

**Listening to Young Learners**  
**Applying the Montessori Method to English as an Additional  
Language (EAL) Education**

Carla Marie Briffett Aktaş, B.A., B.Ed., M.A.

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Department of Educational Research  
Lancaster University  
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Department of Educational Research,  
Lancaster University, UK.

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This thesis results from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

Signature ..... *Carla Briffett Aktaş* .....

## **Abstract**

With the current immigration and migration trends in Europe and worldwide, English as an Additional Language (EAL) education is becoming a prominent area of educational research. The discourse around EAL and social justice education has, until now, largely focused on primary, secondary, and post compulsory aged students. Preschool aged EAL children have been left out of the academic discourse. Pedagogical approaches need to be explored to marry EAL and social justice for preschool children. Maria Montessori's pedagogical approach may be able to achieve this unity without compromising the language development that is desired. The following study is a piece of action research, applying the Montessori Method to a group of nine EAL children in the Canton of Zürich, Switzerland.

The data gathered suggests that applying Montessori's approach to EAL education, that of listening to the child and being attentive to his\her needs, gives autonomy to the student, and can promote social justice in preschool EAL education. Listening to the child occurs through 'observation' (attentiveness to the child), critical reflection of practice, and experimentation in education. In this way each child receives a customized education that has, at its foundation, respect for the child. Using 'observation,' field notes, and researcher reflections, it became apparent that young children are able to communicate their educational needs. TESOL outcomes were used to monitor the rate at which English was learned. Each language journey was vastly different, but regardless of the initial outcomes met, all children demonstrated increases in their comprehension and spoken English. It is important to recognize that children must be listened to and should be considered valued members in their education.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

Man's ontological vocation (as he calls it) is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively.

(Freire, 1996, p. 14)

### **1.1 My Language and Migration Journey**

In August 2011, I packed my belongings and moved from St. John's, Newfoundland, where I was completing my studies in Education, to the Inuit community of Clyde River, Nunavut, on Baffin Island. Excited and nervous for my first day as a qualified teacher, I made sure that each lesson was planned, down to the last detail. I wanted to get to know my students and their culture, so my first day's lessons were focused on us getting to know one another. The shock came when the bell rang and the students entered the classroom. I was their first English speaking teacher. Up to this point, the students received one half hour lesson in English per day and the remainder of their schooling was conducted in Inuktitut, their first language (L1). My experience teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL) was not one that I had studied for, nor did I feel prepared for. With hard work, hours of independent EAL study, hours of preparation and six-day work weeks, I was able to teach EAL in combination with the Math, Science, English and Art classes that I had been hired to teach. My language journey began as a teacher, but soon my role became that of a language learner.

I arrived in the village of Çambaşı, Turkey, population 250, in July 2012, knowing only a hand full of Turkish words. I was met by my now husband's immediate and extended family, who had come from as far away as Istanbul to meet me. In total, there were over twenty family members present, staying in two houses, owned by my husband's mother. I was met with excited faces, all eager to meet and speak with me. I

looked to Oktay, my soon to be husband at the time, who had the arduous task of translator, quite a difficult feat amid so many conversations. Throughout my first visit to Turkey, I struggled to understand and communicate with those around me. The frustration and confusion of not understanding was eased with hand gestures and sound effects. Throughout the next few years, my knowledge of Turkish grew, and with it, the confusion of my Turkish family environment lessened. That was, however, until I moved to Zürich, Switzerland, where I was faced with the task of learning German and Turkish simultaneously. Having to learn two languages is difficult, frustrating, and often feels hopeless. In my new linguistic environment, my Turkish vocabulary and knowledge of grammar suffered, while my German knowledge grew rapidly. I then found myself making peculiar error transfers depending on the language being spoken. While speaking German, the error transfers being made came from English, my L1. While speaking Turkish, I found my error transfers coming from German. The mixing of languages and vocabulary caused further frustration that will likely continue until each language is mastered. At present, I am again faced with a new linguistic challenge, having moved again to Xi'an, China, where Mandarin is the primary language.

My personal experience with language learning and new cultural environments sparked my curiosity about how the process can be made easier for young children who are learning languages, how languages can be learned more effectively by abandoning didactic educational models, and how, by putting social justice and the learners' needs before all else, language learning can occur. For young learners, what is referred to as the 'traditional' educational model, whereby the relationship between teacher and student is defined by 'a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient,

listening objects (the students)' (Freire, 1996, p. 52), was deemed as being inappropriate. The idea of 'traditional' education refers to Freire's ideas of the 'banking system' of education (Freire, 1996, pp. 52-67), whereby students are passive recipients in education and teachers are the authority responsible for imparting knowledge. My own language learning journey brought about the realization of how ineffective the 'banking system' is for language learners. My experience has been that real-world exposure and practical use of language is a much more effective way to learn. A framework that encouraged children's curiosity was sought to remedy this dilemma. Eventually, the Montessori approach was identified as being a framework that had social justice and the natural curiosity of the child at its centre.

The duality of my roles, both as teacher and learner, affords me a unique perspective in the following research. I am able to identify with the needs of learners, having the necessary compassion and patience in moments of frustration, that I know from first-hand experience, is inevitable.

## **1.2 Arriving at the Final Research Project**

The beginning of my academic investigation into language teaching and social justice occurred in the East of England where I was residing at the beginning of my PhD studies. I concentrated largely on school structure and curriculum being taught to secondary school students who are EAL learners, and the social implications of the education being provided for this group of students (Rashid & Tikly, 2010; Tikly, 2009, Nov 2010). Woven into this investigation was a greater understanding of immigration/migration patterns and the role that globalization has on education systems and changes that are needed therein (Giddens, 2002). McPake, Tinsley, and

James (2007) recognise the UK as being a ‘superdiversity.’ They use Vertovec’s (2006) definition of ‘superdiversity,’ meaning that there has been an increase in the number of ‘new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically, differentiated and legally stratified immigrant and migrants.’ My own migration pattern has spanned four countries on three continents in the last six years. I have lived in a remote Inuit village in the High Arctic, cities in England and Switzerland, and currently reside in China. As my understanding of globalization deepened, I realized that this idea of a ‘superdiversity’ is not limited to the United Kingdom, but can also be applied to a broader European and world context.

Upon moving to Zürich, Switzerland, I began to work with young children in a Montessori preschool, knowing only the basic philosophy of the Montessori Method from my undergraduate studies. I began to read and research this method, looking, not to already established Montessori institutions, but to Montessori herself in *The Montessori Method* (Montessori, 2006) and *The Absorbent Mind* (Montessori, 2007). The original texts, *The Montessori Method* (Montessori, 1912) and *The Absorbent Mind* (Montessori, 1949) were not readily available for examination, so reprints of Montessori’s work will be used as the basis of the pedagogy employed. The term ‘method’ is not to be understood as a scientific method whereby there is a definite formula for teaching and learning. ‘Method’ in this thesis should be understood as a set of principles of listening to children and experimentation in learning. Montessori stressed two notable points, first, language learning is a fundamental part of young children’s development and second, that justice should play a prominent role in education systems. My original curiosity for language learning then became interwoven with the language learning approach outlined by Montessori. In her

writings, the stress on language and justice was centred around the L1 of a child. I began to wonder whether her approach could be used as a response to the globalization patterns being experienced in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Upon further investigation, I was unable to find any research that could answer my questions about how different educational models can be used specifically for preschool aged EAL learners. The idea for the study came about through my own exposure to languages and my exposure to new educational methodologies, in particular, the Montessori Method, democratic education, social justice pedagogies and models for inclusion and diversity.

The students I had during my time in Switzerland originated from migrant families from various social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. It became obvious that the students I had were passive participants in their migration. Migration was something that was done to them, as they were not a part of the decision-making process. Children's voices need consideration in socially just EAL learning, particularly when children are a by-product of their parent's or family's decision to immigrate/migrate. Children should be listened to, since they have power and knowledge of their wants and needs. John (2003), emphasized the power of children and their need to participate in democratic institutions. Likewise, I sought to create a platform whereby preschool children are listened to during the EAL learning process. This listening process in education is also echoed by Montessori (Montessori, 2006) and encompasses employing all senses (hearing, seeing, observing) in the listening process.

### **1.3 Theoretical Approach**

The approach taken within this study is rooted in a constructivist paradigm. Particularly with small children, who use exploration and experience to produce meaning, constructivism allows for the complexity of their development and personal histories to be explored. ‘Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). The difficulty presents itself when meaning has already been constructed in one environment, but when, because of migration and globalization, the known environment is replaced with an unknown one. Thus, meaning must be recreated in the new environment, with a new language. ‘No object can be adequately described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 45) and as such, one must consider the social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives of those who are creating the meaning and ‘doing’ the interaction with the environment. In the process of creating meaning, it is paramount to ensure that the new environment, where meaning is being sought and established, is such that the humanity of the person is maintained and a space for individual voice is created. Constructivism relies largely on ‘processes of interaction among individuals’ (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). The need for socially just language education can be met while guiding the learner in how to construct meaning in his\her environment through interaction with the new environment and with new people. The human construct of language can then marry the need for social justice in education to produce a climate that promotes and encourages the creation of meaning through language in a respectful and just way.

Given the age and variety of L1s represented among the participants in this study, constructivism provided a needed means by which to ground the study through the

observation of the meaning being created. According to Creswell (2014), constructivism relies on the ability of ‘the researcher, [who] listens carefully to what people say or do in their life settings’ (p. 8). This was particularly important when considering the language differences between the researcher and the participants. It is also an integral role of the educator in the Montessori Method, in her call for every teacher to become an observer and experimentalist (Montessori, 2006, p. 28). The researcher’s position in constructivism is equally as important as the position of the participants. Within the data collection in this study, my own reflections on each lesson and participant was fundamental in continuing to provide a just education. The perspectives of the child cannot be independent of the meaning they create and the perspective of the researcher cannot be disassociated with the research. Through the constructivist framework, neither the participant nor the researcher are independent from the meaning being created and each play an important role in the ‘listening’ process. Whatever meaning is created is a direct result of the history and background of the individual doing the creating. ‘It not only theorizes the interpretive work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation’ (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239). Researcher reflexivity is an important aspect of this type of research and promotes the idea that objectivity is an illusion. The researchers’ experience, using constructivism, must be addressed within the theoretical conception developed.

Through the theoretical framework of constructivism, I was able to help facilitate the creation of meaning through language to a small group of participants, recognizing each participant’s experience and background being brought to the learning process and the creation of meaning. Through the study and with the use of reflections and

researcher reflexivity, a balance was achieved between the creation of meaning through language with a group of young children and maintaining a sense of justice for the wellbeing of each child. The implications this has for education are significant because it allows for the desired language development to occur while placing the focus on the learning journey of the participant, without jeopardizing the end result.

#### **1.4 Contribution to Knowledge**

My contribution to knowledge is to apply the principles of social justice to young EAL learners by employing the Montessori Method. The contribution to EAL education is twofold. Firstly, preschool education is only a small portion of educational research, while most EAL research does not address preschool aged children (Alexander, Doddington, Gray, Hargreaves, & Kirshner, 2010; Young-Scholten & Herschensohn, 2014). While there has been research conducted on EAL in early childhood contexts, (Devarakonda, 2012; Mistry & Sood, 2015; Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000), it is not specifically for or about preschool aged children and does not play a prominent role within the larger EAL research discourse. Secondly, the literature on social justice and student voice tends to focus more on school aged student groups (Hallett & Prout, 2003; Hill, Davis, Prout, & Tisdall, 2004; James, January 2011; Prout, 2000). Although some work has been done with social justice in early childhood education (ECE), it is at its beginning stages (Hawkins, 2014a, 2014b). This piece of research sought to bridge the gap between preschool educational research, EAL research and social justice in education research by using the Montessori Method to create a socially just learning environment for EAL preschool students. Here, the voice of the child and the willingness of teachers to listen plays a central role in applying Montessori's pedagogy.

Social justice in education includes providing students with ‘the resources and respect they needed in order to be able to participate on par with others’ (Fraser, 2007, p. 17). The question now becomes; how should educators provide ‘the resources and respect’ to their students? How do educators ‘do’ social justice in their classrooms to ensure that opportunities to participate are made available? The research conducted here identified the Montessori Method as one means by which educators can create spaces for student voice. This study brings to light the complexity of the teacher-student relationship, focusing on how one’s background (social, cultural, and linguistic), plays a role in the learning process. The purpose of this action research study is to recognize diversity in English learners and offer an alternative language program that provides significant learning outcomes, but one that is rooted in the promotion of social justice through encouraging student voice. All children should be encouraged to actively participate in their education, but only if and when they feel comfortable doing so. In this study, silence was respected as much as vocalizing language. The lessons sought to develop ‘social relations to ensure that they are practiced on the basis of respect and equality and allow everyone to take part in our democracy’ (Benjamin & Emejulu, 2012, p. 36). The respect and equality that is required in socially just education cannot be restricted to the child. Parents, carers, family members, and communities must also have social justice principles applied. What I hoped to accomplish was to provide a space for the voices of students and their families in the language learning process. Mutual respect for multiple voices must occur between the teacher, child, family, and the greater community, if social justice is to be achieved.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

The following questions helped navigate my exploration of social justice through the use of Montessori's Method in EAL learning with young preschool aged children:

**How can the Montessori Method be used to promote social justice in preschool EAL education? An action research study at Blume Kinderhaus in urban Switzerland.**

(a.) How far is it possible to employ the Montessori approach for multilingual EAL children in the first plane of development (0-6 years of age)?

(b) How far\to what extent is the Montessori Method versatile enough to respond to social, cultural, and linguistic differences?

## **1.6 Methodology/Method**

The Montessori Method was used to facilitate the lessons, and social justice and student voice theories were used to determine the interaction between the participants and the researcher. Montessori's framework was established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and had, as it's foundation, the idea of justice. This idea implies a sense of responsibility from adults in whose care the child is placed.

The child achieves incarnation in order to adapt himself to life with other men and become equal to them...The absorbent mind believes all, hopes all. It receives poverty as it receives wealth, it receives all faiths as it receives the prejudices and customs of his environment: it incarnates it all within itself (Montessori, 2007, p. 238).

Educators, researchers, and policy makers all have a responsibility to provide children with an environment that is conducive to learning but which also demonstrates an attitude of equality and justice for the child. Montessori wrote often about justice and giving, even to the smallest of children, an appropriate level of educational autonomy.

Even more frequently she refers to the simple act of loving the child. This incorporates all aspects of the social justice theme throughout her writings. ‘The study of love and its utilization will lead us to the foundation whence it springs and that is the Child. This is the new path that man must follow’ (Montessori, 2007, p. 241).

Maria Montessori wrote in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and had direct contact with John Dewey, who developed his educational theory around the same time. Dewey’s philosophy echoes Montessori’s in its promotion of ‘continuous reconstruction of experience’ (Dewey, 2008, p. 74). Dewey identifies some disagreement with the approach as laid out by Montessori. ‘Even the kindergarten and Montessori techniques are so anxious to get at intellectual distinctions...that they tend to ignore- or reduce- the immediate crude handling of the familiar material of experience’ (Dewey, 2008, p. 136). Dewey believed that Montessori’s Method was moving in the right direction to promote democracy in education, but that experiential learning should take a more prominent role in her approach. Paulo Freire wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), originally published in 1970. He, too, sought to re-establish ‘the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students’ (Freire, 1996, p. 53). Although Montessori, Dewey, and Freire would not have agreed on every aspect of how education should be ‘done,’ there are similarities echoed throughout the writings of each. For instance; Montessori, Dewey, and Freire encouraged the autonomy of both teacher and student. The teacher’s position should be that of a guide in knowledge, rather than an authority. Student voice is something to be encouraged and respected. From a practitioner’s point of view, what has been written in educational philosophy for the past 100 years has not resulted in changing how we ‘do’ education in a democratic and socially just way. The

current stress put on educators around assessment and outcomes has hindered the social justice movement and limited how teachers can implement social justice in their classrooms. This piece of action research was my attempt to put the above philosophies into action with a group of young children who do not possess a voice in the education they receive, and who are, therefore, limited in their participation in the current system.

The following study sought to gather qualitative and quantitative data using an action research methodology ‘with the goal of designing [a program]...that set [the EAL learning community towards an education focused on]...progressive self-improvement’ (Lewis, Kellett, Robinson, Fraser, & Ding, 2004, p. 280). Action research was particularly beneficial for this study because it sought to accommodate learner diversity and needs. The methodology employed, therefore, also had to have as its focus, the social and cultural histories of the participants. Action research promotes ‘awareness and sensitivity to an individual’s social, cultural and historical location [to produce a] meaningful, constructive reflection on experiences’ (Gillies & Alldred, 2012, p. 54). The focus on participant background in action research compliments social justice in education, recognizing differences in learners and the influence that different backgrounds can have on education. It allows for the complexity of EAL learning to be placed at the forefront of the study. The variables of age, ethnic and linguistic background, migration, home, social, and cultural environments, all play a role in how learning occurs and how educators need to adapt language programs to meet the needs of students. Language learning does not occur in a vacuum; indeed, it is dependent on many factors. The goal of action research is ‘*improving education by changing it and learning from the consequences of changes*’ (Cohen, Manion, &

Morrison, 2011, p. 347). The methods used in the collection of data are equally as important when determining the positive and negative aspects of the changes being made.

This study consisted of a group of nine children who were selected based on the willingness of parents to have his/her child participate in the study. Participants originated from a variety of social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. The length of time the children had resided in Switzerland also varied. Some were born in Switzerland to Swiss/immigrant/migrant parents while others had settled in Switzerland after being born elsewhere. Each parent was given the option not to have their child participate in the study, but to still participate in the English lessons without data being collected. Each parent was then provided with an information sheet in English and German. Parents who wanted their child\children to participate in the study were given consent forms that were signed and returned to the researcher (see Appendix One).

In this study, it was not sufficient to collect data using a single method. When ‘doing’ research, relying on one method only can lead to questionable validity and important discoveries may go unnoticed. To collect data that reflects the listening necessary of the researcher in this study and identify issues within the learning process, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The qualitative data were collected through the use of ‘observations’ during lessons, field notes, and researcher reflections. The ‘observations,’ field notes, and reflections depended largely on my interpretation of events and the success or failure of lessons. Quantitative data were collected through two parental surveys (see Appendix Two & Three) and give the

language development of each child through the lens of his\her parents. Gaining insight of development from my own, as well as from parents' perspectives, provided a broader conception of what language was being demonstrated by the participants in multiple environments. Language development is, in itself, a vague concept. The rate of language development, vocabulary learning versus grammar knowledge and comprehension versus spoken language are all elements of language learning. Additional quantitative data were collected through TESOL (Gottlieb, Carnuccio, Ernst-Slavit, & Katz, 2006) checklists specifically designed for preschool aged children. The TESOL checklists were used for its age appropriate language outcomes and they reflect the importance of comprehension and spoken language as the first stepping stone in language acquisition.

### **1.7 Purpose of Research**

My intention was initially to create lessons in English that would teach English effectively, giving the children a voice and autonomy in their education. The Montessori Method was used to plan the lessons and to determine how vocabulary was taught and learned, with a special focus on maintaining justice throughout. Justice in education seems to have been forgotten with young learners, perhaps due to their lack of social, political, and economic power. This action research was conducted to bring justice to young children despite their lack of social power and position.

The importance of this study lies in its adaptability to a variety of educational contexts. This means that there is no presumption that only educators in a Montessori school or preschool can use the findings of this study to meet the language needs of students. Instead, the purpose is to provide all teachers of preschool aged children

with an alternative means by which to teach English. The approach employed can be adapted to multiple curricula and teaching styles. The intent of the study is not to imply that such a program would be successful for all children, but that social justice in education and student voice is important for language learning with children from a variety of social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. Children are generally viewed by societies as being powerless. It is the responsibility of educators to create a space within school settings where children are given the tools needed to learn and develop and to provide them with autonomy over their own education, giving them a voice.

### **1.8 Outline of Chapters**

The following chapter; Chapter 2, is a review of relevant literature focusing on exploring and defining key concepts and terminology necessary for the data presented and analysed in this thesis. Chapter 3 explains the methodology employed in the research, including the methods used in the process of data collection. The following chapters are the presentation of the data collected. Chapter 4 examines the individual language learning journeys of the participants. Here, the qualitative data ('observations,' field notes, and reflections) are brought to the forefront of the learning process. Chapter 5 provides key information about various aspects of the children's backgrounds that played an important role in their language acquisition and continues with a presentation of the quantitative data gathered through the use of TESOL checklists. Chapter 6 highlights some key aspects of 'doing' social justice in a preschool environment. Here, key themes recognized during the lessons are outlined and discussed. Finally, Chapter 7 considers the implications of the research on the wider educational research community and how social justice in education may be examined for a broader EAL student population.

## **Chapter 2 Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The following chapter is a review of the literature that helped inform my exploration of the Montessori Method in EAL learning and assisted in the development and implementation of English lessons that adhere to the principles of social justice in education. As new research in education is being conducted and new findings published, it affords educators and educational researchers with a more comprehensive understanding of the role that education plays in society. More practically, the research explores how the teaching and learning process can, and perhaps in some cases, should occur to fill this role. This study has two primary concerns: the process of learning in a socially just context and the resulting language development. Throughout this thesis, it is imperative to keep in mind the age of the students being studied (2-4 years). At this age, children are still passive participants of their own life and have very little control over where they live, what education they receive, and how that education is realized. Identifying the social position of the participants was realized, in part, using the following literature.

Each body of literature that is discussed in the following chapter played a significant role in how the research was conducted, always keeping a socially just education in mind. In the initial stages of this study globalization was a particularly important concept. The need for its incorporation into this thesis came about once the participant group had been established, only a very small percentage of whom were Swiss born. With so many societal, cultural, and linguistic groups represented, it became paramount that I understand the immigration flows between Switzerland and the outside world, in an effort to understand the children. One of my most influential

educators once told me ‘to start where the children are.’ This advice has been fundamental in my teaching career and I have continued to follow this advice here, where how social justice is to be applied demands understanding the roles of student and teacher and the context from which the students come. Social justice must always be at the forefront of educational thought, particularly where the education of very young children is concerned. One cannot respect or value a student without knowing who they are and what cultural fabric makes up their being. This task is a huge undertaking, and for one to do so effectively, social justice must be defined and then applied to the educational context being explored.

During the research conducted, I found myself returning to the literature on social justice often so as to ensure that how the lessons were being conducted was socially just and honoured the humanity of the young students. With social justice and student voice in mind, I began to explore the work of Freire and Dewey, which led me to the discovery of the Montessori Method which was used as the primary pedagogy in the research. Finally, upon examination of the Montessori Method, it became apparent that further EAL literature would be required, as EAL study was not included within Montessori’s Method. The EAL literature provided a guide through the learning process and highlighted the important practices necessary for such language learning to occur. Although a daunting task, the body of literature surrounding EAL styles and approaches to learning did much to provide ideas about how to approach such a difficult project effectively.

The following exploration of the literature on globalization, social justice, educational theory, and EAL is by no means exhaustive. Each of these topics consists of a body of

literature that is far too large to address in this thesis. The review gives an overview of each, with regards to its relation to this thesis. Key terms are defined and their complexity realized, while being placed in context for this thesis.

## **2.2 Globalization: The Salad Bowl of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Life**

As well as referring to changes in immigration and migration patterns, ‘globalization is political, technological and cultural, as well as economic’ (Giddens, 2002, p. 10). The perimeters set out by Giddens, in his discussion of globalization, incorporate both the physical and nonphysical spaces used, in which people interact and connect with others of different cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. The term globalization reflects a complex social phenomenon that has impacted many facets of societies; in particular, social institutions. The term can be understood as the social interconnectivity and interaction that has brought about cultural, linguistic, and societal diversity, reflecting the fluidity of the phenomenon. Appadurai (1999) echoes Giddens’ ideas around the social aspect of globalization, writing that ‘globalization is not simply the name for a new epoch in the history of capital or in the biography of the nationstate. It is marked by a new role for the imagination in social life’ (p. 236). Globalization should not be limited to being described only in terms of physical spaces, but should incorporate nonphysical spaces that are readily available and commonly used. The internet is one such space for interaction (Beaulieu, 2005). Because this project focused on EAL learning for very young children, the proceeding discussion of globalization will focus on the sharing of physical space and the physical interactions of varying communities of people. In large part, this is due to the age and ability of the participants being discussed, who are not yet able to use nonphysical spaces independently for communication or interaction.

Despite the global nature of this phenomenon, the European continent will be focused on because it was the location for the research being undertaken. Immigration and migration rates have been increasing exponentially in Europe. The latest figures show that ‘a total of 3.4 million people immigrated to one of the Member States of the EU-28, while at least 2.8 million emigrants left a Member State of the EU’ (Eurostat Statistics Explained, May 2015). Although Switzerland is not an EU Member State, the statistics are similar to those of the EU. The latest statistics indicate that there are approximately 2 million foreign nationals currently residing in Switzerland and are broken down into the following categories: ‘foreign-born foreigners (they represent just over 70% of this group, ie 1'406'000 persons); foreign-born native Swiss people whose parents were both born abroad (23,000 persons) [and] foreign-born naturalized Swiss nationals (539'000 persons)’ (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2016). The above statistics, although the most recent, are no longer accurate. For instance, the above statistics do not account for the influx of asylum seekers from Syria who have come into Europe in 2015\2016. This demonstrates the complexity of globalization and its far-reaching impact on European society and its institutions. It also highlights the difficulty evaluating immigration trends and interpreting the political events that have resulted in mass immigration into Europe.

Although Giddens (2002) does provide a brief description of what globalization is, he does omit one of society’s important institutions in his definition, that of schools and educational institutions. ‘First, it is impossible to separate globalization and diversity from education because public schools are the first place where these issues become apparent’ (Nieto, 2013, p. 106). The influence of globalization on schooling is

reflected in the pupil population and the differences of cultural and linguistic groups represented. Immigration and migration bring people to different regions for different reasons, and with them, come children who must be educated. Schools no longer represent a homogeneous social or cultural group, as was largely the case 100 years ago. With the changing student population, ‘how we think, and what we do, about public education’ (Nieto, 2014, p. 3) must also change. The rights of all students, regardless of origin, becomes a task that educators now face. The globalization trend was certainly reflected in this research project and how the rights of diverse student groups are to be honoured came to the forefront of the project. Exploring how the rights of diverse students are to be achieved may lie in understanding theories of social justice and how these theories can be implemented in schools.

### **2.3 The Role of Social Justice in Developing Educational Communities**

#### **2.3.1 Defining Social Justice and Evaluating Institutions**

Social justice is a complicated theoretical concept that can have many meanings depending on the society and facet of society being discussed. In the case of social work, for instance, social justice is concerned with distributive justice, meaning that it ‘refers to the way economic and social goods, services, rights, and opportunities are distributed in a society’ (Olson, Reid, Threadgill-Goldson, Riffe, & Ryan, Jan 2013, p. 25). For educational concerns of social justice, this definition may also apply if we view schooling and education as a service and a right of students. In fact, when literature addresses the rights and opportunities being given to students, often times the distributive justice definition above is used. There is a difference, however, between being provided with the right of receiving the service of education that is

ensured by law and actively being able to participate in the education (service) that is provided.

A broader definition is needed to include participation in education. According to Fraser (2007), social justice can take on new meanings when examined in light of globalization trends.

In the eyes of some, it sufficed that citizens be formally equal before the law; for others, equality of opportunity was also required; for still others, justice demanded that all citizens gain access to the resources and respect they needed in order to be able to participate on par with others, as full members of the political community (Fraser, 2007, p. 17).

Based on the above definition, justice and equality revolve around the ability ‘to participate fully, as peers,’ (Fraser, 2007, p. 20) in civil society. Within the definition there is no mention of the age at which this participation should occur. The impression given here is that social justice includes participation for all age groups and levels of education, including preschool. Opportunities for participation should be provided but these opportunities are not particularly useful if one cannot participate in them with respect and dignity. ‘Equality is not just a matter of rights, but also a matter of capabilities and how equal access to institutions and resources... allow for equal participation in social and political life’ (Richardson & Monro, 2012, p. 175). It is necessary to create a multi-dimensional definition of justice and equality that can benefit all citizens in all aspects of civil life. Social justice in education seeks to assist ‘every child [in achieving] the maximum of its individual abilities... [and] to give to any human being all help that will enable him to reach his full spiritual stature, and those who serve the spirit in all ages, must give help to these energies’ (Montessori,

2007, p. 233). The importance of applying principles of social justice in schools should be recognised because ‘schools are a central vehicle of cultural transmission, perhaps the most important vehicle next to the family’ (Reich, 2007, p. 299).

How socially just an educational institution is or is not can be judged through applying Held’s (2010) cosmopolitan principles of ‘equal worth and dignity, active agency, inclusiveness and subsidiarity and avoidance of serious harm’ (p.69). Similar to these principles are Fraser’s ideas of social justice as revolving around the ability of individuals to participate in society (Fraser, 2007). Throughout the discussion of globalization, social justice, and cosmopolitanism, there is, at the centre, a need for participation in civic society, equality of opportunity, and respect for the individual. Theoretically, this is not something particularly new or revolutionary. Educational philosophers have been saying much the same for the past 100 years. Until now, the discussion of social justice has been at the macro level, meaning that the conversation has been based on wider social and educational participation. The micro sphere of social justice is focused on individual schools and the pedagogies employed therein, most commonly in the form of inclusion policies and democratic education. Within inclusion and democracy dialogues there are no specific ages or levels of education that are excluded. Therefore, preschool aged children should be brought into the discussion as valued contributors of educational development.

### 2.3.2 How to ‘do’ Social Justice

#### *Creating school communities through democratic education.*

The task now becomes *how* to create a socially just education. One response to this issue has been the recognition for the need of democratic education being promoted in

schools and how schools can function to bring about cohesion in student populations. The common values and beliefs of diversity and multiculturalism can be used to create an educational environment that is committed to creating a democratic education that promotes social integration. In this case, unity can be accomplished through our shared human experience, regardless of what cultures, societies, or linguistic groups are represented. Perhaps an accurate representation of the shared experience being sought can be found in the term community cohesion, meaning

working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, p. 3).<sup>1</sup>

Adopting the goal of community cohesion within schools, the shared human experience of different groups can be acknowledged and celebrated, while the differences between groups are also recognized and appreciated. This meets the criteria of social justice as outlined by Fraser; in that respect, opportunity, and participation are of equal importance. It has at its foundation a common vision and desire to belong to a community with shared values and beliefs.

In educational institutions, community unity can be accomplished, in part, through a democratic approach to education. Democratic education has, at its foundation, the belief that 'all children – regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, or religion – are

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Children, Schools and Families is now called Department for Education.

entitled to an education adequate to equal citizenship' (Gutmann, 2004, p. 74). Multicultural education promotes democracy in education by encouraging students to accept cultural differences that are present among the population and by 'recognizing the role that cultural differences have played in shaping society and the world in which the children live' (Gutmann, 2004, p. 71). The cohesion of a community can be accomplished through 'a progressive society [that] counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth' (Dewey, 2008, p. 264). Societies are constantly experiencing growth and change, and as such, schools too must undergo similar evolution. The idea of incorporating social justice in democratic education should not be limited to secondary and post compulsory school settings. It should be applied to even the youngest of learners, giving them a voice in their education (Hawkins, 2014a, 2014b).

#### *Student voice.*

Student voice is an important aspect of socially just and democratic education. The literature on children's voices is an important stepping stone to achieving the desired outcome and certainly the frequency of such research is becoming more common (Hallett & Prout, 2003; James, January 2011; John, 2003). This is reflected in the newly published *International Journal of Student Voice*, recently founded in 2016, whereby educators and researchers have a platform for dialogue and collaboration. John (2003) correctly identifies the current problem with lack of hearing children's voices, writing that 'we are still largely deaf to what they have to say and teach us about the world as they see and [how they] experience it' (p. 28). This deafness may be hindering children who are then not given the space for participation in 'genuine decision-making in school and neighbour- hood [platforms, thus preventing] positive

outcomes,' (Prout, 2003, p. 20) such as sense of educational responsibility, from being met. When children are given a platform to have a valued voice in schools, socially just education can be achieved with even the youngest of learners.

Although literature on student voice for preschool aged children is limited, Leboyer (1977) suggests that a child is able to express his\her voice from birth. In education, student voice is most often discussed with primary, secondary and post compulsory students in mind (Alexander et al., 2010; Hallett & Prout, 2003; James, January 2011; John, 2003). EAL students are given less of a space for student voice in the literature, as no reference to it could be found. This piece of research sought to extend the current scholarly dialogue about student voice and apply it to preschool aged children. This allows young children to express their voice in the education they receive, ensuring social justice is achieved at every level of education. Encouraging student voice, may mean for educators, a move away from what Freire refers to as the 'banking style' (Freire, 1996, p. 75) of education toward a more student centred education based on experiential learning that was advocated by Dewey (Dewey, 1997, 2008) and Montessori (Montessori, 2006). The journeys of each of the participants in this study are documented in Chapter 4 in an effort to demonstrate how student voice and English language developed throughout the course of the study. The conclusion is that even with limited language knowledge, young EAL children have a student voice and have the ability to participate in their education.

#### **2.4 Social Justice Theories in Education**

With the changing student population it is becoming necessary to re-examine the purpose of education. Biesta (2009) outlines three functions of education that are

useful for consideration here. Biesta suggests that ‘*qualification* of children, *socialisation* and *subjectification*’ (Biesta, 2009, pp. 39-40) are the primary purposes of education. Education serves to provide skills and knowledge to children, to create an atmosphere of being a part of a group and to encourage independence. *Subjectification* is important in this discussion since social justice demands participation in education. Independence is encouraged through autonomy and ownership of one’s education, i.e. participation in education. The functions outlined above are not specific to one educational level, but are equally valid for all ages. If we think of education in this way, the teacher\student and student\subject relationships must also be rethought and how learning occurs most effectively must be re-examined.

#### 2.4.1 Freire’s Education Problem

Paulo Freire (1996) is quite clear in his warning about the result of inequality in society that can lead one group to become the oppressor, and the other group to become the oppressed. This shift in equality can occur through the attitude or belief that ‘the earth, property, production, the creation of people, people themselves, time – everything is reduced to the status of objects at its disposal’ (p. 40). Schools must be careful to protect the student from becoming ‘the object’ of education. The dangers of such an occurrence are made clear by Freire in his description of the traditional method of educational instruction. The paradigm of student as object is reinforced in education,

by the banking style, to give them “knowledge” or to impose upon them the model of the “good man” contained in a program whose content we ourselves organized. Many political and educational plans have failed

because their authors designed them according to their own personal views of reality, never once taking into account (except as mere objects of their actions) the *men-in-a-situation* to whom their program was ostensibly directed (Freire, 1996, p. 75).

Many years after Freire's work, the fear is still that students are beginning to be viewed as objects by government authorities and schools themselves through the use of league tables and formal rating systems. Freire, in his writings, does provide a solution to this problem. It must take the form of a 'pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, and therefore, action *with* the oppressed' (Freire, 1996, p. 48). Education is one of the most influential arenas in which social justice can be encouraged and honoured.

His discussion does not begin with the school as a whole, but with the individual teacher. 'Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students' (Freire, 1996, p. 53). Students should no longer be considered vessels into which knowledge is to be imparted. Instead, they must be 'critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher' (Freire, 1996, p. 62). The teacher, therefore, must consider the student to be an intellectual equal. There is a sense of respect for the student that must be present and the intellectual abilities, thoughts, desires, and needs of the student must be valued. Educators no longer hold the position of authority figure. They are to direct the students to self-discovery.

#### 2.4.2 Experiential Education

John Dewey echoes the concerns of Freire about the dangers of how instruction in schools takes place. His fear stems from a concern that ‘the material of formal instruction will be merely the subject matter of the schools, isolated from the subject matter of life-experience’ (Dewey, 2008, p. 13). This is not to suggest that all experiences are educational in nature. Dewey points out that a mis-educative experience is one that can stunt or hinder the growth process, preventing further growth experiences (Dewey, 1997, p. 25). ‘The experiential continuum’ (Dewey, 1997, p. 33) is then used to establish whether or not a particular experience should be labelled as having educational value. Instead of isolating students from the education they receive, education should be viewed as ‘a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating, process’ (Dewey, 2008, p. 15). In more practical terms, Dewey’s ideas of education should include,

participation in meaningful projects, learning by doing, encouraging problems and solving them, [this] not only facilitates the acquisition and retention of knowledge but fosters the right character traits: unselfishness, helpfulness, critical intelligence, individual initiative, etc. Learning is more than assimilating; it is the development of habits which enable the growing person to deal effectively and most intelligently with his environment (Warde, Winter 1960).

Adapting this educational framework does away with the authoritarian nature of the teacher-student relationship, as was suggested in Freire’s writing. Instead of education being used as a control mechanism in society, the teacher should be responsible for ‘assisting through cooperation the natural capacities of the individuals guided’

(Dewey, 2008, p. 26). Again, the reader is presented with a need for the reconciliation between the roles of teacher and student. It is especially important for very young learners that education be rooted in human interaction. Dewey (1997) stresses that for small children experience begins with people, most importantly, parents and family. When children enter into a school environment their education must begin with humanity from the educator. Freire, Dewey and Montessori believed that a change in education was to begin at the micro level of education, with individual teachers, and then flow upward to impact education at the macro level.

#### 2.4.3 Educational Approach of Montessori

Dewey and Freire highlighted problems with how traditional education is framed in society and how students are being taught. Montessori, too, recognized similar problems but went one step further and created a framework that can be implemented in schools. The Montessori Method abandons the didactic method of education and embraces the duality and fluidity of teacher\student roles in the classroom through listening and observing each student, and by experimenting with teaching approaches and techniques. Like Dewey, Montessori believed that ‘education must be given, practically...[so that] education ...[is able to] acquire authority over society’ (Montessori, 2007, p. 11). By society, Montessori here is referring to all societies and the method of education needed to promote experiential learning is the same for all. Montessori, herself, ‘expressly states that [her method] is not yet complete’ (Montessori, 2006, p. xix). Her approach to experiential learning requires teachers to become observers in their classroom and act as experimentalists in the educational process (Montessori, 2006, pp. 28-35).

Montessori viewed the ‘observation’ of the child as fundamental to the development of her method. Here, ‘observation’ includes a dimension of listening to the child and can be described as attentiveness to or sensitivity to the child’s needs. ‘Dr. Montessori based her stage theory on ‘observations’ of children throughout the world in natural settings,’ (Helfrich, 2011, p. 31) which resulted in an approach that can be applied in multiple societies, cultures, and linguistic groups. ‘Observation’ should not be limited to the physical act of watching a child, but should include seeing the child’s behaviour, how he\she interacts with other children, how the child interacts with learning materials and listening to the child’s voice. Although there has been some research conducted on the Montessori Method (Duckworth, March 2006; Pitcher, 1966; Rathunde, Summer 2003; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, May 2005), it has not been applied or adapted to different educational contexts in an effort to fill social gaps that currently exist. By using the Montessori Method to teach EAL students and young learners, it is hoped that a new, socially just education can result in a framework to help young learners in their English language acquisition. The principles used to apply the Montessori Method will be explored in the following chapter. The concern now has become how teachers and educators are to implement the student led education that is so very important to the theorists discussed above.

Maria Montessori’s method for education of young children, beginning at age 3, was chosen for the implementation of this study because of its emphasis on social justice, the role the teacher should play in the classroom, and the importance placed on language learning. The implementation of the approach in the lessons was concerned with applying the method as was directed by Montessori in her writings. For this reason, how Montessori schools promote and implement the Montessori Method is

absent from and is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, the focus should be on the original method as was laid out by Montessori in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, using her original written works to outline how language learning should occur. The research that has been conducted on the Montessori Method (Haskins, June 2010; A. Lillard & Else-Quest, Sept 2006; A. S. Lillard, June 2012; Pate et al., 2014) often reflects an evaluation or application of the approach instead of testing its flexibility in different contexts, as is the case here. For this reason, the primary texts to be examined in this section are those of Montessori herself. This will allow the reader to understand education as Montessori intended.

One of the most distinguishing features of the Montessori Method has to do with the role of the teacher and the autonomy that is afforded therein. ‘For if we make of the teacher an observer, familiar with the experimental methods, then we must make it possible for her to observe and to experiment in the school’ (Montessori, 2006, p. 28). Using this framework, educators should not be bound to a particular method by which to teach. Instead, the method should be determined by the students and the teacher’s ‘observations’ made throughout the teaching process. Here we can see the importance of student voice in how topics are learned. It is the responsibility of the teacher to listen to students’ voices and act accordingly. There is no mention here of the subject matter or the level of education being taught. The role of ‘observation’ is to be used throughout all levels of schooling and subject areas. Two actions are required to fulfil this framework. Firstly, the action of ‘observation’ of the students and secondly, the experimentation of teaching approaches based on the initial ‘observations’ made. Montessori deems this approach as appropriate to every social and cultural context. ‘If education is to start from birth, there can be but one method. There can be no question

of special methods for Indian children or Chinese or Japanese or European children' (Montessori, 2007, p. 45). The approach developed here allows for a customization of education that will change continuously, because the students and their needs will change throughout time. Montessori recognized that there is no one model of education that can benefit every child. Montessori refers to her approach as a method to give scientific status to her work. Giving her approach scientific status may have occurred in an effort to place her approach on an even playing field with the educational approaches being developed by men during this time. By encouraging teachers to become observers and experimentalists in his/her classroom, she, like Freire and Dewey, created a space whereby the roles of teachers and students are interchangeable.

Montessori does provide guidance about how language, in particular, should be taught. The guidance given is generalized to such an extent as to apply to any language. This was an intentional quality of Montessori's work because she wanted her method to be used in a variety of contexts. For instance, for vocabulary development Montessori outlines three periods that should be followed to cement the word association with the object or idea being taught. '*First Period*. The association of the sensory perception with the name. *Second Period*. Recognition of the object corresponding to the name. *Third Period*. The remembering of the name corresponding to the object' (Montessori, 2006, pp. 177-178). Association, recognition, and memory are the three stages of learning vocabulary. How these stages are implemented is not expanded. The autonomy of the teacher and student are to determine how these stages are performed.

Although the voice of the student is to be observed and respected, Montessori still values the assessment process in education. The assessment, although encouraged, should only be for the benefit of the student's progress, and should not be used to place or rank students.

*First.* "The lessons in nomenclature must consist simply in provoking the association of the name with the object, or with the abstract idea which the name represents." *Second.* The teacher must always *test* whether or not her lesson has attained the end she had in view, and her tests must be made to come within the restricted field of consciousness, provoked by the lesson on nomenclature. *Third.* If the child has not committed any error, the teacher may provoke the *motor activity* corresponding to the idea of the object: that is, to the *pronunciation of the name* (Montessori, 2006, pp. 225-227).

The language used by Montessori with regards to assessment should be noted. Here, Montessori is not implying any type of summative assessment. She is focused on assessment that is formative in nature as a means of gauging if the student has made the connection with the vocabulary that was being taught. In fact, nowhere in her writings is summative assessment encouraged. Assessment should be done by the teacher regularly for the sole benefit of the student and his\her progress. The discussion around language does not end with spoken language, but incorporates methods of teaching reading and writing also. For the participants in this research project, spoken language and vocabulary were concentrated on.

Montessori outlines two periods in language development; a lower and a higher period. For this research study, it is the higher period of language learning that is the

concern. In the lower period of language development, the physical mechanisms of language (moving the tongue, mouth, etc.) are the primary focus. The higher level is quite different and is ‘determined by the higher psychic activities which are *exteriorized* by means of the performed mechanisms of language’ (Montessori, 2006, p. 313). The higher level of development depends in large part on the physical capabilities of speech already being in place, with the need for ideas, opinions, and wishes being communicated to an audience. The language that has been learned by the child then provides him/her with the vocabulary and grammatical structure of a language, so that he/she can participate in the act of communication in a meaningful way and is able to express his/her ‘own experience’ (Helfrich, 2011, p. 121) of the world. By not providing a rich linguistic environment for children, ‘the potential for their ability to communicate effectively will be limited by lack of experience’ (Isaacs, 2010, p. 16).

Recognizing the need for establishing the correct environment for language learning is also an important aspect of the Montessori Method. Maria Montessori recognized that language learning occurs through direct instruction, as well as through environmental factors. She places importance on using correct speech with children during the language learning process. ‘Nomenclature prepares for an *exactness* in the use of language which is not always met with in our schools’ (Montessori, 2006, p. 232). It is the responsibility of the educator to expose children to proper oral language so that new vocabulary and grammatical structures of language can be demonstrated and replicated by the students. Repetition and modelling language are of particular importance to Montessori and is especially so when students are EAL. Because

Montessori does not address EAL learning in her body of work, the framework for EAL education had to be extended to include subject specific literature.

## **2.5 How to ‘do’ Socially Just EAL Education**

### 2.5.1 Teacher Expectations and Communication

There are many environmental influences that may affect EAL learners. A teacher’s expectation is one factor that can encourage success in language learning or may hinder such linguistic development. In creating a socially just educational experience for learners, the expectations that are placed on students should seek to provide a positive influence on learning.

These positive dispositions and expectancies may be accompanied and reinforced by important external conditions, such as equally motivated friends, a high-achieving group of classmates, a teacher with high expectations for student learning, or a combination of some, if not all of these factors (Lawson & Lawson, 2013, p. 454).

The type of expectations that are placed on students play an important role in how we view their success or failure. ‘Probabilistic expectations represent what we think is most likely to happen. Prescriptive expectations, on the other hand, tend to be expressed by the use of the word ‘ought’ (Colins, 2002, pp. 154-155). The dilemma with what type of expectations are adopted by teachers and school systems can place educators in a position of judge, or an authoritative figure, in the classroom. ‘The relationship between students and faculty generates tensions between the roles they play and their expectations of each other’ (Farias, Farias, & Fairfield, July 2010, p. 336). Naturally, the expectation a teacher has depends largely on how he/she perceives the student group and what measures are taken to create a positive learning

environment. It is important to remember that the expectations being placed on students must be appropriate for the age group and capabilities of the students.

As with any expectations, the child's personality must also be taken into account. For instance, students who experience noticeable moments of shyness may need different expectations from teachers than students who are not shy. Here, shyness can be defined as 'a sense of discomfort in social situations. It does not have a precise meaning, although it has connotations of wariness, timidity and inhibition' (Crozier, 2001, p. 1). This is a simplistic definition and it should be noted that consideration should be made of the term 'shyness' and its wider social meaning. The effects of a child's shyness or extroverted nature must determine the expectations placed on that child by the teacher if a positive learning environment is to be established for all students.

Building a positive learning environment has the ability to create a sense of unity in the school and classroom. 'Clearly defining classroom expectations creates a common language that teachers, children, and families can use in the classroom environment' (Carter & Pool, 2012, p. 316). When a variety of ethnic and cultural groups are represented, outlining classroom expectations is important and may not be known by children or their parents beforehand. 'The adult's sensitivity towards children's ethnic and cultural backgrounds is essential to creating a social-emotional climate that is conducive to learning' (Fumoto, Hargreaves, & Maxwell, 2007, p. 137). Expectations and creating a respectful learning environment may be conveyed in a variety of ways, but should always take each child's background into account, as much as is possible. This goes beyond verbal communication, which may be limited for EAL children and

their families, and includes ‘the ways in which they, [the teacher] listen to these children’ (Fumoto et al., 2007, p. 149). This includes observing facial expressions to determine stress levels, whether the child appears happy, content or anxious. ‘Communication is not just about the words you use, but also your manner of speaking, body language and, above all, the effectiveness with which you listen’ (Department for Education and Skills, 2005, p. 6). Montessori’s requirement of teacher as observer is echoed here to ensure the welfare and emotional wellbeing of each child. The needed communication between teachers and students must also be extended to parents/carers as well. This is important when determining the level of involvement that parents have in their child’s education.

#### 2.5.2 Understanding the Home

Understanding home environments is important for educators as a means of developing the tools to ‘listen’ to the child and understand the communication that is occurring. Subtle cues made by a child may go unnoticed without a complete understanding of the child and his/her community. For example, knowledge of parental expectations (Baroody & Dobbs-Oates, 2011; Drury, 2000; Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010) may not be obvious when observing the child. Through interaction with the home, this knowledge can be known by the educator. In this context, the children themselves are not able to provide a complete picture of who they are and so reliance on parents and carers to fill in the gaps is essential. The purpose of information about the home environment and cultural background should be considered in an effort to ‘determine how to bridge the gap between EAL students’ home and school culture’ (Tangen & Spooner-Lane, Nov 2008, p. 67).

The important role that parents play in their child\children's education should not be underestimated. There has been a concerted effort in recent years to bridge the gap between home and school, recognizing that by educators learning about individual students and their communities, the child is able to receive a much more fulfilling education than would otherwise be possible. (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Listening to the child in isolation from their home and social environment affords the educator a one-dimensional picture of the child's personality, needs, and wants. By incorporating and understanding the context of each individual child, a three-dimensional picture begins to emerge. This information does not have to be formally obtained, but can come from informal conversations with parents\carers or during parent\teacher evenings. Which factors play a role in determining the learning processes of children is far beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to accurately reflect the complexities of influences on each child.

### 2.5.3 How Language Learning is Achieved

In keeping with Montessori's approach, it was the researcher's intention to guide the participants through the learning language process, as opposed to being taught language explicitly. The role of the educator revolves around 'observation' of the participants in an effort to 'survey the capacities and needs of the particular set of individuals... [as a means of arranging] the conditions which provide subject-matter or content for experiences that satisfy these needs and develop these capacities' (Dewey, 1997, p. 58). Language learning and teaching is viewed in terms of 'development, not teaching' (Montessori, 2007, p. 94). The teaching of vocabulary uses Montessori's outline for language lessons which consist of,

*First.* “The lessons in nomenclature must consist simply in provoking the association of the name with the object, or with the abstract idea which the name represents.” *Second.* The teacher must always *test* whether or not her lesson has attained the end she had in view, and her tests must be made to come within the restricted field of consciousness, provoked by the lesson on nomenclature. *Third.* If the child has not committed any error, the teacher may provoke the *motor activity* corresponding to the idea of the object: that is, to the *pronunciation of the name* (Montessori, 2006, pp. 225-227).

Developing vocabulary equips students with the tools for having a voice but cannot take precedence over comprehension. Language and vocabulary must be understood through comprehension development, modelling language, and constant repetition.

#### *Basic vocabulary.*

When discussing language development, the first step in the process is to acquire basic vocabulary that allows for verbal communication to occur. Oral language communication skills provide a student with a voice that allows him/her to express himself/herself, a fundamental part of any democratic education. For the purposes of this research, oral communication skills and comprehension are the primary focus. ‘It would seem, therefore, that fluency, competence in and comprehension of spoken language are the keys to being able to learn effectively’ (Riley, Burrell, & McCallum, Oct 2004, p. 658). Once the foundations of a language have been learned, it is then that linguistic scaffolding should take place as a means to further the expressive language skills of the student. How the basic vocabulary is acquired by the children in this study is a direct result of modelling words, practicing pronunciation, and

repetition of words and the actions that help the child comprehend the meaning of the word and use it correctly in context.

### *Comprehension development.*

Word decoding can be understood as ‘simple efficient word recognition, and linguistic comprehension as the ability to understand language’ (Chen, Geva, & Schwartz, 2012, p. 1798). Naturally, the age of the students will determine the extent to which the above definition is applied and expected. A useful tool when increasing the word decoding ability of young learners is to incorporate music and song into the lesson. Song and music allows ‘children [to] gradually become familiar with the intonation and patterns of the language, how it is structured and how it fits together’ (Brouillette, 2012, p. 69). Tabors (2008) suggests choosing songs ‘with highly predictable components, [introducing] words of the songs first without music so that the second-language-learning children have an opportunity to catch on more quickly’ (p. 115). The songs incorporated throughout the study helped teach the children high frequency and emotion words and gave them the vocabulary needed to express their feelings about learning.

There should be a distinction made here about the difference between learning a word and knowing a word, its meaning, and being able to use it correctly to express oneself. ‘An extremely useful technique utilized by teachers when working with young second-language learners is to provide what I call *running commentary* or what others have called “event casting” or “talking while doing”’ (Tabors, 2008, p. 108). The advantage of employing this method is that it allows the child to create mental connections between the word or concept being described and the action or

demonstration that goes along with the word. Tabors (2008) also explains buttressing communication as ‘using words along with some type of gesture, action, or directed gaze’ (p. 91). Relying on both speech and action serves two functions in the learning process for children, particularly. Firstly, ‘ELLs [English Language Learners] who are unsure of the meaning of verbal instructions can use physical cues from the teacher and other students to deduce what is meant’ (Brouillette, 2012, p. 70). The first function focuses on increased comprehension. Secondly, ‘the physicality of the activity also helps children stay interested and focused, allowing them to think conceptually and verbally while moving’ (Brouillette, 2012, pp. 70-71). Very small children cannot learn in a stationary position. Songs that include actions can meet the physical needs of children for movement and add to the comprehension of high frequency vocabulary in the songs. Educators must be aware of the needs of the age group that is being taught. A traditional desk and chair language lesson would not be appropriate; nor would it be effective for preschool age children. Buttressing communication allows for the language needs of students to be met while meeting the children’s need for physical activity.

Perhaps music, song and circle time are less conventional models of conversation interaction, but they are important because they create ‘the necessary connections between input, output, feedback and some learner cognitive capacities (noticing and attention)’ (del Pilar García Mayo & Alcón Soler, 2014, p. 224). Providing an informal platform for conversation interaction with children provides a stress-free environment for language learning and opportunities for demonstrations of language. In order for children to participate in their education, as defined by social justice, it is necessary for them to feel comfortable in doing so. Creating fun and stress free

environments encourages the desired participation. ‘Children begin to perceive themselves as part of the larger whole of humanity. They build trusting relationships with others beyond the initial intimate community of the immediate family’ (Helfrich, 2011, p. 154).

### *Modelling language.*

One of the most important aspects for vocabulary learning is modelling words. The research undertaken by Mistry & Barnes (2013) brings to light the necessity of providing EAL learners with linguistic models. Listening to educators and other pupils communicate gives the English learners ‘valuable skills [that] can be learnt and imitated’ (Mistry & Barnes, 2013, p. 605). Particularly at the beginning stages of language learning, repeating key terms, restating, and rephrasing are necessary. The use of modelling serves several functions,

First, it allows teachers to accept the content contributions that students make while also drawing on their linguistic abilities, thus furthering both academic knowledge and academic language. Second, it can help students move beyond the specifics of a given lesson and begin to generalize about the concepts they are learning. Finally, the use of micro-scaffolding moves enables students to participate in a literate community. (Lucero, 2014, pp. 546-547).

For younger children, micro discourse also benefits the pronunciation of the new words learned. Upon hearing native English speakers and other EAL learners, the natural rhythm of the language can be heard by students and imitated. Maria Montessori also saw the benefit of modelling vocabulary for students, encouraging children to ‘repeat [words] several times’ (Montessori, 2006, p. 148) if difficulty in

pronunciation is experienced. She goes on to encourage informal conversation between teacher and student (Montessori, 2006, pp. 123-124). This serves as speaking practice for the child and serves as conversation modelling for the children listening to the dialogue. Hearing a word or phrase once is not sufficient. Repetition must be applied to all aspects of language learning.

### *Repetition.*

Within the struggle of language learning is the struggle to remember new words and their meanings. The speaking of new vocabulary and hearing the new word being spoken often is very important to the child remembering the word. The need for such repetition has to do with how our memory works when language learning occurs. 'Saying the same thing more than once gives a child more than one opportunity to catch on to what is being said' (Tabors, 2008, p. 92). Although there is an acknowledgement that repetition within the lessons is extremely important, vocabulary repetition between the lessons must also be frequent. Words must be revisited multiple times and used in different contexts. Listening is important for the child; however, practicing speaking is also important and both should be employed jointly. 'Responding, in turn-taking discussion which repeat patterns of language, and listening to the interactions of other children with the teacher' (Drury, 2000, p. 56) creates an interplay between speaking and listening that promotes comprehension and pronunciation practice.

Within each of the methods of how language learning occurs, it is important to remember that attentiveness to the child throughout the language process is paramount. Here, Montessori's approach to attentiveness of the learner is helpful in

identifying problem areas that a child may experience with language. Listening to and observing the child through every language method outlined above and providing a customized learning experience so that each child is able to take full advantage of the education being provided is good practice. Ensuring that each child is happy and is being provided with the tools to participate in education meaningfully is social justice.

## **2.6 Summary**

Globalization is a social phenomenon that continues to influence people's interaction with one another. Through immigration and migration, people's physical interaction has dramatically increased. This new diversity is evident in many social institutions, especially in schools. With the increase of social, cultural, and linguistic groups being represented in schools, it is important that a sense of social justice be established and how we 'do' education change. Throughout the past century educational philosophers, such as Freire and Dewey, have called for a change, promoting a need for socially just and democratic education. Maria Montessori's approach seeks to promote these ideals at all levels of education, giving teachers and students autonomy in the education process. There are some differences between Fraser and Montessori and how social justice is presented in their work. The most prominent difference being that Fraser did not explicitly state that children should be given the right to participate in civic life. Her definition of justice implies this because social justice is to apply to all people, but young children are not mentioned specifically. Montessori brought the idea of justice explicitly to the preschool educational context. Here, EAL is being introduced in combination with social justice and ECE, part of which is understanding the home environment of the children. EAL specific literature was employed to further gain

understanding of how language learning occurs most effectively and how social justice can be incorporated into the teaching process for EAL children.

For the study that was undertaken for this thesis, the Montessori Method was used as the educational framework that shaped the theoretical foundation and implementation of the English lessons. In the following chapter, action research will be explored and the methods for data collection outlined. The method employed for data analysis, grounded theory, will also be discussed.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology and Study Description**

I do not think that the method which we are employing is at all adequate to the accurate solution of this question; the true method is another and a longer one.

Plato, *The Republic*

### **3.1 Introduction**

The following chapter situates the language development of EAL children in a socially just educational framework by employing the Montessori Method within an action research methodological approach. The chapter begins with an outline of action research, why it was chosen as the methodology employed and how it was applied to this study. An overview of the research is then provided, along with ethical considerations during the study. Researcher reflexivity was a particularly important aspect of the study, and as such, has been placed in its own section within the chapter. Next, how the Montessori Method was applied to the lessons is discussed with special focus being placed on buttressing communication, running commentary, modelling language, repetition, and experiential learning. The methods employed for data collection are then explained and a rationale for each is given. Finally, grounded theory is discussed as the method by which the qualitative data were analysed.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Studies in educational research can make use of different research designs and depends largely on the type of study being conducted and what type of data, qualitative or quantitative, is being sought. In a broad sense, this project can be labelled as problem-solving research. The problem identified here is a lack of research into preschool education, particularly with regards to social justice and EAL children. We must, therefore, ‘bring together all the intellectual resources that can be brought to bear on its solution’ (Phillips & Pugh, 2010, p. 59). There are several research designs

that would be appropriate for this type of research and various methods that can be used to collect the required data, both qualitative and quantitative, in an attempt to provide some solutions for the issues outlined in Chapter 2.

Certainly, in this thesis, there will be instances where a participants' culture or language will be described. In this case, the study takes on an air of an ethnographic study. A major shortcoming of employing an ethnographic study in the research conducted here, lies in the need for quantitative data collection to monitor the language development of each child. Data of this type is not usually presented in ethnographic studies. Another potential research design is that of a case study. Case studies rely largely on the perspective of the individual with regards to the phenomenon being examined. 'Such a study would start from the premise that any unit of investigation in which persons were involved could only be understood if the perspectives of those involved (and the interaction of those perspectives) were taken into account' (Pring, 2004, p. 40). Case studies do not rely on a single method by which to gather data, but 'relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion' (Kohlbacher, January 2006). This type of research design also places the perspectives of the participants in the foreground and this is problematic because the perspectives of the children are largely assumed. Action research was chosen as the research design because it adheres to Montessori's call for experimentation in the classroom. This piece of action research allows for qualitative and quantitative data collection and it places, in the foreground, the practice of the educator and assesses the success or failure of the pedagogy being employed.

### 3.2.1 Action Research Defined

Unlike other research designs, action research is not concerned necessarily with producing a new educational experience for students. Its primary concern is to improve practice that has already been established. Milton-Brkich, Shumbera and Beran (2010) identify the first step of conducting action research as being to ‘articulate a wondering’ (p. 51). Here the ‘wondering’ does not mean that there are no EAL programs that have been established in schools and preschools throughout the English-speaking world. What is being ‘wondered,’ that has yet to be addressed, is the promotion of social justice within the system of EAL education, particularly at the preschool level. Action research seeks ‘to empower participants through research involvement and ideology critique, to develop reflective practice, to promote equality democracy [and] to link practice and research [through] reflection, monitoring, evaluation, intervention, problem-solving, empowering, planning [and] reviewing’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 129). More specifically, the type of action research that was conducted here would fall under the category of critical-utopian, as defined by Nielsen & Nielsen (2006) (Helskog, 2014, pp. 10-11). Action research of this kind seeks to create a space for dialogue and experimentation, but requires that the researcher must take on the role of active participant.

Action research was particularly useful because it allows for a mixed methods approach for data collection and places the educator in a central position within the research framework. Because of the language differences and ages of the participants, the participant’s perspective can only be understood one dimensionally. Action research relies, instead, on the practice, reflection, and evaluation of the educator. Within this framework, there is a recognition of ‘the values which the teacher brings to the practice, and [that] those values will in turn be refined through critical reflection

upon their implementation in practice' (Pring, 2004, p. 135). As children's social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds influence their makeup, so too do the values, social, and cultural settings influence the educator's perspective and practice.

### 3.2.2 Why Action Research?

Maria Montessori called on all educators to conduct action research in their classrooms, even though she did not label it as such. 'For if we make of the teacher an observer, familiar with the experimental methods, then we must make it possible for her to observe and to experiment in the school' (Montessori, 2006, p. 28). For Montessori, the dual role of teacher and researcher was not a cause for concern, but was something to be encouraged. It is through action research that Montessori believed social justice could be achieved in schools. Through the 'observation' process, teachers were responsible for developing individualized lessons that ensured that each child was reaching his/her full potential. She believed that applying the same educational approach for each child was, not only ineffective, but unjust. It was an act that did not honour her ideas about loving the child. The action research here should be viewed as an answer to Montessori's call to honour the autonomy of the teacher as a means of providing a just EAL education that best suits the needs of children participating in this study.

### 3.2.3 Applying Action Research

The action research design was applied through the careful 'observation' of the students in their learning journeys and by listening to their needs and wants expressed in both verbal and nonverbal ways. Based on the 'observations' made, alterations and modifications in the education being provided were made accordingly. Likewise,

throughout the process, the researcher's background was reflected upon regularly and how the researcher's own experience influenced the research being undertaken was also recognized.

### **3.3 Overview of Study**

The research was conducted at Blume Kinderhaus in the Canton of Zürich. The name of the Kinderhaus is fictional to protect the anonymity of participants. Blume Kinderhaus is a preschool with a high percentage of international children, with the primary language being German. Although few of the children have only one language, German is taught in the school as the L1. The pedagogy employed is based largely on learning through play in structured activities. For English learning, I wanted to encourage student voice and autonomy in education, something that I felt was missing in the play pedagogy being employed. I began to explore alternative pedagogies that would honour the child and provide each with a level of communication ability to allow their voices to be heard. I adopted the Montessori approach after researching how it can be adapted to different contexts and how it could be implemented in English language learning.

The participant group consisted of nine children between the ages of 2-4 years. Although the society of which the children are a part is predominately Caucasian and Swiss German speaking, the children's ethnicities and linguistic backgrounds vary, and parents of each participant possess varied educational backgrounds and professions. In June 2015, I presented a brief outline of the study that would commence in the Fall, to all parents. There was no limit placed on the number of children who were accepted into the lessons, and all parents were made aware of the

lessons in English and again in German, through the use of a translator. In the Fall of 2015, those who chose to have his/her child participate were provided with an information sheet that outlined what the study would entail. Within the information sheet I explained the surveys that would be distributed to parents as well (see Appendix Two & Three). Next, each parent/carer was given a consent form that gave his/her child permission to be included in the study (see Appendix One). The information sheet, consent form and both parental surveys, were made available to parents in both English and German to ensure full understanding of the study. Informed consent could not initially be obtained from the children because of language barriers between the children and researcher. Consent was given by the children implicitly and nonverbally based on their willingness to participate in the lessons. 'Close attention [was given] to children's expressions, signals and body language to gauge indications of assent and/or dissent' (Graham, Powell, & Truscott, 2016, p. 84). If at any time a child appeared not to consent to the lessons or seemed unhappy to participate, an alternative space was available in the preschool where the child\children could engage in a non-English based activity.

In both the information sheet and consent form provided, it was made explicit that each child would remain anonymous in the data collection process and any resulting publications. The name of the educational institution would also not be identified but would be referred to as a preschool located in the Canton of Zürich. All participants in this study remained anonymous; this applied to the children, the parents, and the institution where the research took place. Prior to any data collection, random names were selected. All names chosen were Swiss or German names to disguise the ethnic identity of the children and their parents. 'Observations,' field notes, reflections, and

checklists used only the predetermined name assigned to each child. The consent forms and the parent surveys did include identifying information about the child and parent, but were scanned onto a computer and all files were encrypted, while the hard copies were shredded.

The lessons themselves occurred once a week and lasted between 30-40 minutes. There were fourteen lessons given in total. TESOL standards were chosen because outcomes are provided for preschool children specifically and those standards do not necessarily rely on verbal demonstrations of English. The TESOL standards encourage nonverbal demonstrations of comprehension along with verbal if and when the child is comfortable.

Each lesson was planned first by examining the TESOL standards beginning with standard one, ‘English language learners **communicate** for SOCIAL, INTERCULTURAL, and INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES within the school setting’ (original emphasis used) (Gottlieb et al., 2006, pp. 48-49). Once a particular objective was identified, the Montessori Method was explored and how the objective was to be taught was then decided. Throughout the lessons, there were some indications of differing learning preferences among the children. It was then that I adapted lessons to accommodate the learning differences of each child. In an attempt to provide continuity in lesson structure, each lesson began and ended with song circle time. ‘Observations’ written during lesson time were made in jot note form and then later expanded after the lesson had finished. An environment was created that encouraged correct use of English language. Children were exposed to age appropriate vocabulary for their learning, but were also provided with a rich linguistic environment by

hearing adults speak to others and by hearing the language development of their peers. There was little need to modify the approach as set out by Montessori as the generality of the method is such that it could be applied quite easily to an L2 or L5 context.

### 3.3.1 Ethical Considerations

Every effort was made before, during, and after the study, to ensure that all ethical standards were upheld and ethical issues addressed appropriately. The effort made to uphold ethical standards included how the study was conducted with the children, establishing an open and honest environment with parents, maintaining anonymity of all parties involved, and establishing my own position within the study.

### 3.4 Researcher Reflexivity

My role within the study can be best described as participant-as-observer, categorized as ‘a member of the group who reveals his/her role as an observer, whose knowledge of the group/situation may be intimate and who may gain ‘insider knowledge,’ but who may lack the necessary objectivity to observe reliably’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 457). The dual role of insider and observer may at first seem like two roles that are in conflict with one another. Montessori, however, requires both of these roles simultaneously to occur in teachers using her method (Montessori, 2006, p. 28). In this project, the dual roles did not present difficulty, because from the outset of my employment I was aware that this group of children would hopefully play a part in my research and that my relationship with them would be unconventional. This is not to suggest that I achieved pure objectivity in my ‘observations.’ Pure objectivity can never be achieved in any type of research because it is always interpreted and presented through the lens of the researcher. ‘Observations are ‘filtered,’ as it were,

through the understandings, preferences and beliefs of the observer' (Pring, 2004, p. 35). Recognizing my role within the research and reconciling the impossibility of objectivity in research made my dual roles complementary rather than at odds with one another.

There were concrete efforts made that aided the ease with which I was able to take on the research/observer role in each lesson. For instance, beginning the day with the lessons seemed to be much easier than conducting the lesson midday. I entered the school environment with the researcher mind-set, conducted the lesson, then removed the research/observer hat. Distinguishing my roles was achieved through internal reflection and dialogue. Consciously asking myself, 1) Which role am I taking on at this moment? 2) How is my perspective influencing what I am observing? 3) Am I being objective? If no, what is hindering my objectivity? Reading further about the teacher/researcher roles allowed me to recognize what role I was taking on at specific times. Also, seeking advice from colleagues was useful and helped to shed light on how lessons were being conducted, how 'observations' were being recorded, etc. Realizing the limitations of each role is equally important. A teacher must be a researcher on some level but the same is not true for the researcher. As long as I remained aware of the duality of my position and recognized the benefits and disadvantages of each, a balance between the two could be achieved during the collection and analysis of the data.

### **3.5 Development of the Lessons**

#### **3.5.1 Language Expectations**

As was encouraged by Montessori, there was no summative assessment that took place during the course of the study. All assessment was formative in nature and the

language in the checklists for monitoring progress was not prescriptive. The checklists did not include the words ‘ought’ or ‘should.’ The goal was to monitor the development of the children, and not to place judgment about the developments made. Instead, probabilistic expectations, using words such as ‘can’ and ‘is able,’ were used. At no point throughout the process did the children become aware that their progress was being monitored. This information was withheld from them as a means of maintaining a stress-free learning environment that, particularly at this age, reflects a socially just learning platform. The previous exposure to English, linguistic ability of each child, age, personality, and home environment influenced the probabilistic expectations placed on each child.

Six of the nine children (Matteo, Leonie, Leandro, Lara, Anna, and Luca) had no prior experience with hearing or interacting with people in English. Initially, the only expectation was for each of these children to demonstrate a willingness to learn. As time progressed and I was able to determine the rate at which each child was acquiring English language skills, both oral and comprehension, I adjusted my expectations for learning. Lara and Anna were able to demonstrate comprehension quite early on and showed a willingness to verbalize English vocabulary learned. My expectations for these participants were quite high. Gabriel, Levin, and Elena had prior exposure to English. Although neither tended to verbalize their knowledge often at the beginning, their comprehension was very good. I approached this group differently from the others because a foundation for English comprehension had already been developed in the home. Eventually the language development for each child reached a common level and then expectations for both groups mentioned above were similar, although varied slightly for each child. In the case of Leonie and Leandro, who experienced

silent periods, the expectation was that they would demonstrate knowledge of English comprehension but without any verbal requirement for doing so. Most often, comprehension levels were determined by nodding the head for a 'yes' response and shaking the head for a 'no' response. Only after they became comfortable did they begin to verbalize English learned. Once instances of shyness lessened, I adjusted my expectations of them for English learning.

### 3.5.2 The Role of Family in the Study

Creating an open dialogue with families was very important, even when language barriers existed. In this case, each parent was made fully aware that should he\she want or need to speak with me there would always be someone who could provide translation so that such exchanges were possible. Often, it was this open dialogue with parents/carers that provided further helpful information regarding the history of each child.

### 3.5.3 Learning English

Because Montessori does not address second language learning in her work, techniques for EAL learning came from EAL research, as was discussed in Chapter 2. Gaps in the Montessori literature, as will be described in this section, meant that methods of English language learning and pedagogy were brought together from multiple sources. The three stages of vocabulary development outlined by Montessori (Montessori, 2006, pp. 177-178) served as the foundation for each lesson with additional literature used to enhance the learning experience. The initial lesson, which was associating the name with the object, used varying approaches and were chosen based on the interests, needs, and learning differences of the children. Once the noun,

adjective, or verb was learned, it was then that I stepped back and allowed the children to learn through self-exploration.

#### *Basic Vocabulary.*

The most basic of vocabulary that was taught from the first lesson, were ‘yes, no, and help.’ Choosing the first words to teach was a conscience decision. I wanted to provide the children with the ability to express what they wanted with a basic yes or no response. This way, if only on a superficial level, they were able to convey their wishes. For Leandro and Leonie, who were nonverbal, movements of the head, nodding for ‘yes’ and shaking the head for ‘no,’ was taught. Even if some of the children were experiencing a nonverbal phase in the learning process, their wants and needs were still equally valued. The word ‘help’ was necessary to learn as well. Asking for help is an important part of communication and was not solely needed for language learning but was also used when frustration was experienced with other children. These words were practiced in lessons one and two, and by lesson three most of the children were using the words independently. The learned words were then reviewed periodically until the end of the study.

#### *Running Commentary and Buttressing Communication.*

In most of the activities that were conducted during the course of the study, particularly those that focused on art education, running commentary and buttressing communication were used to describe instructions and improve vocabulary comprehension. For example, during lesson ten, the children made a Diwali lantern. During this activity, it was necessary to learn the verbs ‘to glue, to put, to place, and to let dry.’ Throughout the duration of the activity I, too, had a lantern that I was decorating. For each step, the children would listen to me describe what needed to be

done as I used my own lantern to demonstrate the necessary vocabulary. Relying solely on oral communication would not have been helpful for the comprehension and understanding of key concepts and terms that were used throughout the lessons. As time progressed, the vocabulary that required running commentary changed. Once a word had been mastered by the children that word would no longer need any commentary. A new word would then be incorporated into the lessons and running commentary would be provided for that word. The above activity really focused on comprehension and did not rely on oral participation from the children. The goal here was that they understood, at least in part, what they were being directed to do. It is important to note here, that at the beginning of teaching new vocabulary, the running commentary and buttressing communication were largely performed by the teacher. With the progression of language abilities, the children began to take on the role of teacher with their peers and also used this teaching technique, although the commentary provided by children was limited and focused more on demonstrating (buttressing communication) the meaning of a word.

Singing was an important tool for developing comprehension of English. The songs taught, although primarily chosen for their vocabulary content, were also used to teach the social conventions of greetings and farewells. The songs that were chosen ('The Hello Song' and 'The Goodbye Song') were chosen because of the repetitive vocabulary in each and the actions provided buttressing communication for increased comprehension. Singing time with actions also promoted physical activity in the learning process. 'The Hello Song' was particularly useful because it gave the children vocabulary for emotion words and increased their comprehension of different emotions. The children were then able to vocalize how they were feeling at any given

time during the lessons. Once the song was learned, new emotion words were included to expand emotion vocabulary. This was a fun time for the children, and one that they were comfortable with, since the circle-singing time was a normal part of their day.

### *Repetition and Modelling.*

The need for repetition was recognized and so various activities requiring the same vocabulary were incorporated into the fourteen-week program. Repetition of vocabulary and sentence structure played a key role throughout the study period. This element of language learning has very little to do with the age of the learner or the level of English being taught. Hearing and speaking high frequency words cements the vocabulary in the memory and allows the recall period of vocabulary to lessen. The verbs, nouns, and adjectives that were taught were repeated constantly with all of the children in various lessons and contexts. The more the words were repeated, the more instances of the words being used by the children in the correct context occurred and the more confident the children became in their use of English.

Circle time allowed for an opportunity for conversational interaction between teacher, student, and small groups of students. It provided a contrast between informal speech when singing and having circle time, and the more formal speech while an activity was being conducted. Circle time was incorporated into every lesson of the study at two points: at the beginning of the lesson and again at the end, for a maximum of five minutes. The singing time also gave the children repetition and word modelling practice. Repeatedly singing the same songs helped the children in their pronunciation of words. This was important for some more than for others, depending on how

different the sounds produced by the child's first language were to English phonemes. Pronunciation is particularly important if the L1 of the child consists of very different phonemes than English or if the L1 has a different rhythm of speech.

### **3.6 Methods of Data Collection**

The methods used to collect data on the above lessons would fall under the category of mixed methods and were used to increase the validity of the study. 'Where two or more methods are used in this way, to try to verify the validity of the information being collected, the process is referred to as triangulation' (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2010, p. 85). For the data presented here, the triangulation process includes data collected from 'observations,' field notes, reflections, checklists, and parental surveys. This allows for an accurate judgment of whether the Montessori Method can be used to teach young EAL learners and if it meets the criteria of being a socially just educational program. Collecting both qualitative and quantitative data has allowed for both data types to be integrated and compared as a means 'to check the accuracy (validity) of the other database' (Creswell, 2014, p. 15). Using a mixed method approach is demonstrative of the complexities of language learning and 'reflects the changing and integrated nature of the world and the phenomenon under study' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 26). In an effort to make connections among variables that are present in this study it was imperative that multiple methods be employed. How these variables interact and the role that each plays in how language develops, needed to be explored more fully than any one method allowed. By gathering both types of data, qualitative and quantitative, a comparison of data sets was made possible and the findings from one set sought to validate the others. In turn, this allowed me to gain 'a better understanding [of] the need for and impact of' (Creswell, 2014, p. 218) the

English program being conducted. It also brought to light unexpected results that required further reading and adaptation of lessons for particular children.

### 3.6.1 'Observing' the Child

'Observation' was perhaps the most important method of data collection in this study, not only because it coalesces with Montessori's idea of the role of teacher as observer and experimentalist, but because it allowed for constant assessment of the students. Participant 'observation' allowed me to 'engage in the very activities...[I] set out to observe' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 297). This type of 'observation' was chosen out of necessity. There was no other staff member who knew English well enough to conduct the lessons. Also, when considering the age group of the children, it seemed non-participant observation would be an unrealistic expectation placed upon them. The 'observation' conducted fell under the category of semi-structured. Based on the already established checklists, I had some idea of what I was looking for in the 'observations' but the data gathered expanded the original topics 'in a far less determined or systematic manner' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 457). There are advantages and disadvantages to employing this method of data collection. It allowed insight into the context of where the children originated and how they related to English language learning and how they interacted with the lessons, the language, and each other. The amount of data collected for each lesson varied and depended on how receptive the children were on that particular day, their mood, and their enjoyment, or lack thereof, of an activity. The inconsistencies that can sometimes present themselves, especially when working with very small children, were one reason why such a large number of methods for data collection were used.

‘Observation’ was a logical method to use since the participant group consisted of children with varying levels of exposure to English. Relying on verbal responses from them would not have indicated their true ability to comprehend spoken English. Comprehension and verbal use of English are two distinct events, so especially at the beginner level, it is unrealistic to assume any verbal use of English for some children. ‘Observations’ allowed for including ‘the experiences of pre-verbal children’ (Clark, 2004, p. 158). ‘Observations’ were recorded in two ways; through the use of field notes taken during and directly after each lesson, and then through reflections that were written at the end of the day.

‘Observations’ were not conducted solely on the children’s language development, but also on my own practice. The reflections were used as a space for me to record notes on the needs of individual children, how best they learned, and how I could best cater to their needs. It was also a place to make notes of approaches that did not work or activities that the children did not like. Please see Appendix Five for a sample of reflections and ‘observations.’

### 3.6.2 Field Notes

Field notes were written during three time periods; the first being as the lessons were conducted, the second directly after the lessons had taken place, and finally, during a reflective period on the same day as the lesson, but usually in the evening. During the analysis phase of the study, notes were once again added to the original field notes to provide a larger picture of the research that was undertaken. The suggestions for recording field notes and observations made by Lofland (1971) were used as a guideline as to how the notes were written and when. For example, notes were written

quickly as soon as possible, and free writing was chosen because it allowed for additional thoughts to be included during the writing process. Also, the field notes and reflections were typed after the original hand written notes had been completed for ease of reading and data analysis. Included in the reflections was a lesson outline with indications of what was felt to have worked well and for what student. The reflections sought to identify the particular needs of students and guide the development and adaptation of lessons where necessary.

### 3.6.3 Checklists

Summative assessment was considered inappropriate in this case because of the age of the participants. Formative assessment was conducted during each lesson and was used as a means of monitoring the progress of each child, recognizing any challenges that a child was having with the language learning. Social justice means having the ability and means to participate in education. The assessment that was conducted was done only to increase the participation of the children and identify areas that needed to be addressed to ensure full participation. Regardless of the type of assessment being used in any given educational situation, there must be criteria against which the progress of the child is measured. TESOL objectives were used for this study because they include in their model, objectives for prekindergarten age children and the standards of English language development that can be used in conjunction with a variety of teaching pedagogies and methods. These groups of standards coalesce with Montessori's pedagogy because 'students are to be actively engaged in learning, having ample opportunities for interaction, and demonstrate their English language proficiency in multiple and varied ways' (Gottlieb et al., 2006, p. 5). Because the participation group was so varied in their previous exposure to English, these

standards were particularly important because they value nonverbal demonstrations of English and comprehension as well as verbal and later written communication.

Each level from PreK- 12 consists of five standards, spanning multiple school subjects. They include,

English language learners **communicate** for SOCIAL, INTERCULTURAL, and INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES within the school setting, English language learners **communicate** information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of LANGUAGE ARTS,... MATHEMATICS,... SCIENCE, [and] SOCIAL STUDIES (original emphasis used) (Gottlieb et al., 2006, pp. 48-57).

Each standard includes areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Standards provide levels 1-5, 1 being beginner level and 5 being advanced, for each standard and for each objective therein. Because the standards are so vast, for this project only the standards of ‘English language learners **communicate** for SOCIAL, INTERCULTURAL, and INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES within the school setting [and] English language learners **communicate** information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of LANGUAGE ARTS’ (Gottlieb et al., 2006, pp. 48-51) were used and only levels 1-3 were included in the checklist. The standards chosen to include in the checklist were done so because of their focus on nonverbal comprehension during the beginning levels, which is an important consideration that must be made when previous exposure to English has been minimal. This decision was made through prior knowledge of the children’s language abilities. The reading and writing components of each standard were only focused on after the listening and speaking objectives were met.

A checklist was made for each of the children using the standards listed above and the checklist was completed for each child for each lesson as the standards and objectives were met. At no point did the children see the checklists. This was completed after each lesson to avoid any child from feeling intimidated by being observed and judged. Each set of parents/carers were provided with a copy of the checklist so they were made aware of exactly what was occurring in the lessons and what I hoped to achieve.

#### 3.6.4 Parental Surveys

Each set of parents/carers was also asked to complete two surveys: the first at the beginning of the research study and the second at the end. Surveys are used in research in ‘identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared, or determining the relationships that exist between specific events’ (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 256). In this case, the first survey sought to establish the linguistic and ethnic background of each child and determine any prior exposure the child had to English. Although each child was known previously, in most cases the ethnic identity of the child was known but not all linguistic backgrounds were known. The mix of linguistic backgrounds of the children was diverse because the language of both parents and both sets of grandparents and other prominent people in the lives of the children had to be considered. The first survey sought to help contextualize each child and establish an accurate picture of where he/she originated and identify the languages spoken at home and what level of German and/or English each parent had.

The second survey sought to establish any English language development that was noticed outside of the school setting. Especially with very young children, displays of

language can be vastly different between school and home settings. This survey sought to compare the English language displays of each child at school, using the checklist discussed above, and the English used at home and in social settings. By comparing the first and second surveys completed by parents, the progress of English development can then be understood that includes a larger context than limiting knowledge to a school setting. They were then examined in light of the checklists completed to provide a deeper level of understanding about the learning processes for each child and how each child progressed during the study period.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The analysis that was undertaken here sought to provide thick descriptions of the language journeys presented. Individual instances of language demonstration and comprehension were not isolated occurrences. Each ‘observation’ and field note was examined in light of the reflections, checklists, and parental surveys. It was through the triangulation of data that meaning was gained from the data set. Considered together, the grounded theory analysis of the ‘observations,’ field notes, and reflections and the analysis of the checklists and surveys give a well-rounded picture of each individual child.

#### **3.7.1 Defining Grounded Theory**

The analysis of the ‘observation,’ field notes, and reflections was conducted using grounded theory, specifically, constructivist grounded theory. ‘Pure’ grounded theory as defined by Glaser and Strauss (1973) was not employed because this theory suggests that research questions should not be pre-determined. Instead, Charmaz’s (2014) outline of grounded theory was used, whereby the methodological approach is data led and flexible. Constructivist grounded theory states that if ‘social reality is

multiple, processual, and constructed, then we must take the researcher's position, privileges, perspective, and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). Particularly with language learning, which is undoubtedly a human construct, this method of data analysis was important and had advantages over other data analysis methods. Using narrative analysis or content analysis, for example, relies primarily on written material without taking into account the position of the researcher. Grounded theory, firstly, allows for the researcher's role in the research and data analysis to be recognized and does not assume that the researcher is an unbiased observer in the research process. Particularly in the interpretation of data, it is of the utmost importance that the researcher be able to place him/herself within the context of the research being undertaken. Secondly, it focuses on generating theory 'about patterns of human behaviour in social contexts' (Engward, 2013, p. 37). Since language is a socially constructed aspect of humanity and that demonstrations of language can be considered to be a human behaviour, grounded theory was useful for this study. Finally, grounded theory also allowed for 'multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information' (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Within the tradition of grounded theory there is some diversity about how the analysis is to be completed. The analysis in this case began 'with a more general understanding of the data and from this point, using a more holistic approach, progress[ed] to a more detailed categorization of the data' (Hramiak, Fall 2005, pp. 83-84).

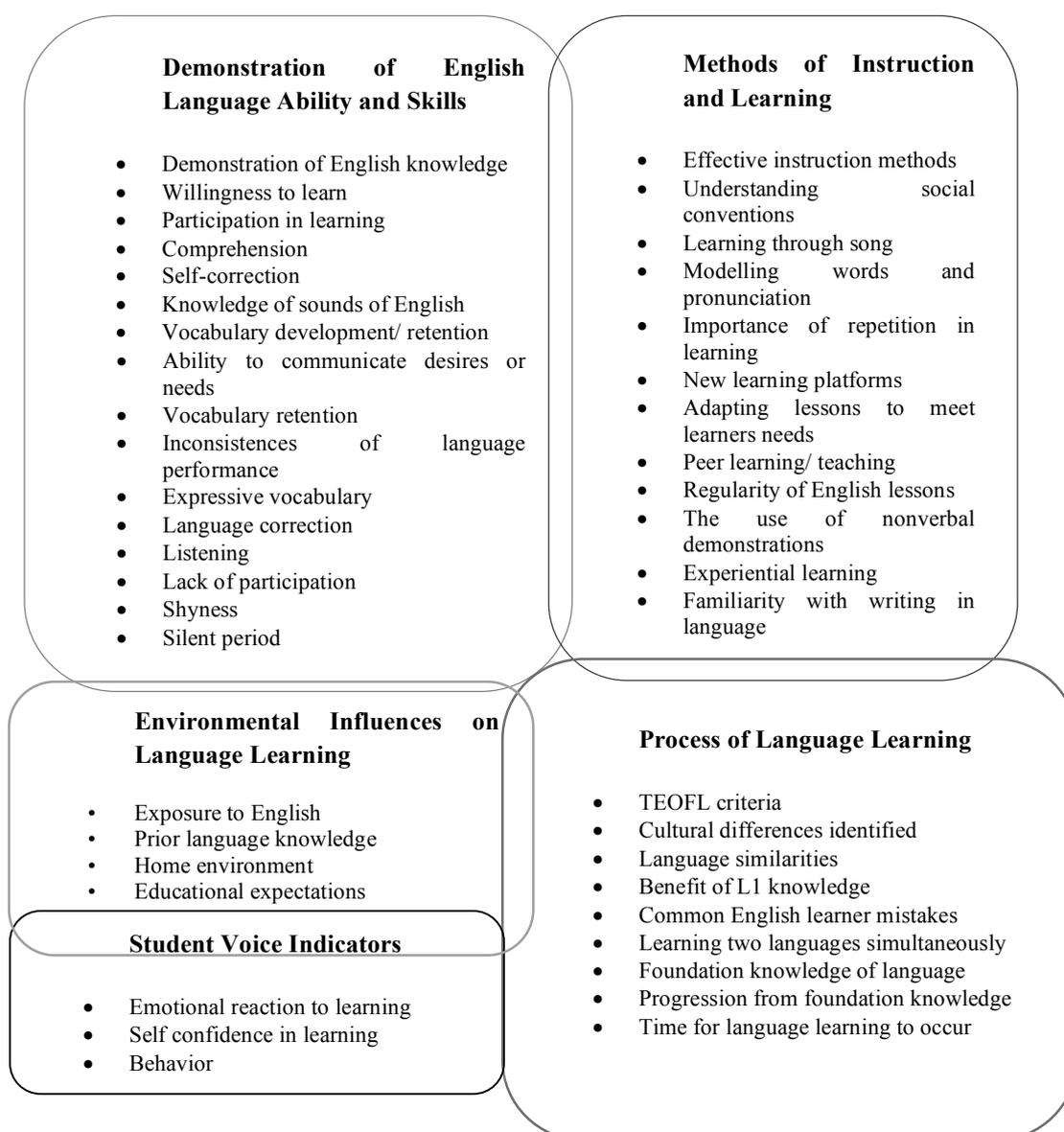
### 3.7.2 Using Grounded Theory

The first step in the process of data analysis was to type the 'observations,' field notes, and reflections. The memos that were written alongside each 'observation,' field note

and reflection sought to provide ‘a space and place for making comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating conjectures about these comparisons’ (Charmaz, 2014, p. 163). The analysis of the data continued with coding, with particular attention being paid to the function that the coding would serve. This created ‘the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data’ (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). Line by line coding was chosen above coding chunks of text because it allowed for detailed analysis. The participant group consisted of nine children, and so the ‘observations’ were not organized by child, but tended to go back and forth between the children. The data recorded were not linear so line by line coding was a much more realistic option. I was able to compare ‘observations’ and ‘incidents to each other in the data, [and from there] ...[code] the data in every way possible’ (Holton, April 2010, p. 24). Throughout this process, certain themes and ideas began to present themselves, some of which had been anticipated, but many of which were not.

Throughout the process of analysing the data, the attitude with which I approached the data was exploratory. Although I had some indication about what the data would reveal, I made every attempt to keep my mind open to new discoveries throughout the process. ‘Discovery is at the heart of both researchers’ ideas; one enters the field open to realising new meaning and, via cycles of data gathering and analysis, progressively focuses on a core problem around which other factors will be integrated’ (Heath & Cowley, 2004, p. 143). After the initial coding was complete, I began the process of focused coding, joining the codes based on commonalities discovered therein. The resulting codes were much more focused in nature and determined where the theory

would lead. This is not to say that all of the codes have been explored fully in this thesis; indeed, the depth and breadth with which the codes are explored leaves much room for further discussion that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Reaching a state where the data were saturated required time as did reviewing the data and making comparisons between data sets until I was able to define categories and could explain relationships between categories satisfactorily (Charmaz, 2014, p. 213). The process of coding and refining\joining codes ended with five broad themes that allowed the data to be condensed to a manageable size (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1 – Themes Identified in the ‘Observations,’ Field Notes, and Reflections**

### 3.7.3 Checklist\Survey Analysis

Data from the checklists were placed in figures for easier analysis. The monthly progress for each of the children was placed in its own figure and then all figures were combined and examined to obtain a collective data set. This way, average means could be calculated for each month and an overall idea of progress trends identified. Likewise, data from both parental surveys were collected into tables and figures. This allowed the backgrounds of the children to be easily accessible during the analysis. The data from the second parental survey were examined individually and then data from the 'yes/no' questions placed into tables for comparison of progress.

### 3.7.4 A Cautionary Note

Research with preschool aged EAL children is currently in its infancy and so to generalize any findings to the wider preschool aged EAL community would be irresponsible and unethical. What the study does seek to do is to provide an accurate picture of how children in a Swiss context learned English using the Montessori Method with a focus on social justice education. It is hoped that the resulting thesis will promote further research of a larger scale so that perhaps a confident generalization can be made in the future. The following chapters, although they bring to light important aspects of the learning process that were discovered, should not be generalized to the wider population of EAL children. This does not diminish the importance of the findings, but, seeks to lay the foundation for further research.

### **3.8 Summary**

Action research is a research design that has, as its main goal, to improve practice. The first step is to recognize a ‘wondering’ and as is the case in this study, enter into an active participant role within the research. The research questions, as outlined in Chapter 1, determined the research design and articulated the ‘wondering’ for this research project. The most reliable way to know how well an educational approach (Montessori Method) will work in an EAL context with young children is to apply it and experiment with it. Researcher reflexivity was an important part of this project, as it is in most education settings. It is a common practice among educators at all levels of education, even if the specific terminology is not known. Reflections allow for critical consideration of the education being provided, and occur spontaneously throughout lessons as well as through more formal means, in the reflections. Maria Montessori herself, encouraged teachers to conduct such research and did not view the roles of teacher and researcher as being in opposition to one another.

The study employed the Montessori Method to teach basic vocabulary and comprehension practice through modelling language and repetition. A mixed methods approach was taken for data collection as a means of seeking validity in the study. Grounded theory was then used to code the data and identify key themes therein. Because of the variety of data collected, the presentation of data also varied. We turn now to the individual language journeys of the participants gathered through ‘observations,’ field notes, and reflections.

## **Chapter 4 Language Journeys**

To stimulate life, leaving it free, however, to unfold itself, that is the first duty of the educator.

(Montessori, 2004, p. 141)

### **4.1 Introduction**

The following chapter provides short accounts of each of the participants' language learning journeys. The purpose of providing such accounts is to provide detailed answers about the extent to which Montessori's Method can be applied to children of different linguistic backgrounds and what obstacles may be present using the method. Each journey, individually and collectively, provides answers to the questions being posed, that is: 'How far is it possible to employ the Montessori approach for multilingual EAL children?' and 'To what extent is the method versatile enough to respond to social, cultural, and linguistic differences?' Examples of how English acquisition came about for each individual is provided and places the following quantitative data from the checklists into context. As part of the theory of social justice in education, the end result, although important, should not be given precedence over the means by which a learner arrives at the end point. Although the Montessori Method was used in planning the individual lessons, the modification of lessons to meet each learner's individual needs employed a social justice educational outlook. Each 'observation' was recorded with reflections on each child (see Appendix Five), learning techniques that worked, approaches to learning that were not successful, and any additional needs that were identified. 'Observation,' as understood by Montessori, is a three-dimensional process. It is not enough to observe the children, instead, what is required is a critical self-evaluation of the educator of what practices are successful and what ones are not, and how the practice is honouring the

child. Through the process of critical reflection, the aims of social justice for participation were realized.

One shortcoming that was identified in the Montessori Method was that Montessori did not address external differences in children (ethnic, linguistic, etc.). In all likelihood, this oversight is because at the time of her teaching, her groups were primarily homogeneous. According to social justice practices, ‘*recognition of difference*’ (Benjamin & Emejulu, 2012, p. 36) is an important part in ‘performing’ social justice in an education context. The differences recognized in the accounts below stem from different child backgrounds, level of English exposure, and personality differences. Intersectionality theory (Hahn Tapper, 2013), particularly in reference to children’s attributes, is important in the language journeys because it allows for ‘the relationships among multiple dimensions’ (McCall, 2005, p. 1771) of the child to be explored, in this case, in the context of English language learning. Differing attributes and personalities of the children were explored because it directly influenced to what extent each child participated in the lessons and how that participation manifested itself, being either verbal or nonverbal (see Table 4.1). The journeys are documented to demonstrate how these differences were identified and how efforts were made to assist each child in his\her learning.

<b>Child</b>	<b>Attributes\Characteristics</b>
Leonie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shy</li> <li>- Reserved</li> <li>- Gentle</li> <li>- Quiet</li> </ul>
Leandro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shy</li> <li>- Reserved</li> <li>- Quiet</li> <li>- Initially timid until his language confidence increased.</li> </ul>
Lara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sociable</li> <li>- Outspoken</li> <li>- Responsive to language education.</li> <li>- Articulate</li> </ul>
Anna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sociable</li> <li>- Reserved</li> <li>- Confident</li> <li>- Creative</li> </ul>
Luca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shy</li> <li>- Reserved</li> <li>- Gentle</li> <li>- Timid with verbal language (likely due to learning two languages at once).</li> </ul>
Matteo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sociable</li> <li>- Emotional</li> <li>- Confident</li> <li>- Strong-willed (particularly evident when taking turns with peers and sharing toys).</li> </ul>
Levin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capable</li> <li>- Confident</li> <li>- Considerate</li> <li>- Good-natured</li> </ul>
Gabriel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confident</li> <li>- Reserved</li> <li>- Considerate</li> <li>- Good-natured</li> </ul>
Elena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sociable</li> <li>- Outspoken</li> <li>- Responsive to language education.</li> <li>- Articulate</li> </ul>

**Table 4.1 Attributes and Characteristics of Children**

Another purpose of the journeys that follow is to recognize the differing challenges that each of the participants faced and how student voice was developed for each. Language learning is not a linear process. There are many challenges that learners

face throughout. These challenges may stem from a variety of factors, including a person's L1, the number of languages spoken, the support of the family unit in language learning, etc. Each challenge experienced by the participants in this study was unique and great strides were taken throughout the lessons to provide each child with the support he\she needed. Despite the variety of challenges identified, each of the children made great progress in their English learning, both in their ability to comprehend spoken language and in their speaking abilities. We now turn to the individual journeys of the participants.

#### **4.2 Silent Learning: Leonie's Journey**

Leonie, as well as Leandro, is shy. Shyness refers to 'wariness, timidity and inhibition' (Crozier, 2001, p. 1) particularly in social situations. Cheek and Watson (1989) suggest that 'broader conceptualizations view shyness as a psychological syndrome that includes both the subjective experience of anxiety in social situations and awkward or inhibited social behavior' (p. 87). These emotions may be experienced during moments of shyness, although there is no indication that all three emotions must occur in every situation. Moments of shyness are common for everyone at some point, but for these two cases, shyness was a very prominent influence on their learning process. This means that both experienced silent periods, although Leonie's lasted much longer than Leandro's and both came out of their silent period quite differently. Drury (2013) states that 'it is clear that the 'Silent Period' or 'non-verbal period' is an experience shared by all children entering a new language learning context' (p. 385). This was not the case in this study, as only two out of nine children experienced such a period of being non-verbal. Leonie's learning process, in particular, is distinct from the other participants.

Leonie experienced a significant silent period, lasting nearly twelve weeks of the fourteen-week study. Whereas Leandro came out of his silent period slowly, Leonie emerged from her silent period suddenly and began to speak rapidly, using many of the words learned throughout the study all at once. How shyness and the silent period, affects learning is well documented (Coplan & Weeks, 2009; Crozier, 2001; Spere & Evans, 2009). Although her demonstrations of English were non-existent verbally in the first twelve weeks, her demonstration of English comprehension was demonstrated in each lesson. In keeping with the social justice approach, Leonie's participation was encouraged but was not reliant on verbal displays. Instead, nonverbal demonstrations of learning were valued equally and there was no difference in the praise given to Leonie than was given to a vocal child. Participation is important but one type of participation should not be placed above others as being more valid. From the beginning, she showed a willingness to participate in the English activities, although there were periods where she remained secluded from her peers. During these brief periods of seclusion, she always gave the impression of being content and did not display any signs of distress or unhappiness. Leonie gave the impression among staff at the preschool that she was a very pleasant child who was happy to play independently of the other children, but one who would also occasionally participate in group activities.

Leonie began the study attending the preschool two days a week. She was one of the newest children, having only been at the preschool for a few months. She is originally from a conservative Asian country but both parents have an advanced level of German and have resided in Switzerland for seventeen years. Despite the length of time

residing in Switzerland, Leonie was born abroad and her parents returned to Switzerland after her birth. Although her parents have a good working knowledge of German as a L2, Leonie did not speak German or her L1 at the preschool. By all accounts, she was experiencing a silent period in all languages, but this may have occurred only in the preschool setting. There is no data to suggest her language usage in the home.

During the first English lesson, Leonie and Leandro did not sing along with the opening song, the 'Hello Song.' Leonie, though, sat contently in the circle with her peers and clapped along to the rhythm of the music, swaying back and forth. She repeated these clapping and swaying motions at the end of the lesson during the 'Goodbye Song.' During the main content of the lesson, she was unsure of what the verb practice activity entailed. She stood in the room and made eye contact with me until I took her by the hand and 'did' the verb with her. After this initial contact, she began laughing and smiling, seeming quite happy to participate in the activity so long as I was guiding her. During the first lesson, Leonie's shy nature was evident. It was also quite obvious that she was experiencing a silent period, although at this point I could not predict how long this period would last. In the field notes that accompanied this first lesson, I questioned whether her shyness was the result of her culture or religious practice. Although this speculation can be made, there is no definitive way that any conclusions can be drawn. I also questioned the role that parental influences can have on a child's personality traits.

Prior to beginning the research project, the personality trait of shyness, I will admit, did not largely factor into the plans for the lessons. From the first lesson I quickly

realized that I would need to 1) become more familiar with the literature around shyness and its potential origins (Coplan & Weeks, 2009; Crozier, 2001) and 2) decide what approach was best in keeping with social justice and Montessori approaches. Leonie's shy nature may originate because of genetics, environment, or culture; however, no conclusions can possibly be reached and are beyond the scope of this thesis. It is important to recognize that shyness is not necessarily a permanent characteristic of one's personality. Indeed, it may lessen with age and increased social interaction.

Leonie's shyness meant that during the course of the study she sometimes was more content to play on her own, rather than participate in activities with the other children. As the lessons progressed, instances of isolation and independent play became less frequent. In the second lesson, for instance, Leonie did participate in the singing circle, but did not participate in the remainder of the lesson. She was content to play on her own, although still within hearing distance of the rest of the group. The ratio of time spent actively participating in this lesson was limited to roughly five minutes. Although separate, she still was able to hear English being spoken in her play environment. She was content to stay in the same room and so her exposure to English increased even though she was not conscious of the learning that was taking place. The following lesson was less isolated for Leonie. Although still not vocal, she did participate in the lesson with her peers, albeit using non-verbal interaction.

In week eight of the study, outside of the English lesson, Leonie indicated that she wanted a drink. As she held her cup up to communicate her meaning, she said 'please.' This was her first English word spoken and a very good indication that she

was, in fact, learning from the lessons and from her peers. She not only demonstrated her knowledge of an English word used in the correct context, but she demonstrated that she was beginning to understand the social conventions of using polite language. The field notes that accompany this ‘observation’ indicate the expectation that Leonie will soon come out of her silent period, and that the learning that is taking place during her silent period is valuable. Again, in lesson nine, she vocalized ‘please’ when requesting a drink, this time during lesson time. During week nine Leonie also called me by name instead of tapping me or using some other non-verbal means to get my attention. Calling me by name was a significant event because Leonie, up to this point, had not called any member of staff by name. In lessons ten and eleven no English was spoken although she participated in the lessons with the other children. It was not until lesson 12 that Leonie came out of her silent period fully and began speaking multiple words and making her comprehension skills even more evident. Up until this point, Leonie had said ‘please’ twice and my name once.

Week twelve was a milestone in Leonie’s English development because she was now able to verbalize her comprehension. This lesson was based around the weather and aspects of the sky. The focus words were ‘moon, star, rain, snow, and cloud.’ I cut out coloured pictures of each prior to the lesson and wrote the corresponding words on the pictures. We went through the pictures twice. She liked to hold the pictures after I said the word. We did this twice with the cards, and unexpectedly, she began to repeat the words! This was the first time Leonie made any attempt to repeat words that were modelled for her.

CBA (Researcher): (Holds up the moon picture) Moon. (Hands the picture to Leonie)

Leonie: Moon. (Looks at the picture)

CBA: (Holds up the star picture) Star. (Hands the picture to Leonie)

Leonie: Star. (Looks at the picture)

CBA: (Holds up the raindrop picture) Rain. (Hands the picture to Leonie)

Leonie: Rain. (Looks at the picture)

CBA: (Holds up the snowflake picture) Snow. (Hands the picture to Leonie)

Leonie: Snow. (Looks at the picture)

CBA: (Holds up the cloud picture) Cloud. (Hands the picture to Leonie)

Leonie: Cloud. (Looks at the picture)

CBA: Well done! (Gives high fives)

Leonie: (Laughs)

This spontaneous language demonstration was unexpected and I had intentionally modified the lesson for Leonie, expecting that she would not speak. I had initially intended to lay the pictures out and ask her to choose the card for the word being said. She liked this sort of activity and is a valid assessment activity to determine her level of understanding English nouns. After her outburst of English the lesson format changed. I then asked her to say the word and then choose the picture of the word said. As she was saying the words, Leonie, who was sitting on a rug, jumped up laughing as she spoke. Nearing the end of the activity Leonie again demonstrated her comprehension of English.

Leonie: (Holds up the moon card and points to her T-Shirt with a moon in the background with some film characters in the foreground) Moon.

This was the first time Leonie was able to vocalize a connection between the lesson with some outside object (the picture on her t-shirt). This event was an indication that her cognitive skills were advancing quite rapidly. In a matter of a few minutes, she

became vocal and began to make connections with English vocabulary on her own. At the end of the lesson we did some singing of common children's songs, some of which Leonie knew the actions for. She did not sing along with the songs, but she did get up from the singing circle and retrieve a child's musical instrument and began to play the instrument to accompany the singing. Throughout the circle time, she swayed back and forth to the music and was smiling while playing her instrument.

Once Leonie began to vocalize her English knowledge, I paid particular attention to the praise she was given for these demonstrations. She responded very well to high fives and verbal praise for English efforts. This served to encourage her further in her language development. The praise given was not limited to her vocalized English. It was my habit to give praise whenever any demonstration of English occurred, whether verbally or otherwise. This is important, particularly with small children. How teachers respond to a child's learning can have the power to help or hinder the development of skills being taught. In this study, when an error was made, I suggested the child try again. Words such as 'wrong, error, and no' were not used but instead a more productive approach was taken. The goal was to encourage their learning and develop their confidence in using language, not to discourage them. This was important, especially for Leonie. She needed to feel comfortable in her environment so that she would feel comfortable enough to come out of her silent period and use English in whatever way she could or felt at ease with.

Leonie is a very happy child who is constantly smiling and laughing, even when she is playing independently. She is also an example of what some children may experience when going through a silent period. A silent period does not mean that learning is not

taking place, but rather, it means that learning is occurring but that a child may need time to verbalize his\her language skills. Speaking may take time and it may be a gradual development or it may occur spontaneously, in rapid succession. Regardless of the end result, a child experiencing a silent period needs to feel comfortable and confident in his\her environment and feel encouraged to demonstrate his\her language knowledge in whatever means he\she feels most at ease. Learning is a process and one that differs in every environment and for every child. Leonie began the study meeting no TESOL outcomes but ended the study meeting nine. Leonie is one example of how learning can take place and of the development of language that had an unconventional process.

#### **4.3 Steady Progress: Leandro's Journey**

Leandro's story is somewhat similar to Leonie's, in that both share a personality trait of being shy and withdrawn in social situations. Unlike Leonie, Leandro has a good foundation knowledge of German and his L1. Fluent in both, he tends to be shy with people he does not know, but his shyness lessens as he becomes familiar with his surroundings and the new people therein. Although he becomes more comfortable, tendencies toward shyness still remain, particularly in groups of peers. At the beginning of the study Leandro met one TESOL criteria. He was able to follow simple, one step instructions. This basic level of comprehension of English may have been the result of the commonalities between some vocabulary between English and German. Another difference that should be identified is how both children came out of their silent periods. Whereas Leonie came out of her silent period with spontaneous bursts of English language, for Leandro the process was slow and steady. He began with speaking one or two words, then progressed to more vocabulary in the following

lessons. Leandro, though, did not experience any withdrawn behaviour. He was willing to participate in every activity and lesson, choosing to do so in a non-verbal manner.

The singing time at the beginning and end of each lesson saw Leandro sitting quietly in the singing circle, observing his peers and listening intently. He followed along with the actions of each song, but did not join in the singing. In lesson two, during the end of lesson singing time, Leandro began to hum along with the songs, and he did attempt to form the word 'goodbye.' The humming along with songs is an important indicator of a willingness to participate. Because Leandro is fluent in both German and his L1, it may be that his lack of verbal English is reflective of his lack of confidence for speaking new languages. During this time, he did say 'goodbye,' a high frequency word in the song. The song, that consists of 21 words, has 'goodbye' sung five times. After hearing the word repeated in both the first and second lessons, I believe that his confidence at attempting to say this word was heightened, and thus an attempt was made. He sang the word only once that was in a whisper, but this indicated a willingness to model English words, and showed that verbal communication would have to be on Leandro's time. He needed to hear words multiple times and only then did he feel confident and comfortable enough to repeat the vocabulary. In lesson three, for instance, Leandro repeated the word 'red.' We had learned red in lessons one and two, but only after hearing the word multiple times did Leandro repeat it. Like 'goodbye,' 'red' was repeated once, but was an indicator of learning style and personality of the learner. The following five lessons Leandro was silent but attentive and observant of his surroundings and peers.

Instances of single word usage is not an uncommon event in language learning and Leandro certainly used his non-verbal stage to absorb the new language environment. It was in lesson nine that Leandro really began to demonstrate his knowledge of the language that he had been observing and listening to weekly. On the morning of lesson nine,

CBA: Leandro, can you count my fingers?

Leandro: Okay.

CBA: (Holds up index finger) One.

Leandro: One.

CBA: (Holds up index and middle fingers)

Leandro: Two.

CBA: (Holds up index, middle, and ring fingers)

Leandro: Three.

CBA: Excellent. You count so well! (High five)

For the last two numbers, I did not need to model for him. Later, when asked to count again, he did not. Further along in the lesson, he began to repeat the shapes ‘circle, square, and rectangle.’ He did not repeat the word triangle. At the end of the lesson Leandro would not repeat the names of shapes, but was willing to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ (in German) when a shape was held up and a name given to the shape. For instance, when asked if the circle was a square, he said ‘no.’ At the end of the lesson, during singing circle:

Group: (Singing ‘I’m a Little Teapot,’ doing actions while singing)

Leandro: Teapot! Teapot! (Jumps up and down)

Although his English usage increased, it did not always remain at a constant level. He was willing to demonstrate his knowledge of English using words that he felt

comfortable with. This did not reflect his knowledge of English but was indicative of his personality and age. It was unrealistic to expect a small child to be consistent with his\her demonstrations of language. Perhaps he was tired of speaking English, or perhaps his mood changed. Regardless, the important part of the learning process was that overall progress was being made and Leandro was becoming more comfortable in his environment.

During Leandro's silent period, when he was unsure what the activity entailed, demonstrating the action and modelling the vocabulary simultaneously worked very well. The use of buttressing communication (doing while saying) was not specific to Leandro, but he in particular, benefitted from it greatly. This teaching technique served two purposes. Firstly, it was used to aid in the comprehension of the directions being given. Secondly, it was used to increase the self-esteem and self-confidence of the children. This way, even if the language was not understood, each child was able to participate fully in an activity with his\her peers without any feelings of isolation or feeling ill at ease in the group. Lesson ten was focused around making Diwali lamps. Leandro struggled with the directions of 'to put' and 'glue' and the vocabulary 'glue, glitter, and decorate.' Sitting beside him with my own lamp to decorate, I provided the vocabulary while giving him a demonstration of what the words meant. He then created his own lamp, giving him independence in the learning environment and the confidence of being a member of the group without being singled out for comprehension difficulties.

It was after this lesson that Leandro began to use English independently to communicate his wishes.

CBA: (Holds a plate of different kinds of cake) Leandro, what kind of cake do you want?

Leandro: (Points to a piece) This one.

CBA: Okay, here you go. (Places cake on Leandro's plate)

Leandro: Thank you.

CBA: Your welcome.

By the end of the study, Leandro began to use 'please, thank you, yes, and no' regularly. For Leandro, coming out of his silent period was a slow process, but one that was reflective of his personality. He is a very mild mannered child who shies away from attention, particularly in groups of peers and people he does not know. At the end of the study Leandro met eleven of the TESOL criteria, quite a large development for a child who displayed some trepidation with oral communication. Remembering the means by which people communicate is fundamental. Humans communicate verbally and non-verbally. Although the tendency in education is to place greater importance on oral communication, it is not truly reflective of the communication abilities of humans. Leandro is one example of how complex communication is and how educators are able to teach without inflicting added pressure on learners while still obtaining the language learning outcomes that are desired.

#### **4.4 Shout it Out: Lara and Anna's Journey**

Lara and Anna are identical twins who share a very close relationship and are equally sociable with other children in the preschool. Lara and Anna have been grouped together to highlight the differences in their learning journeys even though they are identical twins. In direct contrast to Leonie's and Leandro's experiences of language

learning, both Lara and Anna are outspoken little girls who never experienced a silent period. From the first lesson onwards, Lara, in particular, showed a great desire to learn English and engaged with the lessons and her peers. The beginning of their time at preschool was limited to five mornings per week. This later changed to three whole days and two half days. This change in schedule came about because of their mother's desire to continue with her own education. Coming from a single parent household did not appear to impact Lara or Anna. There were times when they would spend weekends with their father, but the primary caregiver was their mother. From informal conversations with the girls' mother, it is apparent that the level of support for their education and wellbeing is of paramount importance.

There have been suggestions that parental education does reflect negatively on the literacy level of children (Räty, 2003; Serpell, Sonnenschein, Baker, & Ganapathy, 2002), but this is not always so. Baroody and Dobbs-Oates (2011), for instance, found that in their study 'parents' education level was not related to parents' reports of child interest' (p. 353). In fact, this was the same conclusion that was reached in the case of Lara and Anna's mother. In secondary school when she had the twins, she was unable to finish her formal education until the girls were old enough to attend a preschool. If anything, her experience of having to postpone her own education allowed her insight into the importance of the education of her daughters. She encouraged the language development of her children in German, English, and their L1s (mother and father have different L1s so the girls have learned both). Although both girls demonstrated enthusiasm for English learning, Lara in particular was more keen on learning it. She often demonstrated her English knowledge, outside of the English lessons, at school and at home. During an informal conversation with her mother, she informed me that

Lara often recited all of the English words she knew while playing at home and then proceeded to make up new words, claiming that she was speaking English. Anna, a little more reserved than Lara, also enjoyed the lessons but was less outgoing in her language demonstrations.

Lara, in the first month, met three of the TESOL criteria. Two of the criteria met were based on her ability to follow one step directions in English and respond non-verbally to the directions given. She was also able, in the first month, to begin saying 'please' and 'thank you' when making a request and having a request met. Lara also began the English lessons knowing two colours in English, red and pink (her favourite colours). The rapid pace with which she was able to learn new vocabulary was surprising and exceeded the rate of vocabulary acquisition of the other participants. After the first lesson that focused on the colours red, green, and blue, she was able to request the colour of the balloon she wanted to take home with her. From the first lesson onwards, Lara was able to express her desires in a limited capacity. When these colours were reviewed in the following weeks, she could remember them correctly.

There were two specific instances of rapid vocabulary learning Lara demonstrated. In lesson three, for instance, we reviewed all of the colours learned thus far. The activity consisted of matching colour cards, eating foods of the colours learned, and then singing songs with the colours included in the lyrics. During the activity for blue, each child matched the blue cards with the blue stickers on the floor. We then ate blueberries as a snack and sang 'Bluebird, Bluebird.' While we sampled the blueberries, I asked each of the children if they liked them, and then I commented that I thought blueberries were delicious. Six days later:

CBA: Here is your snack. (Gives Lara snack of carrots)

Lara: (Eats carrots)

CBA: Do you like carrots?

Lara: Yum, karotten, delicious!

CBA: I think carrots are delicious too.

In this case she combined the German, 'karotten,' with the English 'delicious.' This is a great example of the level of vocabulary she was able to acquire in a short period of time. At this point she had only heard the word 'delicious' on one occasion but was able to use it much later in the correct context. It was during this time that I realized Lara, in particular, needed more advanced English vocabulary learning than some of the other participants. I began to use advanced words when I spoke to her one on one and expanded directions given to the group that provided an appropriate level of difficulty for comprehension development.

Another demonstration of her fast learning ability occurred after lesson thirteen. In lesson twelve, we were learning weather and elements of the sky (as described above in Leonie's story). Following the lesson, the weather and sky pictures were taped to a sliding door. After lesson thirteen, the children gathered to place their stickers next to their names on the English participation chart. Once the children had gathered, I closed the sliding door that had the weather and sky pictures taped to it. I noticed that the sun picture had fallen off and was inside the gap in the wall.

CBA: (Looking at the sliding door) Oh no, our sun is lost!

Lara: And where is cloud?

CBA: Oh yes, you are right. I didn't even notice that the cloud was missing too. Oh well, we can get new pictures for the door later.

This short conversation demonstrates three points. First, that Lara is able to retain vocabulary at a very rapid rate and secondly, that she is able to use the newly acquired vocabulary in correct contexts. This example also shows the grammar knowledge learned. Lara remembered the word for cloud without having any verbal or visual prompts and towards the end of the study could form short sentences in English. It is possible that the rapid pace of English learned was due, in part, to her love of books.

Like many of the children, Lara loves books. She often sat and looked at books trying to name objects in the pictures in both German and English. I began to incorporate reading time into some lessons, particularly when the weather kept the group inside. In lesson nine, I read *Oh the Places You'll Go!* (Dr. Seuss, 1990). The reading took much longer than expected because Lara wanted to identify objects in the book that she knew in English (car, house, etc). In addition, she began listing, in English, all of the colours on the pages that she knew. Similarly, in lesson fourteen, we read *The Smartest Giant in Town* (Donaldson, 2002). While reading this book, Lara did much the same thing. She identified colours and objects on each page that she knew. When there was an object she was not familiar with she pointed to it and asked 'what?' I would then say the word and she would repeat it. The enthusiasm she displayed for English was very exciting, and her advancement in English was unparalleled.

Specifically, for Lara, there were issues with the TESOL criteria that were noticed quite early in the study. In the preschool aged categories for English development, the majority of the outcomes focus on comprehension of English in directions being given. This included single step directions, and then later, multiple step instructions. The issue identified for Lara was that the criteria did not focus on targets of spoken

language by the children in this age group. There were some cases where spoken language was incorporated into the criteria but this was minimal and was limited to using polite language and being able to identify common nouns. What the TESOL standards lacked was how many words were learned and used in the correct context and also the grammar development of the child. Lara ended the study, meeting fourteen of the standards, but her spoken language was well beyond others in the group. Although the data collected showed that she made quite a lot of progress in her English development, it did not accurately reflect her language abilities. Her ability to communicate her wishes and participate in conversation meant that her English ability was far beyond what was reflected in the checklist because there were aspects of English learning that were not included. This is especially important for Lara because neither she, nor her sister, Anna, had much previous exposure to English. It was important, therefore, that the study utilized both checklists and field notes. One should not presume that checklists are complete and that all children will fall into the categories therein. Lara is one such example of what can happen when data collection uses only one method. It is possible to end the study with an inaccurate picture of what developments the child actually made.

There is another point that should be made regarding the speed with which Lara adapted English vocabulary and the willingness that she demonstrated to speak English. The lessons that I planned always kept Lara's abilities in mind. I tried to differentiate the lessons to suit her needs. This often took the form of using more advanced words in our one to one conversations, planning extended activities in case she finished the group activity before others, and encouraging her to initiate her own conversations with me and other children. Whereas for Leonie and Leandro,

participation meant including nonverbal activities and interactions, for Lara, social justice and participation meant that she should be provided with the tools to reach her full linguistic capacity. Social justice means respecting all children and their needs. Lara is a very good example on the other end of the spectrum. Her needs are to be equally valued and catered to as the other children who may not quickly adopt vocal language.

I can only speculate on the reasons why Lara was able to make such progress with her vocabulary development and became communicative so quickly. There is no doubt that her home environment and her supportive mother played a large role in her language success. Perhaps her language success was a result of her exposure to multiple languages and language structures. Perhaps Lara is especially apt to learn languages from oral communication in an English-speaking environment. Yim and Rudoy (2013), sought to examine the extent to which implicit learning can affect language learning. They concluded that ‘linguistic experience does not implicitly influence the learning of one statistical regularity and that auditory implicit learning strongly correlates with language performance’ (Yim & Rudoy, 2013, p. 320). Perhaps having exposure to different linguistic groups did not affect Lara’s ability to learn language, but the method with which English was taught using the Montessori Method with a focus placed on oral language development, was partly responsible for her success. Or, it may be that Lara has an inherent talent for language learning. If this is the case and she does possess a natural talent, how can the differences between Lara and Anna’s language development be explained? At this point, it is impossible for any definite conclusions to be reached. The *why* is important but cannot be answered satisfactorily without further examination. Such an examination is beyond the scope

of this study, but it is important to keep the possibilities in mind. We now turn to examine the learning process of Anna, the more reserved of the twins.

Anna has distinct personality differences from her sister. Where Lara is quite outspoken and eager to use her knowledge of English, Anna is a little more reserved. She began the first month of the study meeting two of the TESOL criteria. She demonstrated a willingness to participate in the lessons and did not experience any silent period. Her demonstrations of English included basic sentences and word chunking. Her use of English was usually a result of being asked a question. With that being said, her ability to learn and retain new vocabulary was similar to Lara's.

As was described above, after the first lesson using balloons to teach colours in English, she too, was able to choose the colour of the balloon she wanted to take home with her. She was also able to recall the words learned the following week. Her knowledge of colours continued into the third week.

CBA: (Holding a picture of a red wagon) Does anyone know what colour the wagon is?

Anna: Red!

CBA: Yes! The wagon is red. (Holding up an apple) Do you know what this fruit is?

Anna: Apple.

CBA: Yes, it's an apple. What colour is the apple?

Anna: Red!

CBA: Yes! Good job. The Wagon (holding up the wagon picture) and the apple (holding up the apple) are both red. Do you want some apple?

Anna: Yes, please.

No doubt, reviewing the colour vocabulary each week helped to cement the vocabulary in her mind, but also, her active use of the vocabulary helped aid her memory. In lesson three her willingness to model new words also became more evident. When asked what colour an object was, Anna responded 'weiss.' I then said the colour 'white' and she repeated the modelled word. This instance demonstrated two points: first, Anna was able to understand the question being asked in English, even though she did not have the vocabulary knowledge to respond in English. Also, it pointed to her ability and willingness to be communicative in whatever way she could.

From the beginning of the lessons, polite expressions were viewed as being very important for the children to learn. By the third lesson, Anna used 'please' and 'thank you' regularly. If there were times when politeness was forgotten, I would give her a prompt. This was often times no more than a pause before answering her. She would quickly say 'Oh please!' Sometimes I would also say 'And what do we say?' She would then realize she had forgotten and make sure to use the polite speech. The cues given became less necessary after the fourth and fifth week. Along with providing cues for the children, I also made sure to use polite expressions while speaking with them and giving them directions. Modelling the language desired stressed the importance of such language and the children adopted the habit of using this language when conversing with me and also with their peers.

Anna was particularly interested in singing. During the singing circle at the beginning of each lesson, she always participated, showing great enthusiasm and learning a lot of vocabulary through song.

CBA: Since it's our last lesson, do you want to sing some more songs?

Group: Yes!

CBA: Okay, what songs do you want to sing?

Group: (Calling out song titles)

CBA: We have to take turns so everyone can have a turn. Anna, what song do you want to sing?

Anna: Sun song.

CBA: 'Mr. Sun?' Okay let's sing 'Mr. Sun.'

Together: One, two, three (group begins singing)

In the 'Hello Song' for instance, the emotion words, 'I'm fine, happy, and sad' are repeated multiple times. Anna was particularly good at remembering emotion words. She also liked songs that had actions to go along with them. For the emotion words in the opening song, even something simple like creating an exaggerated facial expression to demonstrate the emotions, helped in her comprehension and added to the entertainment of singing. She learned this vocabulary very well and quickly. By the last half of the study, I was able to ask Anna how she was feeling, and she would respond in English. She was able to convey how she felt at any given time and that afforded her a voice in her education that she did not have before.

At the end of study, Anna met fourteen of the TESOL criteria. Unlike her sister though, the outcomes met gave a more accurate representation of Anna's language abilities. A lot of the criteria met, for instance, revolved around Anna's

comprehension of English and her ability to respond in appropriate ways, whether verbally or non-verbally. The verbal requirements that were met revolved around her ability to identify objects, which she could do with ease. Because she had not reached a level of English that used sentences to convey meaning, the outcomes presented were appropriate. Looking at the criteria, with both Lara and Anna meeting fourteen outcomes respectively, would give the impression that their English level was the same but this was not so. With regards to their comprehension ability, certainly both girls were on an even platform throughout the study. Verbally, there were stark differences. Both girls could answer questions and use polite phrases. They were also equally able to demonstrate English knowledge. The level of English used in responses varied between the sisters. Lara, as discussed above, began to use short sentences in English, whereas Anna tended to respond with one word answers. Lara began to initiate conversations, whereas Anna would wait for me to initiate them.

The results of the study for Lara and Anna are quite interesting. They are identical twins, have the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and share a home environment, but the results for both girls differed, which was quite unexpected. The assumption was that identical twins would progress similarly, but in this case, the differences that presented themselves may be linked to the personality of the individual. Often times it is assumed that siblings, particularly twins, are a single entity, while in fact, they are not. They are two separate people who undoubtedly have a strong emotional bond with each other, but whose needs and learning preferences vary. It is helpful here to go back to Montessori's definition of justice. She writes 'justice is really spiritual, it seeks that *every* child achieve the maximum of its individual abilities' (emphasis added) (Montessori, 2007, p. 233). From this

definition, every child must be approached as his\her own person, even if he\she have a common shared experience with another member of the group. Anna loved music and singing and could learn English quite quickly using these methods. Lara, in contrast, learned new vocabulary best by verbal communication and conversation practice. In an effort to honour the humanity of each of the girls, both approaches were adopted in the study and helped to advance their knowledge and usage of English. We must remember that these two girls are individuals with their own thoughts, desires, and ways of communicating. That is the first step to achieving an educational experience for them that obtained the desired results but that also placed justice at the forefront of educational thought and practice.

#### **4.5 Something New: Luca's Journey**

Luca had only been in Switzerland for a very short period of time. He was fluent in his L1 and his parents took great measures to expose him to educational material and experiences. Upon his arrival in Switzerland, he spoke no German, and although both parents speak English, he had no previous exposure to English. Luca was used to being in educational settings. He demonstrated his willingness to learn from his first day in the preschool. He was very quiet but sociable, even when language barriers existed between himself and his peers. What made Luca's language learning experience special was that at the time of this study, he was being exposed to and learning two new languages, German and English. Luca began the study meeting three TESOL outcomes and ended the study meeting thirteen. The majority of the outcomes met were centred around comprehension. Verbally, Luca did experience some difficulties with retaining vocabulary.

CBA: The first thing we need to do for this activity is choose what colour paper you want for your picture. Luca, what colour would you like?

Luca: (No response)

CBA: (Pointing to each colour of paper as each word is spoken) Do you want blue, green, red, pink, black or brown?

Luca: (Points to green)

CBA: Green?

Luca: Green please.

This was not a surprise since the language overload that he was exposed to meant that sometimes he was unable to distinguish between English and German vocabulary. With this being said, his comprehension of both developed quickly. Although quiet, he was eager to participate in the English lessons and repeat high frequency words that were modelled for him.

From the first lesson, based around colours, Luca was willing to repeat the colours of the balloons that were in the room. His verbal communication at this point was solely repetition of words that were modelled. From the first lesson Luca was able to follow simple, one step instructions. Particularly with verb practice, he was apt at listening to the word being spoken and then repeating the action that went along with the verb. Luca's ability to follow directions in English from the first lesson may be a result of his educationally focused home environment. For instance, in the second lesson, when being asked to count, Luca clearly understood what was being asked but did not have the English vocabulary to fulfil the request being made. In this case, he began counting in German. With some praise for his comprehension ability, I then began counting in English, allowing pauses after each number so he could repeat. Again, in

this lesson, Luca understood the importance of polite speech, but said the words ‘bitte’ and ‘danke’ instead of the English ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’ The interchangeable use of German and English was quite difficult for Luca, as it would be for any person learning two languages at the same time, regardless of age. It does take time and patience to sort out in the mind, which words belong to which language, and what words must be used when communicating with others. For Luca, constant repetition and modelling English vocabulary were necessary. Also, how the occurrence of German use in the English lesson was handled is of importance. In the instances of German use mentioned above, Luca had the opportunity to finish his vocalization and only then was the English equivalent spoken. This was very important because I did not want to negatively impact Luca’s German language learning during the course of the study.

For Luca, social justice went beyond the educational responsibility of the teacher. It required a great amount of attentiveness to Luca and his situation. He was placed in a new environment, not knowing the culture or the language. Perhaps the most important aspect of social justice in his case was creating a safe place where he felt comfortable and supported. Respect, in this case, had to be given to his German learning as much as his English. Even when he spoke German after being asked a question in English it was essential that he receive praise. He demonstrated in these times that he could understand the English question being posed and that his German vocabulary was developing enough to answer an English question in German. The personalized education being provided in this instance was fundamental in increasing his language skills (in both German and English) and his confidence as a new learner.

The careful nature with which I approached Luca's language development was different and is evident in the following dialogue:

CBA: Luca, can you count the blocks?

Luca: ein, zwei, drei, vier, fünf.

CBA: Good job! (give high five). Ein in English is one.

Luca: One.

CBA: Zwei is two.

Luca: Two.

CBA: Drei is three.

Luca: Three.

CBA: Vier is four.

Luca: Four.

CBA: Fünf is five.

Luca: Five.

CBA: Good job! Look, now you can count in German *and* English!

The above dialogue showed that English was not placed in a higher position than German. For Luca, it was important that he learned both. Going through the numbers slowly, one number at a time, allowed Luca to make connections between the two languages and to hear the similarity of sounds between both. The end of the dialogue mentions both counting in German and in English, so that Luca could separate the two in his mind as different languages. Even though Luca sometimes struggled with differentiating English and German, a comment also made by his parents in the second survey, his comprehension of English increased greatly within the short fourteen-week period.

The matching game played in the third lesson demonstrated Luca's comprehension of English. I explained the instructions to him and he was able to complete the activity without any demonstration of the directions provided (buttressing communication). By lesson four, Luca was regularly using polite expressions, although, as with any child, sometimes reminders were necessary. Once 'yes' and 'no' were learned by Luca, it provided him with another means to demonstrate his English knowledge even when vocabulary were not readily available in his mind. For instance, when assessing his colour knowledge, if I asked what colour a green balloon was and he was unable to answer, it was useful to ask if the green balloon was pink. He would then respond 'no.' This form of assessment was used with Leandro as well. Likewise, when singing, Luca sometimes had trouble remembering the words to songs. Instead of singing, he would hum along to the tune of the song. Any demonstration of participation was encouraged during the lessons. Any form of participation is learning and learning is the goal.

From Luca's English learning experience, there are some points that can be helpful for educators to keep in mind. It is important to consider the origins of the child. This consideration should not be limited only to the ethnic or religious background of the child, but needs to be extended to the linguistic background of the child and the current linguistic challenges that he/she may be experiencing. Having a sense of compassion for the frustrations and difficulties of language learning is important at any stage or age of learning, but even more so with young children. There is no way to avoid the time it takes to learn a language. Time and practice are two very important components of learning that cannot be eliminated from the process. Luca is a child first and a language learner second. This order must never be confused. The time it

will take for Luca to sort out German from English in his mind has to be a patient period whereby Luca is placed in a linguistically rich environment. Only with constant practice, repetition, and patience, will his language development in German and English take place.

#### **4.6 A Very Active Learner: Matteo's Journey**

Matteo, like Luca, also had no previous exposure to English. Unlike Luca, he does speak and understand German quite well. He is a very energetic boy who is very polite. Having an outgoing personality, he was always willing to participate in the English activities and was eager to repeat words modelled for him and began using English words independently early. After he learned polite expressions in English, for instance, only rarely was a reminder needed. By the third lesson, he used 'please' and 'thank you' on his own. He also began to use English words outside of English lessons, saying 'thank you' regularly in other school contexts. His comprehension of English was also quite good; however, there were some challenges with Matteo that limited his English learning.

Matteo comes from a single parent household, living primarily with his mother. He does spend small amounts of time with his father, but this is not a regular occurrence. During my time with him, the sometimes-conflicting relationship between his parents became evident. Custody was not set firmly and so there were periods when he would see his father quite often and other times when he did not. During the periods of fluctuation of custody, he often demonstrated some issues with his peers, and occasionally, with adults. Matteo's behaviour was most likely, partially reflective of his uncertain home environment. Behaviour challenges often came about because of

lack of adult attention. Waiting his turn and allowing peers to participate in activities often resulted in Matteo becoming upset. On a few occasions his emotional outbursts led him to bite or hit, although these instances occurred less often with time. Matteo spent five days per week at the preschool and knew the staff and other children well. During the periods when he spent time with his father, he was taken out of preschool, missing several English lessons. Despite the absences and behaviour challenges, he began the study meeting two of the TESOL criteria, and ended the study meeting eleven.

Matteo's behaviour challenges continued throughout the study and were not limited to English lessons, but were present throughout his school life. In lesson eight, the activity was baking cookies. Each of the children lined up along the kitchen counter and took turns adding ingredients into the pot and stirring. Once the ingredients were combined, the children formed the cookies and placed them on their individual cookie trays. Matteo was at the front of the line and took the first turn.

CBA: First we need to add sugar. (Holds up sugar for the children to see)

Matteo: Sugar.

CBA: (Hands the sugar to Matteo) Can you put the sugar in the pot please?

Matteo: (Puts the sugar in the pot) Sugar.

CBA: Good job. Now we have to stir the sugar.

Matteo: Sugar. (Begins to stir)

CBA: Now let's add the butter.

Matteo: Butter. (Puts butter in pot and continues stirring)

When I explained that it was the next child's turn, Matteo became very angry. He repeated 'no' multiple times and refused to step back to let another child take a turn.

When he did step back he was crying and began running around the hot stove. I explained to him the danger of his actions and he stopped, and after some time he began to cry again and eventually left the kitchen. He returned a short time later, but again would not wait for his turn. Eventually he left the kitchen and did not return, choosing instead to complete another activity.

During other lessons, similar behaviour was displayed. In one lesson, different occupations were being acted out by the group. The occupations acted out were bus driver, pilot, and teacher. The bus driver and pilot occupations were being dramatized through different chair formations. Acting through play meant that each child was given the opportunity to act as the pilot and bus driver, while the others pretended to be passengers. First, I demonstrated the role of pilot to the children, making the sounds of an airplane to accompany my acting performance. I then got out of my seat and switched places with one of the children. Matteo stood to take the child's place but when I explained that everyone should have a turn, he returned to his seat upset. When it was Matteo's turn, he pretended to be the pilot, making the sounds of the airplane. He then refused to get up and switch positions with another child and began to cry. When I led him back to his seat he tried to scratch my arm and began kicking the chair in front of his. We then moved onto bus driver drama but Matteo continued this behaviour until it was his turn to act as the bus driver and the scene was repeated when his turn ended.

Matteo's behaviour brings certain aspects of working with young children to light. Regulating one's emotions is not an innate aspect of humanity. It is not a naturally occurring event, it must be practiced. Particularly in young children, 'emotion

regulation constitutes a major developmental task' (Susa et al., April 2014, p. 494). Certainly for Matteo, this is one aspect of his development that must be developed further. It is important to remember that the difficulties or instability of the home do play a major role in the behaviour of children. For Matteo, language learning tended to be less important than developing his social skills and emotional regulation. No doubt it affected negatively on the English he learned because there was an outside challenge that took precedence. It is important to note, though, that even with the behaviour challenges, learning did occur, both in language and also in his personal development. Another aspect of working with children is the need for regularity. Matteo missed several lessons and thus did not have the same advantage and exposure to English as did his peers. Children need basic needs to be met before learning can occur. This means that a child must be emotionally supported first and have a sense of security. When these aspects are lacking, the learning process is challenged. The challenges that Matteo faced were evident throughout the study and certain accommodations were made. Matteo, for instance, always had the option to work independently from the group if he wished. There were some times when he wished to work alone and other times he did not. Providing a child with emotional security is a daunting task, and certainly not something that can be fulfilled within a fourteen-week period. Although efforts were made to do so, the learning that took place could perhaps have been much greater had this aspect of the child been met previously.

#### **4.7 Scaffolding: Levin and Gabriel's Journey**

Both Levin and Gabriel have undergone similar language journeys and come from the same social, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic background. It is for these reasons that I have chosen to integrate both boys into one section. Levin and Gabriel were born in

Asia and share the same L1, although Levin has a much broader language background, speaking a total of five languages while Gabriel speaks three. The boys also share a similar family environment. Their parents understand the importance of education, particularly English education, and have made time in the home for such development. The boys have spent the past one and a half to two years in a German speaking environment. Because of their extended time in a German preschool, neither Levin nor Gabriel currently have the struggles faced by Luca. Both are quite aware of the differences between English and German and understand what staff members speak which language. Neither Levin nor Gabriel have ever spoken to me in German. Likewise, neither boy has ever spoken with other school staff in English. Perhaps because of the time spent learning German, neither boy is completely fluent in either English or German. They are able to convey their thoughts and wishes in either language but their communication is fragmented and they largely employ word chunking, not forming complete sentences. Basic nouns and verbs in English are known by both boys so the English lessons were approached much differently with these two participants than with others.

The foundation vocabulary needed for effective communication had already been developed in the home with both boys. Levin and Gabriel both knew how to count and knew some of their colours in English prior to the lessons beginning. Thus, the goal for Levin and Gabriel was scaffolding, building on the foundation skills they had already developed. This is not to suggest that the boys did not face challenges in their language journeys. Levin began the lessons meeting six of the TESOL criteria. He was able, from the beginning, to follow directions given in English, identify objects by name and could participate in simple conversations. Gabriel, too, could follow

directions and identify some objects from books and around the classroom. He could also participate in basic conversations, answering questions with one or two word answers. Gabriel began meeting four of the TESOL criteria. Following the completion of the study, Levin met sixteen criteria and Gabriel thirteen respectively.

With the already established knowledge of the boys, I used them to help their peers in the learning process. Lesson four focused on reviewing colours and elements of nature. This included going on a nature walk and collecting flowers and plants of various colours to be used for an art project in the following lesson. During the walk, Levin joined Matteo, Leandro, and Leonie in the park and began pointing out flowers and their colours.

Levin: (Points to a leaf) Green.

Matteo: Green.

Levin: (Points to a dead leaf) Brown.

Matteo: Brown.

CBA: Levin, what are the green and brown things?

Levin: Leafs.

CBA: Leaves. Very good. (Holds up a leaf) This is a green leaf.

Matteo: Green leaf.

Levin: Leaf.

CBA: Well done. (Gives high fives)

Although this did not last long, just a few minutes, it was important that Levin take a leadership role within the group. Firstly, it ensured that he was able to demonstrate his knowledge and secondly, to provide him with a task that was challenging. This was one of the greatest concerns with Levin during the study. I wanted to ensure that he

was able to benefit from the lessons along with the other children who did not possess the same level of language knowledge. Along with employing more difficult vocabulary when conversing with him, co-operative learning was an activity that he enjoyed and that helped him cement learned vocabulary. As well as being beneficial to Levin, the other children he worked with periodically seemed to enjoy the change as well. Soon after Levin took on this role, Matteo began to repeat Levin's vocabulary that he modelled. This was useful for both Levin and the participants, but more importantly, they viewed the experience as being a part of play.

Levin was also apt at singing and learned new songs quickly. He was able to learn a new song in full after hearing it only a few times. From lesson three onwards, Levin was able to sing both the 'Hello Song' and the 'Goodbye Song' well. Throughout the course of the lessons, he was also able to use the vocabulary learned in the songs in different contexts. This was particularly true for greetings and farewells as well as to express how he was feeling. By the last lesson he had learned the lyrics to several more songs. The last lesson demonstrated his ability to use music as a means of learning vocabulary. It was in this lesson that I decided to have an extended circle singing time.

CBA: Guys, what songs do you want to sing today?

Levin: Brother John.

Group: (Begins to sing)

CBA: (Pauses, not sure of song lyrics, hums)

Levin: Carla, stop! Morning bells are ringing, ding ding dong.

CBA: You are right. I forgot the words.

Group: (Laughs and continues singing)

Levin was eager to correct any errors that occurred in English, whether it be with me or with other children. These corrections were always done respectfully and he liked to help with language learning where he was able.

Gabriel was slightly different in personality from Levin. He was more reserved and less outgoing. He was well socialized and got along with his peers, but he was less willing to take on the role of teacher in a co-operative learning environment. His vocabulary in English, although somewhat developed, was not as advanced as that of Levin. Gabriel began the lessons with a well-established habit of using polite expressions. Gabriel was eager to repeat words that were modelled for him, something that was necessary for particular words, such as balloon, which sounded like 'hello' when spoken in the first two lessons. His difficulty in pronunciation was likely because of the different types of phonemes in English and his L1. To ensure progress in pronunciation, I made a game of this with him. I would say a word and then I would point to Gabriel who would repeat the word. I would then repeat the word again faster and point to Gabriel who would repeat. This continued several times, each at a faster pace.

CBA: Let's play a game. I'll say a word and you repeat okay?

Gabriel: Okay.

CBA: Ba-lloon.

Gabriel: Ba-lloon.

CBA: Balloon. (Faster)

Gabriel: Balloon. (Faster)

CBA: Balloon. (Faster)

Gabriel: Balloon. (Faster)

CBA: Balloon. (Faster)

Gabriel: Balloon. (Faster, laughs, and rolls on the floor)

This is one of the techniques I used to disguise pronunciation practice with him, disguising teaching and language practice with a fun game. I used a similar game to help Gabriel with his counting to correct the mistake of switching numbers while counting blocks.

Initially, Gabriel was able to follow one step instructions, but by lesson five, he was able to follow multiple step instructions, provided that the directions were repeated once throughout the activity taking place. By the fifth lesson Gabriel could also identify his emotions independently, giving him a voice to express his feelings about an activity or situation. Gabriel's main challenge was remembering numbers in order and trying to form complete sentences when responding to a question. In lesson nine, Gabriel was counting the days and omitted the number three while counting out loud. The numbers that were mixed up or omitted in his counting were not necessarily the same in each instance. During another counting activity, he inverted six and seven while counting. This showed that he did know the numbers sometimes, but more practice was needed. I tried to assist him in this regard, asking him during every lesson to count something (blocks, cards, etc.).

While trying to encourage full sentence use, Gabriel would respond to a question I posed, usually with a one or two-word response. I would then take his response and model a full sentence based on the response given. Following is a short dialogue that occurred in lesson eight to demonstrate this technique.

CBA: Gabriel do you like to eat cookies?

Gabriel: Yes!

CBA: What kind of cookies are your favourite?

Gabriel: Chocolate.

CBA: Oh, you like to eat chocolate cookies. I like chocolate cookies too!

Taking Gabriel's response and forming a complete sentence and then adding my own sentence, demonstrated sentence structure for Gabriel and provided examples of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person. This technique was used throughout the study period and by lesson eleven Gabriel had begun to repeat entire phrases and sentences. At the end of the study Gabriel was able to make short sentences independently, without first needing the sentence to be modelled for him.

Levin and Gabriel had some English vocabulary and certainly good comprehension skills prior to the study. This does not mean that they did not require special attention. Needs were still present, although they were different from the other participants because of their previous exposure to English. Both boys were encouraged to begin speaking in full sentences although this was not explicitly stated. The sentences were modelled for them and after some time they began to repeat the sentences, eventually beginning to create their own. Allowing Levin to take on a co-operative role during the lessons also encouraged his self-confidence as an English learner and provided the other children with an opportunity to learn from a peer. Each learner has different needs and the important role of the educator is to identify those needs and find some way of meeting them in a classroom setting.

#### **4.8 Contagious Laugh: Elena's Journey**

Elena comes from a bilingual North American country. Her mother is African American and originates from the same country. Her father's background is a mix of the mother's nationality and Swiss. Both German and English are used in the home; however, in the preschool setting, Elena speaks primarily German. She has spent the majority of her life in Switzerland, but visits her home country regularly. Although she has had previous exposure to English, her spoken English at the beginning of the study was limited to one word responses and so conversation was one sided. Always a happy child, she showed great enthusiasm for English learning and began to become vocal very early in the study.

The first lesson was based on learning colours. Early in the lesson I noticed that Elena often mixed up blue and green. I was uncertain why this confusion between colours was taking place. Upon consulting my mother, a Kindergarten and Grade 1 teacher for 35 years, she suggested that I separate the colours so they are not taught in the same lesson. During the following lesson I split the colours and Elena's confusion seemed to resolve itself. In this case, the learning challenge occurred because of my teaching practice, reflecting the importance of self-evaluation, reflection, and seeking advice from more experienced educators. Upon changing the way the concept was taught and modelling the vocabulary, Elena was then able to overcome the initial errors made.

Modelling language was particularly important for Elena as a way to reinforce her use of English. In lesson four, I began by presenting the group with bouquets of flowers. I smelled the flowers and then asked each child to smell them as well. Elena smelled

the flowers in an exaggerated manner. I asked her if she liked the smell and she replied, 'Ja.' I then said 'Yes?' and she repeated, 'Yes.' She then began to adopt the word 'yes' into her vocabulary.

Like other participants, Elena's talent for remembering vocabulary through song was interesting. During an extended singing circle in lesson six I taught the children, 'Ring around the Rosey.' After singing the song only once, Elena could remember the lyrics, 'ring, posey, and pocket'. She then insisted on singing the song multiple times thereafter, and on laughing and giggling at the end of the song when the children were required to fall to the floor. It was during the same lesson that I noticed Elena's difficulty in pronouncing multiple syllable words. From this lesson onwards, I paid particular attention to the rate of speech, slowing my pace of talking so that she was able to hear and repeat larger words correctly.

By lesson ten, not only was Elena using more English vocabulary, but she was attempting to make full sentences. The sentences made were a combination of English and German words. This is to be expected at the beginning of any language learner's progress. This occurrence, known as codeswitching 'is a widespread phenomenon in bilingual speech communities and in conversations with bilingual individuals. 'Just as monolinguals may switch registers, styles or voice during conversation, bilinguals may switch languages'(Jisa, 2000, p. 1364). For Elena, this occurred most often when the word that was needed in a sentence was not known in English but known in German. She would then use the languages interchangeably based on the need for, and availability of, vocabulary she had learned. Again, modelling was important. When she used both German and English in a sentence, I would then repeat the sentence in

English so that she could hear the sentence fully. Most often, she did not repeat the English sentence in full, but hearing language is the first step, while speaking is the second. This generally was not an issue, as my level of German allowed for easy translation of the words she was using. In other language learning contexts this can be frustrating for learners when trying to communicate.

Elena's ability to make cognitive connections should also be noted. The first two lessons used balloons to teach colours in English, a connection made by Elena in lesson twelve. This lesson focused on weather and when presented with a picture of a raindrop and asked what it was, Elena responded, 'balloon.' This was quite a good observation since the colour, shape, and size were the same. I then had to explain the difference between a balloon and a raindrop. This was done through a physical demonstration, by using a balloon and some water. After the explanation was finished:

CBA: What do we use to protect ourselves when it rains?

Elena: Elena umbrella it rains.

By this lesson, Elena had moved beyond word chunking but was not yet at the stage of making complete sentences. Again in the last lesson, Elena used word chunking.

CBA: (Reading *The Smartest Giant in Town*, shows the pictures while reading)

Elena: (Points to a mouse in the picture)

CBA: Mouse.

Elena: Mouse. Mouse crying sad.

CBA: Yes, the mouse is crying because it is sad.

The important point here is that she was able to convey an idea in English without codeswitching. This is not to suggest that she was able to do so all the time, but she

was in the beginning stages of distinguishing German from English and had obtained enough English vocabulary to create meaning without resorting to her knowledge of German.

Elena was perhaps the child who got the most joy out of English learning. She was consistently pleasant and her laugh brought such joy and light-heartedness to the lessons. Her English language progress, no doubt, was a result of her exposure to English, her home environment, as well as the English lessons. She began the study meeting six TESOL outcomes and ended meeting thirteen. Like Gabriel, the need for language modelling was fundamental in the lessons to ensure that correct pronunciation was displayed for high frequency words.

#### **4.9 Summary**

Each child in the above narratives demonstrated a positive attitude to language learning, although the variations of such attitudes fluctuated from lesson to lesson. This is to be expected with children of such a young age. We must never forget that the age of the learners is one of the most important influences on the language learning process. The data presented above was gathered largely through ‘observations,’ field notes, and reflections that were documented throughout the study period. They sought to provide details and examples of how the learning process occurred for each of the participants and the student voice that was encouraged throughout their journeys. The data were then analysed and categories were developed based on the common themes throughout (see Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3). The above journeys and the categorizations of the data helps to explain how each child arrived at the final point of the outcomes met, based on the TESOL criteria employed in the

study. It is to this data and the parental survey data, collected for each child, that we now turn.

## Chapter 5 Discovering Language

A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery.

James Joyce, *Ulysses*

### 5.1 Introduction

The above quote reflects the attitude with which the language acquisition in this study was conducted. Indeed, each child was encouraged to use the English language that he/she had acquired in whatever way he/she wished to convey his/her ideas. Errors in grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary were made in each lesson, and that was, I believe, one factor that led to the progression of language acquisition that occurred. ‘Language constantly gets away from us. It is like a turbulent stream that we can swim in but not divert’ (Smith, 1995, p. 588). Each child was encouraged to explore language and make mistakes, experimenting with English vocabulary and word chunking.

In accordance with the constructivist paradigm, the following chapter offers a general geographic and linguistic background of the participant group in an effort to contextualize the learning processes that occurred. This data set was gathered through a survey distributed to parents at the beginning of the study. Without some knowledge of a person’s history or where they come from and what languages they speak, a just education cannot be achieved and an accurate description of English development cannot be made. To provide some means by which to compare my results with the wider EAL community, a discussion of the resulting English acquisition that took place was recorded using the TESOL criteria and outcomes for preschool aged English learners (Gottlieb et al., 2006, pp. 48-57).

Error transfers that are specific for particular languages will also be addressed briefly. Finally, demonstrations of English used outside the classroom, in the home and in social situations, are discussed, based on the final survey given to parents.

## **5.2 Participant Backgrounds**

Establishing the social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of each of the participants serves an important function in the study. First, constructivism uses data to contextualize how someone's background impacts the learning process. Secondly, information about each student provides the educator with the tools to accommodate individual needs and provide a customized education. A young learner who does not share a common language with his\her teacher is not able to communicate his\her needs or share very important parts of him\herself. In this case, the parents helped to provide me with the tools to put social justice into practice. The information seeks to identify the role of the teacher and student within the process and what capabilities each child possesses. Instead of beginning the lessons with no knowledge of the background or needs of the child, I was able to create a tailored experience from the first lesson based on the linguistic background information provided. This is especially important because educators have only a limited amount of time with the child. Not gathering background information may lead to lost time in figuring out what the child needs when this information could have been provided beforehand by parents\carers. Depending on the background of a student, the needs may vary greatly and the role of the teacher may change.

The need for recognizing differences in students is also addressed in social justice theory in education to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to participate

meaningfully in their education (Fraser, 2007). Identifying differences allows for participation of each student while providing knowledge of their origin and identifying challenges that may present themselves in the learning process. Maria Montessori too, sought to examine the social justice question by examining the intimate or home life of the students and their families (Montessori, 2006, p. 46). This study sought to gain insights into the home and social lives of the students through a survey that was distributed to parents at the beginning of the study. Accommodations were then made for each child when needed.

### 5.2.1 Survey One

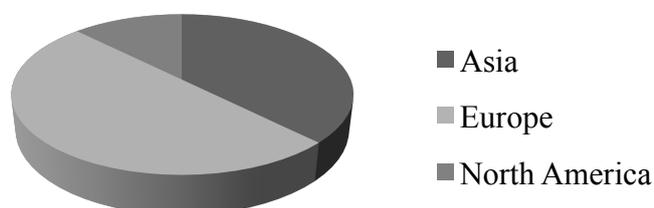
The first survey was distributed to parents with a request that they fill them out and return them. Of the nine surveys distributed, only eight were returned. Although some of the information for the remaining child is known, only the data collected from the returned surveys are included in the following background information. This was done, in large part, to prevent any false information from being provided, as assumptions about language and origin of the child and parents could falsify the data set. Of the eight children whose parent's filled out the first survey, three children (Leonie, Levin, and Gabriel) originate from Asia (see Figure 5.1). The parents of the three children, both mothers and fathers, also originate from Asia (see Figure 5.2). Four of the children originate from Europe (Leandro, Lara, Anna, and Luca) (see Figure 5.1), two of whom were born in Switzerland (Lara and Anna). The parents of Leandro originate from Asia. Lara and Anna's mother originates from Asia and their father from a non-English speaking European country. Luca's parents also originate from a non-English speaking European country (see Figure 5.2). Finally, Elena is

from an officially bilingual North American country (see Figure 5.1). Her mother is North American and her father is from a non-English speaking European country.

Of the children in the study, Elena and Levin have English as one of their first languages. Elena has two additional languages and Levin has four. Anna, Lara, and Leonie have German as a first language, with Leonie also having one other language, while Anna and Lara have two additional mother tongues. Gabriel, Luca, and Leandro have a mother tongue that is neither English nor German, although Leandro can now speak German fluently. Only Elena's parents have English as their mother tongue, although Luca, Levin, and Gabriel's parents can speak English, but are not native speakers. The number of languages that each of the children are exposed to varies. The number of languages for each child is as follows: Leandro – two, Lara – three, Anna – three, Leonie – two, Levin – five, Elena – three, Gabriel – two, Luca – one (although Luca has only recently moved into an alternative linguistic setting and is now learning German and English). There are two sets of parents who have no proficiency in German, but most other parents have some level of proficiency ranging from A2- native speaker proficiency.

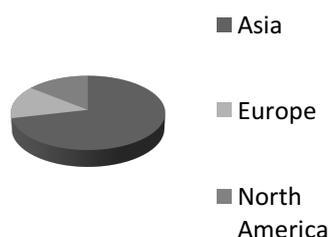
Of the participants, Elena, Levin, and Gabriel have had some exposure to English, although Elena's exposure is less than that of Levin and Gabriel. For example, her comprehension is quite good but she speaks more fluently in German than in English. This is due, in part, because she was an infant when she arrived in Switzerland. Levin was slightly older when he arrived and was primarily in a home environment until this past year when he entered a German speaking preschool. Gabriel, however, only

arrived in Switzerland one year ago and is younger than Levin. He can speak German and English equally, although he is proficient in neither.



**Figure 5.1 Continent of Origin of Participants**

### Mothers



### Fathers



**Figure 5.2 Continent of Origin of Parents**

### 5.3 TESOL Checklist

The data collected from the TESOL checklists seeks to examine if the Montessori Method is effective in achieving language learning in diverse groups. The overall findings in this study suggest a positive outcome. The backgrounds described in the previous section highlight the growing diversity found in preschools. The checklists that were recorded for each child indicate that in a four-month period, language learning occurred for each participant, regardless of their social, cultural, or linguistic background. There should be a cautious note made here that such findings will not

necessarily be met in every EAL preschool group. Certainly, here the findings do suggest that this educational approach was successful in English learning.

### 5.3.1 TESOL Standards

Of the five standards outlined for preschool aged children in TESOL Proficiency Standards (Gottlieb et al., 2006), only two standards, ‘English language learners **communicate** for SOCIAL, INTERCULTURAL, and INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES within the school setting [and] English language learners **communicate** information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the area of LANGUAGE ARTS’ (p. 48-51) were used for this study. These standards were chosen for their focus on oral communication and comprehension of spoken English. Within each of these standards there are four categories, ‘listening, speaking, reading [and] writing’ (Gottlieb et al., 2006, pp. 48-51). Each category then consists of five levels, from one (beginner) to five (advanced). Because of the age of the participants and the varying level of prior English exposure, only levels one through three were used. Each child had his/her own checklist and the checks were assigned as the standards were met. Monthly time frames were provided from month one - month four. In total, there were 24 standards included in the checklist (see Appendix Four for specific outcomes met for each child).

### 5.3.2 TESOL Standards Met

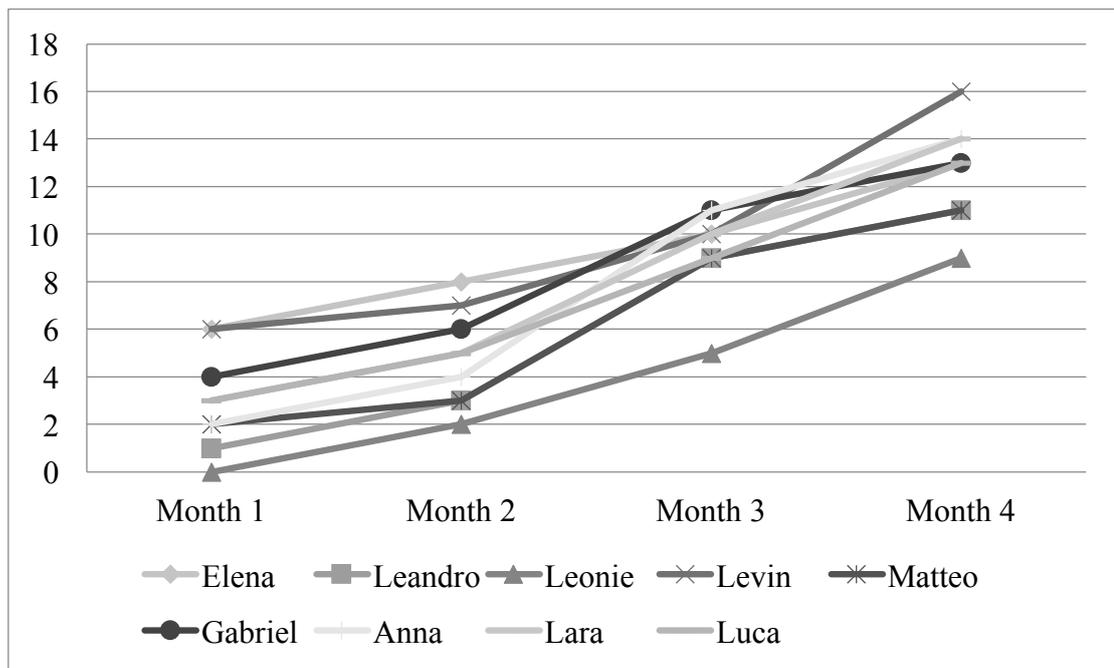
Each child began the study meeting a variety of TESOL standards.

Name	Number of Standards Met
Leonie	0
Leandro	1
Matteo	2
Anna	2
Luca	3
Lara	3
Gabriel	4
Levin	6
Elena	6

**Table 5.1 Month One TESOL Standards Met**

The standards reached in the second month increased by two for Leonie, Leandro, Anna, Luca, Lara, Gabriel, and Elena. Matteo and Levin met one additional standard in the second month. It is interesting that during the course of the third month, the standards met by the children were on a similar level. English use and comprehension, for example, was the same between Lara and Levin, even though Lara began the study meeting three of the standards, while Levin began meeting six standards. By month three, both had met ten standards. The average standards met at this time was between nine and eleven. The exception was with Leonie, who was in her silent period during this time. Even though she was not communicating orally in English, she was able to meet five standards because her comprehension was improving. Then, during the fourth month of the study, again the standards met had a larger gap between some children than others. Six of the children ended the study meeting between thirteen and sixteen of the standards. Matteo ended the study meeting eleven standards, primarily because of his time out of school. Leandro ended with eleven standards met and was no longer in a silent period and Leonie finished the study meeting nine standards and was also no longer in a silent period (See Figure 5.3). Leandro's silent period ended

formally during week three, but his speech was limited to ‘please’ and ‘thank you,’ while Leonie’s ended formally at week nine. Leandro did not vocalize English to express his wishes until week ten and Leonie did not extend her English beyond ‘Carla’ and ‘please’ until week twelve.



**Figure 5.3 TESOL Outcomes Met**

The data collected from the checklists were not compared to data sets of ‘normal’ English development because what is considered ‘normal’ differs with each L1 and for each age. It is not conducive to socially just EAL education to suggest that one child’s English development is ‘abnormal’ compared to another child’s. It may be the case that the first child’s L1 has substantially different phonemes than another child’s L1, who may not experience the same challenges in English learning.

#### **5.4 Error Transfers between Languages**

This is not to imply that learning English occurs at the same or a similar rate for each child, indeed there are many differences between linguistic groups that may result in difficulties for some first languages that are not present in other language groups. Transfer effects between languages are a discipline in their own right and will only be addressed briefly here. Error transfers occur when ‘language learners attempt to refer to their first language to bridge the gap of the deficiencies of their knowledge of the target language, or they assume that the target language functions like the native one’ (Rabadi, 2015, p. 24). Some examples of error transfer between language groups represented in this study were identified to accommodate the learners and help understand potential challenges. For instance, native speakers of Arabic have been found to ‘transfer their prosodic strategy of vowel epenthesis in elicited imitation or repetition’ (Rajaa, May 2012, p. 54), meaning that even when repeating English words, they tend to add vowel phonemes into English words where none exist. For Leonie such an issue did not present itself, but I paid particular attention to my pronunciation and speed of speech because I was aware that she might have this issue. Gabriel did have this error transfer, even though he is not a native Arabic speaker, so my awareness of potential error transfers and strategies were helpful even when the L1 error transfers did not match the child’s L1.

Native speakers of Hindi and Urdu have ‘a very broad range of verbs that causativize, generally with accompanying morphological changes’ (Helms-Park, 2001, p. 75), whereas in English this may not always be so. This can result in English learners whose L1 is Hindi or Urdu to mix the word order when using English causal verbs. Word order was an issue for most of the children and was not specific to native Hindi

or Urdu speakers in this study. Again, because I knew that this could be a potential problem I was able to address this error transfer to the wider group of participants.

For German learners of English ‘homophones can cause a problem’ (Rabadi, 2015, p. 25), even for older language learners. German learners may also have difficulty with the pitch range that is present in English, as ‘pitch ranges are not evenly distributed over the whole IP [intonational phrases]’ (Mennen, Schaeffler, & Dickie, 2014, p. 326). At the beginning of the language journeys I noticed that the children who were fluent in German used fewer pitch ranges when speaking. I did not address this error transfer because the children were just beginning their language learning and pitch does not generally affect the meaning being conveyed while speaking. It does not impact the level of communication occurring, but has a more aesthetic value and was viewed as a minor error transfer. When considering the progress of the learners in this study, it is important to consider the difficulties that may be present when learning English as a L2.

#### 5.4.1 Error Transfer Strategies

Communication strategies are extremely important and were employed throughout the study to ensure that the students’ L1 error transfers were minimized. Some of the strategies used included:

Topic avoidance - avoiding topic areas or concepts which pose linguistic difficulties, Circumlocution - Describing or exemplifying the target object or action (e.g., the thing you open doors with for describing keys), Approximation - using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of target lexical items as closely as possible

(e.g., ship for describing sail boat), Use of non-linguistic means - mime, gestures, facial expressions (Ayuno Putri, January 2013, pp. 130-131).

The communication strategies described above were all employed during the course of the study. There are many strategies that are not discussed here, but these appeared to be the most appropriate for the age of the children. Employing such communication strategies does not solve error transfer in language learning but it does seek to minimize L1 specific issues that are sometimes present.

Maria Montessori did not address error transfers between languages in her writings because her teaching ethic assumed a homogeneous student group. She did promote the use of gymnastics to develop the mouth muscles needed to form sounds in a language (Montessori, 2006, p. 147). Along with these exercises, she instructs the teacher to show the student ‘clearly the movements which she herself makes when pronouncing the syllable’ (Montessori, 2006, p. 148). This type of word modelling was used throughout the study. For Gabriel, especially, slowly pronouncing each syllable and having him watch how my mouth moved with each sound helped improve his pronunciation.

## **5.5 Social and Home Demonstrations of English**

### **5.5.1 Survey Two**

Of the second survey that was distributed to parents, eight were completed and returned. The results were quite interesting and established that there were some differences of English usage at home and at school (see Figure 5.4). The first question, ‘Does your child use English words while at home?’ received seven positive

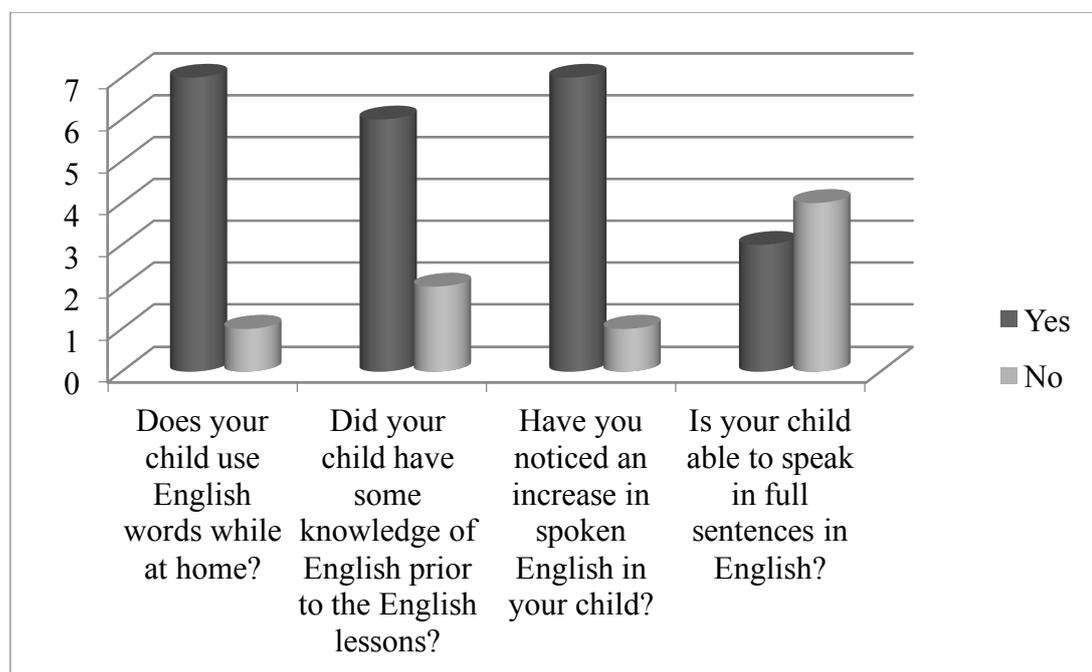
responses and one negative. While in the home environment, one child did not demonstrate his\her English knowledge but did so while in the school environment. This, in all likelihood, had to do with the home environment, in which neither parent is fluent in English, with German and the parents' native language being spoken most often.

When asked 'Did your child have some knowledge of English prior to the English lessons?' six parents responded 'yes' and three 'no.' This result does not coincide with the findings in the study, as Elena, Levin, and Gabriel were the only children at the beginning of the study who had English comprehension and spoke, albeit minimally. This result may have occurred because of the vagueness of the question; therefore, if a child knew one or two words in English the parent answered yes to the question, which does not accurately reflect the language reality of that child.

The third question, 'Have you noticed an increase in spoken English in your child?' is particularly important. Seven of the parents could identify an increase in English usage in their child. This may have become noticeable in the child's behaviour at home, as well as an observation of my interaction with the children, speaking to them in English and them replying when parents were present. Certainly for the one negative response, the child's shyness may have played a role in his\her demonstrations, or lack thereof, of English. Overall, the language development was noticeable to parents.

The final yes/no response question asked 'Is your child able to speak in full sentences in English?' This response was split, with three positive responses and four negative.

Luca’s parents, for instance, specified that he is able to make sentences that are basic, whereas Gabriel and Levin’s parents both answered ‘yes.’ Of the four parents who answered ‘no,’ some explanation must be given. Elena’s parents provided a negative response to this question; however, her ability to make chunks of words to create meaning was superb. In this case, ‘learners move from single words to *chunks* or fixed phrases then to a more productive use of form’ (Holme, 2014, p. 611). Lara and Anna, although not able to form complete sentences either, were able to give more than single word responses and could convey ideas using word chunks. Leandro and Leonie experienced a silent period that likely impacted their ability to make word chunks. Both used single words to answer a question or to express themselves. All of the children were able to communicate their ideas and wishes and used single words, word chunking, and/or full sentences to convey their ideas.



**Figure 5.4 Language Development of English at Home**

Finally, when asked for further comments about the language development of their child\children, some parents gave additional information that was quite helpful.

Leandro's parents stated that they were confident that Leandro would begin speaking English soon, while Leonie's parents specified the words that she had adopted into her everyday speech, such as 'yes, no, and thank you.' Luca's parents stated that he cannot 'differentiate between English and German' and that his 'German is now better than English.' This comment is not surprising, since for the majority of the time, Luca is in a German speaking environment. Gabriel's mother commented that he 'now tries to frame sentences and could understand long sentences.' This is also an important point. Even though a child may have had prior exposure to English, his\her comprehension and speaking ability may also improve with English lessons, particularly if they live in a non-English speaking environment.

## **5.6 Summary**

Although generalizations cannot be made to the wider EAL preschool community, it is encouraging that not only did the TESOL criteria indicate increased English language acquisition, but that parents were able to identify evidence of learning outside of the classroom and school environment. What can be concluded from an exploration of this data is that the Montessori Method appears to be a versatile pedagogy that may be able to provide an alternative EAL education that is socially just to a diverse group of students. Specifically answering the primary research question, the Montessori Method can be used to promote social justice in preschool EAL education, but should be used in conjunction with current EAL teaching methods. Although the oral language skills of the children may not have been fully developed in English during the course of the study, their increased comprehension was evident. Even when the language development of the children is secondary to the social justice of the education being provided, the data reflects positive results. The

concepts of how to integrate social justice with language teaching and learning and its role within the study will be explored in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 6 ‘Doing’ Social Justice in EAL Education**

‘When we, as educators, allow our pedagogy to be radically changed by our recognition of a multicultural world, we can give students the education they desire and deserve.’

(Hooks, 1994, p. 44)

### **6.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 1, the question posed for the research enquired how the Montessori approach can be used to promote social justice to preschool EAL learners. Throughout the research it became apparent that Montessori’s ideas surrounding justice for the child occurred largely through loving and respecting the child. Social justice comes about in education through listening, observing, and being attentive to the needs of the child. Through this practice, social justice became intertwined with language learning. This chapter draws together the Montessori approach with social justice theory. The Montessori approach generally can be applied to EAL learning, keeping in mind that there are gaps in her approach because she did not incorporate second language learning. The general principles of ‘observation,’ attentiveness, and listening makes her approach versatile. When the language of the child and the educator are not the same, these principles become difficult.

Teacher-student roles should be based on respect, with the voice of the child being of primary importance. There should be observations made about learning styles and how each child learns most effectively. Also, the pace of learning and assessment should be considered through the social justice lens. Educators must have the help and support of the home if this process of listening is going to be successful. Understanding the home environment of the child is extremely important. A positive relationship between teacher and the home should be developed to convey

information, especially when the child is unable to communicate his\her own background, life experience, and educational needs. Knowledge of the home environment helps to provide context for each child, thus giving the educator the tools to ‘listen.’ Creating a learning space that fosters student voice will allow differences in students to become evident.

Before beginning to discuss the findings of this study, there should be a cautious note added. Participation in the institution of education should be encouraged as part of social justice in education. This does not mean that participation should be forced on learners. Depending on the personality of the learner, participation may take time and a lack of participation should be respected equally with those who do participate. John Dewey (2008) stresses ‘the need of free development of individuality in all its variety’ (p. 83). This means that each learner may begin the learning process at different stages and may progress at different rates. Each learner must be respected and valued for his\her individuality regardless of the point from which they begin their education. In this study, that would mean that Leonie, who did not verbally participate in some lessons, was no less valued than Lara, who was quite vocal from the first instance.

## **6.2 The Role of Teacher and Student**

Certainly, at the beginning of the study, because of language barriers, the activities were teacher-directed. Within the first few weeks some children were able to make suggestions about what they wanted to do and how they would like to learn English. After the third lesson, the lessons became more student-centred. At the end of each lesson I made an effort to ask the children what interested them, encouraging them in developing their own voice as students. I then proceeded to develop a Montessori

English lesson based around the children's interests. The adaptation of lessons was a constant process and one that was conducted prior to lessons and throughout the lessons when the need arose. The following themes (learner voice, experiential learning, and learning differences) were identified as being of primary importance when creating a socially just EAL environment.

### 6.2.1 Giving Learners a Voice

Learner voice is perhaps one of the most important foundations for creating a socially just educational experience. Teaching EAL to very young children complicates the process of first providing the linguistic skills to allow learners to have a voice, and second to actively use that voice in helping to shape the education being provided. 'The conquest of language is a laborious conquest towards a greater independence, and it ends in the freedom of language' (Montessori, 2007, p. 109). This type of pedagogy is difficult to establish when children have not developed the language skills needed to express themselves. 'Help, yes and no' were words taught early in the study so children who did not experience a silent period could convey their wishes or like/dislike of something. But voice must be viewed as being more than an auditory expression. It must include a more detailed 'observation' of the nonverbal kind. In this way, even when language ability is lacking, the voice of the child can be heard loud and clear by the educator.

The beginning of the study was based mainly on activities that I chose and implemented using the Montessori Method. The first lesson, for instance, revolved around learning colours with balloons. I was not able to ask beforehand if they wanted to learn with balloons. The participants did not have the vocabulary to know what a

balloon was. I guessed that most children like balloons so it would be something of interest to these children as well. The kinaesthetic and tactile learning in this first lesson was based on my previous knowledge of how the children learn best. In the first lesson they clearly demonstrated that they enjoyed balloons and so I continued with the 'balloon learning' in lesson two. I did not ask whether or not they wanted to continue but the 'observations' made in the first lesson indicated that they enjoyed this activity.

By the third lesson, the level of comprehension of the participants was such that I could suggest ideas for the following lesson and the children could then indicate with a 'yes' or 'no' whether they liked the idea or not. For Leonie and Leandro, head movements were encouraged to convey their wishes during their silent period. For example, at the end of lesson three I asked if the children would like to go outside for the next lesson or if they wanted to do some baking. The children decided that they wanted to go outside. I asked them where they wanted to go and several of the children said 'park.' I then developed a lesson that incorporated colour review and nature vocabulary (flower, tree, leaf, etc.). Leonie did not verbally respond but jumped up and down when the other children said 'park.' I knew that collecting flowers would be popular with the children because on a previous occasion while out on a walk they collected flowers on their own. This lesson included listening to what the children wanted (going to the park) and observing things they like and find interesting (picking flowers).

Teaching the word 'help' in particular, was strategic. It allowed each of the children to communicate need and it also gave them a tool with which they could voice

displeasure with something or someone, thus minimizing frustration. It helped to promote regulating emotions, an important developmental milestone regardless of language. It was then that the class dynamics changed where ‘the student and teacher are equals’ (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2008, p. 88). It was also during this time that I began to take on the role of ‘leader of group activities’ (Dewey, 1997, p. 59) as opposed to the authority in the classroom.

Student voice is not solely about conveying wants and needs. It is also a means by which children can communicate how they learn best and what topics are of interest to them. Once children have an educator who is willing to engage them in decision making, they become partners in the educational process. Although not specifically developed for educational participation, Arnstein’s ‘Ladder of Citizen Participation’ (1969) is quite useful in this context. Partnership, when applied to education, allows children to negotiate with educators, paving the way for children to gain further control and power in their education. Under the partnership rung of the ladder, ‘citizens [or in this case students,] have some genuine bargaining influence over the outcome of the plan’ (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 221-222). There has been no case that I have known where children are not interested in learning. The case is often that the *way* of learning is unsatisfactory. It is then the responsibility of the educator to listen to the child when such information is being conveyed, as it almost certainly will be in some form, whether vocally or otherwise. It should be noted that partnership with children in education is not the end goal. There are further levels of participation; however, in this instance, the age and ability of the children should determine the level of partnership that is employed.

### 6.2.2 Experiential Learning in Montessori's Method

At the root of the Montessori Method is experiential learning that is defined as 'learning by doing.' This type of learning allows the pupil to learn through practical experience rather than through formal instruction by the teacher' ("Experiential Learning,"). Maria Montessori stresses the need for experiential learning throughout her writings, stating that 'the intelligence of the child will reach a certain level without the use of the hand; with the hands it reaches a still higher level, and the child who has his hands has a stronger character' (Montessori, 2007, p. 125). The stress therefore, is placed on how 'the children learn to *appreciate* the objects and constructions which surround them' (Montessori, 2006, p. 166). Again we must return to the consideration of the age of each child. A child who is 2 years old will obviously not be expected to complete any work or manipulate structures in the same way as a 4-year-old. Although all of the children in this case were between the ages of 2 and 4 years, the physical abilities possessed by the children of different ages was noticeable and accommodations were made to suit each. The primary focus was not that each child could learn by 'doing' the same thing, but that they each learned by doing in whatever way they were able.

Experiential learning was at the forefront of thought in the planning and implementation of lessons. This was met with some difficulty throughout the project. Due to poor weather, most of the lessons, although still focusing on experiential learning, had to occur indoors. Despite these limitations, it was of the utmost importance that each child was able to learn using his\her hands and physical

movement. A short summary of each of the fourteen lessons will serve to provide a comprehensive idea of the type of experiential learning that took place.

Lesson One – Singing circle/ Learning colours with balloons/ Verb practice activity/ Singing circle

Lesson Two – Singing circle/ Expanding colour learning with new balloons/ Hand measuring activity/ Singing circle

Lesson Three – Singing circle/ Matching colour activity/ Matching colours with food/ Singing circle

Lesson Four – Singing circle/ Flower activity/ Nature walk/ Singing circle

Lesson Five – Singing circle/ Flower art activity/ Singing circle

Lesson Six – Singing circle/ Verb practice activity/ Singing circle

Lesson Seven – Singing circle/ Calendar/ Station activities/ Singing circle

Lesson Eight – Singing circle/ Making cookies/ Singing circle

Lesson Nine – Singing circle/ Calendar/ Reading time/ Station activities/ Singing circle

Lesson Ten – Singing circle/ Diwali lantern activity/ Singing circle

Lesson Eleven – Singing circle/ Calendar/ Christmas market activity/ Singing circle

Lesson Twelve – Singing circle/ Weather activity/ Singing circle

Lesson Thirteen – Singing circle/ Occupation drama (pilot, bus driver, teacher)/ Singing circle

Lesson Fourteen – Singing circle/ Calendar/ Reading time/ Conversation practice/ Singing circle

Each of the activities took advantage of the energy and the natural tendency for children to move, to create, and to explore. Of course, the amount of time spent on each activity was limited. It is unrealistic to expect a child to concentrate on one activity for 30-40 minutes. For this reason, I chose to include two to three activities for each lesson period. If a child expressed interest in a particular activity, he\she was then given the option to continue with that activity; however, most commonly, it was necessary to keep each activity to a maximum of fifteen minutes.

### 6.2.3 Multiple Intelligences and Learning Differences

Just as all children have their own unique background, home environment, and culture, so too, they each have their own intelligences, capabilities, and learning differences. Gardner (2006) identifies eight intelligences in his multiple intelligences theory: musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist (p. 8-19). Existential intelligence is described as being a 'candidate intelligence' (Gardner, 2006, p. 21) and so was not included in the main list of intelligences. Differences in learning will generally fall into one of four categories: 'visual (learning by seeing), auditory (learning by hearing), tactile (learning through touching) and kinesthetic (learning through doing)'("Children's Learning Styles,"). By combining these categories in every activity, or as much as possible, the chances of the learners' success increases. Also, the chances of meeting every child's learning style is more likely than simply relying on one or two of the mentioned learning categories.

*Learning categories applied.*

With a very young learner base, the visual learning style was quite limited. The children were given the opportunity to see English words; for example, the colours learned using balloons had the English word written on each. When learning weather elements, the vocabulary was written on each picture for rain, snow, cloud, etc. Because the children were not at a reading and writing stage of development, the amount of visual learning with regards to reading was limited. I did incorporate visual learning in other ways. When the children learned ‘balloon,’ they were presented with balloons. They could see them (visual), they heard me repeating the noun multiple times (auditory), and they were given an opportunity to play with them (tactile and kinaesthetic). Another example of incorporating all learning differences into a lesson, occurred in lessons four and five, seeing flowers and plants of different colours (visual), hearing the names of the flowers and their corresponding colours (auditory), being able to smell and feel the plants (tactile), and finally, making an art project with the flowers collected in lesson five (kinaesthetic).

Identifying learning differences was necessary to ensure that English learning was accessible for each child. It was a process, rather than a single event. For instance, it was only after the first few lessons that I was able to identify the singing circle as an effective means by which some of the children, especially Gabriel, could learn English vocabulary quickly. Other children, like Lara and Elena, were able to learn vocabulary quickly through oral communication and so the level of English spoken to these children was heightened. Levin learned through teaching peers and was given this opportunity sporadically throughout the study. Other participants, Matteo in

particular, learned best through physical activity. Once the preferred way of learning of each child had been identified, I tried to incorporate as many of these styles into each lesson as possible. Using multiple methods and learning categories in education promotes ‘reflective/deep processing (with the mastery goal of deep understanding and long-term retention)’ (Komarraju, Karau, Schmeck, & Avdic, 2011, p. 472), rather than shallow processing, that focuses on learning with assessment performance as its primary concern.

### **6.3 Pace and Assessment of Learning**

The pace of learning was determined solely by each child. Leonie and Leandro did not choose a fast-paced learning environment as was chosen by Lara and Elena. That was perfectly acceptable and there was no effort made to quicken their pace. Stress and frustration are a normal part of language learning and communication, but efforts to teach small children should seek to minimize these common feelings of language learners. Some children learned quickly while others needed more time. All children’s learning paces were respected and lessons were conducted accordingly. Once again, the pace of learning was approached with respect for the child and how he/she learns best. I did make a point, throughout the lessons, to review material and vocabulary with all of the children. This allowed for faster learners to practise vocabulary and those who had a slower pace of learning were able to learn the vocabulary multiple times and use a variety of methods to do so. When applying social justice to the actual lessons, it revolved around respect of the individual, how they learned, the pace at which learning occurred, what their needs were, and how best to fulfil those needs.

Regardless of the pace with which each of the students chose to learn English during the lessons, the assessment process was the same for each. Summative assessment was deemed from the start as being inappropriate, firstly because of the age of the children and secondly, because the socially just environment that was created placed language acquisition over language learning and rote memorization. Formative assessment was chosen and occurred in each lesson throughout the study. Largely, the checklists were used to establish the pace of learning outcomes. The field notes and ‘observations’ were used to identify learner needs. The formative assessment that took place was based on the Montessori ideal of assessment through ‘observation.’

#### **6.4 Home-School Relationship**

Creating a supportive and open relationship between researcher and parents was sought from the outset of this study. From the beginning, parents were made aware that I would make myself available to them whenever the need or desire arose. Most often, informal conversations took place regularly, during drop off or pick up times. These informal conversations provided further insight into the lives of the children and the culture from which they come. My relationships with the parents stemmed from my travels and where I have lived. For example, I lived for nine months in the home country of Levin and Gabriel. When I met their parents our commonalities helped to develop an open relationship. I have also spent large amounts of time in the home country of Lara and Anna’s mother and Leandro’s parents. I have family in this country so it served as a way to start conversations and open up dialogue. The development of these relationships led to further insights about the children’s interests, needs, and home life. It is important for teachers to find a commonality with parents\carers. It may be a hobby that is shared or a common activity. The information

that can be gained from connections with parents\carers increases the knowledge of the teacher when individualizing lessons.

Through conversations with Levin's mother, I recognized the importance of parental expectations to her. Luca's parents also held education in high regard. For example, when asked if they had a good weekend, they would talk about going to museums and seeing exhibits. These conversations, although informal, gave me a sense of the home environment. The expectations of the children in the home were brought to the forefront. It is important that educators understand the home culture of each child, but it is equally important I believe, to understand the expectations that are being placed on each child, not to try and change the expectations but to try and understand the life of the child. The relationship between teacher and the home can be strengthened or weakened based on the perception of the parents that the teacher has. It is important for the teacher to evaluate his/her perception of the parents to ensure that communication remains open and a relationship of respect is developed. Once understanding has been achieved, the educator can then proceed to incorporate principles of social justice to education in an individualized way.

As I was given glimpses of the lives of the children I felt that my own thoughts and judgements of the parents had to be evaluated. How teachers perceive parents, their expectations, and involvement, whether high or low, plays an important role in the education that children receive. 'The issue is not simply one of parent involvement versus noninvolvement. Rather, the issue is the quality of the involvement' (Walde & Baker, 1990, p. 319). This subject is sensitive because it examines the judgments made by teachers that are directed towards parents and may take on a positive or

negative air. Why we perceive some parents as ‘good’ and others as ‘bad’ must be reflected upon by teachers. Wood & Warin (2014) suggest that in their research, ‘a majority [of school staff] also chose to focus on the perceived individual deficiencies of parents without acknowledging the many structural constraints, like poverty, that make family life and parenting difficult’ (p. 948). As with any researcher, one’s own biases must be identified in an attempt to approach a parent with the most objective attitude. The relationship between teachers and parents is important in the educational process of any child, and cooperation and mutual respect must be demonstrated by both parties. It is only then that the child will be able to benefit from the joint school-home environment.

Throughout the fourteen-week period, I was able to gain some insight into the home environments of the children through interactions and informal conversations with parents. Insights included what interests the children had, the relationships between siblings, and how families spent time together. I used these insights to plan lessons that the children were likely to enjoy and engage with. I also found that the parents responded well to the English lessons because I took into account different interests of the children and incorporated some cultural activities as well. The more the parents saw what I was doing with the children and the more I spoke with them and developed a positive relationship with them, the more they were willing to share their lives with me.

## **6.5 Summary**

Throughout the course of the study, certain themes were identified that proved to be important in how socially just education is ‘done.’ How social justice is implemented

is rooted largely in the role of teacher and student and how these roles are defined in the classroom. Giving learners a voice, even at a young age, does much to ensure social justice in educational practice. Listening to the wants and needs of students is important if learner voice is to be valued in the classroom. Recognizing the learning differences of each child and making the necessary adaptations is also a fundamental practice. Experiential learning was encouraged by Montessori and was found to be most effective, incorporating both tactile and kinaesthetic styles within a single educational model. The pace with which learning occurs should be set by the child since it reduces stress and makes for a comfortable environment. Assessment, therefore, should be formative in nature and should be used only for the benefit of the learner, not as a means of creating competition in learning. Establishing a respectful and open relationship with parents was the most basic principle. The teacher's perception of parents must be respectful and consider multiple aspects of their lives (culture, language, socioeconomic status, etc.). Judgment is a human tendency, but if social justice is to be achieved, its principles must also be extended to the parents\carers of children. Promoting social justice in EAL education using Montessori Method as a pedagogy demands that educators 'listen' to students and also that the social justice framework extend to the relationship between teacher and parent. In this way, social justice is being applied to the individual student, their parents\carers, and the larger community. The framework employed here can be applied quite easily to different cultural, social, and linguistic groups.

## **Chapter 7 Concluding Thoughts**

What kind of idea are you? Are you the kind that compromises, does deals, accomodates itself to society, aims to find a niche, to survive; or are you the cussed, bloody-minded, ramrod-backed type of damnfool notion that would rather break than sway with the breeze? – The kind that will almost certainly, ninety-nine times out of hundred, be smashed to bits; but, the hundredth time, will change the world.

(Rushdie, 1989, p. 354)

### **7.1 Purpose and Research Questions**

My contribution to knowledge is to apply the principles of social justice to young EAL learners by employing the Montessori Method. If social justice is to be viewed in terms of students' participation in education, then it is only logical that the voice of students play a prominent role in the educational approach being employed. The purpose of this study was to create lessons in English that would teach English effectively, giving children a voice and autonomy in their education. The success of the study can be judged on the research questions and the discoveries that have been made.

#### **How can the Montessori Method be used to promote social justice in preschool EAL education?**

The vocabulary lessons outlined by Montessori (2006, pp. 177-178) can apply to any language, including L2, L3, etc. English. Her stress on 'observing' the child and being attentive to each child's needs promotes student voice in young leaners. The focus placed on student autonomy meets the participation requirement of social justice as defined by Fraser (2007).

(a.) How far is it possible to employ the Montessori approach for multilingual EAL children in the first plane of development (0-6 years of age)?

The Montessori approach can be used to teach basic vocabulary, but EAL teaching techniques must be employed jointly. This helps to fill the gap in Montessori's approach due largely to the homogeneous student groups Montessori taught.

(b) How far\to what extent is the Montessori Method versatile enough to respond to social, cultural, and linguistic differences?

Montessori's approach is versatile because of the focus she places on respecting the child and promoting justice in education. It is the responsibility of the educator to experiment with education in a respectful way with the students. Social justice to Montessori revolved around loving the child (Montessori, 2007, p. 231). Part of loving the child is loving and respecting the cultures and societies that make up the fibre of that child.

## **7.2 Language Journeys**

Language learning is a process, and as such cannot have a definite beginning and end point. The intention for this thesis was to give a glimpse into the English learning of a group of young children that had, as its foundation, social justice. As described in Chapter 2, the literature that has been conducted in ECE does not often address the education of EAL children. EAL children tend to be a forgotten group in EAL and ECE research. Likewise, research around social justice and student voice is primarily focused on older student groups (see Chapter 2). There are many potential reasons for this. Young children's lack of economic, political, and social power does not mean that they do not have the power to voice their desires and needs in education. What is needed is someone to listen to and respect the voices that can already be heard. This does not mean that early childhood teachers do not listen presently, but that the concept of 'listening' must be redefined and expanded. 'Listening' must be brought to

the forefront of the ECE pedagogy. This piece of action research sought to bridge the gap between EAL, ECE research, social justice, and student voice discourses. Through the language journeys presented here, it can be concluded that language outcomes can be met while still having social justice as the foundation of education. Although not a perfect process, it is the beginning of a much larger conversation that needs to occur between educators and researchers.

The nature of these language journeys means that there are questions that remain and further research that must be conducted. When I began my research I hoped I would be able to take my passion for languages and social justice and apply them to a new educational setting, where, up until this point, there had been little research conducted. I had hoped that my research would give new ideas to educational practitioners that could help close the gap between theory in education and educational practice. From my own experience, sometimes research and practice in education feel worlds apart, so disconnected with one another that educators are left feeling misunderstood and unequipped. They are often given unrealistically high expectations for the performance of their students and experience their own form of social injustice in their professional life. My goal was to provide a means of ‘doing’ social justice in language education that respected the children as valued contributors to their educational experience, while making education accessible to educators. There were difficulties in achieving this ideal, primarily because of language differences between myself and the participants at the beginning of the study. What I came to realize though, is that although children are considered powerless in the education they receive, they are capable of expressing themselves despite language barriers and are capable of being

active participants in their education. All they need is a teacher who is willing to 'listen.'

Listening in its most primitive form involves auditory functions, but in the research being carried out here it involved listening to words, observing each child, and making an effort to understand them without the use of spoken words. The beginning of the study relied primarily on my skills as an observer to determine the wellbeing of each participant. This included looking for facial cues of distress or discomfort and then making adjustments where necessary. Eventually, with the improvement in vocabulary, the children were each able to convey their feelings verbally. From this point on the wellbeing of each child was determined simply by asking how they felt.

Giving children multiple means by which to express themselves and having the will to observe that communication, then respecting the communication being expressed, is social justice. The most important requirement for social justice to occur is participation. Providing an opportunity for participation is very good, but if one does not possess the tools or means to participate, the opportunity is lost. What I sought to do was to provide an open environment through attentiveness and listening within an education framework and then provide the children with the means to participate (vocabulary, feeling comfortable to use nonverbal communication, etc.). That, according to Fraser (2007) is a more complete idea of social justice than providing the opportunity and ending the social responsibility there. A child, in such an environment, 'making use of all that he finds around him, shapes himself for the future' (Montessori, 2007, p. 13).

Throughout the English lessons, how each of the children communicated with me and with each other differed dramatically. I began quite early asking what and how the participants would like to learn. At this point some of the children were able to give suggestions while others were not. The level of communication increased with each lesson, and by the end of the study each child was able to express how he\she wanted to learn and what his\her interests were. It was then my task to go away from each lesson and create a Montessori based lesson, using the style of learning that the children had indicated worked best for them. Naturally, there were times when this was quite difficult and took a lot of effort, but it was possible.

By the end of the study, all of the children had become verbal in English, although some more than others. Leonie and Leandro, for example, were later in their development of spoken English than their peers but were able to demonstrate their knowledge in other ways. One of the most unexpected findings was the children's 'capacity to keep their two languages separate' (Tabors, 2008, p. 11). There were only a few instances of German or other languages being spoken throughout the course of the study. The tendency of this group of children was not to respond to a question when they did not know the English words needed. Only in a few instances did a child respond in German as a means of answering a question. What tended to happen in these cases is that the child would stop whatever activity he\she was participating in and pause until I made some suggestions of appropriate English words. He\she would then choose the word that conveyed his\her idea and continue with the activity. As the study progressed, these instances became less common. By the end, each child had a short memory recall of vocabulary and the high frequency words were readily available to them when needed.

‘Observation’ played a primary role in how the lessons were conducted and the help that was offered to each child. Some children needed quite a bit more repetition than others. For instance, Lara needed very little since her vocabulary development grew exponentially in a short period of time, usually needing only to hear a word a few times before she could adopt the new word into her vocabulary. Gabriel was a different case; he needed a little more repetition practice and needed words modelled for him slowly to ensure correct pronunciation. Again, observing the learning differences and needs of each child determined particular interventions that were useful in each learning journey.

### **7.3 Achieving Social Justice**

In Chapter 2, Held’s (2010) cosmopolitan principles of ‘equal worth and dignity, active agency, inclusiveness and subsidiarity and avoidance of serious harm’ (p.69) were mentioned as one means of indicating if social justice has been achieved. The application of ‘equal worth and dignity’ means respect for the individual, his\her families, culture, and life. Equality does not mean treating everyone equally with the same expectations. Equality may, and in this case, did look very different for every child. Leonie was an important member of the participant group. She may not have displayed the same verbal communication skills that other children like Lara did, but her ability to participate was no less. Her ‘voice’ although not audible for much of the time, was no less valued than anyone else’s. This would not have been possible without a conscious decision to ‘listen’ and ‘observe’ three dimensionally, taking into account facial gestures, emotional responses, etc.

‘Active agency’ is the ability to choose. As was discussed in previous chapters, active agency was not present in the first two lessons because of the language differences between the children and the researcher. Once the children had gained a few basic words in English (lesson three) the choice of what activity would be done the following week was determined by the children. Throughout the study, there were also times when lessons did not go according to plan. For example, Matteo’s behaviour was an obstacle during some lessons. There were times when Matteo decided he wished to play independently of the other children. It was his choice to do so and he often came back to the group activity when he felt comfortable and then would leave again when he wished. All children were given the option to take time out of the lessons if \when they wished. As is described in more detail in Chapter 4, Leonie also took time out away from lessons when she wished to play independently of the other children.

Inclusiveness was always encouraged, but again, it was never forced. Children should feel comfortable to participate but that participation should be their choice. Subsidiarity was achieved through a process of questions and answers throughout each lesson. ‘What would you like to do in the next lesson?, Are you happy?, Are you having fun?, Do you want to do something else now?’ were all questions that were asked regularly to 1) plan the next week’s lesson, 2) to determine the emotional wellbeing of each child, and 3) to determine the level of engagement of each child in each activity. In this way, the children were given the autonomy over their education in a way that Montessori felt was important.

Avoiding serious harm can take multiple forms. It may mean physically, emotionally, or mentally. The questions that were posed throughout the lessons also served to ensure that the children were content and happy with the activity they were participating in. Naturally, physical safety was always a priority.

I would never suggest that social justice was achieved perfectly. I feel that such a statement would be inappropriate and inaccurate. I do believe that a socially just environment was created whereby each child was given autonomy over his\her education and each voice was listened to and given equal respect. This, according to Held's cosmopolitan principles (2010), is social justice.

#### **7.4 Limitations**

As with any research, this study does have limitations. This study was conducted with a group of nine children from a variety of linguistic, social, and cultural backgrounds. The sample size, being small, does not allow for generalizations to be made to the whole of the EAL preschool community. To make such generalizations would be false and misleading. Instead, the study should be viewed as 'being [a] 'work in progress' rather than [providing] unassailable truths' (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 243). Naturally, further research must be conducted on a much larger scale to further our understanding of how social justice can play a role in EAL education for preschool children and what approaches may be most effective for accomplishing this task.

I was not able to provide a complete picture for each child's social, cultural, and linguistic background. To obtain such a thick data set was beyond my means. Interviews with each child and his\her family may have provided more information

with the help of an interpreter, but again, this was not a viable option for this study because of the cost of such services. Further efforts could be made to understand how social justice can be applied to different student populations. Likewise, the group of participants come from only a fraction of the world's societies. Examining Montessori's framework for EAL children in different societies and cultures may shift the results found here. With the research presented, even in its limited capacity, there are still important discoveries that were made, and hopefully, with further research, even more knowledge can be gained about the social justice issues in EAL education for small children.

### **7.5 Opportunities for Further Research**

Ideally, entire education systems can be overhauled to achieve social justice in education; however, this expectation is unrealistic and would most likely be met with resistance among schools and governmental departments. 'It is always easier to promote social justice in a school where the ethos and support from other staff demonstrate a strong commitment, but it is still possible for an individual teacher to take action in the classroom' (Mitchell, 2012, p. 29). This thesis reflects a study that was conducted by an individual and did not rely on the overall ethos of the school. For the most part, the main priority of schools are the outcomes met by the students. This study was one example of how desired outcomes can be met in a timely fashion while applying social justice to an educational framework. Although this is the first step, exploring other means by which to teach young pre-schoolers English is important for our understanding of what social justice means and how educators can bridge the gap between theory and practice. This study focused on employing the Montessori Method as a means of achieving a socially just environment; however, there are other

approaches that may also have the flexibility to promote social justice in EAL education for small children.

There are many educational pedagogies that may be used to promote social justice. Using Makaton, ‘a language programme based on the use of signing, symbols and speech’ (Mistry & Barnes, 2013, p. 603) may also be examined for its use in promoting social justice for EAL children. Often times dialogue about citizenship education programs tends to occur for older students. It would be interesting to examine how a like-minded program can be developed for young EAL children and how it may influence their language learning. John Dewey’s (1997) framework of experiential learning can be examined and employed for EAL education use to a greater extent than is done here. There are certainly many educational frameworks that can be used to employ social justice in preschools with EAL learners. The conclusion reached in this thesis is not that the Montessori Method should take precedence over other approaches, but rather, that it is an option for implementing social justice in preschool EAL programs. Certainly further research must be conducted to determine the flexibility of other, already established programs, to determine how best the theory and principles of social justice can be most effectively applied to the practice of education.

The study presented here surrounded social justice and preschool aged children. This is not to suggest that EAL students in primary, secondary, or post compulsory institutions are being provided with an English learning program that is socially just. Indeed, the study should be extended to include older students as well. There has been research done in areas of education for older students, although the social justice

education for the EAL student population is rather limited. With the further research suggested here, it is possible to make real changes within education systems. It is also possible to use this research to help inform and make needed changes to teacher training as a means of empowering teachers to take an active social justice role within their individual classrooms. There are many directions that must be explored within the field of EAL social justice programs. This study, and the resulting thesis, is only the first step of exploration in the journey of meeting social justice goals in education.

### **7.6 Concluding Thoughts**

Even before I entered a university setting, I expressed an interest in different cultures, societies, and religions. During my secondary schooling, I was interested in how other people lived. I wanted desperately to go into the world and explore its treasures for myself. It was not until my adult life that I was finally able to explore and experience the world in the way I wanted. I have had the opportunity to live in many countries, with differing cultures and languages. I did not believe, when I set out on this journey of discovery that I truly understood the power of language. It was not until my own language journey began that I was really able to comprehend the difficulties of language learning and the emotional responses that go along with it. It was not until I began living elsewhere that I became aware of the importance of languages and the role it plays in our lives and how it has the power to shape people.

Globalization is a very real social phenomenon that the world has not been exposed to on such a dramatic scale before. The immigration and migration patterns globally are expanding at such a rate that they become inaccurate before any report has been completed or published. The reasons for such movement are as vast as the number of people who migrate. Regardless of the reason for such movement, providing children

with a socially just education, whether it be EAL or another subject, has the ability to empower those who, for whatever reason, are entering into a new culture or society. Particularly with EAL education, it can help give a voice where language barriers prevented such a voice from being heard before. Children are the most powerless in society, but they have a voice if we are willing to listen to it and foster their ability for learning and self-expression.

This thesis is similar to the language journeys of the participants in this study. It is not linear and no definite answers have been provided. Salman Rushdie, one of my many favourite modern writers of fiction, is credited with having said ‘throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who have claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought havoc among mere mixed-up human beings.’ As stated before, this study is intended to be a first step in implementing social justice within a particular educational context. The explanations and discussions herein are incomplete and sometimes fractured. There are many factors that must be considered in EAL education and social justice education, far more than there is room for in this thesis. Cultures, societies, languages, politics, education, and the humans who make up these institutions are just that, *humans*. We are imperfect, but it is our responsibility as global citizens to improve institutions when and where we can. In a world that tends to value the end result in education more than the process, it was of the utmost importance to demonstrate here that both the end result and the learning process can be given equal importance without jeopardizing one or the other.

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## Appendix One: Consent Forms

**Doctoral Programme in  
Education and Social Justice**



### Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I consent to my child taking part in this research project. I understand that my child's participation in the project is voluntary and his/her participation in the project may be stopped at any time, but that this will not affect the opportunity for my child to attend and participate in the English lessons.

I understand that my participation in the survey is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation up to two weeks after the project has ended.

I agree for my child and myself to take part in the above study.

**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Parent/Carer 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Carer 2 (if relevant):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix Two: Parental Survey 1

**Doctoral Programme in  
Education and Social Justice**



### Survey for Parents of Participants

#### Part 1

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

+

**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Parent/Carer 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Carer 2 (if relevant):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nationality of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nationality of Parents: Mother:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Father:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity of Child (please check all boxes that apply):**

- Asian
- African
- Caucasian
- Hispanic/ Spaniard
- Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnicity of Parents: Mother:**

- Asian
- African
- Caucasian
- Hispanic/ Spaniard
- Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- Father:**       Asian  
                   African  
                   Caucasian  
                   Hispanic/ Spaniard  
                   Other (Please Specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Frist Language of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

**First Language of Parent/ Carer 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Carer 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Languages Spoken in the Home:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Length of Time in Switzerland:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Children:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Languages Spoken by Other Children:** \_\_\_\_\_

**German Proficiency Level of: Parent/Carer 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Carer 2 (if relevant):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents/ Carer 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Carer 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix Three: Parental Survey 2

**Doctoral Programme in  
Education and Social Justice**



### Survey for Parents of Participants

#### Part 2

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

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**Name of Child:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Parent/Carer 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Carer 2 (if relevant):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Does your child use English words while at home?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Did your child have some knowledge of English prior to the English lessons?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Have you noticed an increase in spoken English in your child?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Is your child able to speak in full sentences in English?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Are there any other language differences that you have noticed in your child during the project?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Comments:**

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix Four: TESOL Checklists

**Doctoral Programme in  
Education and Social Justice**



### Leonie - Language Checklist

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)				√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)				√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)				√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)				√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)			√	√

**Leandro - Language Checklist**

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)			√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated books’ (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)				√
‘Match symbols or icons with photographs or facial expressions				√

<b>that express feelings' (Level 1 – Reading – LA)</b>				
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**Lara - Language Checklist**

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)				√
‘Depict family members in drawings’ (Level 1 – Writing – SIIP)			√	√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated				√

<b>books' (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)</b>				
<b>'Relate occupations to tools of their trade through pictures of community scenes' (Level 2 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>'Ask and answer wh- questions in small groups about occupations' (Level 3 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>'Match symbols or icons with photographs or facial expressions that express feelings' (Level 1 – Reading – LA)</b>			√	√

**Anna - Language Checklist**

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Depict family members in drawings’ (Level 1 – Writing – SIIP)			√	√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)			√	√
‘State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated				√

<b>books' (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)</b>				
<b>'Relate occupations to tools of their trade through pictures of community scenes' (Level 2 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>'Ask and answer wh- questions in small groups about occupations' (Level 3 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>'Match symbols or icons with photographs or facial expressions that express feelings' (Level 1 – Reading – LA)</b>			√	√

### Luca - Language Checklist

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)				√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)			√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated books’ (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)				√
‘Relate occupations to tools of their trade through pictures of				√

<b>community scenes’ (Level 2 – Speaking – LA)</b>				
<b>‘Ask and answer wh- questions in small groups about occupations’ (Level 3 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>‘Match symbols or icons with photographs or facial expressions that express feelings’ (Level 1 – Reading – LA)</b>			√	√

### Matteo - Language Checklist

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)			√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)				√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Match names of familiar objects with pictures or [the object’s physical form]’ (Level 3 – Reading – SIIP)				√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)			√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)			√	√

<b>'State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated books' (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
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**Levin - Language Checklist**

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Match names of familiar objects with pictures or [the object’s physical form]’ (Level 3 – Reading – SIIP)				√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated				√

<b>books' (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)</b>				
<b>'Relate occupations to tools of their trade through pictures of community scenes' (Level 2 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>'Ask and answer wh- questions in small groups about occupations' (Level 3 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>'Match symbols or icons with photographs or facial expressions that express feelings' (Level 1 – Reading – LA)</b>			√	√
<b>'Match letters with pictures that express feelings with a partner' (Level 2 – Reading – LA)</b>				√
<b>'Match words with pictures that express feelings with a partner' (Level 3 – Reading – LA)</b>				√

### Gabriel - Language Checklist

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)			√	√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated books’ (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)			√	√
‘Relate occupations to tools of their trade through pictures of				√

<b>community scenes’ (Level 2 – Speaking – LA)</b>				
<b>‘Ask and answer wh- questions in small groups about occupations’ (Level 3 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>‘Match symbols or icons with photographs or facial expressions that express feelings’ (Level 1 – Reading – LA)</b>			√	√

**Elena - Language Checklist**

**Title of Project:** Alternative EAL (English as an Additional Language) Education: Applying the Montessori Method to Young English Learners in an Urban Swiss Context

**Name of Researcher:** Carla Briffett Aktas

	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4
‘Identify... recreational objects from pictures or [in their physical form] as directed orally’ (Level 1 – Listening - SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Follow one step oral directions in whole-group recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 2 – Listening SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Follow multistep oral directions with partners in recreational activities or multicultural games’ (Level 3 – Listening - SIIP)			√	√
‘Practice and use polite expressions’ (Level 1 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Make polite requests of teachers or classmates’ (Level 2 – Speaking – SIIP)		√	√	√
‘Role-play conversations with adults using polite language’ (Level 3 – Speaking – SIIP)	√	√	√	√
‘Respond nonverbally to oral directions as part of whole-group activities’ (Level 1 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘Identify... objects in pictures in books from oral descriptions by teachers or adults’ (Level 2 – Listening – LA)		√	√	√
‘Place... [objects] in locations according to descriptive oral directions’ (Level 3 – Listening – LA)	√	√	√	√
‘State occupations in L1 or L2, from pictures or illustrated books’ (Level 1 – Speaking – LA)				√
‘Relate occupations to tools of their trade through pictures of				√

<b>community scenes’ (Level 2 – Speaking – LA)</b>				
<b>‘Ask and answer wh- questions in small groups about occupations’ (Level 3 – Speaking – LA)</b>				√
<b>‘Match symbols or icons with photographs or facial expressions that express feelings’ (Level 1 – Reading – LA)</b>			√	√

## Appendix Five: Sample Observations and Reflections

The following observations and reflections are only a sample of the data gathered from one of the participants (Lara). Due to file size and image quality limitations, not all data could be included.

Lara	Observations	Reflections
	<p>Lesson One:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lara didn't know 'Hello Song'</li><li>- likes music - swaying, humming to the song.</li><li>- Review of colours with balloons<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Lara knew pink - her favourite colour.</li></ul></li><li>- very eager to repeat vocabulary.</li><li>- repeated 'red, blue, + green'</li><li>- verb practice - walk, run, sit, sleep + stop.</li><li>- Lara - laughing + doing the verbs</li><li>- repeats words that are spoken</li><li>- needs demonstration for new words<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↳ usually one demo. is enough</li></ul></li><li>- is quick to catch on.</li><li>- comprehension - very quick to learn new vocab + demonstrate knowledge</li><li>- is happy to repeat new words (speaks new vocab on her own)</li><li>- listens to vocab carefully (watches my mouth)</li><li>- was able to remember the colours + picked one of the balloons to take home with her</li><li>- Ended with 'Good Bye' Song<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- again hummed along to the song (new song).</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- the children are familiar with beginning the day with 'singing circle', so I chose to continue with this format for the Eng. lessons. (maintain continuity)</li><li>- Lara is very energetic - she likes music (can sing songs in German + her LI) and sing while playing with other children.</li><li>- Lara has no previous exposure to Eng. (She does know 'pink' but this is a common word between Eng. + Swiss German. (Should not be considered Eng. knowledge.)</li><li>- During verb practice, Lara was particularly happy. She was doing the verb + laughing. Once the verb was spoken, she could repeat it a few minutes later on her own. She is a very quick learner. Her pronunciation is almost perfect. She can make complex sounds + sound combinations after hearing a word once!<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>↳ a higher level of vocabulary should be used for Lara once basic vocab has been learned.</li></ul></li><li>- 'Mouth watching' is much the same way as a baby does. This is helpful for pronunciation because the mouth moves very differently in German, English, + her LI. She is able to mimic the movements of my mouth.</li></ul>

Lara

Observations

Reflections

- Lesson Three: - Began with 'Hello Song' This week Lara began to do the actions with the song.
- Sang - 'Hello' on her own
  - repeated 'I'm fine, happy + sad' emotion words after I sang it.
  - Colour matching activity - Lara could 'find a red card' - remembered the colour.
  - 'find red sticker' - I had to point at the stickers for comprehension of vocab.
  - repeated 'sticker' multiple times on her own.
  - Lara knew the word 'wagon' (from picture)
  - I modelled sentence 'This is a red wagon.'
  - Lara repeated whole sentence.
  - Sang 'Little Red Wagon'
  - Lara didn't know song but swayed with song.
  - I asked what colour the apple was. Lara said 'red.'
  - Practiced the 'please' + 'thank you' as I passed out apple pieces.
  - returned to matching game. Blue - bluebird song - ate blueberries.
  - Lara remembered Blue
  - New colours white + yellow
  - ↓                    ↓
  - May had a    mr. sun
  - little lamb    ↓
  - ↓                    ↓
  - banana          lemon
  - explained banana inside is white.
  - Lara said 'yellow' + 'banana'
  - said 'weiss' when asked what the colour the inside of the banana was.
  - modelled 'white' for her
  - she repeated
  - she was able to remember 'white' at the end of the lesson during colour review

- Lara is beginning to participate in the song (more than before). (She attempts to do the actions.) Her willingness to participate is encouraging. She really seems to engage with the lessons + is quite happy to do so.
- Lara can remember the colour vocabulary from last week. When instructed to find a red ... (vocab she doesn't know) she is able to understand as long as some kind of buttressing commentary is provided. In this case, pointing to the object was enough.
- When presented with a picture of a wagon (a word she knows - same word in German + Eng/ slight difference in pronunciation) she is very excited. She jumped up + shouted word. She gives the impression of being proud of herself + her knowledge.
- willingness to participate - repeating 'please' + 'thank you'.
- Lara was able to make the connection of colour + object (yellow + banana). I didn't make this connection - I said banana was white on the inside. She made this connection on her own.
- her comprehension is improving. Even when she doesn't know the colour in Eng. - she understands the question being asked and will answer in German. It is interesting that the vocab transfers are from German + not her L1.
- Lara responds very well to verbal praise. She shows pride in her abilities + is eager to learn more Eng.

- Ended with 'Good Bye' Song
- Lara remembered goodbye + sang the words where they appeared in the song. For lyrics she didn't know, she hummed.

- remembering new vocabulary
- willingness to participate in song + music (whenever + however possible)

Lara

Observations

Reflections

Lesson Five: Began with 'Hello Song'

- Lara had some difficulty remembering the emotion words - remembered the 2nd time we sang the song.

- Flower artwork Activity - Lara was able to choose the colour paper she wanted (pink).

- when reviewing the colours chosen, Lara repeated each colour as I pointed to it.

- I held up roses & asked if anyone remembered what this was.

- Lara said 'flowers'.

- I pointed to the leaves on the flowers. Lara repeated 'leaf' after I said it.

- Asked Lara if she wanted a paint brush. She said 'yes'. I said 'yes?' & waited. She said 'yes please' - no prompting needed.

- Lara chose the colours of flowers she wanted. (pink, white + yellow). - She remembered all colours.

- I wrote her name on the picture after she was finished. - She can recognize her name ~~best~~ after I ~~say~~ said it slowly, pointing to ~~the~~ each letter as it was being said.

- Ended with 'Goodbye' Song.

I could remember 'goodbye', say, & everyone.

- can understand 'to put, to glue, to press & to wait' using actions to convey meaning.

- Lara's difficulty today with the vocabulary - repeat vocab often.

It is important to review the vocab so it is not forgotten.

\* Vocabulary that is not used is forgotten - find new ways to review the vocab from the songs.

- Lara enjoys picking flowers - she was doing this the other day at the park with some of the others. They seem to enjoy being out in nature. (Child's interests should be starting point in planning.)

- Lara's vocab recall is fantastic! Her vocabulary is growing rapidly & her pronunciation is perfect. She is always wanting to learn more words.

- Lara has adopted polite expressions into everyday conversation. Sometimes (rarely) she will forget. A short pause is enough to remind her that she has forgotten. No verbal reminder needed.

- modelling & bootstrapping contemporary are useful tools for Lara. She can make the connection between the action & the word being spoken easily.

- Because Lara learns so fast I started pronouncing words & pointing to the printed word. She can't read or write yet but this is a good way to introduce her to written language. She can start to make mental connections between each letter & the sound it symbolizes.

- Vocabulary for the 'Goodbye' song is expanding. Repetition is needed further for this vocab.

Lara

Observation

Reflections

<p>Lesson Seven: Introduced wooden calendar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- practical months + seasons</li><li>- Lara didn't know this vocab but repeated each word after it was spoken.</li><li>- I asked Lara to move the markers on calendar. She wasn't sure of the directions. B.C helped her understanding.</li><li>- Weather words introduction.</li><li>- 'sunny, cloudy' - Lara didn't know vocab but after we went outside to look at the sky, she could understand cloudy + sunny. (she repeated vocab numerous times).</li><li>- Activity stations - Lara + stana placed in group together.</li><li>- Puzzle activity - Lara did well in understanding the directions for the activity, but had some trouble with the puzzle itself.</li><li>- Too hard.</li><li>- With some help, they were able to complete it.</li><li>- Sorting activity - Lara knew green, yellow, blue + red</li><li>- She didn't know purple.</li><li>- I said the word + she repeated</li><li>- after I moved on <del>to</del> to check the other groups, she was repeating 'purple' multiple times.</li><li>- Sewing activity - needed B.C to go along with oral directions.</li><li>- actions + instructions done on, she caught on quickly.</li><li>- Repeated the different colours of string - independent review of colours.</li><li>- showing Lara the string + saying colour - peer teaching.</li><li>- Introduced participation chart - Lara could find her name + chose the flower sticker using correct vocab.</li><li>- Ended with 'Good Bye Song' - She can remember most words of the song.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Kuttressing communication + running commentary are really useful tools for Lara. She is quick to learn new vocab when she can see what the word means. It helps her remember the vocab later as well. Mental connections being made.</li><li>- same with weather words. showing her the object 'cloud' + 'sun' is good for her learning style.</li><li>* for the puzzle activity - make sure that activities are age appropriate. The puzzle was difficult for everyone (not just Lara). Future consideration.</li><li>- sorting activity - not knowing purple - Lara made eye contact, held up the purple piece + raised her eyebrows. She asked what the colour was without actually asking. Multiple means of communicating.</li><li>* Importance of observing facial gestures + body language.</li><li>- Lara likes to demonstrate her Eng. knowledge to her peers. This has not been done formally. Usually she does this by herself + then I let her continue. She does this throughout the day - not just in English.</li><li>- Introduced participation chart. The goal here is to encourage the children's self-esteem. Lara is proud of her learning + I want the others to feel proud of themselves too. It is also a time set out each lesson when each of the children receive praise for their hard work. Makes everyone feel equally valued.</li></ul>
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Lara

Observation

Reflections

- Lesson Nine: story time -  
On the Places You'll Go
- Lara enjoyed book - pointing to objects + saying noun in Eng
  - house, tree, boat, elephant, balloon
  - pointed at colours + labelled them in Eng.
    - yellow, pink, red, blue, green
  - got up + started walking around after 10 mins. - book too long. / words too difficult.
  - activity centers set up. - added shape matching activity.
  - Lara was able to do the puzzle activity this time with no help.
  - matching colours + shapes - Lara could remember green, yellow, blue, red
  - picked up purple piece - held it up - raised eyebrows
  - I started the word - pur / waited
  - Lara said 'purple!'
  - shape activity - circle, square, rectangle, triangle
  - I hold shapes - say the word
  - Lara repeats - lists the colours of the shapes - no problem.
  - few mins later - ask her shapes - she remembers circle + square.
  - Calendar - practice - month + season - Lara can't remember vocab but repeats after me.
  - Weather - I ask if it's sunny outside
    - Lara 'no'
    - I ask if it's cloudy Lara 'yes'
    - I asked if there was snow Lara 'no'
  - Sing 'Goodbye' song - Lara knows words in song now.

- reading helps children recognize the accents of words + patterns of speech in Eng. Very helpful to promote natural fluency of speech.
- This book was too long - the children got restless so I stopped reading before the book was finished.
- Maybe part of the problem is that some words are made up (so they can't understand) + it's in poem format. The sentence structure is too difficult.
- Choose more straight forward book next time - easier vocab.
- For this lesson I wanted to give the kids another opportunity to review vocab so we repeated activity centers. The kids really seemed to enjoy this last time. (They didn't want to stop!)
- Lara uses non verbal communication to ask questions - very clever.
  - I think she is ready to start learning question words now - she does this often - would be helpful for further knowledge + communication tools.
- Lara has a bit of trouble with pronouncing 3 syllable words
  - I have to make sure to say them slowly so she can hear each sound - then she can say the words without difficulty - usually only required once.
- Lara has mastered her colours - will start to add new colours in the future - her recall time is very short + she doesn't seem to have to think about it before speaking.
- weather vocab - Lara's comprehension is quite good. She can answer 'yes' or 'no' questions correctly about the weather.
  - note: add more weather vocab
  - pictures of weather with the words written on them are good way to introduce her to alphabet + writing.

# Lara

## Observations

- Lesson Eleven - 'Hello Song'.  
Lara knows all words to this song.
- She is very good at remembering emotion words ('fine, ok, sad').
  - Last lesson 'nervous' added - today Lara remembered the word!
  - Calendar - practiced saying month + season - Lara repeated but not sure if she understands what it means.
  - I asked what the weather was like today.  
Lara - 'snow'
  - I asked if she could see the sun. Lara 'no'
  - Christmas Market ornaments - mitten, star, bell + heart shapes.
  - Held up each shape - Lara knew star + bell
  - We practiced saying mitten + heart. I explained what a mitten is. After she said 'mitten.'
  - asked if she wanted paint brush - Lara 'yes please'
  - gave paint / glitter / etc.
  - I asked Lara if she needs help  
Lara 'no thank you'
  - decorated the ornaments by herself. (hums a song)
  - I asked her to place the ornaments on another table to dry. - She understood  
Lara 'ok'
  - Asked her to go to the bathroom to wash her hands - she went + cleaned up.
  - Came back into room + got a book
  - started listing all the words in the book she knew.
  - Asked her how she was feeling.  
Lara 'happy'
  - Did you have fun today?  
Lara 'yes'
  - No time for song today.

## Reflections

- added new vocab to 'Hello Song' - for nervous - place fingers near mouth + shatter teeth to describe nervous. B.C. works really well for Lara - she can make connections really easily.
  - Not sure about the calendar - I don't know if Lara is too young to understand months + seasons (further reading about age appropriate time teaching)
  - Lara is quite good ~~in~~ when understanding weather. When I ask any question - she looks outside to check before answering
  - She is very particular about providing the correct answer.
  - Lara is quite an independent little girl. She likes to work alone sometimes + is happy to play alone sometimes
  - She is very confident + sure of herself + her abilities.
  - Lara is very enthusiastic learner - she likes books - I should try reading again - more age appropriate book.
  - Lara's comprehension is quite good now. She can understand simple directions + some more complicated multiple step instructions too. - Next couple of lessons - develop more complex instructions for her.
  - Lara can now express her emotions quite well. Facial gestures are important but she can now answer when asked.
  - Continue to ask regularly how she is feeling.
  - ability to communicate is developing well.
- ★ Today mom said Lara lists all of the Eng words she knows when playing at home. When she finished with the words she knows. She makes up new words + pretends she is speaking English. (i)

Sara

Observations

- Lesson Thirteen - Began with 'Hello Song' - Sara knows all the words to the song.
- I still do the action for nouns until she can remember the word with no recall
- occupations - pilot, bus driver, teacher
- 1st - I demonstrated 'pilot'
- sat in chair - I told kids to find their seat - Sara lined up + pretended to hand me her ticket.
- I asked if she had ever been on an airplane - Sara 'yes'
- Told them to put on seatbelts
- She did the action.
- I asked where the kids wanted to go
  - Sara said ( — ) - the home-country of mom.
- Took turns being the pilot - Sara made plane sounds - laughing
- made bus with chairs - Sara took turn as bus driver
  - Sara 'wheels on the Bus'
- I asked if she wanted to sing - Sara 'yes'
- We sang 'Wheels on the Bus.'
- she knows some words but not all
- Teacher - mat was school
- played school
- later I asked - who drives an airplane - Sara - pilot
- who drives the bus
  - Sara - busdriver (driver a little practice needed for pron.)
- who teaches students at school? Sara - teacher
- Sang 'good bye' song - Sara knows all the words + tone.
- I asked Sara if she had fun - Sara 'yes'
- How are you feeling
  - Sara - happy.

Reflections

- B.C. is quite useful for Sara. I continue to use it for certain vocab until she can remember the words 100% of the time.
- Sara's comprehension is quite good. She can understand what is going on even during play with rudimentary toys (chairs put in formation for airplane).
- When asked questions, she gives appropriate answers.
- Indication that she understands what is being asked.
- Sara is able to convey her wants now - ex: saying the name of the song she wants to sing rather than saying she wants to sing a song.
- singing + song are words she hears regularly but she has never said them on her own. (?) - Interesting - she seems to be selective about the vocab she adapts.
- After the lesson - Sara demonstrated that she is able to recall vocabulary for weather even when there is no visual reminder of the word.
- her word chunking is increasing as well.
- Sara is starting to learn question words + adopt them into her speech.
- After lesson - weather pictures on door slide off. (sun/cloud)  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~
- I said 'oh no our sun is lost. Sara said 'where is cloud?'
- Knows vocab well for weather.
- me: 'yes, you're right' - I didn't even notice that the cloud was missing too. Oh well, we can get new pics for the door later.