the child with EAL questions and interacted with them during this activity more so than with the other children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>TOTAL: 53</td>
<td>TOTAL: 126</td>
<td>This practitioner didn’t interact as much with any of the children but interacted quite a bit with the child with EAL. Practitioner tried to group a few children together during a role-play. The children interacted well whilst practitioner observed and child with EAL also joined in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL: 67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>