

**Making sense of a changing world.**

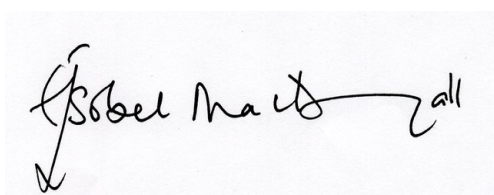
**An ethnographic study of a class of young emergent  
bilingual children**

**PhD study by  
Isobel MacDougall**

**2020**

Declaration of Authorship: I, Isobel MacDougall, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature reads "Isobel MacDougall" in a cursive style. The first letter 'I' is large and loops around the 's'. The 'g' at the end has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Date: 02.06.2020

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## **Abstract**

### **Making sense of a changing world.**

#### **An ethnographic study of a class of young emergent bilingual children aged two years.**

This small-scale ethnographic study examines three young emergent bilingual children from minority ethnic communities aged two years as they start in a nursery. The aim of the study, based on a sociocultural view of learning, is to consider how these children become enculturated into the new linguistic and cultural context within a busy Children's Centre. This required an inquiry into the culture of the nursery class that the children joined.

A review of literature includes recent historical perspectives of early years education and care in the UK, studies of bilingual children, and notions of power relations. Using an ethnographic methodology, this study aims to listen to the voices of the practitioners and understand the children's many forms of communication. Data was collected through observations, interviews, and field notes, and reading documentation within the Children's Centre. A sociocultural framework was applied to the analysis of data. A model of concentric layers illustrates the complex impact of change from external and internal forces on the perceived roles of the practitioners as they found ways of entering the new world of nursery. Using 'communities of practice' as the theoretical framework and 'legitimate peripheral participation' as the lens for analysing observations of each child, the children's agency was notable in supporting their trajectories and their individual approaches to becoming participants in the class.

The study reveals the tensions within the Children's Centre, as continuous external change to early years education and care and internal institutional change created hierarchical power relations. The findings suggest firstly, although as active agents, very young emergent bilingual children adopt strategies that enable them to make sense of their new environment, they benefit from the support of practitioners who are knowledgeable about linguistic and cultural diversity and the role of the first language in providing support for the children entering a new world. Secondly, that too much change with little opportunity to understand the changes is disempowering for practitioners and this may impact on their practice in their work with young emergent bilingual children from minority ethnic communities. The study concludes with implications for policy and practice when working with children under three.

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## Introductory notes...

### **Pseudonyms**

Throughout this thesis I have used pseudonyms for the location of my research and the names of all the people involved in this study.

### **Terminology**

The three children, Rahaf, Aeshah and Abdilaahi were exposed to English as a new language when they started attending the nursery. I have used the term **emergent bilingual** to describe the linguistic process they were going through.

I have called the generic team in the Children's Centre **staff**, this includes teachers and early years practitioners, teaching assistants and support workers, and when I am referring to **practitioners** in the analysis chapters, I am referring to staff who do not hold a teaching qualification (see Table 3).

I have used the term Bilingual Support **Staff** although within Edward Square their title was Bilingual Support **Workers**. I have done this to ensure that these staff are viewed as equals alongside the rest of the staff team.

I have called the former Day Nursery the **Daycare Centre** to avoid confusion in terminology with the use of the word nursery used to denote the location of Class 2.

## **Acronyms used throughout the thesis**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full title</b>
BERA	British Education Research Association
BLP	Building Learning Power
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BSS	Bilingual Support Staff
CACHE	Council for Awards in Childcare and Education
CC	Children's Centre
COP	Communities of Practice
DFE	Department for Education
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
DLO	Desirable Learning Outcomes
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EPPE	The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education
ES	Edward Square (Children's Centre)
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYPS	Early Years Professional Status
LA	Local Authority
LPP	Legitimate Peripheral Participation
NNEB	Nursery Nursing Examination Board
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PSE	Physical, Social and Emotional development
QIF	Quality Inspection Framework
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RECE	Reconceptualisation of Early Childhood Education
SEFDEY	Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years
SMT	Senior Management Team
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

## Chapter 1

### Origins of Inquiry

#### 1.1 Introduction

Since 1990 there has been a sharp rise in immigration within Britain (The Migration Observatory: 2018). Conflicts around the world have led to significant expansion in numbers of people seeking asylum, and a multiplicity of countries of origin have changed the earlier focus of migration from countries with colonial links to Britain to those who have no such links. There are multiple dimensions of differentiation that characterise the emergent social patterns and conditions, '*comprising of a variety of possible subset traits such as ethnicity, language[s], religious tradition, regional and local identities, cultural values and practices*' (Vertovec: 2007). This has led to complex social environments in which a simple ethnicity-focused approach to understanding and engaging minority groups in Britain is inadequate and inappropriate.

The Cambridge Primary Review (2010) reported that the cultural and social diversity of primary pupils is growing in the UK, with one fifth classified as being from a minority ethnic background. One in eight children were bilingual or even multilingual, having English as an additional language. Children aged two years, often from minority ethnic backgrounds, were encouraged to attend English nurseries (Field: 2010) to reduce inequalities and provide a strong foundation for future learning and to enable all children to maximise their capabilities (Marmot: 2010: 15). This is the demographic context for my research project carried out in 2010/11, based in an inner-city Children's Centre nursery class for children aged two years.

#### 1.1.i Focus on the children

The original focus of my study was with very young children who were entering nursery for the first time as two-year-olds, not speaking English and from a culture other than the dominant English culture of the setting. I set out to investigate how they become active participants within the nursery context. The rationale for my interest in this area of research is discussed within this chapter. However, after starting to attend the nursery to collect data, I became aware that there were other external factors that were impacting on the practice of the practitioners, including the complex social environment noted above, which in turn, affected their relationships and interactions with the children. Although I maintained my focus on the children starting in nursery from different linguistic, religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, this is not a study on bilingualism or language. It became a study on the factors that shaped the practice of three practitioners in their work in a nursery class with three 2-year-old children who

did not speak English, and therefore, the possible effect of their practice on the children's participation. I have called the children 'emergent bilingual' children throughout my study to indicate the process they were going through as they developed their linguistic skills across more than one language.

This research was started in 2010. In this chapter I outline the motivation for my research, starting from my own experiences, both personal and professional. I then summarise the recent historical and political background to the implementation of Children's Centres, and consider the changes within early childhood education and care over the past 20 years. A discussion of culture and diversity provide further perspective on my research and I conclude by stating the primary purpose of my research, my main research question and three supplementary questions.

## **1.2. Rationale for study**

As an educator in the UK, teaching in colleges and working with marginalised families within a large multicultural city, I was concerned about young children attending institutions where they were cared for in a language other than their home language, as they engaged in secondary socialisation within a new sociolinguistic context. What skills would they need to develop to help them adjust to a new set of cultural norms within this context and how could adults best support the children? Much research has been carried out within the context of schools and nurseries (Kenner: 2000; Brooker: 2006; Drury: 2007; Gregory: 2008), but there is little research into children aged two years who are starting nursery without knowledge or experience of English. I have used the term 'home languages' to indicate the children's primary language or languages spoken in their homes.

### **1.2.i An unrooted childhood**

What of my own contextual background? I spent my first five years living in Northern Nigeria where my parents worked in a rural education complex, training teachers. Our household was shared with Fatchet, who spoke Yergumenshi to us as she cared for us, Pulu our maid, who spoke Fyamawa, and Istafanus the cook, who spoke Birom. Hausa was spoken most frequently as the language of commerce, while English was the language of education. My early years were a rich tapestry of language, culture and relationships.

Nothing could have prepared me for the shock of transition of coming to England in 1955 – my memories are of a stark dislocation from light and warmth to dark and cold. In Nigeria my

mother had been my teacher, and I could read fluently, write and do simple arithmetic. School in England was so different as I sat at a table with other children in a classroom, reciting the alphabet and learning to count. I realise, looking back, how much I was a 'third culture kid' (Eidse & Sichel: 2004), always trying to find a way to fit in with the dominant culture, yet always outside it.

Working as a student nurse in London in 1969, I met Henry, a four-year-old boy from Biafra, Nigeria, with a big smile. Henry had been badly injured in the Biafran war and had been flown to England without his family. I could visualise the physical environment he came from based on my own experiences of Nigeria, but I did not know his cultural background nor was I aware of the impact of the war and the terrible atrocities that he may have witnessed. This was beyond my experience, and it was only more recently, when I read 'Half of a Yellow Sun' (Adiche: 2007), that I reflected on Henry. He had communicated with smiles, which attracted the attention and affection of the nurses, but we failed to understand his home culture and his deepest needs, and he had no shared spoken language to articulate his feelings.

Later as an adult, living and working in Argentina (1978–1982), with its social polarisation between the white Argentines and the indigenous Indian peoples, I was reminded of imperialist empires and their treatment of others, and I began to critique the complex relationship between culture, language and identity and the powerful role of imperialism in positioning people within the world. I have been acutely aware of my 'white' culture; at times because I wanted to blend more with the dominant culture I was in, or because when working with children and students from diverse cultures, I was concerned about how they might perceive me, and always conscious that in each location, as a white European, my culture was highly valued. Younge (2010) comments that unless we are willing to recognise the influences on our identity, we are unable to interrogate them and understand our responses. Pollock & Van Reken (2009:11) state that *'traditional assumptions of what it means to belong to a particular race, nationality, or ethnicity are constantly challenged by those whose identities have been formed in many cultural worlds'*. Having spent my early life in Nigeria during the colonial period and having raised my children in Latin America during the 1970s, I am conscious that I want to see my children and myself as citizens of the world rather than being defined by one ethnic group or nation state.

In her research into white teachers in multi-ethnic classrooms, Pearce (2005) discusses theories of whiteness; these include invisible whiteness, white as the norm, colour-blindness



and orientation to whiteness. Reflecting on these, I realise that my own difficulty with my whiteness is closely related to 'white as the norm', which historically is particularly connected with the colonial period but still exists today. This notion positions the white person as the viewer and judge based on their own beliefs and values. I was shocked when one of the bilingual support staff in my research setting said '*You have to understand, Izzie, the raj is in our heads*' (Field notes: 02.02.11) when talking to me about her views as a Pakistani on the English, revealing the hierarchy in her thinking, and it was reminiscent of the behaviour I had witnessed as a child. My 'whiteness' is connected with racial connotations - a hierarchy of 'race' based on colour - and I was aware that I was judging the white senior managers in the setting from this perspective. Pearce (ibid) makes the critical point that we must distinguish between white as a racial group and white as an umbrella term for a diverse range of white people in the world, and I wanted to ensure that I maintained this distinction as I collected data in the nursery where there were several white European, Black and Mixed heritage families. Keeping a Research Journal was a valuable resource for noting these issues and reflecting on them.

### **1.2.ii Context for my research**

As Programme Leader for The Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree (SEFDEY), working in a Further Education College and two universities in a large multicultural city, the issues around meeting the needs of multicultural, multilingual young children and their families renewed my interest in supporting cultural and linguistic transitions. New Labour introduced the Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years as a work-based degree in response to research that highlighted the importance of having a highly qualified workforce in order to raise the quality of provision within early years settings for education and care of children from birth to five years (Sylva et al: 2004). Evaluations of the impact of the SEFDEY degree carried out by the DfES in 2006 provided evidence of the positive impact of this qualification on both practitioners and settings (Snape, Parfremment & Finch: 2006). I noted that we had very few applicants from black and minority ethnic groups (BAME) and those who were bilingual or multilingual for the programme, which did not reflect the demography of many early years settings in the city. In response to my own concerns and the concerns raised by a local nursery head teacher, I carried out a small-scale research project into the perceived barriers that prevented adults within Black & Minority Ethnic communities from studying level 3 and above qualifications in early childhood education (see 5.3.i for explanation of level 3 qualifications) (MacDougall: 2008). The research was based on the initial findings from a Children's Centre in a large city that provided care and early years education for 113 children aged 3-4 years

and 35 children aged 0-3 years. In this setting 16 languages were spoken, 53% of the children were from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities and 31% had English as an additional language (EAL).

The statistics in The Cambridge Review (Alexander: 2010: 113) supported these findings and indicated the *'increasingly mobile, changing and multicultural'* nature of society in England. It was estimated that over 240 languages were spoken in English Primary and Secondary schools in 2008. Studies on ethnicity and poverty have highlighted the gap in achievement between high socio-economic status and low socio-economic status rather than solely ethnic minority groups (Ainscow et al., cited in Alexander: 2010). The Local Education Authority in my research location had set targets to raise the achievement of BAME groups based on their data, specifically children with EAL, and to recruit more staff from BAME communities (DfE: 2003). The percentage of BAME children to BAME staff in early years settings in the city was approximately 36% children to 4% staff.

Interviews with students in the research cohort (MacDougall: 2008) highlighted the difficulties some had experienced in understanding many of the key concepts of learning in the early years, such as learning through play, discourses of childhood and subject-specific knowledge relating to early years education and care.

*"My education was so different, and attitudes towards children are different around the world. Even though I have been working in England for several years, it is still hard to get your head round different ideas, especially when you haven't grown up with them"* (EAL graduate: MacDougall: 2008).

This is further supported by research carried out in the same city amongst the Somali community (Owen: 2006). Drury (1997, 2001, 2007) has identified the importance of employing bilingual support staff to support emerging bilingual children in developing strong identities of themselves as learners and understanding cultural expectations in a new environment. Moore (2010: 73-75) identified the importance of supporting children in negotiating their home and school environments, and Gallagher (2010: 76-83) has suggested strategies for bridging the learning across these environments.

In Argentina, I was grateful for the help and support I received from friends so that I knew what to expect at the nursery my children attended, such as the daily routine including drinking

sweet tea with crackers for break, providing your child with a large cup and saucer and a napkin, the type of activities provided by teachers, and the expectations of behaviour. As I spoke Spanish, I could understand the literal meaning of the words, but not the embedded cultural meanings or the cultural practices of the staff. I was unfamiliar with the child nurturing traditions and unacquainted with their views of education and care because my childhood was shaped by English attitudes and traditions, and my training as a teacher was within English norms.

### 1.3. Early Childhood Education and Care in England

Within England, Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) has been the subject of intense scrutiny and reform since the 1980s (Table 1). ECEC policy and practice has been constantly changing and reconfiguring since the Rumbold Report “Starting with Quality,” (DES: 1990). There has been a considerable debate around conflicting ideas as to the nature of childcare. Should early years education and care be a time of preparation for school, or provide childcare for parents to ensure equality of opportunity for women in work, or to ensure that it supports a strong economy for the country, or even to prevent later deviant behaviour (Pugh: 2010; Eisenstadt: 2011)?

Date	Policy/Legislation	Curriculum	Provision	Qualifications
1990	Rumbold Report: “Starting with Quality”			
1994	Start Right Report			NNEB continued CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing introduced
1995	Voucher scheme for 4 year old children to be used with any provider		Voucher scheme for 4 year old children to be used with any provider	
1996		Desirable Learning Outcomes for Children’s Learning introduced		
1997			Early Excellence centres opened to disseminate effective integrated practice	
1998	National Childcare Strategy Meeting the Childcare Challenge	Baseline assessment introduced	Sure Start programme established Free entitlement to nursery provision for 4	

			year olds for 12.5 hours across 5 days for 33 weeks per year	
<b>1999</b>				
<b>2000</b>		Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage for 3-8 years Early Learning Goals		NVQ level 4 in Education and Childcare
<b>2001</b>	Ofsted to inspect and regulate early years provision		Ofsted to inspect and regulate early years provision Neighbourhood Nurseries opened	Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years (levels 4 & 5)
<b>2002</b>	Foundation Stage profile introduced		Children's Centres opened	
<b>2003</b>	Every Child Matters	Birth to Three Matters introduced		
<b>2004</b>	Every Child Matters: Next Steps: consultation on pay & workforce strategy			
<b>2005</b>	Children's Workforce Development Council formed			
<b>2006</b>	Childcare Act Transformation Fund			
<b>2007</b>	The Children's Plan Children's Workforce Strategy			Early Years Professional Status (post-graduate)
<b>2008</b>	Qualifications and Credit Framework Building Brighter Futures: the next steps	Early Years Foundation Stage – statutory curriculum from birth to end of year Reception		Qualifications and Credit Framework
<b>2009</b>				
<b>2010</b>	Integrated Qualifications Framework Field Report: <i>The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults. The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances</i>		15 hours entitlement to free places for 3 & 4 year olds for 15 hours across 3 days for 38 weeks per year	Integrated Qualifications Framework
<b>2011</b>	Tickell Review into the EYFS Allen Report: <i>Early Intervention – The Next Steps</i>			

<b>2013</b>	Free nursery places for Two-year-olds		15 hours per week entitlement for families that meet the criteria	
<b>2014 &amp; 2018</b>		Further reviews of the EYFS		
<b>2018</b>	Baseline pilot for EYFS			

Table 1: Changes in early years education and care from 1990 – 2018

Ball (2013) commented that education has been subject to *policy overload*, as successive governments have engaged in education reform. He argued that education policy is increasingly subordinated to economic policy, and stated that *'performativity is the culture or system of terror'* (Ball 2013: 57). Ball (2006) defined performativity as a technology, a culture of regulation that uses judgements and comparisons to incentivise and control individuals or organisations by measuring their performance. The culture of performativity has led to record keeping, appraisals, annual reports, the creation of databases and a regime of inspection, ensuring that teachers' performance could be monitored, compared and judged. Ball (2013) argued that this could lead to unhelpful and damaging practices as teachers become more preoccupied with collecting data and record keeping rather than focussing on engagement with students. Lyotard (1984) highlighted the contradiction of performativity, where the primary activity of the teacher - their work with students, developing the curriculum and carrying out research - is juxtaposed with the secondary activity of collecting performance data, monitoring results and reporting. The secondary activity, required by managers and policy makers, consumes time and energy, thus reducing the time and energy to complete the teachers' primary role. Tusting (2010) carried out research in a childcare centre and noted that the move to an audit culture, in which the childcare workforce were required to record their practices in detail in response to demands for accountability led to stress and a negative effect on their working practices, taking time away from what they saw as their core responsibilities.

Ball (2006) asked who determines what counts as effective and satisfactory performance, who controls the targets that are set, and which criteria are used for measurement. Who sets the benchmarks? Within early years education and care, the reforms noted in Table 1 led to the diversification of institutions, curricula reforms, changing criteria for inspection and altered qualifications. Ball (2013: 58) argued that such changing demands and expectations had resulted in confusion for the workforce, because they were being judged *'in different ways, by different means, according to different criteria, through different agents and agencies'*. A report produced by Boushal & Norris (2012) on the implementation of Sure Start (discussed in 1.3.i) noted the negative effects of rapid changes in legislation, provision of settings, policy and

benchmarks, and acknowledged the detrimental effect that this had on staff in early childhood education and care settings,

*The pace of the programme created challenges for delivery too though. Having to deliver the target of 3,500 children's centres meant much attention was focused on creating or establishing buildings which to some extent crowded out some of the other important implementation challenges, particularly quality and workforce development...One former minister told us, '[We] put too much into buildings and not enough into what went on inside them.'* (2012: 12)

Despite this acknowledgement that the workforce and practice had been overlooked, external changes continued and the effect of these on the workforce were not addressed.

### **1.3.i Continuity of care in a changing context**

The demand for pre-school provision has grown rapidly in the UK over the last 50 years. The first playgroups were started in the early 1960s and were distinct from state nursery schools. Parent volunteers staffed playgroups (Pre-school Learning Alliance: 2016). This contrasted with the practice in nurseries and crèches, which were regulated by the health service. Vernon & Smith (1994) note that there was a tradition in the UK of dividing services for young children into daycare and pre-school education. State pre-school education is often part-time, and until recently was for children over 3 years in nursery schools or nursery classes attached to primary schools.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2000) noted that there had been unprecedented attention and change within Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the UK (see Table 1). The report also commented that the UK provision of early childhood was starting from a relatively low base compared with other European countries within the OECD. Oberhuemer & Ulich (1997) described the ECEC provision in the UK as fragmented and diverse, lacking coherence and co-ordination. The reforms in the UK to co-ordinate types of ECEC institutions and the introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage as a curriculum for children from birth to the end of the reception year led to an expansion of Children's Centres (see Table 1). The following table (Table 2) records the broad range of settings that were available for children under 5 years, as documented in OECD (2000), and illustrates the fragmented provision that was available to families requiring education and care for their children under compulsory school age.

Title of provision	Description of provision
<b>Nursery school</b>	A state-funded school normally providing 2 to 2.5 hours of pre-school education for 3s and 4s during the regular school year. Some nursery schools are full-time.
<b>Nursery class</b>	A class serving children 3-4 and is located in a state-funded primary or infant school.
<b>Early Years Unit</b>	A unit serving children 3-5 within a state-funded primary and infant school on a part- or full-time basis during school terms.
<b>Pre-schools/playgroups</b>	Occasional, sessional, or all-day pre-schools or playgroups serving children 2-5, run by parents, a non-profit organisation or by a for-profit business.
<b>Local authority day nurseries</b> [Daycare Centre]	Locally-funded centres for children from birth to five years of age who are considered to be at-risk of educational failure.
<b>Private day nurseries</b>	Nurseries run by employers (workplace nurseries) or private companies, providing part time or full day sessions to children from birth 5.
<b>Parent-toddler group</b>	Informal group for parents and children under five.
<b>Childminder</b>	Caregiver who provides full- or part-time care for children in her own home.
<b>Nanny/au pair</b>	Caregiver who provides full- or part-time care for children in the family's home.
<b>Combined nursery/family centres</b>	Centres that offer both early education and day-care for children birth to 5, sometimes with extended day and full year options.
<b>Early Excellence Centres</b>	Designated by the Government as models of exemplary practice, these centres offer a range of services, including full-day care for children birth to five, drop-in facilities, outreach, family support, health care, adult education, and practitioner training.
<b>Private nursery schools/pre-preparatory schools</b>	Run by private companies or trusts, these schools serve children 3-5+ on a fee-paying basis.
<b>Reception class</b>	The first class of a state-funded primary, first or infant school, serving children 4-5+. Full-time places (9.00-3:30pm during school terms only) are provided.
<b>Special school</b>	A school serving children with special needs from three years of age and upwards. The school may be a day or boarding school operating during the regular school terms.
<b>Opportunity Group</b>	A service offered by the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) that provides free, additional support for children with special needs. May also be offered by Social Service Departments (SSD) or Health Departments.
<b>Independent schools</b>	Run by private companies or trusts, these schools serve children from 3 and upwards and operate on a fee-paying basis.
<b>Before and after school</b>	Activities for children 3 and older operating before and

<b>club</b>	after school hours.
<b>Holiday club</b>	Activities for children when school is not in session.

Table 2: Types of ECEC provision in England before 2000 (based on OECD: 2000)

In 1995 parents were given vouchers for free education and care for 4-year olds and in 1997, New Labour introduced initiatives within “Welfare to work” that included the expansion of nursery education, improved maternity leave, increased hours of free nursery education, reform of training for early years staff and an integrated inspection service known as Ofsted (Bonoli: 2013). These new initiatives were based on research findings from the OECD, indicating that Britain had fallen from 13<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> in the rankings among industrialised nations in the world (OECD: 2000). In her research, Sylva (1994) noted that the earliest experiences of life shape children’s learning into ‘mastery’ or ‘performance’ learning thus establishing dispositions for learning throughout life. Melhuish (2004) highlighted research from the USA demonstrating the powerful effect of early education on a readiness for school in his commentary on the continuing tension between a desire to provide high quality education and care for the youngest children in the UK and enabling parents to return to work by providing cost-effective childcare services. This raised the question; do we want high quality early education led by well-trained staff or childcare provided by a poorly qualified low-paid workforce?

Children’s Centres were at the heart of the New Labour policy to eradicate child poverty in the UK through a more holistic but interventionist approach to early years education and care through the policy to initiate Sure Start in 1998 (DCSF: 2010). Government funding, costing many hundreds of millions of pounds, was directed towards supporting families with young children, and as a result, Early Excellence Centres were started in 1997. The Sure Start Local Programmes followed these in 1999, aiming to integrate family support, health and early learning in one place, often referred to as ‘the one-stop-shop’. A few years later in 2001, Neighbourhood Nurseries were set up to provide accessible and affordable day-care for families in the poorest areas in the UK. By 2006, these centres had become Children’s Centres, and the intention of New Labour was to provide a Children’s Centre within every local area by 2012 (Bouchal & Norris: 2012). A few state-maintained Nursery Schools were combined with existing Neighbourhood Nurseries in areas of disadvantage to form a new integrated Children’s Centre, as is the case with the centre in this study. The main objectives of all Sure Start Centres were to improve social and emotional development, particularly supporting the attachment between parents and their children; to improve health by supporting parents in caring for their children’s health from conception; to improve children’s ability to



learn by providing high quality environments for childcare and identifying additional needs early; and to strengthen families and communities through their involvement in the programme with family learning, adult education and preparation for employment (DCSF: 2010). These objectives continue to be at the heart of the philosophy for Children's Centres.

Sure Start Children's Centres Fifth Report of Session 2009–10 *Volume 1* (DCSF: 2010: 3) stated the government's commitment to support families' economic well-being and to help families to achieve financial independence through the provision for families in Children's Centres. This programme was based on the view that families needed to be educated and in employment, and the new government's determination to get quick results (Rutter: 2007). However, there appeared to be a disparity between the views of childhood held by government and the views of childhood held by early years educators and researchers such as Blenkin & Kelly (1996), Nutbrown (1999), Siraj-Blatchford (2000) and Pugh (2001), which influenced the creation of Sure Start programmes. Pugh (2001) argued that while supporting the policies of New Labour to reduce poverty and invest in services for young children and their families, the government failed to advocate a child-centred society where children are valued and taken seriously as citizens. Cathy Nutbrown, author of the Nutbrown Review (2013), based her research into how children learn on the premise that children are able, dynamic and creative learners from birth. Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke argued that early years services might maintain social inequalities by creating status disparity between people, and by reinforcing ideologies that could be imposed by the dominant classes (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke: 2000).

Nevertheless, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer for New Labour in 1997, was determined to break the cycle of poverty for children. The Cross-Department Review agreed to consider early intervention for families with children under seven years, with integrated services to tackle social exclusion and to examine other successful initiatives in designing their own policies (Melhuish & Hall: 2007). The hope was that a combination of these factors would lead to a more sustainable social situation with economic growth and a well-qualified workforce (ibid). The Sure Start initiative had been launched in areas of extreme disadvantage, but an early evaluation, the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS: 2005), which involved a complex evaluation process due to the uniqueness of each Sure Start centre, found that it had not had the expected impact (Weinberger et al: 2005). Many of the centres, such as the centres within the city of this research, were purpose-built with new furniture and resources, and multi-professional teams had offices in the buildings. These facilities were in contrast to the housing in the area, and the 'professionalism' of the centres may have been culturally threatening for families. BAME families were highly represented in many Sure Start areas and unless there

was a language support service, written information, fliers and documents in English advertising the services could have been unhelpful, and the services available may have been culturally inappropriate. As a result, centres began to do outreach work, taking the services into families' homes and other more accessible locations, and a later evaluation showed improving life chances for poor families (Belsky, Barnes & Melhuish: 2007). Melhuish (2009) noted that the greater effort to reach the most vulnerable households coupled with the amount of longer exposure to the Sure Start programmes led to the subsequent beneficial effects for families and children living in Sure Start neighbourhoods. A recent evaluation on Sure Start, 'The Health Effects of Sure Start' (Cattan et al: 2019), highlights the positive impact of Sure Start provision on the health of children and young people. Unfortunately, this report was produced at a time when Children's Centres continue to be closed and Sir Peter Lampl, founder of the Sutton Trust stated,

*'If we are serious about social mobility we need to stop the piecemeal closure of these vital community resources and ensure they are again made part of a clear national strategy to improve social mobility in the early years'. (Smith et al: 2018: 3)*

The implementation of Sure Start coincided with the longitudinal research project, the Effective Early Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) (Sylva et al: 2004). Their early findings clearly demonstrated that the quality of any early years provision had a marked impact on the outcomes for children. This research had been commissioned by New Labour to inform its policymaking. The key findings of EPPE stated that the best quality of provision for children and their families was to be found in settings that integrated care and education, and it noted that there was a high correlation between the qualifications of staff and better outcomes for children. These findings, combined with the publication of the Laming Report (2003) and concerns about safeguarding children, led to further government policy developments and initiatives. Every Child Matters (DfE) was published in 2003, setting out five positive outcomes the government hoped to achieve to safeguard children's lives, and legislating for multi-agency working with children and young people. The Children Act followed in 2004. This led to changes in the structure of children's centres, neighbourhood nurseries and local Sure Start schemes, resulting in reduced funding for each centre while continuing to target the 20% most disadvantaged families. The focus was on the integration of health, speech and language, family support and education and care. Crucial to the changes in structure was the integration of care and education, termed 'educare', within Sure Start programmes.

### **1.3.ii National qualifications and training framework for early years**

By 2008, the Government had introduced the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage. The Early Years Foundation Stage (2008) provided a curriculum from birth to the end of Reception Year in Primary School with standardised and predetermined child outcomes (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence: 2007). This play-based curriculum was underpinned by four overarching principles: the unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments, and learning and development. This was produced after many years of changing curricula for early years (see Table 1), starting with the recommended *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education* (DfE: 1996), which stated that pre-school places should be of good quality and should offer education that would lead to desirable outcomes for children's learning. With an increased focus on the importance of education in the early years, a curriculum for early years evolved, assessment became formalised and early childhood institutions became accountable through Ofsted.

Simultaneously, the qualifications for practitioners in early years care and education came under scrutiny. The Nursery Nurses Examination Board (NNEB), the original qualification in early years, was considered too focused on care and took 3 years of training; an expensive qualification. A Level 3 Diploma in Nursery Nursing (DNN) replaced it in 1994, followed by National Vocational Qualifications in Early Years in 1997. The latter training course was a cheaper work-based qualification, but it lacked taught theoretical knowledge to support a strong pedagogy and understanding of how children learn (Calder: 1995). There is now a raft of qualifications, a hierarchy of training levels and accompanying pay and conditions from qualified teachers to support staff, including bilingual support staff (see Table 3, in Chapter 4).

The construction of the early years worker has evolved through government policy, often promising improved career pathways, an integrated qualifications framework, increased support for training for existing staff and the development of new roles such as the controversial Early Years Professional Status (EYPS). This post-graduate role claimed to be equivalent to teacher status, but without teachers' pay and conditions. Early childhood education and care was and still is seen as central to the country's economic and social prosperity, and therefore nursery workers have come to be regarded as guardians of the country's children (Osgood: 2012) as well as facilitating parents' return to work. The nursery workforce, predominantly working-class women, became objectified by government policy, and made responsible for making policies work. However, government guidelines neglected the issues of social justice around low pay and poor working conditions (ibid). Early years practitioners have an important

and complex role in their care of young children, and have been described as caregivers, specialists, babysitters, teachers and advocates (Harwood et al: 2013). Moyles (2001) argued that early years practitioners have historically devalued their professional identity, but Osgood (2010) stated that they are increasingly critically evaluating how they are positioned in policy frameworks. Osgood (2008) argued that state control over professionalism appears to give practitioners greater freedom and agency, but in reality, it is a subtle means of controlling this group of workers.

In my role throughout the past 20 years, training nursery workers completing a range of programmes from foundation courses to postgraduates (PACEY: 2019), I have been aware of the changing goalposts, noting how responsibilities grew while pay and conditions remained unchanged. Government reports commented on the workforce, regarding their practice to be of poor quality and failing to deliver the strategy (HM Treasury: 2004). The content of initial training programmes for early years candidates was not responsive to new research, leaving newly qualified workers unprepared for the changing workplace. With the increased focus on early years education through the Sure Start programme, there were concerns about the underlying issues relating to poverty and disadvantage, and evidence indicated that cultural issues needed to be addressed.

### **1.3.iii Government agenda to “narrow the gap”**

‘Building Futures’ (DCSF: 2009) documented research findings from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (2008) indicating that Black children achieved less than their peers, even though there was no inherent reason for this. The report stated that Black referred to children of Black Caribbean; Black African; mixed White and Black Caribbean; and mixed White and Black African heritage, and further suggested that *‘the terms Black child or Black children are used to refer to children with at least one Black parent, grandparent or great grandparent who was born in Africa, the Caribbean or Guyana in South America’*. This report suggested that early underachievement should be monitored in the early years and interventions introduced to ensure that children make good progress from the start of their schooling. The disturbing projection of this research is that it could take up to 40 years before equality is achieved for Black children.

A study on poverty and disadvantage among BAME children observed that Sure Start programmes and Children’s Centres were usually located in areas of the greatest socio-economic disadvantage (Melhuish & Hall: 2007). Although further reports commissioned by

the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) suggested that the gap was narrowing, a report funded by Ofsted (Pascal & Bertram: 2013) indicated that socio-economic disadvantage was continuing to increase inequalities for children, including Black children. The reports by Marmot (2010), on reducing inequalities in health, and Field (2010), recommending interventions in the early years of a child's life to increase their chances of equality, were among the forces that drove governments to introduce free childcare and education for disadvantaged children aged two years. The EPPE study (Sylva et al: 2004) concluded that the home-learning environment and the quality of care and education in the early years context were key features shaping future learning outcomes for children. Local authorities, including the one in this study, set annual targets to improve the attainment of Black children and have focused outcomes expected within the Foundation Stage. So what are the particular needs for children and their families from minority ethnic communities? Why the concern? These were important questions for me to consider in my research.

#### **1.4 Culture and diversity**

Culture and diversity are different yet intricately intertwined. Culture is the social behaviour and practices found in social communities (discussed further in 1.4.i), while diversity refers to the similarities and differences between individuals (see 1.4.iv). The importance of acknowledging diverse cultural practices is identified in legislation and policy within the UK, but is more complex than the policy documents suggest. For example, Ofsted and the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework (2008), document the required standards for non-discriminatory practice in all work with young children (Devarakonda: 2013). My research project acknowledges the diverse and complex issues of language, culture and identity within the context of the nursery. As children move from home to nursery, they begin to learn the cultural knowledge of the setting, including language, values, belief systems and the expectations of behaviour within the group. This may vary from their home cultural knowledge. How children internalise these knowledges will shape their view of self; their developing identities (Sheets: 2005). Globally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC: 1989) has provided a comprehensive set of universal rights for children, some of which refer to culture, particularly Articles 1, 14 and 30 (UNICEF: 1989). These articles outline aspects of culture that need to be recognised and respected by those who work with or legislate for children. However, Pupavac (2001: 101) suggests that the UNCRC has been criticised as a moral crusade to save children, especially 'Third World' children whose lives do not conform to a Western concept of childhood.

#### 1.4.i Definitions of culture

For the purposes of this study, culture or cultures are the traditions, values, belief systems and ways in which social and economic groups within societies live. Williams (1976) suggests that culture is a particular way of life of a people or a period. It is the vehicle for groups of people to express meanings and ideas for everyday living. Therefore, language is a critical aspect of sharing cultural values and beliefs (ibid). Hall (1976) observes that there are three universal characteristics of culture, defining the boundaries of different groups of people. Firstly, it is learned and not biological; secondly, various aspects of culture are interrelated; and to understand a culture it is important to learn about all of its aspects. Thirdly, it is shared between members of the group, allowing members to act in socially appropriate ways and predict how others will respond. However, this does not mean that a particular culture is homogenous.

Nieto (1999) suggests that culture is dynamic, rooted in distinct contexts; culture is shaped socially, economically and politically, and is socially constructed and learned. Culture is active and productive. The anthropologist Street (1993) contended that 'culture' is a verb, because it is about people doing, rather than people having or owning, culture. Culture is actively reproduced in everyday life and is continuously evolving with time, place and experiences. As such, it can be observed and studied to learn more about diverse cultural practices and their impact on self-identity and positioning within any given context. Hall (1976) likened culture to an iceberg, where some aspects are visible but the majority lie below the surface, and so it is important to find out about other cultures carefully and respectfully, and avoid making quick assumptions from outward appearances. Assumptions lead to stereotypes and ensuing misunderstandings about the rationale for particular activities and behaviours. Hall (1976) notes that most anthropologists suggest that there are different levels of behaviour within culture: overt and covert, implicit and explicit. He states that

*'the natural act of thinking is greatly modified by culture; Western man (sic) uses only a small fraction of his mental capabilities; there are many different and legitimate ways of thinking; we in the West value one of these ways above all others—the one we call 'logic,' a linear system that has been with us since Socrates. Western man sees his system of logic as synonymous with the truth'* (Hall: 1976: 9).

This has led to a powerful view of Western culture being superior to other cultures, also embedded in UNCRC, as previously stated.

#### **1.4.ii Social construction of culture**

The home culture in which a child is nurtured shapes their understanding of the society in which they live. Through their negotiations with the social world, children as dynamic agents shape their lives and become active meaning-makers (Mayall: 2002). In this way, children develop their own cultures. Early childhood is a significant time to consider the diversity in cultural construction (Montgomery: 2003). Beliefs and traditions around childbirth and the nurturing of young children differ greatly across cultural groups.

Some cultural groups have become scattered across different locations as a result of forced displacement through war, famine, disease and ethnic cleansing. These people are known as the diaspora, a dispersal that the cultural groups did not necessarily choose. Other groups of people may choose to blend with other cultures, adapting their own traditions and beliefs and ways of living. This is known as hybridity. Both these practices encourage the social construction of culture (Robinson & Diaz: 2006). Rutter (2009) comments on the ways in which refugee children develop new identities of hybridity to replace their national identities as they settle into a new geographical and cultural location, constructing new identities as a way of managing their new life.

Some critical questions that need further exploration in my study have emerged around childhood. How do different sociocultural groups value childhood? What is valued? Are particular cultures more valued than others? Cunningham (2006) explores the history of childhood in Britain in an attempt to explain the many 'inventions' of childhood and the experience of children within these inventions. Stainton-Rogers (2001: 26) maintains that childhood is constructed by 'human meaning-making' and she develops this further by suggesting that social construction sees children as products of different worldviews. It is now widely accepted that childhood is a historically and socially constructed concept (Montgomery: 2003).

#### **1.4.iii Culture and power**

*"Culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is thickly – described"* (Geertz: 1973: 14).

When children move into situations such as a nursery setting where there is a conflict between their cultural understandings about the setting and the home, or a lack of understanding by the nursery staff of the child's home culture, the child is caught in tension. This may be exacerbated

by the diverse religious values and beliefs held by families, which can contribute powerfully towards the identity of its members. Our perceptions of ourselves change as we move from place to place, adapting to the social norms and expectations of the dominant group. Gramsci (1966), cited in Corson (1998) discussed this, demonstrating the concept of hegemony, describing how people conform in a particular way under the pressure of an invisible dominant cultural power. Giles & Middleton (2008) propose that if culture is the production and distribution of meaning, then culture is the site from which particular groups or communities in society may establish their power over another group. Geertz (1973: 44) states:

*“Culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behaviour patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habits, clusters – as has been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call “programmes”) – for governing behaviour”.*

Since 1990, there has been an increase in migration, caused by situations such as inequality and underemployment, conflict, natural disasters and disease, and these have augmented multicultural communities with the juxtaposition of diverse cultures within the same geographic location (Vertovec: 2014). Whereas prior to 1990, the majority immigration to the UK came from British colonies, Vertovec (2006) noted in his research that since 1990 there are smaller, less organised, and legally differentiated immigrant groups without colonial links to the UK that have transformed the landscape of Britain. He coined the term ‘superdiversity’ to describe these complex emergent patterns, highlighting that this new complexity is greater than previously experienced in a particular society (Vertovec: 2007). The increased migration has resulted in complex social formations such as ethnicity, language, religion, legal status and migration route. This leads to complicated issues around integration depending on the migrant’s human capital (especially their educational background), their access to employment, and the responses of local authorities and service providers to provision of housing and services for the migrants. Vertovec (2006) argues that this notion of superdiversity highlights the importance of considering multi-dimensional policies and practices affecting immigrants in contemporary society to ensure integration and meeting the needs of minority ethnic groups and the wider population.

Robertson (2016) uses the term ‘superdiversity’, as a theoretical lens where the focus is changed from plurality to addressing the complexity of cultural diversity. She states,

*‘within the growing recognition of societal superdiversity, there is a danger that this acceptance conceals the lack of diversity in thinking in educational policy*



*and in pedagogical practice in terms of multilingualism. This seems to be true to all phases of education, from early years to higher education.’ (2016: i)*

#### **1.4.iv Diversity**

Diversity can be defined as the state or quality of being different or varied (Robinson & Diaz: 2006). Issues around inequality based on assumptions of disadvantage or the perceived inferiority of certain cultural groups continue to exist as the UK has become more diverse, but the needs of children and their families have not changed. Unchallenged, this affects even the youngest children’s future success, but if challenged, it may ensure that all education is based on equality and justice, and this will empower relationships that appreciate diversity (Brown: 1998). Historically, early childhood education and care provision has been rooted in social justice. For example, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the McMillan sisters provided for the basic needs of children in their care and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Froebelian values reflected social justice and child welfare (Jarvis: 2014), and more recently the Children Act (1989) states that the welfare of all children must be paramount. “Quality in diversity in early learning” (Early Childhood Education Forum: 1998) was produced to support teachers and practitioners working with young children to understand the importance of valuing the rich diversity of languages, religions, ethnicities and ways of living and nurturing children within an increasingly multicultural society.

Cultural diversity has become an important issue in modern society. Diverse cultures were highlighted through colonialism, which emphasised the ‘superiority’ of Western culture. The post-imperial era has become focused on concerns around ethnic immigration and migration. Culture is not only what we live by, but as Eagleton (2000) argues, it is what we live for. He suggests that affection, intellectual engagement, kinship, memory and meaning in life are all important to human fulfilment.

#### **1.5 Focus of the study**

I chose to carry out research in response to the issues I have discussed within this chapter. I particularly wanted to know how the context of early childhood education and care provides for the specific needs of young children of two years old who are faced with a different culture, language and environment from their home as they start nursery. During the process of this research period, free nursery places for children aged two years was provided for families that met certain criteria, mainly socioeconomic issues (DfE: 2014). The complex relationships between government, local authorities, managers and head teachers, teachers, qualified ECEC staff, parents and carers and local communities, juxtaposed with personal histories and

experiences, can create confusing expectations within nurseries. My own experiences of diverse cultures and geographic locations have shaped my pedagogy and challenged my thinking about the needs of families and young children growing up in an unfamiliar situation. As a result, the main question for this study is *'How do two-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting?'* Children do not live in isolation, and so it is important to research the context in which they are learning and developing. To do this I address three supporting questions:

- i. *'How do practitioners understand their role in their work with emergent bilingual children?'*
- ii. *'How does the nursery environment support the children?'*
- iii. *'How do individual children negotiate their participation?'*

## **1.6 In conclusion**

The purpose of this first chapter has been to introduce the research topic within the political and cultural context. In providing a rationale for my study, I have summarised the issues in my personal and professional life that have influenced my pedagogy in early years education, a pedagogy based on the belief that *"knowledge and identity are constructed ... not from young children being taught but from what children do themselves, as a consequence of their activities, relationships and the resources available to them – by being in relation and dialogue with the world"* (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence: 1999: 76). Early childhood is an important stage; a time when the child's future is shaped, and where the influences of the present will impact on the decisions of the future. Early childhood institutions are statements about how society views childhood and envisages its relation to society. Although the children within this study are not English speakers and are entering an English-speaking nursery, the research focus is not primarily the development of bilingualism, but is about issues, including language, that may affect the very young non-English speaking child as they start nursery.

As I have positioned my research within a sociocultural framework, the following chapters focus on the analytical tools that I have applied in the search for answers to the questions raised in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 discusses the work of Vygotsky, Lave & Wenger's concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation and investigates the work of Rogoff. I have analysed some contemporary research on working with bilingual children and their families in various contexts and discussed the concept of superdiversity. Foucault's theories about power relations and how power is exercised by individuals and institutions is valuable in gaining insight into the effect of hierarchical structures on the working lives of individual people. As the research is based in a Children's Centre, I have examined some of Foucault's theories in chapter 3, and

applied this to a discussion on the contested discourse of care and education and the position of children in society. In Chapter 4 I explore ethnography and describe the process of my research. I also introduce the Children's Centre and my research cohort within their historical, demographic and pedagogical context. In Chapter's 5 & 6 I record the analysis of the outer layers of influence on the institution, and scrutinise the strategies the children adopted as they negotiated their participation in the nursery, and I present my findings. Chapter 7 explains my key findings and the conclusions drawn from the analysis. Based on these conclusions, recommendations are made on what measures can be taken in response to the findings of this research. In a society that is superdiverse, practitioners working with very young children require the knowledge, skills and resources for supporting every young child's participation in their new educational environment, including emergent bilingual children aged two years.

## Chapter 2

### How Children Learn: A Sociocultural Perspective

#### 2.1 Introduction

The concept of the child as a social actor within a societal context is a belief that was central to the work of Vygotsky, which transformed the image of the child as a learner in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the heart of this research project are three two-year-old children settling into an English nursery, each one supported by a qualified early years professional worker. I have chosen to position my research within a sociocultural framework, centred on the theories of Vygotsky and neo-Vygotskian researchers.

In this chapter I start by critiquing the work of Vygotsky and his perspective on how children learn. I consider the work of Lave & Wenger, exploring the concepts of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, followed by an examination of Rogoff's theory of guided participation, noting the importance of relationships between the young child and their carers. I continue to explore this relationship and its importance for the development of language and cognition through an investigation into recent research in educational contexts with children, and conclude with a specific focus on work with young bilingual children.

#### 2.2 A sociocultural perspective

A sociocultural perspective recognises the importance of the history of a culture. It takes account of communities in the past, what is significant for the present and how these may shape learning in the future. Vygotsky, a social constructivist, maintained that concept formation is a social-cultural-historical activity. Vygotsky (1978) used the term 'historical child' to refer to the child and their development. He was concerned to study how, by changing their own conditions of existence, people can change themselves through their social activities (Daniels: 2017), focusing on the contribution that society makes in this process. Vygotsky argued that the development of higher order functions is the result of the social context within which the child exists, including significant adults and peers, cultural tools and shared experiences. His concept of the zone of proximal development, discussed in 2.2.iii, was central to this theory. This theory does not only focus on individual learning and the influences of adults and peers, but also on how cultural beliefs and attitudes shape the learning process.

Vygotsky's main work was in developmental psychology, and it was his reinterpretation of learning as a social rather than an entirely psychological or cognitive process that separated

his work from other constructivist theories of learning. Vygotsky used the term 'development' to explain his view of the process of elementary psychological evolving practices into complex ones (Vygotsky: 1978). He proposed a theory of the development of higher cognitive functions in children that saw reasoning as emerging through activity in a social environment. Vygotsky was interested in the child as a social actor, learning alongside more knowledgeable others in a collective context. He considered the sociohistorical context as essential in the social learning process, where both the historical and the current environmental context shape the child's learning. Vygotsky argued that the development of abstract thought was mediated by psychological tools, developed over previous generations - signs and symbols, such as language, numbering and counting symbols and systems, writing methods, diagrams and artefacts, and so was dependent on historical and cultural practices including language as well as universal cognitive processes. Consequently, Vygotsky maintained that the mechanism of individual development was rooted in society and culture (ibid).

### **2.2.i Key themes within Vygotsky's theory**

Vygotsky claimed that learning appears on two planes: the social plane through language, which he considered to be the most important, where children begin to understand and think about the world alongside others in social contexts; and the psychological plane when they internalise language and use it to develop new meanings (Vygotsky: 1986; Newman & Holzman: 2014). Vygotsky suggested that what constitutes the environment is dependent on the individual child, commenting that even the same physical environment may be experienced differently by individual children, and that the same physical environment may be interpreted differently by the child as s/he grows up (Van Der Veer: 2007), because each child has their own perception of the world based on prior experiences.

Other views of learning, for example the work of Piaget, suggested that learning was a process by which the learner internalises knowledge. This focus on internalisation and assimilating knowledge is cerebral (Piaget: 1959), although Piaget's thinking developed over time and he recognised the social role of cognitive conflict (Piaget: 2000), and it is important to make a distinction between Piaget's age-stage theory of development and his constructivist theory of knowledge (Daniels: 2017). Both Piaget and Vygotsky argued that development involves qualitative transformations and not incremental growth. They viewed the roles of the individual and the environment as inseparable and considered children as active in their own development. A key difference between their theoretical perspectives was the role that the social world has in the child's development and the role of language in learning (Tudge &

Rogoff: 1987). However, it is important to acknowledge the historical, cultural context of Vygotsky's studies in Russia, and the historical, cultural context of the West, where Piaget studied and where Vygotsky's work is applied (Daniels: 2017). Vygotsky believed that children's highest mental functioning occurred through experience with cultural tools in joint problem solving and in conjunction with more skilled partners. Although Vygotsky did not study the cultural character of daily life, understanding development from a sociocultural historical perspective entails investigation of the cultural, social and interpersonal aspects of everyday existence. This includes studying people's involvement in their family and community practices within their cultural traditions and their use of cultural tools.

Vygotsky believed that each generation appropriates cultural tools and uses them for their own purposes, and that is one way in which each society moves on. Cultural tools are not inherited genetically; they are developed and preserved in a particular culture. The internalisation of culturally produced tools activates behavioural transformation, creating a bridge between early and later forms of development (Cole et al: 1981). These cultural tools are thought to shape and transform mental processes and to mediate social and cultural functioning. Vygotsky suggested that human action is mediated by semiotics, the signs and tools that facilitate the co-construction of knowledge and the internalisation of knowledge that will support future independent problem-solving (Palincsar: 2005). Vygotsky used the term 'mediation' to describe the process that takes place *'when in higher forms of human behaviour the individual actively modifies the stimulus situation as a process of responding to it'* (Vygotsky: 1978:14). Mediation acts as an agent to support future learning. Vygotsky (ibid) maintained that the effect of tool use was foundational because it has an important impact on the internal and functional relationship within the human brain. Kozulin (2002) identified two categories for mediation - human and symbolic. He argued that human mediation usually tries to answer the question about *what type of involvement* by the adult with the child might enhance the child's learning, while symbolic mediation considers *the changes in a child's learning* through the use of symbolic tools. Vygotsky (1987) was particularly interested in the 'higher' mental processes, where relying on memory, attention and cultural tools extend thinking. The Piagetian view of learning proposed that children need to be motivated in order to engage in the process of learning, but Vygotsky stated that the child must learn in order to be motivated as a cyclical process (Newman & Holzman: 2014).

## 2.2.ii Thought and Speech

For Vygotsky (1978), language was a communicative tool evolving within a sociohistorical context. A sociohistoric view of emerging bilinguals takes account of the bilingual communities in the past, what is significant for the present and how it may shape learning in the future. Vygotsky argued that language provides children with a powerful tool, helping them to solve difficult tasks, and plan solutions to difficult problems. Language helps to inhibit impulsive actions and enables children to control their own behaviour. The development of thought is to a great extent determined by the child's linguistic skills, which in turn is dependent on their sociocultural experiences (Vygotsky: 1987).

Vygotsky's main premise was the interrelationship between thought and language, identifying thought as internalised speech. Vygotsky's hypothesis is that inner speech is essential for supporting higher mental processes. He argued that thought has its roots in children's external speech, but is dependent on external factors. Over time and with experience, it becomes internalised as thought. Thought development is dependent on language. As inner speech and thought develop, *'the nature of the development itself changes, from biological to sociohistorical'* (Vygotsky: 1962: 51). Vygotsky noted through observations of children that when they were confronted with a problem that was slightly too complicated for them, they used a range of strategies to help themselves. Children solved practical tasks with the help of their speech as well as their eyes and hands. Vygotsky (1978) concluded that children might use tools, such as speech to others, speech to themselves and speech to the object as strategies for mastering the problem.

Long before children use recognisable speech, they are making meaning by observing and experiencing their environments and making sense of them in a social context. Children's meaning-making is what makes this language-making possible (Newman & Holzman: 2014). Vygotsky (1987) believed that the child's early egocentric speech was the transition to their inner speech and thought, asserting that speech and thought are not separate processes, but exist simultaneously on two planes; one being the auditory or the external plane, and the other being the inner or semantic plane.

*'Inner speech is not the interior aspect of external speech - it is a function in itself. It still remains speech, i.e., thought connected with words. But while in external speech thought is embodied in words, in inner speech words die as they bring forth thought. Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings.'* (Vygotsky, 1962: p. 149)

Speech and thought become internalised, driving cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) argued that children's cognitive development cannot be explained separately from the social, cultural, and historical influences in their community and the people they learn with.

### **2.2.iii The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

Vygotsky proposed that development obeys the internal laws of maturation, and instruction externally considers the potential of development (Vygotsky: 1987). He stated that *'instruction is useful when it moves ahead of development... it impels or awakens a whole series of functions that are in a stage of maturation lying in the zone of proximal development'* (Vygotsky: 1987: 212). The zone of proximal development (ZPD) facilitates the relationship between thought and action. Central to ZPD is the concept of the relationship between the 'matured' and the 'maturing' process, explained as the relationship between what the child can do independently and what they are able to do in collaboration with more experienced others who act as mediators. Mediators guide or model an activity based on what the learner can do, supporting the learner as they become more skilful, until they are independent. The ZPD was an important psychological and methodological discovery for teachers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Newman & Holzman: 2014), providing a helpful strategy to support children's learning. However, Vygotsky stated categorically that the child's potential was not unlimited, even with adult support.

Identifying the child's actual developmental level is the starting point of the process of ZPD (Vygotsky: 1978: 86) what the child can already do, that is, the level of development of a child's mental functions. Unlike Piaget, Vygotsky (1986) believed that learning leads development. He suggested that developmental lines of function become central or peripheral, depending on the age of the child, so for example, at the age of two years, the age of the children in my study, language becomes central, and earlier exploration of their fingers and toes becomes peripheral (Vygotsky: 1978), although the use of gestures is still important for children who are acquiring a new language (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke: 2000). However, he also stated that the child's chronological age is not a reliable norm for ascertaining the actual level of development (Vygotsky: 1978), because learning is a social activity, and development takes place through participating in social contexts. Bruner introduced the term 'scaffolding' and argued that as a socially mediated activity it involves the more experienced adult or peer maintaining the complexity of an activity whilst they simplify the learner's role to enable them to accomplish a task (Wood, Bruner & Ross: 1976).



#### **2.2.iv Early years learning and development**

Following his experimental work, Vygotsky (1978) concluded that the most significant time in cognitive development is when speech and practical activity converge, enabling forms of practical and abstract intelligence to flourish. He asserted that language and thought began as two separate functions but merge and become interdependent around the age of two years (Vygotsky: 1962). He claimed that young children do not create their own speech but assimilate the 'ready-made' speech from adults (Vygotsky: 1987). Signs and words provide children with social contact, and this in turn leads to the development of cognitive and communicative functions of language. Later critics contest Vygotsky's theory, suggesting that language acquisition is innate, genetically programmed in the human brain (Chomsky:1957; Pinker: 1994). Other studies (Crystal: 2005; Karmiloff & Karmiloff-Smith: 2001), argue from their research that the stages all children go through in their language development is similar for any language. We can understand very young children through their gestures, pictures and words – (continuing to use these modes for communication throughout adult life). This involves trying to understand the cultural and contextual meanings of their words and actions, including all their non-verbal messages. As young children begin to be verbal, they show an interest in words and names, and Vygotsky suggested that this is linked to a change in thought and language (Vygotsky: 1986). Early egocentric speech is used for planning and organising the child's activities, and Vygotsky proposed that egocentric speech was the developmental link between overt language and inner speech, or thought (Whitehead: 2010).

The Early Years Foundation Stage (2008) which was current at the time of my research, was a play-based curriculum for young children and its pedagogy is rooted in Vygotskian theory. Vygotsky stated that *'play is not the predominant feature of childhood but it is a leading factor in development'* (1978: 101). It has been suggested that children learn best through play because they encounter concepts in their everyday activities, usually arising through first-hand experiences (Whitebread: 2010). Vygotsky recognised play as one of the ways in which children learn, and argued that:

*'As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development'* (Vygotsky: 1978: 102).

The child is in control of the activity through play, and Vygotsky (1967) believed that in play children are able to separate the visual field of what can be seen, from the field of what can be implied, i.e. their senses. He saw this as the first step in the process towards the development

of higher mental functions and verbal thinking. Vygotsky highlighted the motivational aspects of play, noting that children change the uses of objects, transforming them to their imaginary meanings and situations.

It could be said that working in isolation in Russia in the 1930's, within the historical context of western psychology, Vygotsky's work was essentially based on the northern world view. Nevertheless, because his sociocultural theories are not linked to age/stage development but are dependent on the particular environment of the child, arguably they could be transferrable to any cultural context. However, critics of Vygotsky's work suggest that he implied that European cultural tools and forms of mental functioning were superior to the tools of other cultural groups (Wertsch & Tulviste: 2005). Later neo-Vygotskian theorists have extended Vygotsky's work. Rogoff (1990) has further developed Vygotsky's sociocultural theories within cross-cultural contexts, and Lave & Wenger (1991) introduced concepts of 'situated activity', in particular the notions of legitimate peripheral participation and communities of practice. I now examine the work of Lave & Wenger and then discuss the ideas proposed by Rogoff (1998), the processes of supporting children's learning through guided participation, and apprenticeship in thinking.

### **2.3 Sociocultural theories: developing the work of Vygotsky**

Vygotsky's theories viewed children as apprentices to more experienced adults and peers and this informed the research of Lave & Wenger and Rogoff. The central premise of Lave & Wenger is the notion of situated learning, which involves the whole person being actively engaged in the learning process and not just receiving a body of knowledge from a more knowledgeable other. As the learner becomes an increasingly active participant in the learning process, they become empowered within the community. Lave & Wenger (1991) discuss the different interpretations of Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development. They comment that this can be seen as the distance between the solo learner and the support given by a more experienced other to acquire new knowledge. Alternatively, they suggest that there can be a cultural interpretation, in which the zone of proximal development is the distance between the cultural knowledge provided by the sociohistorical context and the everyday experiences of the individual, usually through instruction. This instruction can be given by any more knowledgeable other, peers or adults. In their discussion on Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, Lave & Wenger (1991) suggest that a more recent collectivist and societal interpretation of the zone of proximal development is that it is the distance between the everyday actions of the individual and the historically new form of societal activity,

through the process of social transformation. Using this later interpretation, Lave & Wenger (ibid) place more emphasis on the relationship between new learners and more experienced learners in the context of changing shared practice. Within this concept of situated learning, Lave & Wenger state that learning involves a process of engagement in a 'community of practice', in which learning occurs within the context of '*our lived experience of participation in the world*' (Wenger: 1998:3).

Building on the work of Vygotsky, Lave & Wenger (1991) discussed the process by which learners become part of a community of learners, gaining mastery of knowledge and skills that they require to fully participate in the sociocultural practices of the community. They presented a perspective that locates learning as situated within the context of lived experiences as participants in the world, based on a view of learning as a social phenomenon rather than an individual experience. They introduced the concept of 'communities of practice' as places for the acquisition of knowledge as well as a valuable context for the exploration of radically new insights and the creation of knowledge. Legitimate peripheral participation is defined as being the process through which learning takes place as a situated activity. It provides a way to articulate the relations between the 'old-timers' - existing members of a community of practice - and the newcomers to the community, and includes activities, identities, values and goals, use of language, artefacts and practices.

#### **2.4 Lave and Wenger: Communities of practice**

Wenger (1998) describes a community of practice as a social process of negotiating competence in a situated space over time, enabling newcomers to learn alongside 'old timers'. As newcomers become increasingly full participants, they become enculturated into the community as accepted members, transforming their own identities through their ways of thinking and being. Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a strong interest in something, who learn how to do it better as they interact and collaborate together, solving a problem or accomplishing a task. Wenger (1998) proposed that communities of practice have three requisite components. Firstly, a commitment to a shared domain of interest in which the community share joint activities; secondly, a willingness to be mutually supportive by sharing information through a variety of resources, stories, experiences, tools; and thirdly, shared practice. Wenger (1998) maintained that it is the combination of these three elements, shared interest, shared information, and shared practice that constitutes a community of practice. He further suggested developing these three elements in parallel forms such a community, providing a shared '*living context that can give newcomers access to*

*competence and personal experience of engagement*' (Wenger 1998: 214). Wenger (2000) claims that coupling practice with community defines a very specific type of community.

Communities are cultivated by constantly developing these elements simultaneously (Hoadley: 2012). Fuller et al (2005) suggest that communities of practice are close-knit but not closed communities. Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2004) concur, stating that the apprenticeships described by Wenger as an illustration of communities of practice are tight-knit groups of workers or members, in contrast with the definition of communities of practice by Lave & Wenger (1991), which is relatively loose. Further challenges to Lave & Wenger's model of communities of practice include a more flexible conceptualisation of communities of practice as central to learning. Boylan:(2010) argues from his research that the 'ecologies of participation' explain the complexity and multidimensionality of participation in diverse learning contexts.

Wenger (1998) suggested that communities of practice are centres of learning, negotiation, meaning and identity. Establishing a community of practice, can provide a strong, supportive environment in which children can learn through increasing participation. Lave & Wenger (1991: 31), like other socioculturalist thinkers such as Rogoff (1998), argued that learning is a social process that is situated in a cultural and historical context, moving from apprenticeship to situated learning, then to peripheral participation.

Wenger (1998) argues that not all groups of people form communities of practice. For example, a group of students enrolling on a PGCE course but may not be a community of practice, but can become one as they share their concern or passion and commit to learning and participating together. Wenger raised questions about the original concept of situated learning, suggesting that there may be a number of modes of participation, including marginal participation. Lave (1988; 2011) challenged the distinction between 'peripheral' and 'full', suggesting that participation may involve learning trajectories that do not necessarily lead to 'full' participation. Hodkinson & Hodkinson (2004) point out that there is a disparity between the writings of Lave & Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) about the membership of communities of practice: whether membership is a prime condition for all learning, or whether communities of practice represent certain conditions in which some learning can flourish. Hodkinson & Hodkinson also comment that Lave & Wenger present a monochrome group, failing to describe or analyse communities of practice as spatially and socially fragmented, and suggest that using the terms 'learning as a social practice' or 'situated learning' would better

indicate the underlying principle of communities of practice.

#### **2.4.i Legitimate peripheral participation**

Lave & Wenger (1991: 29) stated that legitimate peripheral participation characterises learning, and is at the core of situated learning. This concept articulates the ways in which newcomers learn through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice as they participate with old timers. They also comment that learning is a social process and state that *'the concept of legitimate peripheral participation provides a framework for bringing together theories of situated activity and theories about the production and reproduction of social order'*. (Lave & Wenger: 1991: 47) Communities of practice are not static; they are constantly changing through the sociocultural transformation in the flux of relationships between newcomers and old timers. Lave & Wenger comment that there is continuity within a community of practice over generations, but also a contradictory displacement, as newcomers become old timers, which introduces a new social order.

Legitimate peripheral participation can be used to understand specific moments of learning, viewing ecologies of practice. These are practices that are viewed as living things and connected to one another, within a community of practice. This practice is not static, but is where learning is understood as the flow of meaning and the focus of understanding (Lave & Wenger: 1991). This focus will change depending on the situation and the analytical purpose. Legitimate peripheral participation helps us to explain the situatedness of the context, the learning relationships, and the trajectories of identities and transformation. Lave & Wenger state that *'A person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice'* (1991: 29). Within legitimate peripheral participation, learning is defined as taking part. The newcomer is able to observe the practices and relations of the community as s/he fractionally moves forward, and progresses from *'learner to learning as participation in the social world, and from the concept of cognitive practice to the more-encompassing view of social practice'*. (Lave & Wenger: 1991: 43).

#### **2.4.ii Process of learning**

Learning is not the property of individuals but is a relational property in a given context and in interaction with another in a situated space. The notion of a community of practice held by Lave & Wenger (1991) alludes to learners, i.e. participants, having access to experts. This suggests that communities of practice must already exist for newcomers to join and participate

in, with its particular common history and identity (Hoadley: 2012). Lave & Wenger (1991) used the concept of apprenticeship, defining it as embodying transformative possibilities of being and becoming, and learning within a specific situated context. These are informal ways of learning, and useful within the immediate context. The newcomer learns and becomes knowledgeable skilful alongside 'an old timer'. Such participation shapes what we do, who we are, and how we interpret our actions.

Lave & Wenger (1991) argued that participation is always based on a situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world, with understanding and experience being in constant interaction. As such, legitimate peripheral participation is an evolving form of membership. Communities of practice are neither static nor a staged process but are social organisms, always changing and evolving. Bohm (1996) proposed that there are two meanings of participation: taking part in, and partaking. He suggested that 'taking part in' is to join in an activity without the sense of belonging, whereas 'partaking' is the actual engagement with a sense of connection, enabling identity formation through situated practice. Therefore, it may be seen that patterns of participation can be diverse (Fuller et al: 2005), and not necessarily accounted for by Lave & Wenger (1991).

#### **2.4.iii Identity transformation**

Wenger (1998: 4) described participation as '*being an active participant in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to those communities*'. Participation in social communities shapes our experiences as well as the community, as the transformation is bi-directional and mutual. Learning is not just the process of assimilation or transference of knowledge; it always includes the interaction of learning, transformation and change. Wenger (ibid) discusses the transformative nature of learning, in which the learning transforms who we are and what we can do, thus shaping the identities of the participants, and in turn, the communities of practice. Linking practice and identity is one of the most powerful aspects of a situated perspective, and highlights the extent to which the educators are neither imparting knowledge, nor helping participants to engage in a specific social practice, but to become particular types of human beings (Boylan: 2010).

But Lave & Wenger (1991) do not develop the significance of learner identity. They focus on the ways in which a newcomer's identity is formed by belonging to a community of practice, but fail to consider what the newcomer brings to the community from their own experiences outside the community (Fuller et al: 2005). It could be said that Lave & Wenger's concept of

communities of practice views the new participants as blank slates, similar to Locke's view of childhood (Montgomery: 2003). Neither the existing conditions of habitus and social codes held by newcomers (Mutch: 2003), nor the continuing learning of the full participants, are acknowledged (Fuller et al: 2005), and so Lave & Wenger only provide a partial account of the complexities of membership and learning within communities of practice. The trajectory of participants is emphasised, rather than the position of the participants (Boylan: 2010). Bligh (2014) states that young emergent bilingual children can settle into a new nursery environment from the safe position of the 'look out post', while taking risks and testing out the practices of the community of practice, without the fear of making mistakes.

## **2.5 Rogoff and Guided participation**

Rogoff (1998) developed her work in cross-cultural research based on a Vygotskian sociocultural perspective. She coined the term 'apprenticeship in thinking', noting the role of the young child as an apprentice in partnership with a more knowledgeable adult, in her research, usually the child's mother. This dyadic role is active. The child is active and has agency in their learning, and the adult is active in their selection of activities and support of the child. The sociocultural nature of apprenticeship is embedded in the child's culture and the social construction of their identity within the community. Through this apprenticeship, the child develops their sense of identity. Lave (1988) proposed that in learning alongside a person who is knowledgeable and skilled, the apprentice is able to think, interact and act in increasingly knowledgeable ways in an authentic and legitimate partnership. This is a respectful relationship, seeing the child as someone who is an equal partner in status, and able to participate within the real world of learning and development.

According to Rogoff (1998), the process of apprenticeship is through 'guided participation', providing guidance from the adult or a more knowledgeable peer: a requisite being collaborative participation in daily activities of cultural value, and therefore meaningful activities. Guided participation can be both a community and a dyadic activity. Rogoff gave examples of Mayan toddlers observing their mothers cooking, which demonstrated the way that children become knowledgeable and skilful in their cultural practices and ways of life, often through non-verbal communication. Adults and children were active and attentive to significant activities and traditions. This process is mediated through intersubjectivity. Rogoff (1990: 8) defines intersubjectivity as '*a sharing of focus and purpose between children and their more skilled partners and their challenging and exploring peers*'. Intersubjectivity is the shared understanding of participants within an activity, achieved through the recognition and co-

ordination of intentions. It ensures that the child's thinking is embedded within their cultural context, and is therefore meaningful and purposeful. What are considered to be important activities are culturally and situationally dependent. This suggests that for the child who is crossing cultures as they transition from a home culture that differs from the dominant culture, for example, a nursery, there is a need to negotiate the contrasting expectations and accommodate them into their practice. Adults can help children to make connections between the known context and activities and the new context (Rogoff & Gardner: 1984). This raises the issue of the cultural importance of skills and activities in the nursery for all children from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and the need for adults to be aware of diverse cultural values and practices, and also where these may differ from their own.

Rogoff (1998) suggested that children are able to extend their understanding of new activities through the interaction and guided participation with more experienced adult partners, and that children learn through partnerships with their peers. In his study, 'The development of intersubjectivity in social pretend play with pre-school children', Goncu (1998) concluded that young children engaging in social play with their peers share emotionally significant experiences, learning together through their interactions, using both verbal and non-verbal language to construct shared understandings. This use of metacommunication enabled the social play by children aged two years to share their worlds more effectively than was previously recognised in the play theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. Goncu (ibid) suggested that it was the identification of their shared emotional needs that provided the focus for their joint activity in social play. Peers may be equal partners, solving problems together, hypothesising and building consensus. In this way, children working in partnership may become more skilled and knowledgeable together than they could independently. In many societies, older children care for their younger siblings, developing apprenticeships within the peer community. Research carried out by Rashid & Gregory (1997), Drury (2007), and Kenner & Ruby (2012) indicate the importance of emergent bilingual children learning with siblings and peers.

### **2.5.i Intent participation**

Rogoff (1995) introduced the concept of intent participation, which may be defined as 'keenly observing and listening in anticipation of the process of engaging in an activity'. She stated that 'observation' refers to watching + listening. Intent participation involves a collaborative, horizontal participation structure with flexible and complementary roles (i.e. reciprocal). In her comparative studies of unschooled and schooled parents, Rogoff argued that this model of



participation is commonly found in cultures where there is less formal schooling. Conversely, what she termed 'the transmission model', involves a hierarchical structure where someone is the boss - the one with the knowledge. This model is more familiar to cultures in the USA and UK, where formal schooling is regulated and a legal requirement.

Rogoff (2012) initiated a study entitled '*Learning through observation and pitching into community activities*' and investigated a model of informal learning that is found in many communities where children were involved in the daily activities of their families and communities. Her findings indicated that children were learning through observation and 'pitching in.' She suggested that '*making a contribution*' is a source of human dignity and value. Children learn to collaborate at home by helping at home and then mirror the approaches from home in the nursery or school setting. Furthermore, Rogoff noted that children who 'pitch in' together with parents collaboratively learn to align themselves with others and to be alert to what is going on.

## **2.5.ii Social interaction**

Rogoff's research focused on the social context of individuals, and the development of methods for studying the complexities of life within the context of living in the community. Rogoff (1990: 3) was concerned with '*the nature of human nature, the nurture of human nature and the nature of human nurture*'. Her work (1990) emphasised the social interaction at the heart of learning and development. Rogoff (2003) argued, and I have noted this in my analysis of the children in Chapter 6, that individual determination and sociocultural engagement are integral to successful learning, both being important yet interweaved.

Bandura (2001) stated that individual people are active in constructing their experiences of the world. We are agents of experiences rather than merely undergoing experiences. Vygotsky was interested in the child as a social actor, learning alongside more knowledgeable others in a collective context (Vygotsky: 1986). He was more concerned with instruction, whereas Rogoff also stressed the agency of the child, noting that children refuse to engage in some activities and insist on others. However, the child's success in determining their own activities is dependent on the willingness of others to allow them to make the choice. Rogoff (1990) gave the example of a baby using her gaze and eye contact to retain hold of a plastic ring when the adult initially tried to take it away from her. The baby and the adult were working cooperatively in this activity. She also believed that '*Understanding cultural as well as individual variation is essential for understanding the process of guided participation and the process of*

*development itself* (Rogoff: 1990: 119). In recent years, research that is underpinned by sociocultural theory has been carried out with children from diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, investigating how children learn within a variety of different educational settings. The findings of some of this research follows a discussion on bilingualism.

## **2.6 How multilingual children learn in a monolingual context**

One popular definition of bilingualism is the ability to understand and communicate with others in more than one language. However, Baker suggested that bilingualism is more complex, commenting that it is important to make a distinction between bilingual ability and bilingual use, and emphasised that normally individual bilinguals *'use their two different languages with different people, in different contexts and for different purposes'* (Baker: 2011: 16). Grosjean (2010: 4) proposed that his definition of bilingualism emphasised the regular use of language rather than fluency, *'bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives'*. I have used the term 'emergent bilingual' to describe the children at the heart of my research, to define the process they were engaged in as they developed English alongside the development of their home languages.

Cummins (1981) formulated a theory of second language acquisition known as the iceberg theory. This comprised of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), being the iceberg above the waterline, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) below the water line. He later developed his theory of Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP), which underpinned both BICS and CALP. This identified that as a person learns their home language, they acquire a bank of skills and metalinguistic knowledge that they can access when they learn more languages. Cummins argued for a common underlying proficiency theory, in which the bilingual person is able to transfer cognitive and literacy skills across languages, primarily from their home language to their second language. He contended that children need to continue to develop their understanding and learning in their first language and that CUP provides the basis for the development of the new language. To gain the full advantages of bilingualism, both languages need to be developed fully (Cummins: 1981). Research by Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) and Milne & Clarke (1993) has highlighted the benefits of bilingualism and provided evidence to show that knowing more than one language may increase the flexibility in children's thinking. Baker (2017) argues that research has shown that divergent thinking, and the use of creative thinking in problem-solving, which is present in people who are bilingual, may give them an advantage over comparable monolinguals. He

also suggests that bilingual speakers have particular advantages in analysing their languages and in controlled attention to their language processing.

### **2.6.i Multilingual learning communities**

Although he did not write in depth about second language acquisition, Vygotsky (1977) did provide a theoretical framework and a methodological approach to guide research into second language acquisition, indicating the importance of bilingualism. In their analysis of the assumptions around language development, Garcia & Li Wei (2014) suggest that many monolinguals, often from the West, consider that monolingualism is the norm and bilingualism is merely double monolingualism. Bilingualism is a common phenomenon in the world, a fact that can be overlooked in traditionally monocultural societies (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke: 2000). Many children in early years settings are growing up within multilingual contexts where they may speak one language with parents, another with grandparents and then be required to learn a third language in their nursery (Whitehead: 2010). In response to the multicultural and multilingual society of the UK, there has been an increased focus in recent years on researching how young multilingual children learn. This research has examined the role of language in supporting acculturation and learning. Much of the research has been carried out in nursery classes with children aged three and four years and in primary schools (Kenner: 2000, Conteh: 2005, Drury: 2007, Kelly: 2010). Other research has been carried out in children's homes and centres of worship (Gregory: 1997, Gregory, Ruby & Kenner: 2010). This research has indicated some of the strategies that children use to make meaning of the transition from their home culture to the school culture, and has suggested practices to better support the children who are becoming multilingual within culturally diverse settings.

### **2.6.ii Connecting the diverse worlds of young children as emergent bilinguals**

In her introduction to 'One Child, Many Worlds', Gregory (1997) comments that it is critical to take account of the multiple pathways of learning in children's worlds. In her work, Gregory (1996; 2001; 2008; and Gregory et al: 2007) studied young emergent bilingual children within schools, researching the disconnect between home learning and school progress, the peer learning that takes place in the home between siblings as well as intergenerational learning as children, parents, grandparents and the wider family learn together, emphasising the sociocultural nature of learning.

Brooker (2003) studied four-year-old children from 'Anglo' and Bangladeshi families in a cultural knowledge and Reception class. In her study, she drew on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital

to emphasise how the school did not take account of children's cultural knowledge and experience, including differing cultural expectations around child rearing. For example, the importance of interdependence to Bangladeshi families, where children were socialised into a mixed-age community of the extended family, and how this contrasted with the Western values of independence and individualism for each child. She noted that the home-school dialogue must be respectful, and not constrained by a dialogue that assumes the school is always right. Brooker (2005) also commented that some of the ideological traditions of childhood have changed little over the last three centuries, while the actual lived realities of children have changed dramatically.

In their study of four children across different faith communities in London, Gregory et al (2013) explored the ways in which children combined their language, cultural and faith experiences to make sense of faith and their everyday lives. With reference to the work of Heath (1983) and Duranti & Ochs (1996), Gregory et al (2013) highlighted the ways in which the four children developed '*cultural threads from diverse sources [that] are interwoven into a single interactional fabric*' and enacted this in their daily lives. Syncretism, defined as '*a fusion of traditions, beliefs and practices*', is used as a theoretical framework to examine these transformative processes. Other studies by Robertson (2004), Kenner et al (2007), Gregory et al (2007), Gregory, Ruby & Kenner (2010), Kenner, Mahera & Gregory (2010), and Kenner & Ruby (2012) have shown how peers, grandparents and community teachers have used similar creative ways to draw on their 'funds of knowledge' from diverse literacy, faith and cultural experiences in supporting younger children in their learning. Conteh (2000) noted that the parents in her study syncretise the practices of both home and school cultures in supporting their children.

These studies demonstrate that children use their home cultures and languages, their close relationships and their wider experiences to develop their multilingual and multicultural identities within different contexts, switching between languages and living in simultaneous worlds (Kenner: 2000). However, Kenner & Ruby (2012) commented that schools in the UK rarely recognise this wealth of knowledge and expertise, in fact, like other institutions, schools tend to devalue certain languages. Conteh, Martin & Robertson (2007) discussed Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, commenting that certain languages and literacies may receive greater value in some social contexts, with Western European languages seen having a higher value than languages such as Urdu. In a presentation lecture in November 2016, Robertson & Auger

stated that *'most schools replicate the hierarchy of languages in a society and do not value the languages that children speak at home'*.

Living in simultaneous worlds, benefitting from cultural and linguistic diversity within a supportive community can reinforce children's learning. Kenner & Ruby (2012: 118) proposed that *'learning power'*, which they defined as *"working together as a community, co-constructing knowledge that draws on multilingual and multicultural resources"* means both the power to learn and learning to use that power. They suggested that as children are able to use this, their sense of agency and involvement with the processes of learning will increase.

Drury (2001) carried out research in a nursery class within a primary school, investigating the ways in which children syncretise home and school learning in a sociocultural context, to discover whether the children have agency and can take control of their learning. Her research indicated that the perception of the nursery teachers, and their expectations of the individual children's abilities, had an effect on the child's progress in nursery, and the degree to which they had control of their learning. Parke & Drury (2001) recognised the importance of encouraging the use of the children's first language across their social worlds but they warned against assuming that children's interactions in simple forms of English, as Cummins (1991) established, are evidence of significant language acquisition for understanding academic concepts. Drury (2007) highlighted the importance of providing support for very young children through the employment of bilingual support staff, to help the children make connections between language, understanding and conceptual development.

### **2.6.iii Living through the silent period**

Many emergent bilingual children, but not all, experience the silent period (Krashen: 1982). Ohta (2001) argued that the child is engaged in an intrapersonal interactive process. Drury (2007) suggested that the silent period can be one of self-assertion, and is both powerful and agentive. This phase is perhaps more accurately described as the 'non-verbal' stage by Drury (2013), who proposed that it was the period when young children needed time to acclimatise to their new linguistic and cultural environment, separated from their families and familiar home environment. Tabors (2008) suggested that bilingual children may choose silence because they prefer to communicate non-verbally. Tabors used the term 'double bind' (2008: 33/34) to identify the complex situation facing the young emergent bilingual, one in which the child needs to become socially accepted by the group who speak the new language, but in order to do so she must be able to communicate with them in their language. The 'double bind' is that social

competence and linguistic competence are indivisibly interrelated. Tabors highlighted the importance of the social context for these children's learning process, and commented that if this is not noted and supported by early years practitioners within the setting, the children may '*spend time playing alone silently, or humming, singing, or talking to themselves*' (Tabors: 1997: 38).

During this silent or non-verbal period, children may be rehearsing the new language silently, then begin to practise sounds in private speech as they listen to the language spoken in the new environment. Consequently, as emergent bilingual children acquire additional languages, the silent period is a common phase, but not always one that is recognised by practitioners. This phase may last for a short time, or in Bligh's experience (2014), can be up to two years. Bligh carried out an ethnographic study to investigate the notion of the silent period in order to explore the learning trajectory of the emergent bilingual child aged two years within an early years English monocultural context, with a particular focus on legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger: 1991) as discussed earlier. Bligh's findings (2014) concur with Drury (2007; 2013) and Tabor (1997), proposing that when examined through a sociocultural lens, the silent period in the initial stage of language acquisition is significant, but often unacknowledged by early years practitioners. She suggested that her research revealed that self-mediated learning is continuing throughout the silent period within the context of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger: 1991). Bligh (2012:6) also stated that within her research there was evidence that the emergent bilingual child preferred to be on the periphery from where they could '*observe, listen and copy the practices within the early years setting*'. She proposed that the silent period is a period of intense learning as the child fractionally increases their participation in the early years community of practice. Research by Flewitt states that it is important to remember that silence of this kind is not limited to bilingual children (Flewitt: 2003, 2005).

Bligh (2014) highlighted the difficulties that emergent bilingual children may face in an English monocultural early years setting, where the environment is predominantly prepared for English monocultural children. She concluded that practitioners would not be able to provide appropriate cultural and linguistic support for children as they pass through the silent period if they do not understand the cross-cultural issues facing the young bilingual child. Siraj Blatchford & Clarke (2000) commented that children in the silent phase can be misunderstood by practitioners, because the children may be considered to be refusing to interact, reluctant to respond or speak to other children or adults, and having difficulties with settling in to nursery.

## **2.7 Supporting Young Children in Becoming Bilingual**

Recent research has highlighted important strategies for enabling emergent bilingual children to participate in monolingual yet culturally diverse nurseries. In this section I discuss the importance of providing language support for young children.

### **2.7.i Supportive relationships to enable children's learning power**

In her study of two sisters at school, Drury (1997) noted the assumption by teachers that the acquisition of English as an additional language would take place naturally, as long as children have sufficient exposure. However, this was not supported by evidence of their learning as the young bilingual children progressed through nursery and into school. Drury (2007), and later Bligh (2014), recognised that the process of learning an additional language was a more complex procedure, involving learning within a sociocultural context in which relationships, diverse cultural experiences and an holistic approach to learning need to be acknowledged. Drury noted that teachers and practitioners who are knowledgeable about the children's home cultures, languages and linguistic development were more able to support the children in this process. Children starting in an English nursery, learning English as an additional language, have to make sense of a new and unfamiliar context without a shared language with their monolingual teachers and practitioners (Drury: 2007). Kenner & Ruby (2012) suggested that teachers should take the lead in connecting children's worlds, and work collaboratively with bilingual children to build strong cultural identities in school. Language and identity are strongly linked and strong cultural identities help to promote academic success (Kenner: 2000). In her research, Kenner noted that connecting the literacy worlds of home and nursery, and involving parents in writing in their home languages on nursery displays, highlighted the interests of all children in written literacies as well as spoken languages. She commented that metalinguistic awareness provides multilingual children with the ability to analyse and manipulate language in ways that are not available to most monolingual children. Ulich & Oberhuemer (1997) referred to children as *living* two languages rather than *speaking* two languages, thus emphasising the integrated nature of language, culture and identity. As teachers, practitioners, parents, and siblings work together, the young child who is becoming bilingual from minority ethnic communities and starting out in a new world of education, can successfully negotiate these new cultures and become part of a community of learners and fully participate in the sociocultural practices of the community (Lave & Wenger: 1991).

### **2.7.ii Bilingual Support Staff**

Kenner & Ruby (2012: 119) stated, *“through interconnecting worlds, education becomes a shared activity in which teachers and children move forwards in learning together”*. Drury (2007) noted that children who are becoming bilingual are dispossessed of much of their home learning within the nursery context. She commented that the structure of the nursery environment and the daily routines are based on the practitioners’ decisions about planning for each session, forming relationships with the children and the provision of resources. In their research paper, ‘Silencing Bilingualism’, Robertson, Drury & Cable (2014) challenged the view that learning English and maintaining home languages are at opposite ends of a continuum of children’s lives and learning, which is evident within the context of early years settings and schools in the UK. In their study (Cable, Drury & Robertson: 2009) they interviewed Bilingual Support workers finding out about the ways in which they mediated language, communication and learning with children, and about their interactions with parents and children. Cable, Drury & Robertson (2009) reported that bilingual practitioners commented in their interviews that they saw English linguistic and social practices in schools as powerful, and that this power relationship became internalised as ‘common sense’ within minority communities. This effectively limited their confident use of home languages with the children, using them mainly for instruction when children did not understand, or when they needed basic information. They also reported using home languages to help keep children focused on the task and for providing information for parents. Cable, Drury & Robertson (2009) drew on the concept of ‘funds of knowledge’, theorised by Moll et al (1992) and explained by Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti (2005) as the experiences, skills and understandings that we acquire through significant people, and which shape our perceptions of the world. Moll et al (1992) argued that some children’s ‘funds of knowledge’ would correlate with school, while others’ ‘funds of knowledge’ might not be recognised and acknowledged. Vygotsky (1978) argued that the development of abstract thought is dependent on cultural practices and language. Practitioners who have made connections for themselves across languages and their different cultural worlds are able to better understand the cognitive processes of the emergent bilingual child and support them in their learning.

Robertson, Drury & Cable (2014) reiterate that bilingual support staff felt silenced in their workplace because of the dominance of English as the language of education with its perceived hierarchical and privileged position. This was reinforced by the continuing misconception among many teachers and practitioners that maintaining a home language and learning English create conflict for the child, which will then impact adversely on their



successful learning in school. Robertson, Drury & Cable (2014) conclude that the untapped 'funds of knowledge' of bilingual children, their parents and bilingual practitioners need to be made visible and recognised so that a new bilingual pedagogy can evolve within early years.

Despite much research into the issues around young multilingual children learning in monolingual educational settings, which highlights the importance of providing support for the children and their families, in addition to government documents endorsing the values of bilingualism and recognising the need to support young bilingual children, it would appear that there are still many challenges. When discussing children who are learning English as an additional language, Drury states: *"their learning paths are not always visible to their early educators. It is the children themselves who are faced with the effects of being unable to communicate in a context they do not yet understand and in which they are not at ease"* (2007: 45).

## **2.8 In conclusion...**

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory gave me a clear framework for studying children within the social context of a nursery. Exploring Rogoff's work which considered the child's culture and the social construction of their identity within the community, also supported my research within a multicultural context and two-year-old emergent bilingual children. The concept of communities of practice was a contextual framework for the nursery class, and the legitimate peripheral participation provided the structure for analysing the three children within their new community. Chapter 6 clarifies how I define the nursery class as part of a community of practice and justifies my use of these frameworks as tools for analysis.

Research carried out by Robertson, Drury & Cable (2014) and Cable, Drury & Robertson (2009), discussed in this chapter, indicated notions of power relations within early years settings. Chapter 3 begins by examining this concept of power relations within institutions theorised by Foucault, who also examined 'regimes of truth' and the effect of surveillance of individuals and institutions.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Power Relations and Competing Discourses in Early Years Education and Care**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The continuous changes in early childhood education and care, as shown in Table 1: 6-8, and discussed in Chapter 1, have been in response to increasing scrutiny from the state, with demands for accountability, achievement, a standardised approach to practice and a compulsory curriculum. Osgood (2008) argues that this move towards centralised control has posed a threat to professionals working within early years, and Ball (2003) asserts that many professionals are challenging the centralised, regulatory approach of the government. As in most institutions, including education, power relations exist, and the effect of power between organisations, people and practices is an important focus in the analysis of data in my research. In order to understand the issues of power relations, the use of language to exert power, and the impact of surveillance on people within institutions, I have examined some of Foucault's writings to inform my understanding of the ways in which certain discourses produce powerful rhetoric and how these have shaped and continue to shape early years institutions, individual practitioners, and their practice. I have then highlighted the polarised discourses of care and education noted by some as a dyadic system in the UK (Bertram & Pascal: 1999), examined the position of children in society and critiqued the concept of agency with particular reference to young children.

#### **3.2 Foucault and power relations**

Foucault was a French philosopher, social theorist and literary critic living and working in France during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout his life and writings, Foucault studied institutions through critiquing their structures and challenging their accepted 'regimes of truth' or grand narratives (Foucault: 1980). Foucault analysed the web of social relations that 'normalise' the modern individual, and claimed that institutions are saturated with such relations (Caputo & Yount: 1993). He formed his theory through studying prisons and other institutions, but not educational settings. However, his theories about power relations and how power is exercised by individuals and institutions is a useful tool for analysing how an institution is managed and the effect of hierarchical structures on the working lives of individual people within the institution (Foucault: 1983).

##### **3.2.i Introduction to notions of power**

Foucault (1980) pointed out that power is everywhere; exercised by individuals, institutions

and societies, producing and enforcing 'truths' through forms of control, surveillance and constraints. Power is always applied in a specific direction, separating people to one side or the other: the good and the bad, the right and the wrong. Foucault also argued that where there is power there is resistance, stating that the relationship of power has, as one of its limits, a relationship of confrontation by which it may be displaced or undermined. Power produces 'truth' and 'truth' can produce resistance (Rabinow: 1984).

Foucault did not invent the term 'discourse', but interpreted it differently from others. Discourse can refer to a type of language associated with a particular cultural discipline or institution, articulating the ideas and statements that express their set of values and/or world-view (Foucault: 1992). Foucault uses the term to describe 'language in action'; the ideas and statements that permit us to make sense of things. He used the term 'discourse' to denote the historical social systems that are reliant on history to produce knowledge and meaning (Rabinow: 1984). Discourses can be described as the effects produced by language rather than corresponding to the language itself. Foucault was interested in the ways in which discourses were constructed and how they change, how they shape everyday existence and form the objects about which they are speaking. In 'Archaeology of Knowledge' (1974: 49) Foucault states;

*'Of course, discourses are composed of signs, but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this 'more' that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe.'*

Discourses are embedded in social systems and privilege some kinds of knowledge over others in an organised way. Foucault's use of the term 'discourse' goes beyond the textuality of signs and refers to the practices, rules and procedures that embody a methodical uniformity. He noted how discourses can engender 'truths' that have the power to persuade others to accept a statement as true.

Foucault (1981: 52) used the term 'discourse' to refer to the substantive verbal traces left by history that produce knowledge and meaning.

*'In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.'*

For Foucault, a discourse is an institutionalised way of speaking or writing about a view of reality that defines what can be intelligibly thought and said about the world, and what cannot. For example, in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) argued that a new discourse of "sexuality" had fundamentally changed the way we think about desire, pleasure, and our innermost selves. In Foucault's argument, discourses about sexuality did not discover some pre-existing, core truth about human identity, but rather created it through particular practices of power/knowledge.

Research and policy development within Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) can sometimes work in parallel with each other, at times interconnecting, and at other times appearing to be in conflict with each other. The example of the discourse of education and care will be critiqued in 3.3. The discourses produced through policy and research are influenced and shaped by the broader political, economic and cultural context of early childhood locally, nationally and globally (Woodhead: 2006). Foucault proposed that 'disciplinary power', the power of the overt coercion of people, is concerned with the management, organisation and shaping of populations in a desired direction (Ransom: 1997).

Foucault (1977) studied the history and origins of disciplinary institutions such as prisons and asylums, including schools. He noted that his term 'disciplinary society' does not mean a 'disciplined society'. Disciplinary power is a process that regulates the behaviour of individuals, social groups and societies. This is done by regulating space (the physical environment), timetables, activities and behaviour, and is enforced through surveillance and regulatory practices. Foucault stressed that discipline is one way in which power can be exercised – power is not discipline. Central to this idea is the notion that power is the ability to order and normalise society. Foucault (1983) also stated that power produces practices in many fields, including education, not only determining how problems may be understood, but also considering how to influence and shape behaviour within society appropriately. Woodhead (2006) suggests that any particular theory or perspective that acts as an advocate for young children will actually be linked to a particular stakeholder, a set of political priorities or a specific view of childhood. This can result in powerful claims of truth about childhood and what is deemed as the appropriate care and education provided for young children.

### **3.2.ii Regimes of truth**

Foucault (1980) defined 'regimes of truth' as the historically engendered forms of knowledge that produce discourses, which are then accepted as true in particular times and places, and

which are highly political in nature. 'Regimes of truth' are the historically specific means that produce discourses, which are held as being true at particular times and places. Foucault later changed this to 'games of truth'. Gutting (2005) suggests that 'games of truth' are systems of discourse that are developed to produce truth. As I have argued in my research, the 'games of truth' refer to the sets of rules by and through which different forms of truth are produced within particular institutions (Schirato, Danaher & Webb: 2012).

Economic and political mechanisms require the constant production of such 'truths' in order to maintain their sustainability and value. These regimes of truth then become the object of political debate and social struggle. Regimes of truth, established through discourses, are disseminated through educational institutions and the media, reinforcing their power through knowledge. Foucault proposed that politics is not only concerned with institutions, but also with the complex and pre-existing field of power relations within which we live as individuals. In his exploration into how rhetoric can be studied and understood in its relation to power and knowledge, Foucault proposed that one must ask: who is speaking, who has the right to speak, and who is qualified to do so? (Gutting: 2005).

### **3.2.iii Power/knowledge**

For Foucault, power and knowledge were inextricably linked and not seen as separate entities. Power exists through complex networks of relations, and is described by Foucault as fluid, flowing through all relations. Prado (2000) comments that power and knowledge are interconnected, and that we are subjected to the production of truth through power. Knowledge is an exercise of power and power is a function of knowledge. Foucault posited that mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge which collate information on people's activities and existence, and asserted that power and knowledge imply one another. Using the example of the act of confession, he proposed that in confession, a form of power, people were encouraged to 'tell the truth', thus producing knowledge (Foucault: 1978). His argument was that through confessing their sexual desires etc, the people were constructing the sexual identity at the core of their being (he suggested, as a form of knowledge), and that identity had to be monitored and controlled. Foucault stressed that he did not claim that 'knowledge *is* power', arguing that he was interested in studying the complex relations *between* power and knowledge. Power/knowledge can be productive as well as constraining, as it opens up new ways of acting and thinking about ourselves as well as limiting what we can do. O'Farrell (2005: 67) states that 'power and knowledge generate each other in endless cycles. They have equal status. Foucault argued that knowledge claims cannot exist or be understood

unless they are located within complex networks of disciplinary practices through which power circulates (Flax: 1993). Foucauldian power is inextricably linked to all forms of knowledge production as well as resistance.

Studying Foucault's writing and lectures has encouraged me to think again about the ways in which some knowledge is selected while other knowledge is rejected within institutions, and seeing how these institutions are being shaped and organized by the exercise of power. Foucault (1994) was concerned to interrogate the discourse surrounding accepted truths and the power that certain truths hold in society. Language is powerful and can be used to transmit hidden messages. Language can assume power, with value-laden terms such as 'the *right* thing to do', a phrase used frequently by politicians. These specific terms may be understood by particular individuals who work within that field or area of expertise. For example, in early years discourse, the seemingly innocuous phrase 'eligible twos', actually refers to young children who are eligible for free education and care, and the term conveys the meaning to practitioners that these children need additional support, come from disadvantaged families, may be dysfunctional in some way and need to be monitored closely.

Foucault outlined some specific properties of power, stating that disciplinary power is used to train and encourage conformity through compliance to the accepted norms in a given society or context (Foucault: 1980). Disciplinary power guides subjects towards a desired outcome, set by those in authority.

### **3.2.iv Surveillance and social regulation**

How is power exercised to maintain or challenge regimes of truth? Foucault stated that power is embodied and enacted. He was interested in the way in which we try to impose order through social structures in the world and reproduced through our everyday activities within the constraints of these social structures (O'Farrell: 2005). He maintained that some people want to exercise power and others want to resist it. Whatever the response, power produces certain types of behaviour, and can be productive in that it produces certain types of knowledge and cultural order. But Foucault also wanted to demonstrate how power could simultaneously be productive and coercive (Schirato, Danaher & Webb 2012). On the one hand it shapes people's thinking, their discourses and practices, and their attitudes and values. However, on the other hand, it can lead to repression and conformity. The power held by an inspecting body such as Ofsted regulates the behaviour of people working in early years services across all strata, including Local Authorities, head teachers, managers, training organisations, practitioners

working with children and parents/carers. All of these stakeholders may adopt a powerful position of surveillance, that is cascaded down through hierarchies of accountability. Foucault (1977) called this kind of power the 'microphysics of power' because it affects every aspect of a person's working life. People are being scrutinised at every level, even if they are not aware of it. However, the subjects of scrutiny may also influence the system, for example, in the way that a person responds to inspection. Foucault argued that we are all manipulated by power.

He used the example of Bentham's Panopticon to illustrate the power of surveillance in modern society. Foucault posited that power is exercised through surveillance, shaping the practices of individual people within institutions. He cited the example of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon design for a prison at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the paradigm and epitome of a disciplinary technology (Foucault: 1977). In his design, Bentham ensured that the prison's inmates could be observed at all times by the supervisor, and only the supervisor, situated in a central tower. In addition, the design was such that the inmates had no way of knowing whether or not there was an observer in the tower, thereby ensuring that they always behaved as if being observed and under scrutiny. However, the design also contained a system for surveying the observer, so that those who exercised power over others were also subjected to it. Through the objectifying practices of surveillance such as the panopticon, subjects come to regulate *themselves* in ways that make the state power invisible and therefore seemingly impossible to challenge or negotiate with. Subjects become bearers of their own surveillance.

The architectural space of a prison is so much more than just that of the building. The cumulative effect of panoptic surveillance and disciplinary power is *social regulation*. The particular rationality of the panoptical ideal was that its activity would lead to efficiency and productivity, concepts that are highly valued in western society. Foucault considered this as a normalisation process, the process of social control. The concept of surveillance illustrated by the panopticon raises questions for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century about aspects of any institution. For example, the timetable for the nursery day, the design of the classroom, the legitimisation of a national curriculum for young children, or an external inspection regime may all be subject to and agents of surveillance. Foucault argued that people might be willing to choose to conform to the dictates of a given society or group in exchange for its protection (Schirato, Danaher & Webb: 2012). So, within a nursery workplace, staff may be willing to conform to the expectations of the senior management team, even if they disagree with some of the changes that take place, in order to keep their jobs and get promotion.

Foucault introduced the term 'the gaze' in his book 'Birth of a Clinic' (1975). Meaning a look or a glance, he argued that this technique may be used to govern and control individuals and

society, working on the subconscious through an insinuation of threat, which affects the internal fear response of people (Foucault: 1977). With reference to his concept of subjects, Foucault suggested that 'the gaze' also refers to the fact that it is not only the object of knowledge that is constructed, but also 'the knower'. Foucault commented that modern power operates to produce the very behaviours it targets. The families that make up the research cohort in my study are all deemed to be 'disadvantaged' and their children defined as 'eligible twos', based on income and other specific economic criteria that are specified by the government in order to receive free education. The families are also labelled as 'black'. Labelling children and their families can lead to stereotyping and encouraging society to expect certain types of behaviour from them. For example, there is extensive evidence that the police disproportionately target black men in 'stop and search' procedures (Lammy: 2017). This was a real problem in the area where my research was carried out, and led to tensions within the community. Labelled families are constantly under surveillance, and the focus of 'the gaze' is on them. Within early years settings, assessments, detailed record keeping and monitoring is required by the government to calculate whether these 'disadvantaged' families are making the necessary progress to meet ever-increasing government targets, (see Chapter 1), explicitly aimed at improving society and eradicating poverty, but perhaps also implicitly the eradication of perceived deviance.

McNay (1994: 92) proposes that disciplinary power focuses around the production of docile bodies, *'the organisation, disciplining and subjection of the human body in such a way as to provide a submissive, productive and trained sources of labour power'*. In 'Discipline and Punish' (Foucault: 1977), Foucault used the term 'docility' to explain how control and power were achieved through discipline. He argued how processes of surveillance and regulation, often in subtle forms, can lead to normalisation and conformity.

All young children become normalised through such processes. The paradox of normalisation is that although it imposes homogeneity it also individualises the child, making it possible to measure gaps and make comparisons between children. Foucault suggested that domination produces a relatively predictable control of the actions of others, and argued that the effects of domination in education could make a child subject to the arbitrary and possible harmful authority of a teacher (Sheridan: 1980).

### **3.2.v Knowledge and language**

In an educational context language plays a critical role in power relations (Moss & Petrie: 2002). Language is an important mediator of power (Foucault: 1994). Failure to understand it



can suggest ignorance. Over the years, the specific language of education has developed to describe aspects of learning within the early years, such as schematic behaviour, learning dispositions and provocations, as well as diverse acronyms, such as DLO (Desirable Learning Outcomes), EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) and PSE (Personal, Social and Emotional). This language is only intelligible to those who are actually working within early years education, and is disempowering for parents and 'outsiders'. Foucault distinguished knowledge as 'savoir', the formation of a discursive field of knowledge, and distinguished this from 'connaissances', the specific statements held true at specific points within that field. He argued that knowledge is always shaped by political, social and historical factors, and that it is important to examine the relationship between knowledge and the influences that have created it. Knowledge is established in relation to a field of statements and objects, practices, and research (Rouse: 2005); starting school at the age of four in England, for example, has become accepted as the 'right thing' for children.

So, language wields power in the way that it maintains a hierarchy that differentiates between the people who know the specific language that is being used in a given context and those who do not. Foucault and other poststructuralist thinkers argue that language is closely connected with the politics of knowledge; the language we use to convey our political position. For example, as a lecturer in Early Childhood Education, I observed that the first few weeks of the programme were often very confusing for new undergraduates as they grappled with the unique language and terminology associated with education, and in particular, early years education. Here my knowledge of the language I was using could have given me a powerful position with respect to the new students if I failed to explain the terms and support their learning.

MacNaughton (2005: 88) suggested that within a Foucauldian discourse, '*meaning is not fixed in specific words and images; it is generated in how we historically and thus politically link signs and their meaning*'. For example, the term EAL (English as an Additional Language) has come to denote people who need support, do not understand English or English culture, whereas the term bilingual or multilingual suggests knowledge and skills in more than one language. It could be construed as the label 'EAL' diminishes whereas 'multilingual' enriches the status of the person. To learn a language is to learn the culture and values embedded within that language (Saville-Troike: 1989).

### **3.2.vi Effects of power within institutions and on society**

Foucault posed questions about the way that power operates in society and stated that:

*“It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticise the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence which has exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them”* (Foucault: 2006: 171).

Education may be used to make society conform to its accepted truths about the ways that people should perform, and adapt to what is considered to be important and economically viable (NACCE: 1999). Ken Robinson explores the history of education in the UK stating; *‘our education system is predicated on the idea of an academic ability. They [these ideas] came into being to meet the needs of industrialisation’*, supporting his view that *“we are educating people out of their creativity”* (Robinson: 2006). He suggests that we are educating people to become good workers rather than creative thinkers. Robinson defines creativity as *‘the process of having original ideas that have value’* and claims that we need to rethink our view of intelligence to meet the challenges of the future, *‘celebrate the gift of human imagination by seeing our creativities for the riches they are, and seeing our children for the hope that they are’* (ibid). He further advocates that our task is to educate the whole child, and to help them make something of their future – as he comments, a future that we may not see but they will experience. The views of Robinson are in contrast to the culture of performativity noted by Ball (2013) and the increased focus on record-keeping, regulation and standardisation of the curriculum for young children discussed in Chapter 1: 8.

What are the issues within early years education that need to be unmasked and exposed? Children’s Centres, such as the location for my research, are complex institutions providing a wide range of services for families with young children. Children’s Centres are a provider of early years education and care within England, having evolved from the Sure Start programme initiated by New Labour, and part of the government strategy for improving the lives of disadvantaged families, discussed in Chapter 1. As multifarious institutions, combining a variety of professional skills, offering a range of services to families and required to be part of a multi-agency process, deconstructing power relations through critical analysis within such an organisation will identify how the institution operates.

### **3.2.vii Power of English**

As a ‘lingua franca’, English is a powerful language used in education, business, politics and travel throughout the world (Jenkins: 2012). This idea of language and power is critical to note when considering the status that different language groups hold within a society. Some

languages are given more status than others, arguably based on the economic and political power that their related states hold. Said (1994) and Conteh et al (2007) argue that in England we admire speakers of Western European languages, Chinese and Japanese, and increasingly Arabic, but disregard the languages of places such as India, Pakistan and the African nations. So, as China has emerged as a world power, Chinese studies have become a popular subject in UK universities. As I discussed in Chapter 2, studies by Robertson & Auger (2016) concluded that most educational institutions value the dominant language of a given society and do not value the home languages of its students. Many young emergent bilingual children start attending an English-speaking nursery in the UK without knowledge of English language or culture, placing them at an immediate disadvantage with respect to participation and agency, thus affecting their learning.

### **3.2.viii Subjectivity**

Subjectivity is often characterised by the dual experience of people, both as objects and subjects of our social world. In his discussion on the process of subjectivity, Foucault (1982: 208) identified '*dividing practices*' – separating people through a classification process. Dividing practices refers to the ways in which individuals or social groups are separated from each other on the basis of judgements made about their practices or attitudes.

Foucault (1982) asserted that his aim was to formulate a history of the different ways in which people become subjects within our culture, through what he called archaeology and later termed genealogy. He challenged the phenomenological concept of a universal and timeless subject that never changed. O'Farrell (2005: 110) comments that the term 'the subject' is very hard to define. She states that 'one must distinguish between the subject and the individual' and notes that according to Foucault '*he is interested in a form of power that transforms individuals into subjects... He is using the word subject in two senses: in the sense of being controlled by others, and also in the sense of being attached to an identity through awareness and knowledge of self*'. People establish themselves as the subjects of their actions, but within various disciplinary regimes. They are subject to someone else by control or dependency, and yet tied to their own identity through conscience or self-knowledge: we become who we are by both our own agency, but also as a result of a disciplinary regime. These processes occur through a 'form of power' that operates through everyday life. Foucault stated that these regimes are '*the models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group* (Foucault:1982: 291). So, power inhabits us, shaping us internally as well as being shaped externally.

The postmodern world may be described as being socially constructed, recognising that social construction is always context-specific, value-laden and challenging the values of modernity, the context in which developmental psychology is situated (Alvesson: 2002). Foucault (1980) proposed, as previously discussed, that knowledge produces power and that knowledge and power are inseparable; that there is no single reality but there are perspectival realities; and that postmodernism problematises dualistic thinking, considering both/and rather than either/or. Postmodern thought claims that there is no absolute truth, no absolute reality waiting to be discovered. Within this framework, Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (1997) discussed the need to problematise the dominance of 'western' discourses and their influence on early childhood education and care practice today, and to see them in perspective, consider their limitations, acknowledge their assumptions and question their reasoning. Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (2007) agreed with other academics (Prout & James: 1997; Moss & Petrie: 2002; Jenks: 2005; MacNaughton: 2005) that there is an increasing realisation that childhood is constructed by society and that this construction is dependent on diverse socio-economic, political, cultural and historical contexts.

Wood (2007) stated that in his view, predominantly Western ideas are not acceptable in a global world with diverse cultures. Cannella (2002), challenging dominant Eurocentric discourses, argued that any child development theory which disregards the diverse range of life, culture, ethnicity and language experienced by children across the world, tend to focus on judging children as disadvantaged or advantaged, thus creating 'patterns of power and privilege' (Sorin: 2005; Swadener & Cannella: 2007). These writers contend that this ethnocentric discourse serves to perpetuate regimes of power, with those categorized as "normal" dictating how and by whom deficiencies in the "other" are to be addressed.

### **3.3. Discourses of care and education within institutions**

Bertram & Pascal (1999) comment that in the UK, Early Childhood Education and Care has evolved as two separate systems – care and education. Osgood (2010) criticised the technical concept of professionalism that ignores the emotional component of working with young children. But in their research, Van Laere & Vandebroek (2016) found that within the climate of the schoolification of children, practitioners viewed learning (education) as higher status than care. The practitioners were aware of the children's emotions but with the focus on education, this caused them discomfort and even an inconvenience. Schoolification is a term

used by Clausen (2015) to define when the early years are understood as preschooling and not achieving legitimacy on their own terms.

In his blog, Peter Moss (2014) stated;

*'Split between 'childcare' and 'early education', with a fragmented and incoherent patchwork of services, and combining high cost to parents with a poorly paid and poorly qualified workforce: we find ourselves in a hole, and don't seem to know what to do. The hole, though, has been there a long time, and we've had opportunities to get out'.*

Care and education evolved from the pioneer work of Rachel and Margaret McMillan (Jarvis: 2014), who based their work in nurseries with very young children on an holistic approach to integrating education and care. The two sisters were determined to reduce the inequalities facing some families in society. Jarvis and Liebovich (2015) suggest that the McMillan's innovative practice was a precursor to the New Labour concept of Children's Centres, discussed in Chapter 1. However, the introduction of Playgroups (see Chapter 1) led to increasing access to a variety of types of provision for parents and children, which have often competed with each other, as different types of provision and services for children have developed (see Table 2). Playgroups were the only accessible form of provision for many families, particularly in rural areas, and many playgroups provided high quality early education services. The provision of services for very young children are often termed 'childcare', with its origins in providing care for children in the absence of their parents. This provision was based on caring for the health and emotional needs of the child, while nursery education, for children over three years, focused on health and education (Bertram & Pascal: 1999). Practitioners, who were known as 'nursery nurses', had been trained in orphanages, gaining the NNEB (Nursery Nurses Examination Board) qualification, which was primarily concerned with caring for the health needs of the young child.

Negative attitudes towards the calibre of practitioners working in day-care nurseries in the UK was articulated in a report in The Guardian (2006) entitled 'Fostering a generation of Vicky Pollards'. This article acknowledged the tension between the status of qualified teachers and nursery nurses. The director of the Association of Colleges challenged criticisms about standards of professionalism in nursery nurses, *"The students educated at college to work in nurseries are trained to rigorous industry standards"* (ibid). The term '*industry standards*' suggests a change in discourse from nurture to commerce, as discussed in Chapter 1. With the introduction of Sure Start, (see Chapter 1), the term 'educare' was introduced, and

education increasingly became the focus for early childhood education and care provision with the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (2008) as mandatory for all providers. Confusion around the discourses of care and education for children under five years continues, and as the Family and Childcare Trust survey for 2017 reports, there are insufficient childcare places, and the childcare costs are too high for many working parents (Harding, Wheaton & Butler: 2017). There seems to be confusion as to whether the government wants to provide education for children, or childcare for parents.

Moss (2006) argued for an integrative approach to working with young children, stating that the 'childcare discourse' was fragmented whereas a pedagogical discourse would provide a more integrated and holistic approach. He defined 'pedagogy' as a relational and holistic approach to working with children, Moss & Petrie (2002) argued that pedagogy is concerned with the whole child, including their body, mind and emotions, and their social identity and history.

### **3.4 Position of children in society**

The view of the child as a co-constructor of knowledge, identity and culture emerged as social constructionist and postmodern perspectives were explored within sociology, philosophy and psychology, and when the developmental psychology outlined above was being critiqued and the comparative movement in psychology was gaining popularity (Montgomery: 2003). Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (1997) claimed that taking a postmodern perspective meant that we could not depend on knowledge as being universal, unchanging and absolute. The term, 'emergent paradigm', coined by Prout & James (1997), emphasised the evolving nature of childhood as constructed and reconstructed, involving the agency of children. It posited that children's social relationships and cultures are worth studying in their own right, stating that children are active in the construction of their own lives.

Deconstructing the dominant discourse of childhood has raised questions of power and ownership, as postmodern thinkers have re-examined the notions of equity and diversity, pedagogy and practice. This has included listening and responding to the multiple voices of children, and positioning children as equals in life and decision-making (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence: 1999; McNaughton: 2005). Within recent studies, such as Robson & Mastrangelo (2017), children have been increasingly recognised as social actors, co-constructors of their own lives and active agents within their communities (James & Prout: 1997; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence: 2005; Jenks: 2005). For practitioners working with young children, although the

notion of 'child-centred' practice may appear to present a rich, powerful child, it is actually adult driven, based on developmentally appropriate practice within a modernist perspective (Yelland & Kilderry: 2005).

In the UK (see Chapter 1), in response to the high levels of children living in poverty, New Labour set up Sure Start centres in areas of perceived 'disadvantage' (Belsky et al: 2007), and successive governments continue to be concerned about intervention in the first 1000 days of life (Field: 2010). This reflected the dominant discourse of redeeming children from economic disadvantage and socialising children from ethnic minority communities into the mainstream culture, discussed in Chapter 1. Settings offering childcare, such as the one in this study, were supported by government finance to improve the economic and educational outcomes of an area of disadvantage. Prout & James (1997) suggested that different 'discourses' of childhood constitute childhood in different ways, not just academically but in practice within society. Living in the postmodern global world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Vertovec: 2006; 2014) requires new ways of thinking and understanding knowledge, engaging with cultural diversity and cross-cultural dialogue.

### **3.4.i Children's services or children's spaces?**

Woodhead (2006) commented that the idea that children are homogenous with coherent identities, and fixed in time and space, needs to be problematized. The concept of children's participation in society is a positive endorsement of inclusivity and consensus, but this is inhibited by the status of children in society as a relatively powerless group whose lives are regulated by adults (Kirby & Woodhead: 2003). As early years services become increasingly commercialised, as discussed in Chapter 1, Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (1999) advocated that *institutions* and *services* should be replaced by the concept of *spaces* for children, contrasting with the reality of early years services become increasingly commercialised. Moss & Petrie (2002) agree, suggesting that it is important to think differently about policy, provision and practice for young children, making connections between understandings *of* childhood and public provision *for* children. They consider changing the paradigm from *children's services* in which the child is viewed as needy with the adult as knowledgeable and powerful to *children's spaces* in which the child is viewed as a competent, co-constructor of knowledge and recognised as a citizen with rights and agency. *Services* are technical processes that ensure the provision of an efficient product, meeting particular economic, social or political objectives. The concept of *spaces* implies a place of possibilities, choice and agency for children. Moss & Petrie (2002: 123) also stated that '*children's spaces [might provide] the possibility of providing*

*for children's relationships and culture...the idea of social spaces for childhood, as part of life, not just preparation for life'. This view recognises the complexities and diversity of childhood and resonates with the concept of Children's Rights (1989).*

### **3.4.ii Children's agency**

Children's Rights (UNCRC) has influenced work with children in the UK since its ratification in 1989. Woodhead (2006) asserted that instead of a 'charitable approach' to working with needy young children, a Rights-based perspective to ECEC policy supports the image of the competent, strong and agentic child held by Malaguzzi (1998). Malaguzzi was instrumental in the creation and development of the Reggio Emilia approach to learning. This was a child-centred philosophy that underpinned the pedagogy for the early years centres in Reggio Emilia, where the child is viewed as powerful and agentic, able to construct their own knowledge. This notion of children as social actors highlights their capacity to make choices about their actions and express their own ideas and wishes. In this way, children are able to have agency, having some control over their lives (Mayall: 2002). Agency is affected by the cognitive belief structure that is formed through experiences, the perceptions of society, and the context into which we are born and nurtured (ibid). Social class, religion, gender and ethnicity may determine or limit the opportunities for a child to make choices for themselves. Giddens and Sutton (2013) challenge us to question whether people as creative actors are actually controlling the conditions of our lives or whether most of our actions are produced by the external social forces beyond our control. Giddens (1984) argued that people make and remake social structure during the course of their everyday activities, and suggested that there is a continuing chronological sequence in which existing social structures lead to individual actions, which in turn lead to a new social structure. This view emphasises the structuring power of actors as agents in shaping social life.

According to Giddens (1984), agency is when an individual is able to observe their own experience and be able to give reasons for their action. Mayall (2002) argues that children's agency is influenced by the parameters of their status in relation to adults, including power relations. However, although children's agency is becoming more visible and acceptable within sociology, children's voices are not always heard within society in general, reinforcing the child's powerlessness (Mayall: 2002; Jenks: 2005; Lancaster: 2010). So despite Children's Rights being enshrined at the heart of the Children Act 2004 (see Chapter 2), which includes the rights of the child to participation in matters relating to their own lives, Lancaster and



Broadbent (2003) suggest that listening to children and recognising them as social actors and empowering them is still in its infancy in western society.

### **3.5 In conclusion...**

In this chapter I have investigated some of Foucault's arguments about power relations, noting the effect of surveillance on people and organisations and the way in which a specific use of language may be powerful in shaping attitudes and behaviour. I have acknowledged the ways in which 'regimes of truth' may be maintained through documentation and disseminated through educational institutions, such as Edward Square, the Children's Centre where this research took place. I have examined questions around the conflicting views of education and care in the UK, the position of children in society and the concept of children's agency.

Foucault did not propose solutions, but encouraged his scholars to continue to think critically: problematising, inquiring, questioning and analysing (Rabinow: 2011). Problematisation posits knowledge as a problem that allows new viewpoints, reflection, consciousness and action to emerge. Within an early years context, this deconstruction of knowledge helps me to re-evaluate received truths and challenge them, and enables me to analyse the factors that influence the culture of the nursery, in response to my research question '*How do two-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting?*' and three supporting questions: '*How do practitioners understand their role in their work with emergent bilingual children?*', '*How does the nursery environment support the children?*' and '*How do individual children negotiate their participation?*' Choosing an appropriate methodology is key to this process. The next chapter documents my journey in selecting an ethnographic methodology, introduces the research context and identifies relevant methods for data collection and tools for analysis.

## Chapter 4 Methodology

### 4. Introduction

Starting out as a researcher in the nursery, watching the young two-year-old children settle in to their new environment, listening to the talk in the room, getting to know the practitioners and meeting the families encouraged me in pursuing answers to my questions:

*‘How do two-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting?’*

- i. How do practitioners understand their role in their work with emergent bilingual children?’*
- ii. ‘How does the nursery environment support the children?’*
- iii. ‘How do individual children negotiate their participation?’*

But it also highlighted the complexity of the issues behind the question. I needed to find a research method that would help me to both describe and understand the social phenomena that I was observing.

*“Research design is not only concerned with the production of data required to answer research questions but also with how those data will be processed and analysed so as to generate potential answers...”* (Hammersley: 2014: 107).

In this chapter I discuss what is meant by ethnography and provide a rationale for my chosen research method, introduce the context for my research, describe my research process, examine ethical issues in relation to my research and explain my tools for analysis.

### 4.1 Why ethnography?

From a sociocultural perspective, which informed my theoretical perspective, ethnography was an appropriate methodological choice. Christensen (2010: 145) states, *‘ethnography provides in-depth and detailed insight into questions of children’s lived experiences and practices, including into connections and interactions with their material, social and cultural worlds’*. With its roots in anthropology, Duranti (1997: 85) suggests that *“an ethnography is the written description of the social organisation, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group of people.”* Originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ethnography was used by anthropologists to represent the descriptive accounts of communities or cultures usually being studied outside the Western world. Ethnographies at this time were distinct from ethnologies, which were the historical accounts and analyses

reported by travellers. This term was discarded and ethnography now refers to both the empirical study and the historical and theoretical interpretation of communities and cultures under investigation by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson: 2007). It is about observing and recording the different cultures of a group of people, like the people in a Children's Centre such as my study, endeavouring to collect rich data and attempting to understand that culture holistically.

A distinctive feature of ethnography is its open-ended nature, with the focus of the research becoming clearer as it progresses. It starts with a question rather than a hypothesis based on an interest in a specific aspect of social life. Data is often collected through 'unstructured' methods and the degree of participation of the ethnographer is dependent on their approach, and the analysis predominantly presented through verbal descriptions. As an ethnographer, I need to be flexible, responding to the research location and cohort. There are many variables that influence the degree to which the researcher is a participant within their study, but the very nature of ethnography is reliant on participation and reflexivity (Coffey: 1999).

These ethnographic methods include participant observation, informal interviews and scrutiny of documentation used to collect research data for analysis (Fetterman: 2010). By using ethnographic methods, I endeavoured to carry out an holistic study, looking at the minute details of people's behaviour in everyday contexts. Geertz (1973) describes ethnographic data as a 'thick description' of events told through the lens of the participants as they live their daily lives, and attempts to cover as much detail as possible about a culture or subculture through the research process. The intention of ethnography is to understand why people say the things they say or behave in a particular way, and provides a comprehensive perspective through observing behaviours in their natural environments (Flick: 2009). My ethnographic study has relied on first hand empirical research, engaging in observations, informal interviews and becoming involved in the lives of the researched. Hammersley & Atkinson (2019) describe the different roles selected by an ethnographer. They may choose to be a '*complete participant*', in which they are a covert researcher but acting as a participant. In some situations, the researcher may actually become a member of the group. For example, in her ethnographic study on adolescents in leisure activities, Niemann carried out covert observations to avoid influencing the behaviour of her cohort (Flick: 2014). By contrast to the '*complete participant*', the '*complete observer*' has no contact with their research community; the researcher's observations are unobtrusive and non-participative.

## 4.2 Finding my research identity

I positioned myself as a participant observer, somewhere between these two poles, but always wanting to be honest and open about my involvement with the Children's Centre and Class 2 in particular. As a participant observer, I needed to combine participation in the lives of my research cohort and maintaining a professional distance (Fetterman: 2010), and I consider the complex nature of this role later in this chapter. This was not a fixed role, but one in which I needed to be responsive to the mutable set of relationships which changed as circumstances changed. It was important to remain aware that as a participant researcher in the real world, people's lives could be affected by my presence, for example, staff and parents may have felt unable to speak freely when I was in the nursery, or be concerned that confidential issues may be compromised. Within this ethnographic study, the research cohort and context were small, but representing diverse cultures. Ethnographers ask questions such as what a culture is, what being a member of that culture means and how that culture differs from other cultures, discussed in Chapter 1. Cultural interpretation required my ability to describe what I saw and heard within the framework of my research cohort's perception of reality (Fetterman: 2010), so my analysis involved an understanding of the behaviours, meanings and actions of the research community, the group that I was studying. Ethnography enables the researcher to account for the complexity of behaviours within in the research cohort, and highlight the interrelationships among multifaceted elements of interactions, thus providing a context for behaviours (Flick: 2014).

Coffey (1999) discusses the characteristics of the relationship between the researcher and researched, and suggests that there has been little to consider how empirical studies in cultural contexts construct the identities, relationships or the concept of the emotional self and the physical self. This could imply that the researcher is less aware of the impact of their research on the identities of the researched. Ethnographers attempt to make emic interpretations of their data from the perspective of their research cohort, rather than etic interpretations (discussed further in 4.8.iii) based on their own perspective (Geertz: 1973; Schieffelin & Ochs: 1986). However, the accuracy of the research findings is contingent on the researcher's observations and interpretations, which makes it difficult to check the validity of the researcher's conclusions (Flick: 2009). Therefore, the researcher is dependent on reflexivity throughout their research study while attempting to guarantee a rigorous approach to empirical data collection and analysis. Hammersley & Atkinson (2019) state that the concept of reflexivity accepts that the positioning of the researcher will inevitably be shaped by the values and interests of their own sociohistorical roots. Therefore, the use of a research journal, which was a separate notebook

from my field notes, and which I kept at home, was invaluable as it gave me the opportunity to reflect as I collected data and spent time with the research community. These notes included my responses to what I was seeing, hearing and reading, critical questions that I wanted to ask myself or ask people in the research cohort, or observe more critically to find the answers. I could then look back to see how my reflections were shaping the direction of the study, and I referred to this journal as I began to analyse my findings. As Conteh (2005) suggested, I had to learn to cope with continuous uncertainty and doubts about whether I was asking the right questions or going in the right direction, always fearful that I may have got it all wrong. My research journal helped me to look back on the direction of my thinking and ideas. I could also record my own feelings and reactions to comments and experiences that connected with my own life experiences and experiences of cultural diversity and my reading. On occasions, a practitioner would ask me 'What is it you are studying?' One of the challenges facing the researcher is the importance of being open-minded and flexible and involved in the primary focus of the process of the research rather than the end product. Although I did not use the records in my journal in my analysis, I referred to the journal throughout the research process, using the questions I had written and comments I had made to inform my thinking.

#### **4.2.i Participant observation**

Denzin (1989) suggests that participant observation could combine document analysis, interviews, direct participation and observation and introspection. Observing the behaviour of others is a naturally occurring phenomenon. However, using observations as a research tool requires the researcher to see what is actually happening rather than what they want to see (Basit: 2010), and to look at the underlying factors within the setting, while acknowledging that this is always a process of interpretation and different perspectives. Fetterman (2010: 1) states that '*ethnography is about telling a credible, rigorous and authentic story*', further commenting that the ethnographer adopts '*a cultural lens*', in order to ensure that the observed activity is placed within a meaningful context.

I was a participant within this research study from the beginning, increasingly gaining access to the setting and the people within the research, wanting to build positive relationships while remaining professional, and also endeavouring to interrogate the issues within my research question. If triangulated with interviews and scrutiny of documentation, recorded observations are an appropriate method to use for data collection (Fetterman: 2010). This is important because participant observations generate qualitative data, and can be highly subjective, based on the researcher's own assumptions and values, if the researcher becomes too closely

involved and loses their research perspective. Comparing different sources of data, for example, interviews with the staff, observations of practice, conversations with parents and reading the policy documents in the centre often enabled me to test one source against another.

#### **4.2.ii Acknowledging issues related to power**

Although my initial focus was on the children, as an ethnographer in a complex institution, I wanted to consider the perspectives of different groups of actors, noting some of the behaviours and relationships that are not consciously identified by the individual or groups. This involved making the strange familiar, so that I could gain understanding, and the familiar strange, so that I did not come to erroneous conclusions and therefore misunderstand it (Hammersley & Atkinson: 2019). I wanted to understand what was happening in this specific early years institution that had an impact on the children's learning in order to contribute to the wider social world of young multilingual children becoming successful learners, but my immediate goal was to get to know my research cohort and collect rich data for analysis.

However, there were other issues that I needed to consider. As the three children in my study were only 2 years old, still developing their home languages and starting in an English-speaking nursery, I tried to ensure that children's voices were given as much weight as adult voices, so it was important that I paid attention to the diverse ways that the young children communicated and to hear their individual voices. As children are aware of the authority wielded by adults in the setting, I needed to be mindful of how this may affect children's participation (Palaiologou, 2012).

I had designed my research proposal, was familiar with working in early childhood care and education, was in control of the choices I made about the direction of the research, what I recorded and how the final report would be presented. I recognised that this could affect my relationships with the children, their families and all the staff at Edward Square, and kept reminding myself that it was important to describe the social phenomena I saw and heard, and not how I perceived or wanted it to be (Hammersley & Atkinson: 2019).

Edward Square had recently been through a major restructuring, and nationally there had been several changes within the early years curriculum, and funding streams from the government and local authorities were constantly under review. Although initially I was focused on observing how the children and their parents were settling in the nursery, I soon became aware

of the hierarchical structure and tensions with Edward Square and specifically in Class 2. Examining the power relations and their impact on practice became an important aspect of the study. I studied some of Foucault's writings and considered different discourses of education and care (Chapter 3). This gave me the opportunity to explore the effect of power relations on institutions (Foucault: 1980), and also my own views about childhood, which I recognised were not fixed, but had evolved throughout my research.

### 4.3 Data collection

In defining ethnography, Atkinson et al (2001: 2) stated:

*Contemporary ethnographic research is characterised by fragmentation and diversity. There is certainly a carnivalesque profusion of methods, perspectives, and theoretical justifications for ethnographic work. There are multiple methods of research, analysis, and representation.*

The success of an ethnographic study is dependent on the data collected that represents the voices of the research cohort, from their insider perspective. It is the role of the researcher to make sense of the data that has been collected from an external perspective (Fetterman: 2010). Although I acknowledge that collecting data can be subjective, and it is almost impossible to eliminate observer bias (Flick: 2014), I used the following methods to record what I saw and heard as accurately as possible.

#### 4.3.i Stages of data collection

The following table demonstrates the different methods and kinds of data I collected during the 18 months period of my research, from June 2010 to December 2011. I recorded information in my field notes and research journal throughout the research period.

	<b>Initial phase</b>	<b>Term 1</b>	<b>Term 2</b>	<b>Term 3</b>	<b>Follow up</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	x	x		x	x
<b>Participant observation</b>		x	x	x	
<b>Document scrutiny</b>	x		x	x	
<b>Field notes</b>	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Informal conversations</b>		x	x	x	

Table 3: Table to show the stages of the main data collection through research period

#### **4.3.ii Observations**

Observation is common practice within early years, and carried out routinely within a nursery to collect evidence for assessments on children. It is a requirement by Ofsted and the EYFS. It was familiar, therefore, for me to carry out observations, for the staff to know that I was observing children and for the children to be observed with written recordings. However, the aims and structure of my observations were different from the statutory assessments required by the centre, and I needed to show the staff how, what and why I was carrying out observations. I informed staff that I would be observing all activity within the nursery, not just specific observations of children, and I made the observations available to the staff. I was not aware that any staff in Class 2 read them and I received no comments, however the team were very busy with their own record keeping. Having gained informed consent (see 4.9) yet wanting to maintain confidentiality, I did not show the observations to the senior managers.

Participant observation is immersion in a culture (Fetterman: 2010), and as a tool for data collection, provided me with the opportunity to see and record everyday activities and situations as they occurred using all my senses and noting the perceptions of the people involved, in real time. It enabled me to be opportunistic and flexible in collecting rich data at the same time as building relationships with the observed. As my observations evolved, I was able to reflect and begin to analyse what I was seeing and hearing. Nevertheless, choosing when and what to observe needed to be systematic and principled (Basit: 2010). As suggested by Flick (2009), the process of observations followed three phases. My first observations were descriptive, providing me with detailed information about the research context, the daily routine and the developing complexities within Class 2. Reflecting on and beginning to analyse these observations enabled me to become more focused, and I concentrated my attention on the processes and activities that were central to my study. This, in turn, led me to become very selective as I identified aspects of the research that needed further evidence and specific examples to guarantee greater credibility and validity in my research data. Silverman (2010) suggests that while recording naturally occurring observations enables one to review one's data many times, the recorded narratives remain in that particular form and therefore the analysis is dependent on the detail provided. For this reason, I wanted to provide as much detail as I could about the context, date, time, people involved and the interactions that took place. As Wolcott (1990) recommends, I tried to listen rather than talk, and aimed to produce notes that were as accurate as possible. Using my field notebooks intentionally, with the direct observations and recorded conversations on the left-hand-side, and my own reflections, detail about the context and any other comments I felt were relevant on the right-hand-side, including reflections and



emerging questions or issues to be followed up. This helped me to separate my thinking from the data. I also met regularly with a group of researchers and discussed my work, enabling me to “peer debrief” (Lincoln and Guba: 1985). This certainly highlighted some assumptions I was making, encouraged me to be more critically aware of my preconceived judgements and to remain focused on my research question.

#### **4.3.iii Interviews**

I carried out the initial interview with each of the children’s mothers, Safiya, Khadra and Sadiqa, and they told me about their lives and their hopes for their children (Field notes: 22.10.10, 21.1.11; 28.1.11). I recorded the interviews, which were carried out separately with the individual mother and an interpreter, and then I transcribed the interviews. This was followed up by home visits to Sadiqa and Khadra, but I was unable to visit Safiya. She asked me not to visit because of her complex situation as a recent arrival to the UK and living in a multi-occupancy flat. However, I was able to have regular conversations with each of the mothers at the nursery. I was accompanied by an interpreter from Edward Square for my first interviews with the parents in their homes, but on subsequent home visits and conversations, Khadra and Sadiqa did not want an interpreter present. They said that they wanted to rely on their spoken English, and were happy for me to check out our understanding of each other through my use of more questions to clarify meanings, and through body language and gestures. I wondered whether the parents were reluctant to use the interpreters because they were bilingual support workers for Classes 3 & 4, employed by Edward Square.

Interviews provide evidence of the nature of the culturally embedded social worlds of the participants (Miller & Glassner: 2011). In order to gain useful information about personal histories, attitudes and values that could not be directly observed, I carried out qualitative semi-structured interviews with the three mothers of the children at the heart of this research, their three key people in Class 2 (see appendices 1 & 2), the lead teacher and the room leader (who organised the rotas) for Class 2, and the headteacher of Edward Square. It was important to find out the views of the headteacher because she had been the head of the former nursery school and was leading the merger of the two institutions, had chosen the practitioners and children for my research, and wanted to be involved. I interviewed the room leader and the lead teacher for Class 2 because they were responsible for the management of this class and could therefore give me more specific background information. These interviews were held at times agreed by the headteacher, but I made sure that I had been in the nursery class for several weeks before I interviewed the key people; three months before I interviewed the lead

teacher and the room leader, and five months before I interviewed the mothers. I met with the headteacher six times, two of these being in the form of an interview. Most of interviews were recorded on my Dictaphone so that I could focus on my interaction with the participant. These time delays were essential for me, because I wanted to build a relationship with the participants in the research.

As Spradley (1979) suggests, within an ethnographic study, the researcher requests interviews with the research participants, explains the nature of the research and the reasons for interviews, and makes the intentions of the research implicit using 'everyday language' to check that the participants understand the process. I wanted to establish a reliable working relationship where the interviewees would engage with the process. I had worked alongside the practitioners in the nursery, met the mothers on a daily basis and started to have conversations with them and was meeting the lead teacher and the room leader regularly. When I was asked to introduce my research to the Class 2 team at a staff meeting, I shared my personal history to demonstrate my reasons for wanting to study this particular topic.

I wanted to speak with the participants of the research individually, hoping to give them a chance to express their own views and opinions about their role in the nursery and also to give them the opportunity to have their voice heard and responded to in confidence. It is important to acknowledge that participants are not just informants of experiential knowledge; they are in the process of co-constructing experiential reality during the interview process (Holstein & Gubrium: 2011). Reflexivity involves self-scrutiny, where the researcher continually considers their role in the research process (Byrne: 2012). In carrying out the interviews, it was important that I paid attention to the way in which the narrative process developed as well as understanding what was being said by the participants.

The location and timings for interviews with the key people were important but constrained by the accessibility of rooms and the generosity of staff to use their free time. We used a small room that was private. I gave people a copy of the questions that I would be asking, but informed them that this was a flexible list. I asked if they minded me recording the interview and asked again for their consent, explaining the usage and storage of the research data. The limited time for the interview meant that I needed to be focused, not wanting to be controlling but maintaining a reciprocal environment. I used descriptive questions to elicit how the participants organised their knowledge about an issue, followed by contrasting questions to ascertain their opinions and feelings (Spradley: 1979).

Within an ethnographic study, where participant observation is mainly used, informal conversations often occur spontaneously, more like a series of friendly conversations (Flick: 2014). As new questions arose, I would introduce them into a conversation, but needed to make sure that they did not become interrogations rather than conversations. However, the problem I encountered was recording these informal conversations. Usually it was inappropriate to turn on the Dictaphone as we would be actively working with children or with the parents. I noticed that the staff were not at ease with the Dictaphone in the classroom. I did not want to deter them from sharing valuable information with me nor did I want to lose the good relationship that we had built. It seemed like a fine balance between sharing in a conversation and me controlling the talk. I recorded the conversation as accurately as possible as soon as I could take time out with my notebook as field notes. Inevitably, this affected the accuracy of my data.

The field notes I kept from the earliest days of this research were a record of all my conversations, notes about documents, emerging questions, observations and suggestions to be followed up and my on-going contemporaneous reflections (see Appendices 6-10). Schatzman & Strauss (1973) suggest that there are four types of field note: the *organisational* notes supporting the planning process but also reminding the researcher of the process they have been through, *theoretical* notes in which the researcher attempts to make sense of their data, *analytical* comments to elaborate abstract statements, and *direct observations* without interpretation. My field notes included these four components.

#### **4.3.iv Documents**

I read documents generated by Edward Square and government documentation, including the latest Ofsted report (2009) and used scrutiny of the relevant documents in order to produce a detailed understanding of my research setting. Early years settings use government guidelines to formulate their own specific policies, aims and objectives, and to shape their practice. Documents, written for a specific purpose, are a readily available and accurate source of information that is relevant to a context, and provided me with a consistent external reference point throughout the research period. As Basit (2010) indicated, policy documents provide information relating to legislation and practice, but also reveal the aspirations and intentions of the senior managers and the intended practice of a setting. Using documents as data supported my analysis of the degree to which there was synchronicity between what was documented as policy and practice, and what I observed in practice and transcribed through

interviews, but I did not complete document analysis. Edward Square's policies were also available to parents in a range of different languages (see 4.3.iv/4.6.i).

#### **4.4 Introduction to Edward Square**

Edward Square, the Children's Centre where I carried out my research, was formed during the time of ECEC expansion in the UK through the merger of a local authority Day Nursery and a nursery school. The formation of Edward Square was typical of other Children's Centres, when such centres were being opened across England, and this was the reason why I chose to carry out my research at this location. Throughout this thesis I have used the term 'Daycare Centre' as the title for the former Day Nursery to avoid confusion with the use of the word 'nursery'.

The former Nursery School had been inspected by the Local Education Authority, was governed by their legislation, whereas the Daycare Centre had been governed by the Social Services and was under their guidance and legislation. At the same time that Edward Square opened, the Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage became the statutory curriculum for children from birth to the end of Reception in Schools in September 2008 (see Chapter 1).

##### **4.4.i Sociohistorical background to research location**

Edward Square was situated within an inner-city ward that had seen a 21% increase in population over the previous 10 years, with 44.6% listed as BAME, 12.8% Muslim and 37% Christian. Within the city, 50% of the Muslim population was Somali, of whom the majority had lived most of their lives outside the UK, and 27% was Pakistani, with a higher percentage having lived most of their lives in the UK. The majority of the Somali population lived in rented accommodation from the local council or housing associations (Census: 2011). A Neighbourhood Plan (LA: 2009) stated that in this ward there were high 'numbers of local people with English not their primary language, new immigrants without recognised qualifications, racism and postcode discrimination, and many families with dependent children requiring childcare support and work flexibility'. Although this neighbourhood was reputed to have a high crime rate, actual crime statistics showed that it had a low level of crime, mainly anti-social behaviour (UK Crime Stats: 2010).

Historically, the local area had experienced race riots in the 1980s like various cities in the UK, and racial tensions continued for many years. At that time, the dominant religious group were Christians and Rastafarians, but the tension was racial rather than religious (BBC: 2001). At

the time of this study, the head teacher informed me that the tensions within the area were still racial (Field notes: 9.2.11), but Nazneem, a Pakistani support worker commented that within the wider community, religious tensions were developing (LA: 2014). The Race Relations Act of 1976 did not cover religious discrimination, but issues of religion, particularly Islam, became increasingly relevant following 9/11 in 2001 and the 7/7 London bombings in 2005. So the paradigm shift from a focus on anti-discrimination, anti-racism, class-based mobilisation and Black politics in the 1980s to the multicultural paradigm, with its focus on ethnicity and recognition of difference, was replaced by increasingly Muslim communities, where religious markers replaced ethnic markers. Joly (2012) states that multicultural policy has not been eliminated; rather it has been replaced by a multifaith approach. She suggests that the move away from a multicultural to a multifaith approach is a reductionist approach that isolates and divides communities. In this Local Authority, radical cuts to public funding had not only affected institutions like Edward Square, but had also affected minority ethnic groups including Muslim communities disproportionately (ibid), because these communities were often located in areas of disadvantage.

#### **4.4.ii Formation of the new centre**

Edward Square opened in September 2008 to create a new integrated service for the local community. The existing buildings of the Daycare Centre were refurbished, providing classrooms for the Nursery School (Classes 3 & 4 for children aged 3-5) and temporary mobiles were added for the younger children in Class 1 (children from 3 months to 2 years) & Class 2 (children from 2-3 years). The outdoor area was developed to provide access to outdoor learning for all the children. All areas of the centre were made physically accessible for children and adults. During the refurbishment, the children and staff from the Daycare Centre were transported each day to another building across the city by coach. Although there were some staff changes, the majority of staff from both settings continued to work within the new centre. The Senior Management Team from the Nursery School became the new Senior Management Team at Edward Square. When I started my research in Edward Square in September 2010, the staff were still adjusting to the merger and managing on-going change, both internally within the organization and externally with government and local authority initiatives and directives. The families who used the organization and the local community appeared to be very pleased with the new centre and engaged in the activities it provided.

#### **4.4.iii Discourses that underpin Edward Square**

The philosophies that had been 'transformational' for the Nursery School were *Building Learning Power* (BLP), the *Reggio Emilia* approach, and the philosophy that underpins *Te Whariki*, the New Zealand early years curriculum and evidenced in practice through their assessment document, *Learning Stories* (Field notes: 6.10.10), and were introduced as core principles in the new institution. The following statement reflects the shared philosophy and values they had developed in the former Nursery School and had introduced into the new centre.

*"We are an outstanding setting which both reflects and celebrates the richness of diversity within our community. All stakeholders are treated with unconditional respect and we pride ourselves for our exemplary work in community cohesion."* (ES website).

The SMT wanted Edward Square to be part of the local community, reflecting the cultures of the community. They were involved with local events such as having a float in the local carnival, and advertising their services in the local shops and community centre (Field notes: 6.10.10).

The former Nursery School was involved in developing *Building Learning Power* (BLP) (Claxton: 2002) in 2003 throughout the school. For the first year of the scheme, staff were inducted into the history, philosophy and practices of BLP, involving training sessions and continuous dialogue in order to distil and understand how the foundational tenets of BLP would be evidenced through practice and how to use the language of BLP with children. The intention of the head teacher was that this should be something that the team 'grew together' and therefore shared ownership of an internal practice rather than taking on an external framework. The four dimensions of learning within BLP are resilience, resourcefulness, reflectiveness and reciprocity (Claxton: 2002). Observations of children, records of progress, staff observations and appraisals all reflected the four dimensions, and displays within the school were also focused on them. Edward Square continued to use BLP as the locus of their shared philosophy when the nursery school and the Daycare Centre merged.

*"We are a setting which has embraced the philosophy of 'Building Learning Power' and we overtly celebrate the process of learning with our children, families and staff. The belief that 'Learning is Learnable' is central to our centre's ethos, and underpins all aspects of our services"* (ES website)

Fiona, the head teacher, had visited the *Reggio Emilia* pre-schools in Italy when she worked in the former Nursery School, and the principles of the *Reggio Emilia* approach were influential in writing the aims and objectives for the Edward Square. This approach views children as competent authors and inventors, who are supported in their inquiries by teachers who view themselves as co-researchers (ibid). Malaguzzi was the founder of the Reggio Emilia nursery schools in Italy. As a constructivist, he was influenced by thinkers such as Piaget and Vygotsky, and he believed that each person constructs their own knowledge through their own life experiences (Edward, Gandini & Forman: 1993). Malaguzzi's view of children and conventional education are summed up in his poem, *The Hundred Languages of Children* (Malaguzzi: 1998: 2-3), which was displayed on the Edward Square notice board.

*Te Whariki* was designed as an inclusive curriculum that acknowledged and valued the multicultural population and included ideas about agency and identity. Its core principle is described as '*children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things*' (Carr & Lee: 2012: 61). Learning Stories are comprehensive yet complex forms of documentation, telling the story or narrative of a child's learning experiences and co-constructed between the child and adult, requiring knowledge of 'learning dispositions' (Katz: 1993).

#### **4.4.iv Partnership with Parents**

Edward Square recognised the importance of parents as their children's first and enduring educators (Field notes: 09.02.11), and had introduced home visits, noted in their Settling-in Policy. Two members of staff, including the child's key person, visited each family after they had applied for a place and before their child started attending nursery. The staff completed forms about contact details, allergies and health, and permission for keeping documents about their child in the nursery. If possible, an interpreter was present so that parents could talk in their home languages and the correct information could be documented. The intention was to establish a partnership between the nursery and the family. Edward Square policy for 'Home Visiting to Support Induction' (2010) stated that:

*"Our aim is to:*

- *establish an inclusive partnership between child/parent/setting*
- *meet the child and families in their home environment*
- *provide opportunities for 1:1 talking and listening*
- *support transition into the setting*

- *begin the process of information sharing*
- *find out the children's strengths, interests and developmental stage and to provide a continuum of experience and have insight into their patterns of behaviour*
- *enable staff to gain knowledge about varied family practices, cultures and histories in order to breakdown stereotypes and provide meaningful experiences”.*

Parents were given a 'Parents information pack' that was available in English, Arabic, Somali and Urdu, and there was also a home visit pack. There was no formal provision for speakers of languages other than these.

The recorded information from the home visit was very brief:

- Names of child and parent
- Address and telephone number
- Date of birth of child
- Nationality and status
- Home language
- Parents' wishes for their child in nursery

These forms were kept with the child's records and maintained by the child's key person.

#### **4.4.v Nursery classes in Edward Square**

There were four nursery classes within Edward Square Children's Centre. Class 1 for children aged three months to two years; Class 2 for children aged two to three years, and Classes 3 & 4 for children aged three years to school age. The nursery classes were located at the back of the premises, with the community rooms and offices at the front of the block. This provided a discreet entrance for each nursery class, but they remained a visible part of the whole centre community. There were diverse groups taking place in the community rooms every day and the reception area was a busy hub. The outdoor area was accessible to all the classes (see plan in Appendix 11) and referred to as an outdoor classroom (Field notes: 09.02.11).

#### **4.5 Staff working in Edward Square**

The SMT consisted of Fiona, the headteacher, Liz, the deputy head teacher, Beth, lead teacher for Classes 1 & 2 and Charlotte, lead teacher for Classes 3 & 4. All names in this study have been changed to ensure confidentiality. All the teachers were Nursery trained teachers with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and several years of experience working in nursery schools.



The SMT were accountable to the board of Governors who had initially worked with the Nursery School. Since the start of Ofsted inspections, the Nursery School had been rated as 'outstanding'.

With the formation of the new centre, the staff team was increased and there were a range of different roles and qualifications, from unqualified staff to post-graduate staff, indicated in Table 3.

Title	Qualification	Level	GCSE equivalence
<b>Bilingual Support Staff</b>	None required	N/A	N/A
<b>Assistant Early Years Practitioner</b>	NVQ in childcare	2	3 GCSEs at C grade
<b>Early Years Practitioner (and keyperson)</b>	NVQ in childcare	3	2 A Levels
<b>Early Years Practitioner (and keyperson)</b>	NNEB Diploma	3	Unclear
<b>Early Years Practitioner (can be responsible for a group of children)</b>	CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing	3	2 A Levels
<b>Teaching Assistant (with children over 3)</b>	NVQ	2	3 GCSEs at C grade
<b>Teaching Assistant (with children over 3)</b>	NVQ	3	2 A Levels
<b>Practitioner with leadership role</b>	Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree	5	2 full years of undergraduate study
<b>Teacher</b>	QTS	7	Post Graduate
<b>Early Years Professional (and keyperson)</b>	EYPS	7	Post Graduate but without teacher's pay and conditions

Table 4: Range of qualifications in Edward Square & their equivalency with English academic qualifications

The following table documents how many staff were employed in Edward Square, covering the range of qualifications. Staff who worked in Class 2 are indicated in bold and within brackets.

Title of role	Qualifications & level	Number of staff in ES
<b>Bilingual Support Staff</b>	None required	3 + 1 visiting once a week <b>(0)</b>
Assistant Early Years Practitioner	NVQ in childcare: 2	2 <b>(1)</b>
Early Years Practitioner (and keyperson)	NVQ in childcare: 3	6 <b>(3)</b>
Early Years Practitioner (and keyperson)	NNEB Diploma: 3	3 <b>(3)</b>
Early Years Practitioner (can be responsible for a group of children)	CACHE Diploma in Nursery Nursing: 3	4 <b>(2)</b>
<b>Teaching Assistant (with children over 3)</b>	NVQ: 2	0 [one in training] <b>(0)</b>
<b>Teaching Assistant (with children over 3)</b>	NVQ: 3	2 <b>(0)</b>
Practitioner with leadership role	Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree: 5	1 <b>(0)</b>
Teacher	QTS: 7	4 [including headteacher and deputy headteacher] <b>(1)</b>
Early Years Professional (and keyperson)	EYPS: 7	1 <b>(1)</b>

Table 5: Number of staff holding ECEC qualifications in Edward Square and Class 2

## 4.6 Introducing Class 2

Most of the children started their nursery experience in this room, although a few children progressed from Class 1. Class 2 was a converted portacabin, which was originally intended as a temporary building (see plan in Appendix 12). Although children were able to start at any time of the year, depending on places available, the majority of the children started in September, and many families chose term-time sessions. Most of the children had 15 hours of free childcare (see Chapter 1), due to their socio-economic circumstances (Field notes: 09.02.11).

### 4.6.i Class 2: organisational structure

Each day the staff team in Class 2 carried out the daily routine (see Appendix 13), which was explained to me by Beth, the lead teacher (Field notes: 08.09.10). There were three notice

boards in Class 2. Just inside the room was a board that contained information written in English for parents, such as term dates for Classes 3 & 4, notices about change of clothing, labelling children’s possessions and the lunch menu for the week. No other languages were used on the noticeboard in Class 2. There was also a weekly notice for staff detailing staff duties for the day. Beth, the lead teacher, was responsible for the planning and leading the weekly staff meeting, but did not primarily work in the classroom. She posted the weekly plans, and where any other messages she had for the staff team were written up on a large whiteboard. Alison, room leader for Class 2, posted details of the daily rota and staff duties on the notice board just inside the door and staff shift rotas inside the cupboard. Staff checked their duties each day when they arrived on their shift. When I first started in Class 2, I thought that this door led to another room as staff often went through the door, and returned after some minutes. I later discovered that staff were checking their shift rota and negotiating changes, which was explained to me by a member of staff. The shift patterns were 8.00am-4.00pm, 9.00am-5.00pm or 10.00am-6.00pm. Apart from Beth, the Class 2 lead teacher, all the staff in classes 1 & 2 were on annual contracts with 4 weeks holiday per year. Classes 3 & 4 were open term-time only and staff, including Beth were on term-time contracts.

#### 4.6.ii Class 2: Staff team

Beth, the lead teacher, had worked in the former Nursery School. Alison, the Room Leader was part of the former Daycare Centre. She was responsible for maintaining the rotas for Class 2 and registering new children and their families. Colleges and universities in the area used Edward Square for student placements, and during my time in Class 2 there were various students, including Early Years Professionals and Foundation Degree students, and students doing their initial NVQ level 3 training and on the apprenticeship scheme.

Pseudonyms of staff & languages spoken	Qualification & role
Beth: <b>English speaking</b>	Lead teacher for EY2, oversight for EY1 (QTS & EYPS)
Alison: <b>English speaking</b>	Room Leader: Level 3 practitioner
Kate: <b>English speaking</b>	Under-graduate practitioner
Claudette: <b>Black-British/English speaking</b>	Under-graduate practitioner
Anna: <b>English speaking</b>	Post-graduate practitioner (EYPS)
Norma: <b>English speaking</b>	Level 3 practitioner

Jagdeep: <b>Indian/Punjabi/English speaking and some Urdu</b>	Level 2 practitioner
Rosi: <b>Filipino/Tagalog/English speaking</b>	Level 3 practitioner: <b>Rahaf's</b> key person
Stella: <b>English speaking</b>	Level 3 practitioner: <b>Abdilaahi's</b> key person
Charlie: <b>English speaking</b>	Level 3 practitioner: <b>Aeshah's</b> key person

Table 6: Staff team in Class 2

There were three lunchtime supervisors who worked on Wednesdays so that the majority of the staff could attend the weekly staff meeting. On other days, only one lunchtime supervisor worked with two practitioners from Class 2. Another member of staff from Class 3 ran the breakfast club that took place in Class 2 rooms every morning from 8.00 – 9.00am.

#### 4.6.iii Key people for the research families

Charlie, Rosi and Stella worked in Class 2 and were the key people linked to the three children in this study (see Table 3). Charlie and Stella were English and only spoke English. Rosi was Filipino, and had moved to England when she married. She spoke three languages, but said that she lacked confidence in writing in English. Charlie, Rosi and Stella had completed three years training as Nursery Nurses, gaining NNEB Diplomas. They had all been employed in the former Daycare Centre as Room Leaders for several years before their merger with the former Nursery School. They were keyworkers with families and also held positions of responsibility.

Charlie, Rosi and Stella had studied for their NNEB at the same college (not at the same time), where the focus of their training was the care of young children from birth to 8 years (Vernon & Smith: 1994). In 1994 the Nursery Nursing Examination Board (NNEB) merged with the Council for Early Years Awards to form CACHE, the Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education. Over the last 20 years the initial training programmes had been re-written to reflect the changing requirements of a curriculum for young children from birth to 7 years 11 months. On the CACHE website under the heading 'child care', it states: "*Parents look to the gold standard, recognised qualifications for reassurance when choosing child-minders, nannies or*

*nurseries. At CACHE we've produced many such qualifications... They are also a marker for parents that the person looking after their child has been trained to the highest of standards."* (CACHE: 2016)

This focus on training to care is evident throughout the Modular Course Overview (NNEB 1994) document. An analysis of the 21 modules indicates that 4 are education modules, 10 are care modules and 7 are professional practice modules (1994: 4). Scrutinised further, out of 750 hours of taught sessions, 400 hours are given to health and care, 180 hours for education and 185 hours for professional knowledge, such as the background of child care services, equality of opportunity and the nursery nurse in employment. This was the training programme that Charlie, Rosi and Stella had completed; having an emphasis on training, rather than educating nursery nurses. When the merger of the former Nursery School and the Daycare Centre was announced, the staff from the Daycare Centre had to apply for a job in the newly formed Edward Square Children's Centre. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were all given jobs in Class 2 as key persons with responsibility for a small group of children and their families.

Information about the role of the 'key worker/person' was available for parents in the 'Settling-in Policy', and Beth described the process of becoming a key person to me in an informal conversation (Field notes: 03.11.10). Charlie was keyperson for Aeshah, Rosi was keyperson for Rahaf and Stella was keyperson for Abdilaahi. Each child was allocated a key person when they registered for the nursery. This person was one of the two staff who had visited the child at home with their family, was responsible for keeping the child's records, and for forming a supportive relationship with the child and their parents or carers. As far as possible, it was expected that the key person was responsible for the personal care of their key children.

#### **4.6.iv Additional staff involved in research study**

While carrying out my research in Edward Square, I met three bilingual support staff. They were not originally part of the research, as they did not work in Class 2, but my involvement with them helped my own understanding of their role in the Centre, and as they shared their life stories with me, I realised that they would enrich the data that I was collecting.

The Centre ran many groups for families, including parenting classes, PEEPs (Peers Early Education Partnership) groups and Stay and Play Groups for parents and their children, in an attempt to reach their target families. Nazneem, a Pakistani worker, recognised the importance of offering support to the young Pakistani mothers. She was also aware of the concern of older Pakistani women that the younger Pakistani women were being indoctrinated into Western

ideals, but they were willing for the young mothers to learn English. So Nazneem set up English conversation classes for the young women, and used these as an opportunity to explain the English education system, English customs and traditions while encouraging them to keep their own religious beliefs and traditions in their homes. Nazneem had discovered the specific needs of a particular group of parents that had not been identified by the majority white English staff in the centre.

Two members of staff in Class 2 were bilingual. Jagdeep had moved to England from India in her teens. She had completed her education in a local secondary school and was training with Edward Square to achieve NVQ Level 2 in childcare and education. She was returning to India in 2011 to get married. Jagdeep spoke Punjabi as her home language and was also fluent in Urdu. She did not use her home languages in Class 2 because she told me that she was employed as an early years practitioner and not as a bilingual support member.

I had conversations with other staff involved with the children, and interviewed the deputy manager of the Daycare Centre who was part of the negotiations for the merger but left when Edward Square was formally opened. The following staff did not work in Class 2, but worked with the children as mentioned in the data.

Pseudonyms of staff & languages spoken	Qualification & role
Yolande: <b>Somali</b>	Abdilaahi's cousin & NVQ3 in Class 3
Nazneem: <b>Pakistani/Punjabi &amp; Urdu</b>	Worker for EMAS (BSS) in community groups
Aayat: <b>Pakistani/Punjabi &amp; Urdu</b>	Bilingual support staff (BSS) in Class 3
Nagat: <b>Somali</b>	Bilingual support staff (BSS) in Class 4
Charlotte: <b>English</b>	Class 3 & 4 lead teacher
Kirsty: <b>English</b>	Deputy manager for Daycare Centre. No longer working in Edward Square

Table 7: Additional staff working with the three children

#### 4.7 Meeting the children and their families

The children in this study were selected by the headteacher following my initial discussion about the remit for my research. The three families lived within walking distance of Edward Square. None of them were in employment. Each of the families had moved to England for different reasons. Safiya and her family were seeking asylum, Sadiqa came to England

following her arranged marriage to a British Pakistani relative, and Khadra came to England as an unaccompanied refugee.

#### **4.7.i Aeshah and Sadiqa**

Aeshah was the middle child of three, with a brother who was two years older and a sister who was 18 months younger than her. She was 2 years 3 months when she started in Class 2. Aeshah's brother had attended Class 4 at Edward Square when he was 3 years old but found it very difficult to settle, so Sadiqa, Aeshah's mother, was advised by Charlotte (lead teacher in Class 3 & 4) to start Aeshah in Class 2 when she was 2 years old. Aeshah lived with her mother, father, siblings, her grandparents, and an uncle, aunt and their children. They lived in a terraced house with a small back garden within walking distance of Edward Square. She had several other cousins living nearby. The family communicated in Urdu, their home language. Sadiqa and her mother-in-law spoke little English. She hoped to start learning when her youngest child started in nursery. When I carried out the first home visit, Jagdeep accompanied me as interpreter.

On the second occasion when I visited Aeshah and her mother at home, her grandmother came to the door and checked my identity before showing me into the front room. This time, I visited alone as no interpreter was available, and Sadiqa had asked me to visit without an interpreter. Aeshah, her mother and her baby sister came into the room, Aeshah hiding behind her mother. It looked as if this was the room for guests and a place to store electrical goods. We communicated through looking at photographs and gesture as Sadiqa was in the early stages of speaking English. Sadiqa showed me photographs of the children when they were younger with their cousins, some of whom lived in the house with them. Aeshah remained silent but watched me closely, with an occasional smile. Sadiqa said that Aeshah loved to play with her brother and all her cousins and how they often re-enacted scenes from school or nursery, reflecting Gregory's (2001) research with siblings. She told me that Aeshah wanted to be a teacher when she grew up, like Charlie at the nursery. The children played upstairs or in the backyard, but never in the street as Sadiqa had done when she was a child. Sadiqa would take Aeshah shopping occasionally, but usually she would stay at home with her cousins and uncles.

Sadiqa grew up in rural Pakistan, in the Punjab district. She said that her childhood was very happy. She had little formal education, but was busy in the home helping to look after her siblings and do housework. She loved playing around the tree in the middle of her village where

all the children congregated when they had finished their tasks. Sadiqa came to live in England when she married her husband. Although they had been betrothed as young children, her husband's family lived in England and he had been educated in England for his secondary schooling. The first time Sadiqa came to England was as a young bride, to live in her husband's family home. Her mother-in-law was the matriarch in the family home and Sadiqa obeyed her. When I visited the home, her mother-in-law would always come to see me, and after sharing a greeting would leave Sadiqa and me to talk together in the front room.

Sadiqa had been living in England for 6 years. She wanted to join groups at Edward Square, but her mother-in-law did not agree to this. Sadiqa wanted to learn English, and so was learning through her children. She also wanted to learn to drive so that she could be more independent. Sadiqa always went shopping with her mother-in-law and sisters-in law. They lived in a tightly-knit community. Sadiqa's husband was unable to work due to mental illness, which was kept as a family secret due to the shame the family had felt when her husband's father had been sectioned many years earlier. Aeshah helped her mother in the home, as Sadiqa had done in Pakistan, and helped with the baby. Sadiqa thought that Aeshah would marry one of their relatives and return to live in Pakistan. Sadiqa missed her family and often felt homesick for her village and friends in Pakistan. She wanted Aeshah to have friends, and perhaps, to be a teacher.

#### **4.7.ii Rahaf and Khadra**

Rahaf was an only child. She was 2 years 3 months when she started in Class 2. Her home language was Somali and until she started nursery, the only English she heard was on the television and when they were out in the community. When I visited Rahaf and her mother at home, Rahaf came to the door saying 'Izzie, Izzie', excitedly took my hand and showed me where to take off my shoes. She then led me into the living room and showed me my seat. The room was very sparse and tidy with a religious image on the wall. The large television was on the CBeebies channel. I began to talk with her mother, Khadra, and the interpreter, Nagat, using my Dictaphone, so that I could transcribe our conversation. Rahaf was very interested and wanted to join in. Her mother spoke to her in Somali. Rahaf sat down on the floor, and then spoke to her mother who got her a box of colours and a book from a cupboard. She did not want these, so Khadra went to get a box of toys. Rahaf rummaged through the box then went back to the colours and book, and started to draw. The book was an educational workbook, however, Rahaf was more interested in our conversation. Khadra got her a drink



and turned up the television, but Rahaf wanted her mother's attention and resisted playing with the interpreter.

When Rahaf was not at nursery she was with Khadra and her friends from college or the mosque. Khadra said that Rahaf never kept still unless she was watching the television. Rahaf slept with Khadra, going to sleep late and waking early. Khadra was pleased that Rahaf could go to nursery so that she had other children to play with. When I left with the interpreter, Rahaf took my hand as I found my shoes and said goodbye. She smiled and said 'Izzie'.

Khadra's mother sent her to England from Somalia when she was in her late teens to stay with family friends and a distant relative, because she feared for her safety. She stayed in London for a few months before moving to another city. When she was living in a hostel for homeless women, she became pregnant. Rahaf was born with a large haemangioma on her face, and had frequent hospital visits and various treatments in an attempt to reduce the size. The haemangioma affected her breathing due to its size and location. After Rahaf's birth, Khadra moved to a small, damp bedsit, but due to Rahaf's serious health problems, they finally moved to a maisonette. Khadra had learned early to be resilient and independent. She had a few good Somali friends from her English class at college and went shopping with them. Khadra missed her home and particularly her mother. She 'Skyped' her mother, and Rahaf was also a competent communicator through Skype. Khadra wanted to go home to Somalia as she felt very lonely in England, but knew that it was not safe for her to return yet. She enjoyed listening to her music and watching Arabic television channels, and was proud to be Somali. Khadra had no English friends and she had thought that England was a hostile place for Somalis, but found Edward Square very friendly and wanted to learn English so that she could train to work with children, and perhaps become a teacher. When she was growing up in Somalia she had little formal education in school, but had always wanted to become a doctor. Khadra was very concerned about the way that people would treat Rahaf because of her facial haemangioma but her hopes for Rahaf's education were more ambitious. She wanted her to be a doctor or a lawyer, while maintaining her Somali traditions and beliefs.

#### **4.7.iii Abdilaahi and Safiya**

Abdilaahi was the oldest of the three children in the case study and he started in Class 2 when he was 2 years 8 months. One of five children, Abdilaahi had older siblings and one younger brother, and when the study first started his mother was pregnant. Abdilaahi was not upset when his carer left him in the morning. He stood near the door and did not join in with other

children. He was quiet and watched children and activities, remaining on the periphery of the group. However, when visitors entered the room, he always called out 'Helloa' and smiled. He appeared to enjoy being outside, spending time on physical activities.

Safiya was Abdilaahi's mother. Safiya and her family were recent Somali arrivals in the UK, and were living with other family members. I spoke with her through an interpreter, but she chose to share very little detail about her home life. Her own childhood had been unsettled because of war and mobility. She wanted her children to live in peace and to keep their Muslim faith and traditions. Safiya and her family lived in a mixed household where more than two families were living, including several children. Safiya was reluctant to give me much information, but as a family they had moved frequently and were recently moved from Sweden. They had other family and friends in the area and spent their time within their own community, speaking Somali as their home language and Arabic for religious purposes. Initially, Safiya spoke no English and often came to nursery with another friend who was able to pass on messages for her. At other times, relatives dropped Abdilaahi off and collected him. For Safiya, life was about survival. She wanted Abdilaahi to be happy. She did not express any other long-term hopes for him. Safiya did not want me to visit her at home. A few weeks after I started attending Class 2, the interpreter told me that I was unable to visit Abdilaahi's home due to issues of domestic violence. I passed on this information to Beth, the Lead Teacher, to ensure that she and the SMT at the Nursery School were aware of this. Beth arranged a meeting with Safiya. Therefore, the information I have about his home came from his cousin Yolande, who worked in Class 3, and increasingly, through conversations with his mother at Edward Square. These were infrequent, and always with an interpreter.

Although Rosi knew that Rahaf had regular hospital appointments to treat the haemangioma, and all the staff were aware that other children may comment on Rahaf's facial haemangioma, Rosi, Charlie and Stella were unaware of the occurrence of domestic violence in Abdilaahi's home, or the mental ill health suffered by Aeshah's father and grandfather. Neither were they aware of the different changes of living accommodation and stays in hospital experienced by Rahaf. This information about the children was not in their records. It was important that I respected the confidentiality agreement that I made with the parents when they consented to take part in this research. Each time I met with the children's mothers, I asked for their consent to pass on any relevant information to the Lead Teacher. I have only recorded information that the parents agreed that I could share. Throughout the research process, I was cognisant of the ethics of my research, regularly checking with the research cohort and my field notes.

Rahaf, Aeshah and Abdilaahi were all from minority ethnic communities and at different stages of acquiring their home language. All of them were new to English when they started in Class 2. Throughout the study, I have referred to them as ‘emergent bilinguals’, to indicate the process of language acquisition that they were experiencing.

#### **4.8 Starting the journey**

Using an autobiographical approach in my main study (Chapter 1) supported my developing knowledge and understanding of inter-cultural and intra-cultural perspectives, including my own. Fetterman considers the voice of the ethnographer articulated through the reflexive nature of the research and the written report, and comments that, *‘living and working in another culture helps one to objectify the behaviours and beliefs not only of people in a foreign culture but also of individuals in one’s native culture’* (Fetterman: 2010:16).

An ethnographic approach to research is interpretative: studying the way people structure their everyday lives, making meaningful order for themselves and others. It enables their voices to be heard and to make visible the actions of those who are often invisible (Christensen: 2010). As the families and children in this study were learning English and were speakers of other languages, I wanted to use interpreters when interviewing the three mothers. The centre asked me to use their bilingual support staff, and this was successful in the initial interviews. However, as I got to know the families better and visited them in their homes, two of the mothers indicated that they did not want me to talk with them with an interpreter. Wechsler (2016) comments that *“Participants may fear that the confidentiality of their responses could be compromised if a third party is listening to the interview...”*. I thought that it was important to respect the wishes of the research participants, even if it meant that I compromised on the depth of my data. What was more critical was that I heard their voices as authentically as possible, and Khadra and Sadiqa were eager to use English.

##### **4.8.i Choosing the location**

I chose Edward Square for my research base because it was in a diverse multicultural area, and was ‘typical’ of other Children’s Centres being developed in England (see Chapter 1). I knew the management team, including the headteacher, and was familiar with its ethos and aims, and this gave me easy access to Class 2. I respected the management team and valued their work within the city. I knew that like other Children’s Centres, it was going through a period of change. I had visited the Nursery School and the Day Centre prior to their

amalgamation and was aware of the different styles of leadership, pedagogy and practice between the two settings. Both settings were well established and had been highly regarded by the local community for many years. In fact, unexpected assumptions did emerge, and these helped me to 'dig deeper' and actually challenged my thinking more, creating other areas of tension and discomfort for me. I knew that the Nursery School was judged as outstanding by Ofsted. I had assumed that all staff would have a sound knowledge and understanding of the process of language development and issues related to young children's introduction to a new language, and that priority would be given to supporting language development. Robson (2011) commented on this paradox of wanting to gain insights into a new subject while carrying out research in an area that is familiar. He suggested that it could help the researcher to gain valuable insights that would guide later research approaches. This proved to be true for me, as my research evolved into more specific aspects of study.

The headteacher was keen for research to be carried out in the centre as she was developing the institution as a centre of excellence in the city, and was willing to be my gatekeeper. As Walsh comments (2004), the gatekeeper will have their own expectations of the researcher's intentions and identity, and a gatekeeper can determine the data that can be collected. I met with her on several occasions prior to starting the research to discuss my intentions and the possible impact on the particular class that I would be working with. I gave her my research proposal and background information so that she could inform the management team, school governors and the staff within Class 2 with whom I would be working. As soon as I had their consent, I started to attend the nursery for one day a week over a period of 18 months. The headteacher did not ask me for anything in exchange for my access to the Children's Centre, although I later discovered that she hoped that my research would raise the quality of care in the nursery and had made this one of the lead teacher's targets for the year. When I became aware of this, I had a further conversation with the headteacher and we agreed that this was not within the remit of my proposal.

The headteacher selected the three families for the study based on their ethnic background and attendance pattern to coincide with the days I attended the setting, and to ensure that I was not working with children or families at risk (although concerns about domestic violence was disclosed at a later date). Some children could not be included for safeguarding reasons. I asked to work with children who had little prior experience of English, had not attended a crèche. The three children, Rahaf, Aeshah and Abdilaahi were the only children that attended on my research day who met these criteria. In her selection of children, the head teacher also

considered which key people she felt were appropriate for my research cohort. She selected the key people, not in discussion with me, but based on my research proposal to study three children who were aged 2 years and not previously exposed to English, their families and their allocated key people. It was important that I established good working relationships with all those involved in the research, especially the other staff at Edward Square, in order to be able to generate the data I needed.

However, it was my own identity or set of identities that became problematic for me at times, and I had to work hard to maintain my identity as a researcher and not an Advisor, nor inadvertently, an informant for the management team. I will discuss this further when I reflect on my role as an ethnographer, and the contradiction of the insider/outsider position in 4.8.iii. Initially, I was focused on observing the daily life of Class 2, with its activities, relationships and routines. However, I realised that I needed to be aware of any issues of power relationships related to my role locally as an ECEC educator and my prior relationships with the head teacher and lead teacher. Acknowledging this tension enabled me to critically reflect on how each of my research participants viewed me and to think about how to relate respectfully and non-judgementally with each person. I found it helpful to record my thinking in my Research Journal, and reading some of Foucault's studies informed my reflections. This whole process was important in developing interpretation of my data through the perspective of the research participants.

#### **4.8.ii Starting out in Class 2**

After my initial conversations with the headteacher, I wrote to the governing body and met with the headteacher and chair of governors to present my research plans and discuss my methods for data collection (see Appendix 3). After I received written consent from them, including the Senior Management Team, we agreed that I would attend Class 2 on one day each week for a period of 18 months. We also agreed a start date when I met the Senior Management Team, selected the families and gained consent to meet the staff, children and families start collecting data from the centre policies and documentation.

Although I knew some of the senior management team and two members of staff working in the centre, I did not know the team in Class 2, nor had I spent time in the room previously. On the first day that I started in Class 2, I arrived by 8.30am and was told that the head teacher and lead teacher for Class 2 would not be arriving until later, so was told to go straight to the classroom. I introduced myself to the staff in the room. There were three children and two

members of staff. It was Breakfast Club, so one practitioner sat with the children eating cereal while the other one was setting up the room. Over the next 20 minutes more staff arrived, and at 9.00am two of the children (three to four years old) and one practitioner left to go to Classes 3 & 4 and the doors were opened for the 2-year-old children and their parents to come into Class 2. By this stage I realised that none of the staff knew why I was there and most of them did not know who I was. Judged to be a successful setting, Edward Square was used to having visitors, and the staff assumed that I was another one. As I became aware that the Lead Teacher would not be working in the class that day, I explained who I was and what I was doing, commenting that I wanted to take part in the daily routine (Robson: 2011: 144). I met with Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and although the headteacher had explained my research proposal, I went through it with them, using the letters I had previously written to them (see Appendix 5) and they each gave me their written consent. As this was still part of the 'settling in' stage, there were very few children as, and during 'Welcome Time' everyone was encouraged to respond to 'My name is...'. This was how I was introduced to the children. I wanted to gain the trust of the staff, and so I was honest with them about my intentions and experience, but at the same time, I did not want to become a threat. I spoke to each person individually, confirming the conditions for my engagement with them: confidentiality, gaining information, and their freedom to withdraw from the research at any time. I wrote a letter to each of the team, (see Appendix 4) explaining why I was there because there was very little time in the working day to discuss issues. I attended team meetings, took part in training sessions in Edward Square and helped out in the room in whatever way was needed. I chose to participate with the team in Class 2 to help me build positive relationships and build trust, particularly with the three practitioners that were part of the research cohort. Being more of a participant also enabled me to collect data about how Class 2 was organised and the work roles of individual practitioners. In the holiday periods I arranged my visits to coincide with the attendance of the children and key people in this study.

I investigated the diverse cultures of the Children's Centre, introduced in 4.3, and in particular, the nursery group of Class 2. This investigation included information about policies, pedagogy and practices in the setting, and details about the qualifications, experiences and personal histories of the three key people. I also collected data from the families about their cultural beliefs, personal histories, views of childhood and their cultural identities in England. I observed the children, noting their behaviour, activities, language and relationships in both their home and nursery contexts. This rich contextual detail helped me to analyse the interactions between the children and their families, the children and the practitioners, the children and

other children, the practitioners and families, and the children and their environment. It is important to make sure that all observations and data collection take place in a culturally relevant and meaningful context (Fetterman: 2010).

I met the three families and had initial conversations in Edward Square to tell them about my research proposal, explain about confidentiality and to ask their permission to work with their children, look at their children's Learning Diaries, and visit the families in their homes. I did this through an interpreter with each family separately before carrying out home visits. Each parent signed my letter of consent. I had discussions with the lead teacher for Class 2, met with the bilingual support staff who worked in Edward Square and interviewed the key people for the research children and other practitioners from Class 2. I scrutinised policies, documents, the children's files and assessment folders in order to become as informed as possible. This enabled me to begin to understand some of the cultural issues and complexities.

Starting in Class 2 was disconcerting because I felt some familiarity with the routine of the nursery, but a complete novice as a researcher in the room. For the first few visits I primarily took the role of an observer, as I did not know my way around the environment, where resources were located, the approach of the staff towards children and the specific roles of staff. I also realised that the staff were very wary of me, and may have thought that I was being used by the management to 'spy' on them. Although I sensed this was the case, it was only much later that some staff confided that this was their initial fear. I spent some time reflecting on my role and used my journal to think critically about this.

*"I can see that my anxieties about upsetting the Senior Management Team by not agreeing to help them meet their targets, my concerns about maintaining a professional stance, my concerns about supporting Class 2 team, and coping with the antagonisms by two of the staff towards me have begun to affect my research process. I need to address this and get back to the core question"*  
(Journal entry: 21.10.11).

My dilemma was paradoxical. I was conscious of the tensions between staff in Class 2 and the senior managers. How could I maintain a professional approach while being immersed in the daily activities in Class 2? It was important to continually remind myself that I was in Class 2 as a researcher, not a member of the team, and nor was I responsible for helping the centre to meet its targets. Hammersley & Atkinson (2019) argue that the obstacles faced by the researcher can help her to understand the social organisation of the setting. Certainly, the

tensions within Edward Square became very evident and a crucial aspect of the analysis in this study.

I identified the need for clarity about the different cultural backgrounds of the three key people, Charlie, Rosi and Stella. They all had completed the same qualification from the same institution, but they had divergent individual life experiences and opportunities during their training. Since one of the key people, Rosi, was bilingual, I had to consider the use of English by staff within the nursery. It was easy to assume that her apparent fluency in spoken English meant that she also understood all the written documentation.

Whatever the paradox, I was at Edward Square as a learner and wanted to ensure that I was learning at first-hand. I had to learn to live with the insecurity of inhabiting the two roles of participant and researcher, and of being sensitive to the feelings of the other staff. As time went on, staff began to trust me more, and talked about their concerns about certain children and the changes taking place in the centre. Perhaps they realised that I was not reporting back to the headteacher and noticed that I was willing to help out with every aspect of the daily routine. When people wanted to talk to me about issues that were not directly related to my research, I did not take notes, and when I took notes or carried out observations, I always asked for their permission. My data was open for them to read at any time, although only Rosi did so on one occasion throughout the research period. In particular, the bilingual support staff Nagat and Nazneem began to talk to me about their experiences and responses to working in the centre, living in England and bringing up their families as second-generation Somalis and Pakistanis. This became critical data for my research and helped me to understand not only their individual cultures more but also the culture within Edward Square.

#### **4.8.iii The contradiction of the insider/outer position**

Hammersley (2006: 4) argues that *'crucial to ethnography is a tension between what we might call participant and analytic perspectives*. There is a constant tension between trying to understand people's views of their own lives as an insider and analysing them as an outsider. However, I found the pragmatics around being a participant researcher difficult and the dichotomy of being an 'insider/outsider' participant was a concept I struggled with throughout the data collection period. In their article discussing the dilemmas of insider/outsider roles, Gregory & Ruby (2011) reflect on the complex roles of researchers, never simultaneously being an insider or an outsider, but moving between the positions. They comment that this is particularly complex when carrying out cross-cultural research, where each person, whether



researcher or researched, has a different cultural, social or linguistic background and a different life trajectory. They noted that even where the researcher shared a common heritage with their research cohort, the position of being a researcher distanced them and they felt an outsider within a familiar culture. Gregory & Ruby (2011) examined the work of Bakhtin, recording his views of the self as a changing person, where being an outsider is a powerful dynamic in understanding other cultures and ways of being. This example of Gregory & Ruby's reflexive approach, the process they went through and the lessons they learned as they explored their insider/outsider roles in their diverse research projects was helpful for me in my reflections on my role as a researcher, and encouraged me to continue to struggle with my sense of self and positioning within the research project throughout the 18 months that I was involved in Edward Square and Class 2. I was initially surprised to find that I felt an outsider in the nursery with the practitioners, as a nursery environment was one that I was familiar with. Reflecting on this and in discussion with the research group I belonged to, I realised that I was observing and interpreting my data through the lens of my own pedagogical approach to work with young children. I recognised that I needed to have a conscious emic approach to interpreting data in order to maintain validity in my research (Hammersley & Atkinson: 2007). An ethnographer who is studying the lives of people within their own context and with people who are known to them, is clearly not a novice and may be placed in the position of an expert or an adviser. Gregory (2005: 9) discusses this contradiction of roles and suggests that the ethnographer needs to '*maintain rather than eliminate the insider/outsider duality*'. Working as a tutor on undergraduate courses in Early Years and delivering training for the local authority, I knew the management of Edward Square through my work. This inevitably influenced the way that the research community viewed me, which in turn could have affected the quality of relationships and the degree to which I, as the ethnographer, was able to be a participant within the study. I needed to be consciously aware of the duality of my professional role as an educator in other contexts and the role of an ethnographer within this research context, and any power issues that this may cause. To achieve this, I did not do any work as an educator with the Children's Centre throughout the 18-month research period, delegating this work to a colleague, and made this decision clear to senior managers, governors, staff and students. This left me free to be an ethnographer in the centre.

Robson (2011: 145) suggests that one needs to be 'active, reflexive and flexible' in one's research role in order to commit to doing participant research. I recognised that this was going to be necessary in order to investigate the questions that were governing my research, but naïvely did not realise the impact that this might have on the gatekeeper. We both had to work

hard to keep each other informed; me about the direction I was moving in and the evolving nature of the study, as discussed above. I realised that access through the gatekeeper had to be continually negotiated and the purpose and conditions of my research reiterated clearly. This meant meeting regularly to discuss the progress of the research, but making sure that my focus of was not compromised and that I was able to continue to collect rich data (Hammersley & Atkinson: 2007).

#### **4.9 Ethical aspects of my research**

When considering the ethical issues within my research, I asked myself the basic questions: Why do I want to do this research? Who is it for? What do I hope the impact will be, for whom and why? These questions helped me to establish the purpose of my study and rationale for carrying it out. As Hammersley & Traianou (2012) argue the purpose of doing research is to produce knowledge claims which can be tentative, so it is important to focus on reflexivity, keeping an open mind, being sceptical, and being aware of the subjective nature of any research.

The ethical issues in carrying out this research became increasingly complex as I realised that different groups of people within Edward Square had conflicting views, and as I became aware of the rivalries between particular groups. Murphy & Dingwall (2001: 339) use the term 'ethical theory' referring to the following issues: non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy or self-determination and justice. How did I rationalise my response to what I perceived as injustices and unequal power relations? I noted my reactions in my research journal, and reflected on my emotional response. As an ethnographer, it was imperative to protect the identities and the lives of the research cohort through using the BERA guidelines (2011), ensuring that all data was stored safely and that all identifying labels or images were coded accurately. I knew that many of the people I was studying were marginalised or dispossessed, so in my research I wanted to tell the story of their lives as they articulated them, initially through interpreters. I talked regularly with Sadiqa and Khadra, two of the mothers, and shared my research with them, trying to check that my comments were accurate representations of their views. Safiya rarely visited the centre and did not want to talk in any further interviews, and I accepted her decision.

Within an interpretative approach such as ethnography, flexible and emergent research methods produce distinct ethical issues. As a participant researcher, there were dilemmas around informed consent. For example, Abdilaahi's cousin worked in Edward Square and

wanted to give me information about the family. Before speaking with her, I asked Abdilaahi's mother, through the interpreter in Class 1, if she gave her consent. She told me that she wanted her niece to be the spokesperson for the family. As the research proceeded in new directions, it was critical that I always gained consent to use information gained from informal conversations and observations. I was using observations, and interviews using electronic recordings with a Dictaphone, in which I was finding out about the family and cultural background of the research cohort, particularly the children's parents, for data collection. As the new centre posted photographs and videos of the children on screen in the foyer of the Children's Centre, some parents were concerned whether my research would be reproduced in this way. Despite my initial discussion with each family about keeping all my data in a locked cabinet and never using social media, I realised that as the families had recently started at the Children's Centre, they were confusing my conditions that I could never use social media with the conditions that they had agreed with the centre. I reassured the participants that the data would not be posted on social media or online. As Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) suggest, at the outset of an ethnographic study, the researcher does not know exactly what will be involved. However, as I was involved with the daily lives of the participants, it was essential that I was aware of my responsibility as a researcher to recognise the potential dangers discussed by Eisenhart (2001:19); *'what if, in protecting some participants, the writer exposes or privileges others?'* To comply with ethical guidelines, the participants in the research were all asked for verbal and written consent (see Appendices 3-5). These were the governing body, Senior Management Team, the staff in Class 2, the three specific key people, the three families and their children. I spoke to all those who spoke English, explaining the remit of the research and the details about who would see the research, what methods I would be using for data collection, and how the data would be stored, and I responded to any questions. Bilingual support staff acted as interpreters for the families in their home languages, so that I could give them the same information and answer any queries. Although I had interpreters when I carried out my first home visits with Sadiqa and Khadra, the mothers chose to speak with me without interpreters when we talked at the centre, using English and sign language to communicate together. It was during these conversations that they gave me greater detail about their home lives, personal histories and concerns about their children. I spoke with the mothers about how the information they shared with me would be used, where it would be recorded and who would see it. I reminded them that all their names would be changed and that I would always check that they were willing for me to use information they told me. As the research progressed, I continued to keep the families and staff informed about the process, showing them any drawings or artefacts from the children. I discussed confidentiality and agreed with all the

research participants that I would use pseudonyms to protect their identity. When asked not to use the recorder or include information, often gained through informal conversations, I agreed, even though at times I knew that I was losing critical data.

While verbatim quotations enable the reader of my study to judge the credibility of the research, these could expose the researched cohort, especially as some of them may have felt vulnerable as residents in the UK or recent arrivals. Each family had different reasons for migrating to England (see superdiversity in Chapter 2). I attempted to overcome this dilemma by reminding all those involved in the research about the importance of confidentiality as well as their right to withhold information to protect them at each stage of the research. I was aware that Abdilaahi's family were recent arrivals in the UK and so it was even more crucial that I checked that they were willing for me to carry out observations on Abdilaahi with them and agree not to take any photographs. The families had been chosen by the headteacher, discussed earlier. I asked the three key people to talk with the parents about my research, using interpreters from the centre, to ensure that each parent understood the research remit before giving their consent. Flewitt (2005) noted in her study that it is important that parents do not feel obliged to take part, fearing that if they refuse it could damage the service they receive.

It is my view that all children have the fundamental right to give informed consent on any research on their lives. Therefore, I spoke with the children in the company of their parents but also asked the child's permission to use some of their mark-making as an on-going process. As Kellett (2010) argues, in the UK we deem that children are criminally responsible at the age of 10 and reach the 'age of reason' at the age of seven years, but do not specify an age for informed consent. The reason for this appears to be whether children can be deemed to be 'competent', and at what age competence occurs (Gray & MacBlain: 2012). I would argue that competence is not dependent on age, but on the individual child and the context of what is being asked of them, and how the questions are asked. As Alderson (2000) suggests, it is in the process of gaining consent that researchers discover children's competence in understanding the research process. This question of 'competence' is the reason why children's consent is called 'assent', and is also critiqued for suggesting that children should be treated differently from adults. Flewitt (2005: 4) used the term 'provisional consent', defining this as *'ongoing and dependent on the network of researcher/researched relationships built upon sensitivity, reciprocal trust and collaboration'*. Provisional consent was most the appropriate process for my study with very young children.

Although the children in this study were two and three years old, I asked them through an interpreter if they were willing for me to meet their families. To gain the consent of the children as far as possible. If they gave me a drawing, I asked 'is this for me?' holding the paper to my chest and waited for them to nod or take the paper back. I also tried to be responsive to their non-verbal communication and withdrew if I sensed they were uncomfortable with my presence. I endeavoured to be sensitive to their body language, their positioning in proximity to me and observed their gaze. The children approached me, rather than me approaching the children. On one occasion I became aware that one child was unhappy when I was observing her, so I put my notebook down and moved away. About 10 minutes later she appeared to want to be involved in the small group of children that I was playing with by coming closer to us and watching us as we played. She kept making eye contact with me. I understood this to mean that she was consenting to my engagement with her, but I did not pick up the notebook until later (Field notes: 10.11.10).

In their discussion on themes from feminist ethics, Brabeck & Brabeck (2009) state that it is important to represent the experiences of the research participants because their lives have moral significance. Their comment is made with reference to women, and although one of the children in my study was male, nevertheless I believe that attentiveness to the voices of all marginalised people is critical. For me, however, it raised the question about my own identity. I was a white, educated woman wishing to represent the views of culturally and ethnically diverse people, so I asked the key people and the parents about their own experiences of education, their views on caring for or parenting young children, and listened carefully to what they said. I reflected back their responses to make sure that I understood their perspective. An ethnographic approach espouses the practice of engaging participants as co-constructors of both research methods and interpretations. Lincoln (2009) outlined principles for reliability that include fairness, to ensure that all stakeholders would be treated fairly in any study, that the researcher should endeavour to be clear about the findings of their study, and engage in positive action in response to the findings and empowering the research participants to share their voice. I endeavoured to maintain these principles throughout the research process, from my initial inquiry to the presentation of my thesis. I submitted my completed Ethical Approval Form to the Research Ethics Committee, who accepted that it met the ethical guidelines for educational research provided by the university and by BERA (2011).

## **4.10 Tools for analysis**

### **4.10.i Finding the right tools**

Within an ethnographic approach to research there are no distinct stages of theorising, hypothesising, data collection and analysing. The research process is continuous, *“the analysis of data feeds into the research design; data collection and theory are developed from data analysis and subsequent data is guided by emergent theory”* (Walsh: 2004: 228).

### **4.10.ii A multi-layered approach**

As previously stated, the analysis for this study is rooted in sociocultural theory, discussed in Chapter 2. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979) is a helpful model for analysis because he advocated that the child at the heart of the research should be studied within their wider environmental context. His approach is focused on individual development, whereas my sociocultural approach focuses on the wider layers of influential environments around a group of children. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory illustrated his concept, in diagrammatic form, of the different environmental influences on the development of an individual child, with the family as the closest circle, and therefore having the greatest influence. While not applying Bronfenbrenner’s work directly, I have adapted his model, viewing the circles as different environmental contexts that influence the social learning experiences of the child in nursery, rather than Bronfenbrenner’s concept of influence on individual development. This helped me in analysing the policies and practices that had an impact on and may have shaped the professional and personal identities of the three staff members, Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and their work with the three children in my study.

The layers that I have explored include the national, local and institutional policies and practices, investigating the effect of these layers on the children’s experiences, as Edward Square evolved into a new Children’s Centre from the merger of two contrasting early years settings. I then analysed the inner layers around the children, their relationships with their families, their key people and their peers. This enabled me to interpret the factors that shaped the evolving practice of the three key people, and how this may have influenced the way that the emergent bilingual children learned to make sense of their world and began to participate as learners in a new context.

Using the model of environmental contexts seen as layers around the child as the theoretical framework, I began by rigorously going through my data, starting with documentation of national legislation relating to Children’s Centres and early years provision, identifying how the

senior managers in Edward Square had interpreted national legislation as they constructed the new centre. I looked at the use of language in written documentation of policies, letters to families, information on their website and the statement of the aims and values of Edward Square.

As my focus was on three emergent bilingual children and their three key people and in Class 2, I then began to analyse the interviews with Charlie, Rosi and Stella and other data that I had collected through observations and informal conversations. I noted the dissonance between the language used in Edward Square documentation and the language used by the key people and their interpretation of the centre documentation. This led to further analysis of the contrasting discourses of education and care, and the philosophical and pedagogical principles held by Charlie, Rosi and Stella and senior managers.

Edward Square was located in a multicultural community (see 4.3) and the centre employed bilingual support staff in Classes 1, 3 and 4. Families attending the centre were representative of the community including the three families in my research. Within my analysis of the outer layers of influence on Edward Square, I also scrutinised the institution's documentation related to supporting bilingualism and cultural diversity. I have identified this as a strand to be analysed throughout the layers of influence.

#### **4.10.iii Analysis of themes**

I used Foucauldian theory as a tool for analysing power relations in Class 2. I identified three key themes: power relations; language and power; and the discourses of education and care running throughout the analysis, by re-reading and coding and refining my data. I then created a diagrammatic spider's web (see Figure 1 in Chapter 5) to illustrate the different layers around the children in Class 2. My aim was to generate theory from the data using a form of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss: 1967) to analyse how these themes were interconnected throughout the different layers and created tension within Edward Square. An ethnographic study endeavours to gain detailed knowledge of the multiple dimensions within the research location and aims to understand the 'taken for granted' assumptions and rules of the members or the research cohorts (Charmaz: 2006). The strategy of a grounded theory approach to analysis is to develop theoretical categories from the data. Using a form of grounded theory enabled me to analyse the impact of the three key themes noted previously on the working practices of the three key people and the nursery environment, and then to analyse how the three emergent bilingual children were affected. The result of analysing each layer and identifying its impact

on the next layer indicated the particular tensions with Class 2 that were shaping the role of the key people in their work with the three children.

#### **4.10.iv Choosing analytical frameworks**

To support my analysis of the three key themes I have used some key theoretical concepts argued by Foucault. As I noted in Chapter 3, Foucault studied institutions, evaluating their structures and challenging their acknowledged 'regimes of truth' (Rabinow: 1984). Although he primarily formulated many of his theories through studying prisons and other institutions, his theories about power relations and how power is exercised by individuals and institutions were an important theoretical lens that I have used to analyse how Edward Square was structured, and the effect of hierarchical structures on the working lives of the staff and children in Class 2 within the institution. In Chapter 5 I have used Foucault's notions of discourse and the role of 'language', 'surveillance', 'docile bodies' and 'resistance' as key concepts to help me understand how the three key people responded to the changes in their working practices, which enabled me to critically reflect on their interactions with their three emergent bilingual key children in Chapter 6.

I then progressed to analysing the data related to the inner layers of influence of the children's experience. In Chapter 6, I used the work of Lave & Wenger (1991), critiqued in Chapter 2, to analyse my observations of the children in an attempt to discover how they became enculturated into the nursery as learners. Lave & Wenger presented a perspective that locates learning as situated within the context of lived experiences as participants. Within the sociocultural theoretical perspective, I used communities of practice as the theoretical framework and the concept of legitimate peripheral participation as the tool for analysis.

#### **4.11 In conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided a rationale for choosing ethnography, and considered the theoretical and practical aspects of carrying out an ethnographic study. My study explores the effect of continuous policy and curricula changes on the practice of three practitioners and the possible implications of this on the experiences of three very young children as they entered nursery from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and negotiated their cultural and linguistic identities as learners over a period of 18 months. The experiences of these children were individual, set within a particular time and place in history.

The next two chapters analyse the findings from my data, starting in Chapter 5 with an analysis



of the outer layers of factors affecting Edward Square and in particular, the three key people in Class 2. This analysis supported my investigation into the factors that influenced their practice, and how this in turn affected the three emergent bilingual children in their endeavour to become enculturated into Class 2. The final chapter summarises my findings, indicates what my research contributes to early years education and suggests some recommendations for policy and practice based on my findings.

## Chapter 5

### Examining the Impact of Change on Practitioners in Class 2

#### 5.1 Introduction

With the successive changes of government in the UK, policies within early years education and care have come under regular scrutiny and changed to reflect the new ideologies and economies proposed by each administration, as discussed in Chapter 1 and noted in Table 1 (Chapter 1.3). This has resulted in changing dominant discourses within the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector. Foucault argued for the importance of critical evaluation, problematising issues and enabling new viewpoints to emerge (Rabinow: 2011). In this chapter, problematising the issues around ongoing change will be used to explore the effect of the continual and diverse changes in their workplace on Charlie, Rosi and Stella, the three early years workers at the heart of this research. These changes, as previously recorded in Chapter 4.3, were both external to Edward Square through government legislation, regulation, a new curriculum and inspection regimes, and internal changes as a new institution evolved from the merger of the two prior institutions, a statutory Daycare Centre and a statutory Nursery School. These changes overlap, and recognising their interdependency is crucial to understanding the complexity of responses to change within the organisation and the practice of Charlie, Rosi and Stella. I argue that this affected the practice of practitioners working within Edward Square, and their relationships with families and children. Ball (2003: 215) commented about the continuous changes taking place in education policy and regulations stating that; *'The novelty of this epidemic reform is that it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes who they are'*.

To answer my research question, *How do 2-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting*, I analysed how these different changes, national and local, affected Charlie, Rosi and Stella's professional roles in Class 2. To aid my analysis, I addressed the following sub-questions:

- *How do practitioners understand their role in their work with 2-year-old emergent bilingual children?*
- *How does the nursery environment support the children?*

This chapter starts by presenting the theoretical framework for the analysis of data, and is followed by a brief discussion concerning power relations, language and power, and discourses of childhood; three key themes that are reflected throughout the different layers of

change and interwoven throughout this analysis. The chapter then continues with an exploration of the impact of change within the institution as the two settings merged, analysing how language used to articulate the new dominant discourse of ECEC affected the practice of Charlie, Rosi and Stella. This is followed by an analysis of the roles of the key people in this research, examining their different qualifications, and interrogating the distinction between education and care. The working practices within Class 2 are then analysed, and the way that the changes in assessment and documentation influenced the role of the practitioners in supporting young children is investigated, before examining the attitudes towards culture and diversity, and the roles of bilingual support staff in Edward Square. The chapter concludes with a response to the two sub-questions.

### **5.1.i Competing discourses**

I have used Foucault's ideas of discourses with their accompanying concepts of 'regimes of truth', 'power/knowledge', 'subjugated knowledge' and 'disciplinary power' (Foucault: 1977), as discussed in Chapter 3, as a theoretical framework to analyse the effects of on-going change as experienced by Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and also the way these changes affected the new institution of Edward Square. He argued that knowledge is always shaped by political, social and historical factors, through power, and it is by examining the relationship between knowledge and these factors that we can begin to deconstruct how certain 'truths' have become accepted. He suggested that a culture forms its identity in relation to what it *rejects*, and called the sets of rules within institutions that govern their accepted 'truths' as 'games of truth'. These then become the received knowledge and hold the power to reject other subjugated knowledge (Schirato, Danaher & Webb: 2012). As I demonstrate, with the construction of Edward Square, what was held to be 'truths' became problematic for Charlie, Rosi and Stella.

Foucault (1972) identified discourse as ways of organising knowledge, social practices, forms of subjectivity and the power relations that are integral to such knowledges and relations, and indicated that particular discourses can create unequal power relations. Policy changes discussed in Chapter 1 emanated from the changing discourses of ECEC from care to education, then education + business linked to the economy of the country and getting parents back to work. This resulted in increased regulation, documentation and target setting which was all linked to the funding received by the individual ECEC institution, perceived as performativity (Ball: 2013). Discourses are embedded in social systems and privilege some kinds of knowledge over others in an organised way. Foucault's use of the term 'discourse'

goes beyond the textuality of signs, and refers to the practices, rules and procedures that embody a methodical uniformity.

In 'Archaeology of Knowledge' (1972: 49) Foucault states;

*'Of course, discourses are composed of signs, but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this 'more' that renders them irreducible to the language and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe.'*

And it is this 'more' that I have endeavoured to understand through my research. To illustrate the process of analysis, I have detailed the complex layers of governance and influence around the children at the heart of this study in the following diagram (Figure 7), demonstrating the ripples of change from the new dominant discourse of education, with its focus on marketisation and target-setting espoused by the elected government in 2008, requiring reactive responses by Local Authorities, early years settings and practitioners successively to comply with the new regulations. As Ball (2013) noted, changes in the organisation and structures of educational institutions, the curriculum and regulatory changes are substantive, moving from a national system that is locally administered to a national system that is nationally administered.

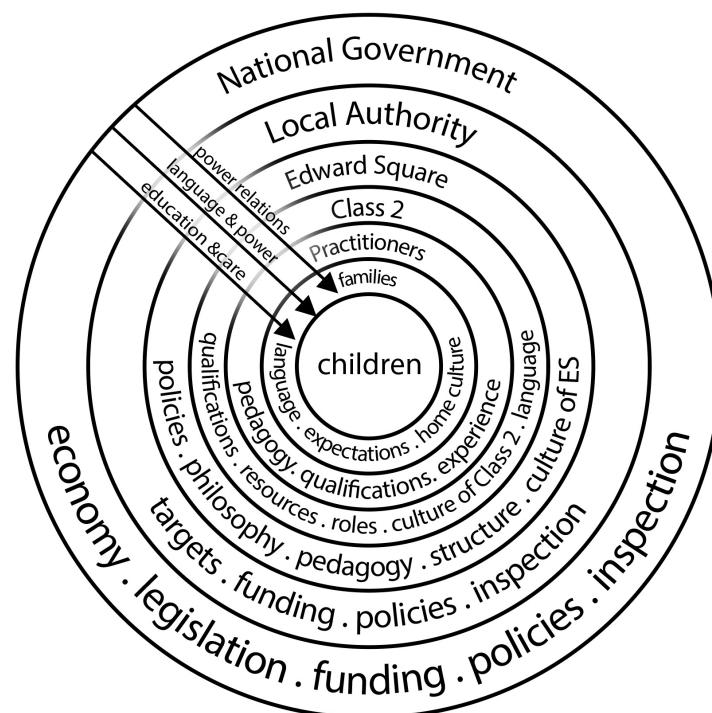


Figure 1: The outer layers of influence on the children's experience

Foucault's ideas and postmodern thought provide an awareness of the ways in which language shapes the way we see, feel and think. His concept of 'regimes of truth' discussed in Chapter 4, gives us an insight into the ways in which specific discourses operate to reinforce a particular view of the world, and are helpful in examining the layers of influence in Class 2.

Relationships of power determine the ways in which discourses are structured and the ideologies they espouse in specific social institutions as well as their effect on society as a whole. This creates tensions within the hierarchies of societies, social institutions and communities. The formalities of language are powerful constraints and may exercise power over others. As Edward Square was constructed from the merger of two very different early years settings, the choice of philosophical and pedagogical foundations was determined by the national educational discourse, and the formation of the staff team created complex tensions and power relationships. How language was received and understood had the power to create conflict between staff in Edward Square, and this will be discussed in this chapter.

Over the past 20 years, education has become increasingly the primary focus in early years, including working with children under 3 years old (see Chapter 1).

## **5.2 Changing the institution: Becoming a Children's Centre**

As discussed in Chapter 1, Children's Centres such as Edward Square were introduced in 2001 as part of New Labour's determination to eradicate child poverty in the UK by providing a range of services in one centralised location within a designated area. This resulted in the amalgamation of some existing early years settings to form new centres.

### **5.2.i Constructing a Children's Centre**

Edward Square, the new Children's Centre, was constructed within the new dominant discourse of education, as a service provider to the local community, regulated by Ofsted and required to meet government regulations. This new discourse privileged some kinds of knowledge over others (Foucault 1980), knowledge that was held to be true and disseminated through government policy statements, the EYFS (2008) and Ofsted requirements discussed in Chapter 1.3.ii. Such knowledge claims are understood when they are located within a network of disciplinary practices through which power circulates (Flax: 1993: 39).

While being essentially a centre for education and care, early childhood institutions have become increasingly commercialised (Penn: 2018), using the language of business. They are required to advertise their products, meet prescribed targets and respond to the needs of 'clients', as discussed in Chapter 1.3. The shift of language from providing 'care' for 2-year-old children to providing 'a service' indicates a new discourse, a change in ideological position to that of marketing for consumers, which has become more evident since this research took place. Dahlberg, Moss & Pence (2007) argue that this construction of the institution is reflected in the roles of early years workers, who become technicians tasked with ensuring that the expected outcomes are achieved that will appeal to parents as consumers. They are seen to be acting as substitute parents, providers of the care needs of the child and entrepreneurs who need to market their goods successfully.

The original Daycare Centre where Charlie, Rosi and Stella had been working was based on a discourse of care, and was under the authority of the Social Services. All the children were referred by them and provided with free places. Although they were aware of the new focus on the economic benefits of the ECEC, from Charlie, Rosi and Stella's perspective, as noted earlier, they provided care rather than a service.

Charlie and Stella were aware of the change, seeing it primarily as an issue of economy:

*Stella: Its all about money now with the government. They want all parents to get back to work and leave their kids with us. They don't think about the children's needs, only making more money for the country. It's not right' (Field notes: 06. 10.10)*

*Charlie: When we were a Daycare Centre it was all about the kids - all the time. Now it's all about money. I guess that's why Children's Centres are new with all mod cons and such. The posh parents like them, but that's not right round here (Field notes: 24.11.10)*

When asked about the change of focus, Rosi expressed her continuing discourse of care for all children and did not comment on the commercial aspect of Edward Square. She also indicated her cultural discourse of the care of young children;

*Rosi: I think that all the children are so young and they need the same care from us. It doesn't matter if the parents pay or not. Our job is to look after them.*

*In my home, babies are with their families. I think that's right, but I try to care for them well here, so the children are happy.* (Field notes: 20.05.11)

As I later demonstrate, Rosi was compliant, accepting the changes in her working practice and accepting authority, but maintaining her primacy of care. For Charlie and Stella, providing places for fee-paying parents was new, as was the focus on marketing, but this did not appear to affect the parents. Khadra and Safiya were new parents and had not known the Nursery School or the Daycare Centre. While Sadiqa's son had received a free nursery place in Class 3 provided by the DFES (2004) for all 3-year-olds, she did not comment on her daughter Aeshah having a free place due to meeting the criteria based on their low income.

Although technically the families were clients, the three mothers in this study, Safiya, Sadiqa and Khadra, all viewed Edward Square as a place for learning, Khadra commented '*I like the school and Rahaf is very happy with the teachers*' (Field notes: 21.01.11). Charlie, Rosi and Stella were viewed by these parents as respected teachers, in powerful positions. In fact, all the mothers mentioned that the practitioners were the teachers and knew what was best for their children. These parents felt part of the centre community, respecting the knowledge and expertise of the practitioners. They did not appear to consider themselves as consumers, but recognised the expertise of the staff as professionals.

*Khadra: The teachers tell me to give her books, so I buy them. They [teachers] are good. I do what they tell me.* (Field notes: 21.01.11)

*Sadiqa: They told me to bring Aeshah to nursery so she will be happy and confident. Not like her brother. She don't like to go but I bring her.* (Field notes: 21.1.11)

*Khadra: I would like to be teacher. They know about children and education.* (Field notes: 22.6.11)

None of the mothers had nursery experience in their home countries, but they knew that their children were in nursery to learn, and valued the knowledge and expertise of the teachers. Although the different status between a teacher and a nursery nurse became apparent through the campaign to encourage 2-year-old children into nursery, because some Somali and Pakistani parents stated that they wanted their children to be taught by teachers, not nursery nurses (EMAS: 2012), the mothers always referred to the nursery practitioners as teachers. Khadra and Sadiqa commented that their daughters wanted to be teachers:

Khadra: *She [Rahaf] want to be teacher like Charlie and Rosi. I want her be doctor.* (Field notes: 22.06.11)

Sadiqa: *Aeshah always say she want to be like Charlie – like a teacher. It's ok.* (Field notes: 21.01.11).

Charlie, Rosi and Stella were experienced professionals who had been working within early years education and care for many years, and had undergone different forms of inspection and regulation with Social Services. As a Children's Centre, they came under the scrutiny of Ofsted as well as the local authority regulatory processes. Power/knowledge can be productive, opening up new ways of thinking and acting (O'Farrell: 2005), but in this context it was constraining. As 5.3 examines later, Charlie, Rosi and Stella had different knowledge based on different discourses, but this knowledge was not included or discussed explicitly within Edward Square, and so became subjugated knowledge.

#### **5.2.ii The role of language in constructing the Children's Centre**

With the merger of the two institutions and the introduction of the new curriculum (2008), the senior managers of Edward Square were constructing a new institution, and wrote their aims, objectives and policies based on the 'truths' contained within the government discourse:

*'Edward Square is an inclusive, creative learning environment, with a commitment to improving outcomes for all.'* (ES Strapline: 2011)

This statement mirrored the language of the intentions of the new statutory curriculum:

*'Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child's experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances.'* (EYFS: 2008: 7)

The construction of an individual institution also depends on the discourse espoused by its management team. The Nursery School had adopted the approach of the education-based programme, Building Learning Power (BLP) (Claxton: 2002), adapting it for use in early years education (see Chapter 2), and this was foundational for the school, which based its curriculum on the BLP frameworks and reproduced its language (ibid) to achieve their intended outcomes (the words in bold mirror the vocabulary used in BLP documentation):

*'Significant to our whole setting is our commitment to learning to learn. We support the children to feel good about themselves as learners and have the skills to be great learners. We want them to be **resilient, resourceful,***



***reflective and reciprocal*** and help them to: ***persevere, be absorbed, notice things, imitate, listen, plan, revise what they are doing, make links and collaborate.***' (ES: 2011; emphasis mine)

This statement clearly expresses the intention for children to learn how to learn, reflecting work by Dweck (2006) on growth mindsets and the reconceptualization of childhood discourse (Cannella: 2005). The emboldened words articulate the intended skills that children should learn, and the processes through which they will become resilient, resourceful, reflective and reciprocal. The role of the teacher is also implied through the commitment to 'help them...'. Each of the emboldened words represent specific meanings within the BLP approach, and indicate the intentional active learning by children, and taught to teams of teachers using the methods designed by Claxton (2002).

Within Edward Square, the majority of the staff in Classes 3 & 4 had been employed in the nursery school and trained to work within this approach. They were familiar with the specific terminology within BLP (and what was meant by each word), all the planning of the curriculum, the forms of assessment, and practitioners' appraisal targets designed to meet the BLP outcomes. In an interview with the headteacher (Field notes: 06.10.10) she stated, when speaking about the introduction of BLP to the prior Nursery School, that;

Headteacher: *It was important for us to spend a whole year as a school team, becoming familiar with the philosophy and practice of Building Learning Power. We had several days of staff training and Guy Claxton came to advise us. I believe that this gave us the depth of understanding and belief in what we do.*

For the staff in Classes 1 & 2 however, BLP was a new concept, and there was a dissonance between the BLP philosophy and the discourse of childhood that was embedded in the pre-existing Daycare Centre. Although the practitioners in Class 2 were very attentive to supporting children's independence, helping them to resolve conflicts and encouraging child-initiated activities, their dominant discourse, as discussed in Chapter 4.4.iii, was predominantly that of a needy child from a dysfunctional home receiving free care. This was compared with the minority group of educated children from middle class families, who paid for their care. Referring to their work in the previous Daycare Centre, Charlie commented on her perception of her role, '*Children were referred to us 'cos the parents couldn't cope so we done it for them*' (Field notes: 06.10.10). Kirsty, the former Deputy Manager of the Daycare Centre stated that the aim of the new centre (Edward Square) was '*to better integrate children from low income and children 'in*

*need' with children from more affluent families ... offer a number of 'free' places to children deemed in need and referred by Health or Social Services' (Field notes: 24.11.10), indicating the change in discourse. The staff in Class 2, including Charlie, Stella and Rosi, were focused on the care needs of the children, as they had been in the Daycare Centre, toileting and sleep routines being regular topics, and at the many meetings that I attended, were given priority for discussion in staff meetings. One week the staff meeting was dedicated to concerns raised by one of the team about sleep times (Field notes: 09.02.11).*

*Charlie: We always used to make all the little ones sleep after lunch. That's why we have all the sleep mats and a sleep room. They need to sleep.*

*Beth: But some parents don't want their children to sleep. Anyway, some go home after lunch, so there's no reason for them to sleep here.*

*Charlie: Yeah, but they're only little. They need to sleep in the day. We need to tell their parents.*

A discourse of education rather than care introduced new terminology. The language used within the then new curriculum, the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE: 2008), Edward Square policies, and BLP documents, was unfamiliar to the practitioners from the Daycare Centre, overlooking the recommendations of the Tickell report (DfE: 2011: 17):

*'While improving the flexibility of the EYFS for specific providers, I am more generally concerned with improving its accessibility and clarity. The language should be revised to replace jargon and unnecessary complexity, as far as possible using terms which everyone will recognize'.*

For Charlie, Rosi and Stella in Class 2 however, BLP was a new concept with unfamiliar language, but was presented as a 'regime of truth' (Foucault: 1979) to be accepted by all staff as the approach to their practice with children. There was a dissonance between the BLP approach and the discourse of care (see Chapter 4.3.iii) that was embedded in the pre-existing Daycare Centre, highlighting the existence of two distinct systems in the UK.

Understanding new discourse with its attendant terminology presented challenges for Charlie, Rosi and Stella. Participating in the process of managing change had not taken place during the formation of Edward Square. As the Daycare Centre had continued to operate 'as normal'

in an off-site location, being an all-year-round service for families (see Chapter 4.3.ii), there had not been any opportunity for the staff from both prior institutions to meet until the actual opening in September 2008 (headteacher: 06.06.10). So, the different approaches to working with children were not discussed. Managing changes in the fundamental ethos and aims of the new institution led to confusion for Stella. As already noted, the discourse of Edward Square embraced the approach of the former Nursery School, based on the model of education rather than the discourse of care espoused by the former Daycare Centre. Without the opportunity for dialogue and collaborative critical reflection, staff across the new institution may hold implicit ideologies without an awareness of the explicit issues, and take for granted a particular power structure in social institutions, social structures and social expectations (MacNaughton: 2005). The teachers and teaching assistants who came from the former Nursery School and who now worked in Class 3 & 4 held certain 'knowledge' based on their experience of working with the senior managers in their previous institution, but Charlie, Stella and Rosi, who had worked in the former Daycare Centre, and now worked in Class 2, did not have access to this information, which created an incongruity of knowledge and unequal power relations.

*Charlie: It's like the nursery classes know what the senior managers are talking about... and we're like what? (Field notes: 26.04.11).*

My field notes record a conversation with Charlie while looking at a new display in Class 2 with photographs of children engaged in activities and annotated using BLP descriptors.

*Charlie: Hey Izzie, what do you reckon to our new display? Beth done it yesterday.*

*Me: Great action pictures of the children. It's interesting to see the language you use with Building Learning Power.*

*Charlie: But for our kids [in Class 2]? I don't even say to my daughter 'you are persevering with your work, or you collaborate well' and she's 12. I don't even know what is meant by that (Field notes: 18.03.11).*

This new language of BLP and what it conveyed, was unfamiliar to Charlie, and language was an important mediator of power (McNaughton: 2005). Charlie, Rosi and Stella had particular 'knowledge' that related to childcare and working with children under three years and the language that supported it. The new language of policies, the curriculum, and assessment used by the senior managers added to the confusion felt by Charlie, Rosi and Stella.

Foucault (1972) identified discourse as ways of organising knowledge, social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which are integral to such knowledges and relations, and

indicated that particular discourses can create unequal power relations. Lack of a shared discourse can undermine professional confidence, and this was evident in Class 2. The EYFS (2008) had become the 'regime of truth' for early years, and had produced relations of domination and subjugation. Stella stated that *'we have to use the EYFS even though we know that the way we have always worked is best for the children. They [referring to the government] think they know best'* (Field notes: 6.10.10). Foucault (1980) explored the relationship between knowledge, truth and power, and the effects of these on people and the institutions they create. There were tensions between the articulated 'truths' of the EYFS (2008), the policies produced by Edward Square and the practices of the former Daycare Centre practitioners, and the different ideologies created confusion for practitioners rather than synergy throughout the institution.

As Foucault stated (1980) language is powerful, expressing the ideas behind the language, and may be used as a vehicle for communicating power. In this context, language played an important role in the construction of the new centre, but also contributed to the tension and confusion expressed by Charlie, Rosi and Stella. The rhetoric used in government documents, new policies formulated by Edward Square and the language used in the new curriculum was unfamiliar to them and they felt disempowered.

Edward Square was not immune from this powerful rhetoric. The merger of a highly professional nursery school led by qualified teachers, with a statutory Daycare Centre that was meeting the needs of families who had been referred by Social Services, staffed by 'nursery nurses' and overseen by social workers, not only led to power struggles but also conflicting discourses of childhood and their attending 'regimes of truth'.

*Stella: The management has changed now, now we're a Children's Centre. It's a larger team and fee-paying children. It's hard to understand why it is all about money now. They talk about having a balance of referred and fee-paying but I'm really concerned that the referred families are being lost.* (Field notes: 6.10.10).

### **5.2.iii Contrasting discourses of education and care**

As I have argued in Chapter 3.4, different conceptions of childhood are held within the UK. Whereas the underpinning discourse of the Daycare Centre was one of care and probably based on a developmental approach, the underpinning conception of childhood in the Nursery

School, regulated by Ofsted as an educational institution, was more aligned to the education discourse. This new discourse of Edward Square, had its emphasis on education, endorsing the creative approach of the preschools in Reggio Emilia and the attention to a 'learning to learn' concept within BLP (Chapter 4:4.iii). The analysis of the effect of complex and continuous changes in policy and practice on the working experiences of three early years workers was not challenging the dominant discourse chosen by the senior managers of Edward Square. It was exploring how this discourse was communicated to these workers and how they understood them – how they were able to understand *why* they were being asked to do *what* they were being asked to do.

The construction of particular discourses of childhood within society is located within a specific moral, social, economic and ideological moment (Osgood: 2012). The EYFS states that:

*'Children are competent learners from birth and develop and learn in a wide variety of ways. All practitioners should, therefore, look carefully at the children in their care, consider their needs, their interests, and their stages of development.'* (EYFS: 2008: 11)

Providing places for fee-paying and referred children would ensure that the setting would become financially sustainable and be able to offer the 'one stop shop' ideal of Sure Start (Field notes: 24.11.10); however, there was a discrepancy between the rhetoric articulated in policy documentation and the actual beliefs of individual practitioners. Edward Square Vision and Values (2011) states: *'We believe that **all** children and families have a right to access our services and be welcomed as **equal** partners'* (emphasis mine).

However, there did not appear to be a shared pedagogy in Class 2, which at times created tension, such as expectations about children's behaviour. Discussions in staff meetings and disagreements between the staff in Class 2 highlighted this (Field notes: 10.11.10). Charlie, Rosi and Stella commented during interviews on disagreements between staff and managers about expectations of children's behaviour, and their individual views of what was appropriate for children under three.

*Charlie: It depends on what sort of behaviour it is. None of us like the hitting and we are all on the same sort of wavelength. If you get a child swear at you, that's the one I find difficult because if you say to a child no I don't like that and they are telling you to fuck off, the management say you are supposed to repeat it back to him. I can't because he is only two or three and I have never sworn at*

*my daughter. I can see Fiona's [head teacher] point – which part of the sentence are you saying that you don't want. I've never sworn at my mum or dad. Perhaps it is the upbringing. Other staff feel the same as me but they are able to do it but I can't. We use conflict resolution but there are some individual things that we are not agreed on. (Field notes: 13.10.10)*

The senior managers expected staff to model to the children which words were unacceptable, but Charlie's interpretation of this strategy shows a lack of understanding about managing behaviour with children aged 2 years.

Changing from the provision of care to marketing a service, and a focus on education rather than care created an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity for Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and this became evident through their practice as their roles changed within the newly formed institution of Edward Square.

### **5.3 Changing roles**

This section argues that the ECEC discourse created certain 'regimes of truth' and power/knowledge that shaped the construction of Edward Square. This discourse was unfamiliar to Charlie, Rosi and Stella, causing the formation of 'docile bodies' and resistance as each one responded to 'disciplinary power'. Their existing knowledge, based on a discourse of care, became 'subjugated knowledge'. The argument is developed through examining the personal stories of Charlie, Rosi and Stella as they established themselves as subjects of their actions within the disciplinary regimes existing in Edward Square, and analysing their responses to the changes in the status of their qualification, their role as key people, and the attitudes towards working with children under three years.

#### **5.3.i Qualifications versus experience**

The change of discourse and unfamiliar rhetoric was further obfuscated by the national review of qualifications and the introduction of a new national curriculum for children from birth to the end of reception year in school. Due to the expansion of qualifications for childcare in the previous 20 years, including National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), apprenticeships, and Sector Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early Years (SEFDEY), qualifications for working with young children came under scrutiny with the introduction of the Children's Workforce Development Council (2005). They were tasked with reforming qualifications and raising the standards of education for people working with children.

As a result of the review of qualifications by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) in 2005, the Nursery Nurses Examination Board (NNEB) qualification held by Charlie, Rosi and Stella (see Chapter 4.6.iii) was relegated from a Level 3 qualification to Level 2. Level 3 became the requisite qualification for a position of responsibility nationally within Early Years institutions. Having always been upheld as the gold standard for Early Childhood this change created controversy (Nutbrown: 2012). Stella and Charlie were proud of their NNEB qualification.

*Stella: Have you heard of the Nursery Nurses college? It doesn't exist now, but it was brilliant. The tutors were so good. My mum and cousin went there too, and they always say it was great. They reckon it was the best training. They are still working and have worked all over. They say you can always tell which workers have done it [the NNEB]. It was hard work but I got my diploma – I'm still so proud of myself even though they don't recognise the NNEB now. (Field notes: 06.10.10).*

Moreover, the restructuring of qualifications and job roles led to a revision in work titles for early years workers, creating additional confusion for practitioners, noted by Osgood (2012). The title of Early Years Professional was given to newly instituted postgraduate workers with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), Early Years Practitioners were level 3 qualified and Charlie, Rosi and Stella became Early Years Assistants, previously known as Nursery Nurses. The new staffing structures with new job titles caused division within Edward Square and Class 2 in particular.

*Charlie: Assistant sounds like I got no qualifications. I qualified as a Nursery Nurse, but that's gone now. I do the same job as I did then, with years of experience – but for what? Me and Stella, we done the same and we had responsibility before, but now... If you done the degree, you don't need experience, you still get to run groups (Field notes: 24.06.11).*

Charlie, Rosi and Stella had all been 'Room Leaders' in the former Daycare Centre, with responsibility for the day-to-day care of the children, working with the parents, managing a team of staff and meeting the requirements of Ofsted. However, with the change in status of this qualification (Chapter 1.3.ii), they became early years workers with responsibility for a small group of 'key children' in Edward Square. In effect, they had been demoted, both by national and external factors through the restructuring of the status of their qualification, and

at a local and internal level through the restructuring of the staff hierarchy in Edward Square. In this section I argue that Charlie, Rosi and Stella's initial training and their years of experience had become subjugated knowledge. To illustrate this, I analyse their responses to the changes in their working practices. Subjugated knowledge is a Foucauldian concept in which knowledge becomes hidden by the dominant discourse, in this context, the discourse of ECEC instituted by the government and now held by the senior managers of Edward Square.

Alison (NNEB), who had previously been one of the Daycare Centre managers, became the Class 2 Room Leader, responsible for the organisation of practitioners but not working directly with either children or families, and in 2009 Beth (QTS), who had been a teacher in the Nursery School, became the Class 2 Lead Teacher with responsibility for leading pedagogy. This led to a hierarchy predominantly determined by qualifications (Osgood: 2012). The professional roles of Charlie, Rosi and Stella had changed along with their previous status, yet they stated that their initial training had prepared them well for working with young children.

*Stella: I loved college. We learnt how to do everything you need for working with young kids and we had to go to different places to learn what to do. You know how it is. We went to a primary school for one term, different nurseries for a year and I spent one term in the hospital on the baby ward. It was good and it made you confident to work with kids. (Field notes: 06.10.10).*

As previously noted, Charlie, Rosi and Stella had been trained to care for young children which was regulated by Social Services, without a particular curriculum. The non-statutory Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning before Compulsory School Age (DLOs) (1996), Birth to Three Matters (2002) and the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS: 2008), were all introduced *after* their initial training. These documents reflected the technical practice of the changing discourses. Staff in early years settings were introduced to new documentation, changing legislation and new policies through internal staff training, and cascaded information following external training for nominated people from each local authority or institution.

*Charlie: The first year when we opened there was so much to take in and we were all like, 'wow'...it was like, trial and error with daily routines and changing times and we were all toying with different ideas but now that we have played around with it we roughly know what works. (Field notes: 6.10.10).*



Charlie's focus was on the technical aspect of working with young children – the routine and toileting, reflecting her initial training (Chapter 4.6.iii) and the DfE documents noted above. Encountering such change through the merger of the two settings, Charlie, Rosi and Stella understood the technical mechanisms of their new routines, but they did not have access to, or the opportunity to be initiated into the discourse that informed them. This notion of becoming technicians is analysed further in the next section, where I examine how regulation affected Charlie, Rosi and Stella's working practices.

Charlie, Rosi and Stella, as qualified NNEB Nursery Nurses were experienced early years workers, and their personal lives, work histories and experiences with the local area gave each of them a unique set of values and beliefs about their professional identities (see Chapter 4.6.iii), but their knowledge had become 'subjugated knowledge' (Foucault: 1979), replaced by the discourse of education, new qualifications and changed status within the new institution, and no longer appeared to be recognised.

In their interviews Rosi, Charlie and Stella expressed the aspects of their work that they felt passionately about.

*Rosi: I like to see the children grow and be happy here. I want them to feel comfortable with me* (Field notes: 13.10.16)

*Charlie: I want the kids to have fun and be safe* (Field notes: 06.10.10)

*Stella: I want the children to become independent and be ready for going to school, and I like to see their mums getting help with parenting. We're good with that here. We did it before when we were the Daycare Centre and I ran the groups for mums* (Field notes: 06.10.10).

Each one had their own opinion on what was important about their work. Stella indicated her own perspective on her professional role – the importance of preparation for school which is found within the EYFS, and the importance of supporting parents, enshrined in the discourse of Sure Start. But they all articulated the frustration and confusion of living through so many changes of government policy, the dissonant discourses between the former social services Daycare Centre and the former statutory Nursery School, and the change in their professional status.

Stella: *Basically, we still do the same work we have always done. But you have to keep changing what you write and where you write it. I'm not saying that change isn't good, but there has got to be a good reason to change.* (Field notes: 8.12.10)

Charlie: *I don't know why the government keeps changing their minds. We know what we're doing 'cos we're the ones who work with the kids.* (Field notes: 26.04.11)

Rosi: *It makes the work harder when you have to keep changing what write, but I try hard to keep up. I listen to Beth when she tells us what to do.* (Field notes: 08.12.10)

Stella implied that she did not know the reason behind some of the changes, Charlie was not confident that national government knew best and Rosi was conscious of the additional work involved. Being demoted was difficult for Charlie and Stella. They spoke of the pride they had felt as room leaders, and their disappointment in losing that responsibility and their specialist knowledge.

Charlie: *It's kind of humiliating when you've been a room leader and then they say no you can't do that now 'cos you're not qualified – when I am. I reckon I'm more qualified than these new ones who come here without even going to college [referring to NVQ staff]. It's not right you know'* (Field notes: 26.04.11)

The hidden message internalised by the practitioners from the senior managers through the new structure and allocation of staffing was that the older children needed better-qualified practitioners who had been initiated into the technical rationale of the discourse of ECEC, indicating two separated systems of care and education as noted by Bertram & Pascal (1999), increasing a climate of division. This hidden message had become a 'regime of truth' within the staffing structure. Foucault (1977) argued that disciplinary power is a process that regulates the behaviour of individuals, social groups and societies.

Charlie: *We don't have no teachers in Class 1 or 2, but the nursery class staff are nearly all teachers. It's like they [senior managers] think we're not clever enough to work with the older kids. They should try working with the little ones and see how hard it is* (Field notes: 26.04.11).

Both Charlie and Stella had enjoyed working with the 3–5-year-old children in the past, *'You can have a real conversation with them and they are so funny. I love being with them. Its more stimulating and they are learning all the time* (Stella: 06.10.10); perhaps they also felt that working with the pre-school children was more respected and of higher status.

*Charlie: The first year we were here I was between 2-3s and nursery so I would spend half of the week up there and half of the week down here. I've been with the 2s permanently for one year. I prefer to have a mix of working and liked the two halves of my week. The older kids are more stimulating so it helps. You can have a conversation with them, you know. They talk to you.* (Field notes: 06.10.10).

Although Charlie used the term *'up there'* and *'down here'* to describe the location of Classes 3 & 4 and Classes 1 & 2, the Children's Centre building was on a level. It seemed to indicate that working with the older children was a higher level - possibly academically or socially and a perceived hierarchy, and Charlie had internalised this discourse – the 'regime of truth', the hierarchy of Edward Square, in which the older children had more highly qualified staff and the permanent purpose built and furnished classes, had become normalised.

Charlie, Rosi and Stella all identified themselves as professional early years workers – acknowledging their training, experience and specialist knowledge. Charlie appeared confident in her role as a professional worker with young children. Although she said that she was not ambitious, she did find it frustrating that younger, less experienced practitioners were given more responsibilities than her, but the job worked well with her personal responsibilities and she felt confident in her abilities,

*Charlie: I know I'm good at my job and with all my experience I could be in management now, but I've got my daughter to think about and all my animals, so I'm happy to be with the kids every day then I go home and forget about work and have my own life. It works for me, you know* (Field notes: 06.10.10).

In reality, within the new qualifications structure, she did not have the qualifications to be a manager in a Children's Centre. Charlie commented that although there were tensions between the staff, particularly related to expectations of children's behaviour and discipline in the nursery, they all put the children first. As Foucault (1980) observed, power is exercised between the interplay of force and resistance, and Charlie was resistant to policy changes, and

although she stated that she could be a manager, the fact was that the power to change policy resided with the government.

Stella was frustrated with changes of policy and disappointed at having her personal ambitions thwarted. She commented that she had formerly been confident in her work, but had now lost confidence and felt undervalued because she was not a teacher and did not have a degree. Her parents supported her choice to train as a Nursery Nurse; *“(it) runs in the family, my mum and my cousin are Nursery Nurses.”* She had worked in the nursery for 16 years and enjoyed working in a diverse community, but did not live in the neighbourhood. Stella wanted to be promoted, and believed that she had the ability to be a room leader, but was always overlooked for better-qualified academic staff who did not have the experience that she had. Stella had felt uncomfortable at being the assistant worker to an NQT teacher for a parenting course that she had previously run, threatening her professional identity;

*Stella: I'd like to be a Team Leader. I was a Room Leader, but now it's like any experience gets lost. They [senior management team] only want qualifications now, not experience. That's why I don't feel valued here* (Field notes: 06.10.10).

*Stella: I used to run it myself. I can do it, but now they think I'm not good enough, I guess* (Field notes: 08.12.10).

Charlie and Stella felt demeaned by their marginalisation, but Rosi's response was different. Foucault (1977) used the term docility to explain how control and power was achieved through discipline, with the production of 'docile bodies' (Chapter 3.2.iv). This can lead to normalisation and conformity. Rosi wanted to conform to the expectations of the senior managers in the centre and worked hard to adjust to the changes. She really enjoyed her work and was diligent,

*Rosi: I never thought about working with children but I enjoy it and like to see the children happy* (Field notes: 13.10.10).

Rosi found all the changes in curriculum, policies, the change in the structure of Edward Square and the new assessment tools difficult to understand, but she was compliant and worked hard to meet her targets, possibly fearing 'punishment' if she did not get everything right.

*Rosi: I worry about getting the Learning Diaries right. You know, it's lots of photographs and sometimes the printer is broken. I don't like technology. Beth*

*wants to check our books [Learning Diaries] and I don't know what happens if I made mistakes (Field notes: 24.11.10).*

Rosi may have found the language of the new documents difficult to understand because not only was the educational terminology new to all three practitioners, but she was also working in an additional language.

*Rosi: We are more into training now and management make sure everyone is qualified. It's a lot to take in...you can't understand it all...I must keep my Learning Diaries up to date...it's a lot of writing (Field notes: 13.10.10).*

The observations recorded in my field notes illustrate the ways in which she was responsive to the children, quietly joining in with their activities but mostly silently. She frequently sat at the play-dough table and children joined her there. Rosi did not have personal conversations or interact with other adults in the room apart from conversations in relation to organisational issues, and appeared to be isolated. Rosi seemed to be an outsider, possibly constrained by the cultural and linguistic anglo-centricity of the setting. She did not express this, nor did any other member of the team comment, but my regular observations noted that she did not join in the general talk between adults, nor did she contribute during staff meetings.

Rosi had not anticipated working with children when she was in the Philippines, but her husband saw the NNEB course for mature students being advertised, and she saw it as a way to get a recognised qualification in England. Rosi was pleased that she was qualified as a professional worker.

*Rosi: I worked in offices and shops in mainland China when I left school, but did not have any qualifications. I met my husband in China and he wanted me to come to England when we got married. Now I have qualifications, so it is good, even though my English is not so good (Field notes: 13.10.10).*

Rosi appeared to be fluent in English. Perhaps her shyness was masking a lack of confidence in herself as a speaker of English – the dominant language of Edward Square. The difficulties she was having in keeping up with her record keeping, noted earlier, may have been due to her lack of confidence in written English. Rosi did not want more responsibility and was willing to conform to the requirements of her employers, *'I want to learn how to work this way now. I like to be a keyperson, but I don't want to be a leader. It's enough, what I do now'* (Field notes: 13.10.10). In her interview she told me that in her home culture, it was important to obey the

regulations and instructions from those in authority Her experience of education was very different from the English system that she now worked in. Rosi's understanding of power relationships was based on an authoritarian structure where children were subservient to adults.

Rosi: *When I was at school, you did what the teachers said and at home you did what your parents said. School at home is very different from England. We had to work hard and learn what the teachers told us. I didn't like school. You get punished if you don't get it right.* (Field notes: 13.10.10).

As noted in Chapter 4, there were no bilingual support staff in Class 2, but there were two staff who identified as being multilingual – Rosi and Jagdeep. There was a clear distinction between staff employed as bilingual support staff and staff employed as early years workers, implied through Jagdeep's comment to me,

Jagdeep: *I'm an early years assistant so we all use English in nursery. I'm not a bilingual worker.* (Field notes: 22.06.11)

Rosi: *I can understand how the parents are because I did not speak English. We speak English here.* (Field notes: 13.10.10)

The implications of monolingualism, with English as the dominant language in the nursery, and its attitudes towards culture and language are analysed in more detail in 5.4.

The constant change and the greater focus on education can leave early years staff from non-educational backgrounds feeling alienated and disempowered (Anning: 2004). As an ethnographer in Edward Square, I was aware of the confusion felt by staff about their roles and the tension that this caused. How Charlie, Rosi and Stella responded to the changes were individual to them, but they all shared a sense of confusion about what was expected of them now. Disciplinary power, imposed on the staff through the unfamiliar discourse of ECEC, produced a level of submission and docility. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were all very loyal to the new management of Edward Square in their preliminary interviews with me: *"It's much more positive now, there is more direction and more improvement"* (Rosi: Field notes: 13.10.10), and conformed outwardly to the new expectations, but the underlying tensions felt in Class 2 were exacerbated by the promotion of new and more highly qualified, but less experienced, staff. Stella: *(when talking about 2 practitioners who are doing a Foundation Degree) "I don't want to do a degree just to do the job I know I am good at. I don't want that stress in my life"* (Field notes: 08.12.10). Her frustration indicated her implicit resistance to change. Resistance can

be transformational, as forms of knowledge and discourses are open to alternative understandings (Foucault: 1997), but as the staff faced further changes, Charlie and Stella's resistance seemed to lead to further subjugation.

### 5.3.ii Key workers or key people?

The EYFS (2008), the document in use at the time of my research, stated the requirement for children in early years settings to be allocated a key person. This was embedded in one of the four principles; Positive Relationships: *'Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a **key person**'* (EYFS: 2008: 9). The document endorsed this prerequisite by stating: *'Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them'* (EYFS: 2008: 19).

Professionalism in relationships with families is important (Vincent & Ball: 2006), and the EYFS (2008) expected staff to achieve this through the role of a key *person*. Beth, the Lead Teacher, introduced Charlie, Rosi and Stella to me as 'key *people*' when I started my research, the title given on the staff notice board. But in their interviews with me, they referred to the role of 'key *worker*' as their primary role, and explained that they were the link person between the child's home and the nursery and were responsible for carrying out all the documentation, i.e. the work, required by Ofsted, providing personal care and promoting learning for their key children.

*Stella: We are all key **workers** and have our own children. I do the child's home visit, discuss their progress with their parents and generally make sure my key children are ok. I get to know them well and then I share this information with other staff in the room. You know, it's like you get really close to them, but you have to be professional and not let stuff get to you. (Field notes: 6.10.10; emphasis mine)*

Charlie, Rosi and Stella referred to their primary role as a key *worker*. The role of a key *person* as a statutory requirement (EYFS: 2008) was stated in the written information for parents;

*'All children are allocated a **key person** who will support them throughout their time in Class 2.'* (Edward Square Parent Handbook: 2010)

But the understanding of the role and the difference between a key *worker*, a term used by social workers and familiar to staff from a social services background, and a key *person*, defined as a relational role, is complex. The discourses underpinning these two concepts were very

significant, but identified through the change of one word. The role of the key *worker* was to complete all the practical work related to their key children, which was primarily keeping records and communicating with the child's family. The role of the key *person* is primarily to establish relationships with the child and their family. However, the debate about the differences between a key *worker* and a key *person* (Elfer, Goldschmeid & Selleck: 2003) had not been discussed within Edward Square, leaving Charlie, Rosi and Stella unaware of the difference between the roles. This distinct role of key *person* included planning for their key children, but the Edward Square documentation also appeared to use the terminology interchangeably:

*'Our Staff team in Class 2 work together to plan from the children's individual and group interests and provide opportunities to extend their learning. All children have individual learning journals and there will be plenty of opportunities to discuss your child's settling in and progress with their key worker during the time they are with us'. (Teaching and Learning Policy: 2011; emphasis mine)*

This suggests that the senior managers may also have been confused by the significantly different discourses. Stella commented on the emotional aspect of her work in caring for children from complex backgrounds and supporting their families:

*Stella: You know, coping with the emotions of families in poverty and such, you just get on with it, provide a routine for the kids, a sense of security and continuity. Provide a stimulating environment for them. (Field notes: 6.10.10)*

To strengthen the key person role and support their partnerships with parents, recent in-service training at Edward Square had focused on developing reflective and reciprocal relationships involving analytical judgements together about children's progress and shared pedagogical values for the child. This process of reflexive practice is challenging academically and emotionally demanding (Skattebol: 2010). The theoretical information around reflexive practice had been hard for Charlie, Rosi and Stella to process, as the language used and the concepts discussed were based on the specific discourse used by Building Learning Power (BLP) (see Chapter 2), the approach espoused by the nursery school and the foundation for Edward Square. Foucault (1974) described discourse as 'language in action'; the ideas and statements that permit us to make sense of things.

*Charlie: We just don't get it...I use the right words but I don't sort of know what they mean really. (Field notes: 24.11.10).*



Discourses are embedded in social systems and privilege some kinds of knowledge over others in an organised way (Foucault: 1974). However, Charlie, Rosi and Stella's response to the new discourse was to continue to inform the parents of their child's progress, discuss any problems and give advice in the same way as they had done in the former Daycare Centre. This practice was rooted in their prior experience and the expectations of the parents who saw the staff as the knowledgeable authority (Field notes: 22.01.11, 28.01.11). The ensuing parental partnership could be viewed as less of a collaborative practice and more a means of giving parents information.

However, due to the confusion about the new expectations of their role as a key *person* and the use of BLP, Charlie, Rosi and Stella continued to work with parents as they had done in the Daycare Centre. However, it seemed that in this context, their resistance to changing practices was the consequence of their confusion, but could also have enabled them to understand more about power relations and their own subjectivities. They were subject to the disciplinary power of Edward Square but also tied to their own identities through self-knowledge (Foucault: 1982).

*Charlie: We know how to do our job, but there's no time to learn about all the new stuff the government want us to do. We need training to keep up with it all. You know, like a day when Edward Square is closed so we have time to talk about it together like.*

*Stella: Yea, but that's not going to happen. We can't afford to shut for something like that. (Field notes: 24.11.10).*

The role of an early years worker is demanding, both physically and emotionally, but this was intensified by the changes in job roles as the two institutions merged, and how the different qualifications within the newly formed Edward Square were recognised. Charlie, Rosi and Stella acknowledged the need to be updated on the changing discourses but recognised that there was insufficient professional development or professional support and guidance to adjust to the changes and develop their changing job roles;

*Stella: Mind you there's so much new stuff to learn, where would we start? I don't have a problem with learning new things, you know, I really like to learn, but sometimes there is just too much and early years is all about change now. (Field notes: 24.11.10).*

### 5.3.iii Attitudes towards working with children under three

Charlie, Rosi and Stella were familiar with Birth to Three Matters (2000) and had found it a useful document to support their work with and assessment of children.

Charlie: *We did Birth to Three and it made sense. This one [the EYFS] is so complicated. Anyway, we know what to do, yeah”*

Stella: *‘I liked the way that it was designed for children this age, so you knew what was right. Someone said that they have included it in the EYFS but I don’t see it there’* (Field notes: 1.12.10).

Rosi: *Birth to Three? [in response to my question]. I liked it. I think we all did. It was easier to do and the cards were helpful’.* (Field notes: 03.02.11).

Charlie indicated that a new curriculum would not change her practice because she was experienced in working with children under three years. The Early Years Foundation Stage guidance document for 3-5 year olds (2000) was familiar to the teachers and the new EYFS (2008) was similar in ethos and content. This document was written for teachers who work in Reception classes as well as nursery teachers and practitioners, who were used to working with in an outcomes-based curriculum within the ECEC discourse.

Change was not only limited to changing discourses, qualifications, expectations and practice. Edward Square was due to have a new building, with state-of-the-art facilities, but due to financial restraints, they adapted the existing Daycare Centre accommodation, with the older children aged 3 and 4 years using the existing but refurbished building, and the youngest children under 3 years being accommodated in temporary mobile cabins, noted in 5.3.i, and evidence of the powerful hierarchical discourse. The outdoor area was developed and landscaped for use by all the children in the centre. There was new furniture and new resources throughout Edward Square, but the disparity between the actual classrooms, between the old and the new buildings, gave a powerful message about the relative importance given to the provision for children *over* 3 years versus those *under* 3 years. Perhaps the pre-school children in Classes 3 & 4 were being prepared for school, reflecting the ‘*school readiness*’ view of the curriculum, providing further evidence of the hidden messages about the powerful education discourse on the importance of school years over the early years;

*“It is crucial to their future success that children’s earliest experiences help to build a secure foundation for learning throughout their school years and beyond”* (EYFS: 2008: 10).

The staff working with the younger children felt this disparity keenly, and it compounded their feelings of inequality and being undervalued, as indicated by Stella:

*'We were the ones to move out of our nursery while all the refurbishment went on, but now we have to work in the crap accommodation while **they** have the new buildings'* (Field notes: 06.10.10; emphasis mine).

Charlie, Rosi and Stella knew that they had more experience of caring for children under 3 than the qualified teachers in Edward Square.

*Stella: We've been working with the little ones in the Daycare Centre – that's what Daycare Centres do. We weren't a Nursery School. They teach children to get ready for school. It's different'* (Field notes: 09.02.11).

These conflicting beliefs illustrated Foucault's observation that first of all, people establish themselves as subjects of knowledge and then act on others, exercising relations of power and domination (Foucault: 1980). The knowledge of education was considered more important than the knowledge of care, noted through the ECEC discourse. This discourse was foundational in the creation of Edward Square. Charlie and Stella felt they had been demoted through the change in qualifications, the physical environment of Class 2, and the new curriculum. As a result of the need for early years settings to prepare children for school, the language and focus of the EYFS (2008) appeared to be more appropriate for children *over* 3 years, as noted earlier.

*Kirsty: The tensions at Edward Square were there from the very beginning and I'm not surprised they are still there. I think the original [Daycare Centre] team felt and still feel very undervalued. I think sometimes other early years professionals undervalue under 3s as if that stage isn't as important as pre-school. I often felt that.* (Field notes: 24.11.10)

Kirsty, the Deputy Manager of the former Daycare Centre highlighted the tension within the institution and implied that there was a lack of respect for staff working with the youngest children. This correlated with the discrepancy between the qualifications of staff within the different age groups and the physical classrooms.

The combination of the status of staff based on qualifications and the disparity between the nursery environments created a sense of a hierarchy in importance and power for those working

with the older children. The specialist knowledge about caring for young children held by Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and their experience of working with the youngest children was subjugated knowledge. Charlie and Stella had shown some resistance and Rosi was docile and compliant. These processes occur through a form of power that operates in everyday life, shaping subjects internally and externally (Foucault: 1982). The response of Charlie, Rosi and Stella was to continue the practice that they were familiar with – their professional role.

### **5.3.iv Organisation vs pedagogy**

Moss & Petrie (2002:138) suggest that pedagogy refers to *'the whole domain of social responsibility for children, for their well-being, learning and competence'*. In agreement with their statement, I am defining the term pedagogy as the dynamic relationship between learning, teaching and culture. Ofsted state, with reference to early years (2019: 15):

*'Effective pedagogy consists of both teaching and the provision of instructive and stimulating learning environments and routines, and the latter need to be well planned and developed with clear goals on what learning is intended....'*

Good organisation was critical for the success of the transitional period, and remained important in their new accommodation. In the new room, daily rotas regarding staff responsibilities for the day were on the noticeboard just inside the entrance to Class 2, the rotas for staff weekly shifts were inside the store cupboard where staff coats and bags were deposited, and the curriculum planning and notes about children's interests were on a large white board near the door to the garden. I noted that staff regularly checked the rotas on the noticeboard and inside the cupboard, and discussed them together (Field notes: 13.10.10). Alison, the room leader, had an administrative role, and did not work in the classroom, and was responsible for maintaining these rotas. She only came into the room to discuss changes and negotiate working hours. Beth, the Class 2 lead teacher and responsible for pedagogy, did the planning and displayed the weekly and daily plans on the white board, but these did not appear to elicit discussion or attention. The staff thought that the plans were Beth's domain, and tried to follow them.

*Stella: Beth does the planning and writes it up on the board. She's trying something new, so she has 3 focus children and writes what they seem to be interested in. Then she does next week's plan from that. It's a bit confusing at the moment but I guess we'll get used to what she means (Field notes: 09.02.11).*

This was not explicitly stated, but this notion was strengthened when Charlie stated that in the school holidays, when not all the teachers were contracted to work and Classes 3 & 4 were closed, the staff in Class 2 *'could do what they wanted'* (Field notes: 20.04.11), evidence of her resistance. Foucault suggested that people are freer than they think, (Martin, Gutmann et al: 1988), identifying resistance as a means of self-transformation. Perhaps, given that they were not involved with the planning and little understanding of the pedagogy, Charlie, Rosi and Stella felt they had no ownership of the planning process, although the centre information for parents stated;

*'Staff are highly skilled at observing the children, noticing significant lines of interest or new learning and extending it through questioning and challenge. The children are encouraged to problem solve and reflect on and explore their learning experiences creatively.'* (ES: Teaching & Learning: 2011)

As was noted in Chapter 3:2.iv, Foucault (1997) used the term 'docility' to explain how control and power was achieved through discipline. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were becoming 'docile bodies', conforming to a practice that they did not understand.

Apart from the sounds of young children playing, Class 2 was very quiet. In practice, it appeared that the organisation of the day, the personal and practical care of the children and maintaining documentation on the child, were the primary task for Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and getting to know children through interacting with them was secondary. This was probably a continuation of their practice in the former Daycare Centre as well as during the transitional period when the Daycare Centre was temporarily relocated, when the staff had to travel by coach with the children each day (see Chapter 4:4.ii) Kirsty commented;

*In the Daycare Centre we were bothered about children learning, but there was a lot of care needs and reporting to Social Services to be done, so I guess education as such may have been overlooked.* (Field notes: 24.11.10)

Charlie, Rosi and Stella were particularly concerned about completing the observations on their key children, maintaining their Learning Diaries and keeping all the daily documented audits required by Ofsted. As a result, they would leave the room to print photographs of the children, check the various rotas to know what their assigned duties were for the day (see 5.3.iv) and write up records about each child's activities, which included what they had eaten, when their nappies were changed, together with any accident or incident forms and regular Health and Safety audits. Paperwork and organisational activities had become prioritised over

pedagogic activity as hierarchies of powerful discourses, because the focus of external scrutiny was on *reported evidence* of good practice. Working with children aged 2 years is physically and emotionally demanding, and as previously noted, was acknowledged by Charlie, Rosi and Stella (see 5.3.ii). Rosi noted that *'They are so young when they start and they miss their families. We need to be like their parents. Sometimes I get upset for them'* (Field notes: 13.10.10). They would have concurred with Elfer, Goldscheid & Selleck (2003: 27) that;

*'Maintaining an appropriate professional intimacy, which every child needs in order to feel special, while keeping an appropriate professional distance requires emotional work of the highest calibre'.*

Arguably, the constant changes within Edward Square affected the practice of Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and the immediate requirement to produce documentation had become the priority. Although the planning was more structured, there were new policies linked to the ECEC discourse to learn, as well as a new staff hierarchy; but the basic daily routine of the staff in Class 2 had not changed from the practices of the former Daycare Centre.

Clearly, Charlie, Rosi and Stella needed to be organised to meet the demands of each day, but organisation was demonstrably the most important aspect of the day. It seemed that the challenge of communicating with non-English speakers, who were still acquiring their first language and becoming bilingual, assumed a lower priority. Stella commented that *'It's hard enough working with 2 year-olds who can't speak to you, but when they don't speak your language, you can't speak to them and I just have to guess what they want'* (Field notes: 06.10.10). As noted above, the Ofsted report highlighted the importance of communication with the youngest children, and much research has been carried out indicating the importance of supporting the linguistic development of emergent bilingual children (for example, Kenner: 2000, Drury: 2007, Kelly; 2010). Interactions between Charlie, Rosi and Stella and their respective key children in this study will be analysed in the next chapter.

Most of the spoken language was the language was used for direction, informing the children about the daily routine or specific activities. For example, children were informed about 'tidy up time' through a verbal warning of two minutes, followed by a child walking round the room with a two-minute sand timer;

Rosi: *It's tidy up time in 2 minutes. Farah, your turn with the timer. Yes, you get it.*

'Circle time' was a loud verbal instruction to the whole class and the outside area, and 'story time' was indicated by a member of staff carrying round the book for the week, inviting children to come for a story if they wanted to.

Charlie: *Put that pen down. It's for the register.*

Stella: *Outside time. Put your coats on and line up ready to go outside.*

Stella: *If you want fruit, go inside* (speaking to children outside about snack time).

The style of spoken language, with the use of short phrases, provided the children with a model of language that did not particularly enhance their language development in English.

Working on different shifts with a group of young children who may attend on different days and at different times does require careful organisation, and, as discussed, Edward Square was going through a period of change. The majority of the staff in Class 2 were familiar with their known practice in the former Daycare Centre within the discourse of care rather than the unfamiliar style of practice within the discourse of ECEC. When managing times of uncertainty and insecurity, time is needed to rebuild trust and confidence. These changes were both emotionally and intellectually demanding, (see 5.3.iv), whereas organisation was practical and less demanding, and may have explained the corresponding priorities of the staff in Class 2.

#### **5.4 Changing working practices**

This internal tension was compounded by continuous external change to working practices, based on the 'regimes of truth' emanating from the ECEC discourse within the EYFS (2008). In this section I argue that these 'regimes of truth' produced new forms of documentation and regulation that were previously unfamiliar to Charlie, Rosi and Stella. The regulation of the routine, new forms of planning and assessment, and different layers of inspection exercised disciplinary power, and produced an atmosphere of mistrust. As this analysis demonstrates, Charlie, Rosi and Stella responded in different ways – at times compliant and at times resistant, but all undermined in their professional roles.

##### **5.4.i Assessment or observation**

The introduction of the EYFS (2008) led to further internal change as new forms of assessment were introduced. Learning Stories (see Chapter 4.4.iii) were recommended as the preferred method of documenting observations, and conformed to the changing requirements of Ofsted. Within Class 2, staff noted down the interests that they observed for their key children, writing what they observed and taking photographs to illustrate the learning process. These

observations were recorded as Learning Stories, as a means of assessing the progress and development of each child.

Each child had a Learning Diary, their own journal of observations which was completed by their key person under the six areas of learning specified in Development Matters (EYFS: 2008). After I had looked at Aeshah's Learning Diary with her, Beth (lead teacher) expressed her frustration that this diary had no Learning Stories, "*They're [the staff] meant to write a Learning Story for each section but this is just full of sticky labels*" (Field notes: 24.11.10). She informed me about the assessment process for children, commenting on the holistic nature of Learning Stories. "*When you analyse them you get so much information about the child. They really help you to plan effectively for each child.*"

Charlie commented: *I don't get Learning Stories. They take too long and I can't get my head round them* (Field notes: 24.11.10).

Charlie had learned to write observations when she was initially trained as a Nursery Nurse, but more recently wrote brief observations on 'sticky labels' that were stuck into the child's Learning Diary;

Charlie: *When we was at college we wrote long observations. Lots of detail. But now we do sticky labels which are quick and you just write what you seen and then put in the learning area, you know like PSE or CCL so you know where to stick it. We done a course with the Early Years Consultant. I like them. They make sense to me.* (Field notes: 24.11.10)

Rosi commented on the process;

Rosi: *We use photos now, which is good, but it takes me so long to stick them in the books and write the comments* (Field notes: 02.03.11).

Stella: *Some of the girls who have done the degree showed us how to do Learning Stories in our staff meeting. It's a bit like the long observations we did at college but now we put photos with them. Photographs are good because it makes the diaries more interesting. The parents like the photographs* (Field notes: 08.12.10).

This demonstrated how the staff were trying to meet the required assessment process by drawing on their previous experiences of long written observations, short comments on sticky labels and using photographs.



One morning I noticed a large photographic display in the form of the descriptive element of a Learning Story, about the children making bird feeders with Charlie. Rahaf had enjoyed making the bird feeders, and the extent of her learning throughout this activity was evident, both in the display, and in her ensuing excitement the following day (see Chapter 6:6.4). I asked Rosi if she would copy the Learning Story into Rahaf's Learning Diary.

Rosi: *Oh no. That is Charlie's work. We only write in our own observations of our key children in their diaries* (Field notes: 03.02.11).

Rahaf's Learning Diary contained 'sticky label' statements noting how she had met the expected outcomes across the compartmentalised prescribed areas of learning. For example, photographs of Rahaf were posted with the comment '*Rahaf uses scissors to cut the paper*', or '*Rahaf joined in singing in Circle Time*', but contained little detail about the learning process. The focus in Class 2 was on Emotional and Social Development: "*with the youngest children we want to help them develop emotionally and socially so that they have strong foundations for future learning*" (Beth: Field notes: 13.10.10). Rahaf's Learning Diary was shared with her mother, Khadra, three times a year, but it was not an accurate reflection of her development and learning, as I demonstrate in the next chapter.

Learning Stories were a completely new method for assessing children at Edward Square. They were based on the emergent paradigm discourse of childhood (see Chapter 4:4.iii), and initially developed in New Zealand as an assessment tool for the Te Whariki curriculum. Charlie, Rosi and Stella had been introduced to Learning Stories as a tool for assessment, but had not been trained in their pedagogical approach, which emphasises how children are learning and what motivates their learning. As a result, they may have felt more competent when using 'sticky labels' and transferred the description into a Learning Story format and added photographs. This information was then used to complete the 'Development Matters' section in the Learning Diary, by highlighting the age-related statements that demonstrated skills rather than the learning process. Understanding the pedagogy related to Learning Stories and how this form of assessment linked to the 'Development Matters' added more confusion for Charlie, Rosi and Stella about their changing role as early years workers.

Charlie, Rosi and Stella had been adapting to the remit of a Children's Centre, to the new discourse that underpinned the ethos and aims for Edward Square, and learning its new language. They were challenged by the change in status of qualifications and the implications

on their professional roles, and the expected outcomes required by Ofsted, the Local Authority and Edward Square. In the next section I analyse the changes in regulation practices, and how these changes affected Charlie, Rosi and Stella's perception of themselves as professionals.

#### **5.4.ii Surveillance, regulation and resistance**

At the time of this study, Ofsted inspections were focused on scrutiny of documentation rather than the direct observation of the staff. The whole institution worked under the shadow of regular Ofsted inspections and regulations, as well as the Local Authority (LA) Quality Inspection Framework (QIF) annual visit, which included staff observations, and the regular unannounced observations of staff by managers, in a climate of 'performativity' (Ball: 2013). Disciplinary power is used to impose order through social structures (Foucault: 1980), enforced through surveillance and regulatory practices. This is maintained through the culture of performativity, that measures performance and outcomes through inspection and record keeping (Ball: 2006).

Charlie, Rosi and Stella had been adapting to the discourse and approach of the EYFS (2008), learning its new language, and the expected outcomes required by Edward Square, the Local Authority and Ofsted. As previously stated, the role of an early years worker is demanding physically, emotionally and professionally and being inspected by organisations who were their employers in a constantly changing environment produced tension. Foucault (1979) suggested that disciplinary power establishes relationships of constraint between individuals, which then creates a hierarchy, and can lead to a lack of trust between people in the workplace. The power of 'the gaze' can be threatening, particularly when those under surveillance are uncertain of what they are required to do. Charlie, Rosi and Stella appeared to be intimidated by the gaze even through both Charlie and Stella, as noted earlier, showed some signs of resisting it by not always conforming.

Within Edward Square there were different layers of surveillance of staff; national regulation through Ofsted, local inspections by the Local Authority, internal appraisals by the Senior Management Team, and the lead teacher's evaluations of the practitioner's observations of children. Although the different requirements, expectations and priorities added to the existing tensions within the nursery, it enabled the senior management team to shape the behaviour of the new institution and ensure conformity, and according to Foucault (1983), regulating the behaviour of individuals and standardising practice. Charlie and Stella stated that they were being observed both internally within the institution and externally through inspections, *'there's always someone doing one inspection or another. We know it happens, but just recently it seems to be happening all the time'* (Stella: Field notes: 10.10.10). They were conscious of a

greater depth of scrutiny on their practice. Beth commented that Ofsted was expected at any time (Field notes: 17.11.10) so they needed to be prepared, and Charlie referred to *“being checked up on”* (Field notes: 24.10.11) when senior managers came into Class 2, leading to confusion about the expectations of external authorities (Osgood: 2012; Ball: 2013).

The headteacher was particularly concerned about the poor quality of interactions between some of the staff and the children in Class 2. After carrying out appraisals and supervision with individual staff, an initial layer of scrutiny, the headteacher and her deputy decided to prepare a video of themselves acting out poor interactions with children during a typical nursery day (Interview with headteacher: 08.05.11). This was shown to all staff as part of an In-service Day, with Classes 1 & 2 in one room and Classes 3 & 4 in a different room, presumably with the intention of changing staff interactions with children through disciplinary power (Foucault: 1983). I was with Classes 1 & 2. The practitioners were clearly shocked by the video, and became distressed. They complained to Liz, the deputy head teacher, that they were being accused of bad practice, and some staff, such as Stella, were unable to continue with the In-service Day activities. Liz informed me that staff in Classes 3 & 4 had laughed during the video, and had then had a discussion on positive engagement with children. Class 2 staff knew that the video had been targeted at them, and some were at a loss as to how to challenge this with the senior managers, having been disempowered through the use of the video as a form of surveillance (Foucault: 1980). *“No point saying anything. They take no notice anyway”* (Viv, staff member from Class 2, Field notes: 03.5.11). This indicated the ‘silencing’ they sensed from the senior managers, and the effect of the video footage in homogenising all staff as having poor practice with young children (Sheridan: 1980). Stella was distressed, because she had featured in the video, and met with Liz but then went home, unable to speak with her colleagues. In my journal I noted my own questions and reflections as to why Classes 3 & 4 had responded so differently. Perhaps the fact that the senior managers had all previously worked in the Nursery School meant that there was trust between the staff and managers. There may have been a clear introduction to the video explaining its purpose, which didn’t happen with Classes 1 & 2. None of the senior management team had previous experience of working in a Daycare Centre or with children under 3 years in a non-statutory setting (headteacher: 06.10.10), so this may have led to a lack of understanding of the issues related to working with children under three years. There seemed to be a lack of respect for the staff in Class 2, both as individuals as well as for their distinctive job roles. It was evident that there was a disparity of understanding between the senior managers and staff in Class 2 based on their prior experiences and philosophical backgrounds, as well as a significant misjudgement as to how to address what was judged to be poor practice without shaming staff publicly.

As discussed in Chapter 3.2.iv, Foucault borrowed the concept of the panopticon to explain the disciplinary power of surveillance (Foucault: 1979). The effect of *'the gaze'* is omnipresent yet discreet, and has the effect of normalising behaviour throughout 360° of an institution or society. This notion of the panopticon ensures compliance and control. The use of the video was like the panopticon, as the film had been made without the knowledge of the staff in an attempt by the senior managers to normalise practices and improve interactions between staff and children. The result was to increase the tension and intensify the power relations within Edward Square. The senior managers had used the powerful position of surveillance in an attempt to change the practice of the early years workers through conformity, but in reality, for Class 2, it led to repression. Foucault (1979) named this power the 'microphysics of power' as it affects every aspect of a person's working life. The staff were being scrutinised at every level through spontaneous observations in Class 2 by senior managers, and when the headteacher brought visitors into the classroom, even if they were not aware of it, creating a climate of mistrust. This event highlighted the tension between staff in Edward Square and emphasised the discrepancy between Classes 1 & 2 and Classes 3 & 4.

Charlie, Rosi and Stella certainly felt under the spotlight of 'the gaze' (Foucault: 1977) and were aware that they were the target of this video exercise. Conceivably, Fiona and Liz, the managers, may have assumed that staff in Class 2 had been educated in the same way as those qualified as teachers, or that the former Daycare Centre had operated in the same way as the former Nursery School. Edward Square appeared to be functioning as two different establishments within one institution, but governed by one set of policies. This event was never referred to again within my hearing, but the fear of being observed by senior managers continued to cause tension, and highlighted the division between staff in Class 2 and senior managers.

Charlie commented: *We all work better in the holidays when they [senior managers] are not around much. They leave us alone as we're the only ones working with kids* (Field notes: 20.05.11).

The struggles faced by Charlie, Rosi and Stella, caused by continuous changes both externally through the government and internally through the creation of a new children's centre, were not heard as there did not appear to be a forum to do so. Foucault (1994) was interested in the immediate struggles of individuals, considering why people struggle and what that says about their understanding of being human. Charlie, Rosi and Stella indicated that they felt more at ease in the nursery when Classes 3 & 4 were closed in the holidays, and there were no staff on term time only contracts, including the senior managers. They could make choices about

their practice. Foucault believed that subjugated knowledge should be heard, unlike the silencing that Stella and other staff had experienced through the video film footage, leaving them feeling powerless and humiliated.

However, Foucault's notion of power *relations*, rather than using the term power *person*, suggests the possibility of resistance and agency, because relations are not fixed positions but are organic and can change. Charlie, Rosi and Stella all responded as individuals, as previously discussed, and chose how to manage resistance and compliance. Within Edward Square there were power relations between staff and employees, among staff, between staff and parents, between staff and children, and between staff and regulatory bodies. All these power relations have an effect on how regulation is experienced. Charlie, Rosi and Stella had worked together for many years and were familiar with each other's working practices.

Rosi was concerned about being observed and meeting her targets, as she made repeated statements about her work.

Rosi commented: *I worry about doing the job right and getting all my observations and records done. It's changed now how we do them but I've worked with the same people in this class [including Charlie and Stella] and we help each other. I can always ask them if I need help* (Field notes: 20.04.11).

Foucault's insights into surveillance and its aim to control behaviour were evident in Edward Square, ensuring conformity but also eliciting resistance (Sheridan: 1980). Rosi was willing to conform, Stella resented being demoted and Charlie was resistant to conformity. Perhaps this was in part an external response to their internal insecurities about their changing work practices and the expectations of the senior managers and other inspection bodies, but arguably, it may also have been a reasonable response to an imperfect situation. But what did it say about the professionalism of Charlie, Rosi and Stella?

Charlie: *We know what we're doing. We were trained for this job and have got loads of experience – and we do a good job. Not like the ones who do NVQ's then get responsibility without experience. It makes me mad but what can you do?* (Field notes: 20.05.11).

Charlie appeared to show the greatest resistance to senior management through her asides to other practitioners and non-verbal communication;

Charlie: *They [senior managers] think they know what's right for these kids but they've never worked with the little ones. Just get on with what we know, they'll [senior managers] never know because we won't tell them* (Field notes: 24.11.10).

Charlie was under the authority of her managers, yet her silence '*because we won't tell them*' was empowering for her and demonstrated her resistance to both the senior managers and work colleagues in Class 2 through the power she exerted over other members of staff and the children. Although there was an official staff structure within Class 2, there seemed to be an unofficial structure where Charlie actually determined the routine through authoritative instructions and her presence in the nursery when she was on duty, and other staff deferred to her. My field notes record Charlie reorganising the rota for staff roles when she was on the early shift, and other staff accepting the changes without comments, but making eye contact with each other to express their feelings. One commented to me: "*we just go with her so that it keeps the atmosphere sweet. I'n't that right, yeah?*" The other person present nodded. This was a regular occurrence (Field notes: 27.02.11). Foucault (1980: 98) described how '*Power is exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power.*' When Charlie was on duty, the rest of the team submitted to her lead although she was not the official leader. This appeared to be their choice as no-one challenged her, but they were being subjugated again, this time by Charlie.

In July 2011, during the statutory school holidays, when Classes 1 & 2 were open, there were less children in nursery as many of the families chose to keep their children at home during the school holidays. Charlie planned the daily activities, informing staff as they arrived what activities they would be doing. On one occasion, Charlie brought in her rabbits to show the children. These were kept in their cage outside and children took turns to sit and watch them. Each of the days that I attended, Charlie proposed free-play throughout the day, allocating staff to either work inside or outside. She informed me;

Charlie: *I like the kids to have the chance to play and enjoy themselves. Do what they want and we can supervise them to make sure that they are safe. You know what I mean. It's what we've always done.* (referring to the prior Daycare Centre) (Field notes: 20.07.11).

However, as Foucault argued power produces certain types of behaviour, that could simultaneously be productive and coercive (Schirato, Danaher & Webb: 2012). Charlie, Rosi

and Stella chose to conform outwardly to the changes in Edward Square in exchange for their on-going employment. They may have been aware that their practice was being scrutinised, but none of them expressed a desire to leave Edward Square. In an interview, the headteacher commented; *we need to raise the standard of practice by staff who we have inherited otherwise they will need to move on* (Field notes: 06.10.10).

### **5.5 Valuing multiculturalism and bilingualism: a dissonance between rhetoric and practice**

In this section the focus is on the dynamics of power, knowledge and subjectivity. I note that there was a dissonance between the rhetoric articulated in Edward Square policies and the actual practice that I observed. Following Foucault's suggestion to use his concepts as a tool-kit for analysis (Rabinow: 1984), I argue that languages other than English had been silenced and the 'regime of truth' held was that young children needed to speak and understand English as a priority over their home languages. I examine the power/knowledge nexus and the conditions that enabled the bilingual support staff and the practitioners to talk about their roles in supporting multiculturalism and multilingualism in Edward Square, creating their subjectivities.

Foucault (1979) identified the role of educational institutions in providing social control through normalisation processes. Social cohesion can be maintained through socialising families who are economically disadvantaged and children from minority backgrounds into the mainstream culture (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence: 2007). Foucault (1977) suggested that domination produces a relatively predictable control of the actions of others, but within a superdiverse demographic, what about reciprocity and reciprocal learning? Within Edward Square, and specifically in Class 2, there were various home languages spoken, French, Polish, Bulgarian, Urdu, Punjabi, Arabic, Ebo, Czech, Swahili and Somali, and families attended the centre from diverse ethnic communities. As previously noted, children from low-income families from across the range of home cultures represented in Class 2 also attended. As discussed in Chapter 4:4.i, the demographic area around Edward Square was changing and the majority language represented was Somali, including Arabic for religious purposes, followed by Urdu. Ethnicity, language and economic factors are distinct classifications, and not necessarily linked to each other. However, the children in this study were representative of the demography of Class 2, they came from low-income families, their main home languages being Somali and Urdu, and representative of the ethnic, linguistic and economic diversity of the families attending Edward Square.

The headteacher, Fiona, had expressed her sensitivity to cultural diversity;

Headteacher: *We are in an exciting and richly diverse area and we respond to the different cultures and lifestyles of the families we are working with. We get involved with the carnival – we have our own float most years. We want to do an exhibition of the children’s work at the Community Centre, and we have family groups here all the time. Our Family Support team do a great job with families, running courses for them. We want to do a cooking class* (Field notes: 6.10.10).

Edward Square’s ‘Vision and Values’ document stated that:

*‘We go out of our way to learn from individuals – adapting and improving our provision to ensure it ‘enables’ all’.* (ES: 2011)

But how was the Centre ‘*learning from individuals*’ and ‘*adapting their provision*’? Edward Square employed bilingual support staff, who had lower qualifications than the teachers and child care workers, on a lower pay scale and were all employed part-time. Most of the bilingual support staff worked in Classes 3 & 4, and one bilingual support staff member worked with the babies for one day a week in Class 1. Fiona stated that;

Headteacher: *The older children need to learn English for starting school, so I want them to have support with speaking and understanding English. I have a Somali speaker in Class 1 because we are getting more Somali families moving into the area and we need to be able to communicate with them about their babies* (Field notes: 18.03.11).

There were no bilingual support staff in Class 2. The bilingual support staff who spoke Somali and Urdu in Classes 3 & 4 used their home languages to support children in their play. These were the two primary additional languages spoken by the children so the senior managers were responsive to the demographic changes in the area. The bilingual support staff were included in In-service training days but not staff meetings, and they were encouraged to do further training. However, this required higher qualifications in written English. Edward Square Teaching and Learning Policy: 2011 states:

*‘Learning needs to take place in the social context and we believe ‘talk’ is central to the learning process... encourage children to communicate in a variety of ways and value 1<sup>st</sup> language and cultural heritage’.*



Despite this, in Class 2, where there were no official bilingual support staff, home languages were not used. Although there were two staff who were bilingual, neither used their home languages in their interactions with the children. There appeared to be a distinction between the role of an early years worker with CACHE qualifications in education and care, and the role of bilingual support staff, who did not have early years qualifications (see Table 5 in Chapter 4.4), that determined who should use their home languages when working with the children. Jagdeep (Punjabi & Urdu speaker) said that *'as an NVQ2 member of staff, my role is to work with the children. I'm not a bilingual support worker, that's not what I trained for'* (Field notes: 21.01.11). Rosi spoke Chinese, but at this time there were no Chinese-speaking children, and Claudette (graduate practitioner) was British Caribbean but said that she only spoke English and viewed herself as *"being English"*. As she was preparing the children for Circle Time, Stella commented;

*Stella" 't's so important for the children to learn to speak English when they are very young. They learn so quick, and that's good because then they can join in at Circle Time (Field notes: 02.03.11).*

This seemed to contradict the Teaching and Learning policy statement and may be further evidence of the lack of focus on language development for the younger children and particular support for children who had little experience of English. There also was little evidence of learning about cultural and linguistic diversity from staff within Class 2 who spoke other languages and were knowledgeable about other cultures. Their critical knowledge was subjugated.

A Primary National Strategy document, 'Supporting children learning English as an additional language' (2007) stated:

*'Bilingualism is an asset, and the first language has a continuing and significant role in identity, learning and the acquisition of additional languages'. (2007: 4)*

This document, intended for practitioners working with children *over 3 years*, (there was no document produced to support practitioners working with emergent bilingual children *under 3*), identified the national concern that many multilingual children were underachieving in schools. This comprehensive document, which contained useful strategies for supporting children who are becoming bi/multilingual, was produced as guidance for all practitioners. National training

was then provided for leaders within Local Authorities (LA), although the intention was for the LA to cascade the training to all practitioners, the document was not familiar to practitioners at Edward Square. The headteacher commented that there were too many new documents being released by the Department for Education (Field notes: 6.10.10), and other staff commented that they were overwhelmed with all the *internal* changes as the two institutions merged between 2007 and 2009, as well as the *external* changes mandated by a continuous stream of new initiatives and guidance documents (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). The senior managers made the decision to focus on providing what they considered to be the essential training and development that was pertinent to the new centre. This included Health and Safety regulations, and the mandatory EYFS guidance. As Building Learning Power (BLP) was the underpinning educational approach espoused by the headteacher, and in accordance with the ECEC discourse, this also took precedence. I had assumed that all staff would have studied language acquisition in their initial training. In reality, no one had learned about additional language development, and basic language acquisition was also for new some staff (Field notes: 2.5.11). This assumption was critical to my study, and discovering the reality enabled me to understand the lack of importance placed on language and language support in Class 2 for all children and more specifically for bilingual children. It highlighted again the discrepancy between the rhetoric of both government directives and the policies of Edward Square, and actual practice.

### **5.5.i Silencing home languages and culture**

It is important to problematize taken-for-granted assumptions, such as my belief that all practitioners had knowledge about language development, and the claim by a senior Early Years Advisor in the Local Authority that: *“as a multicultural city such as this we have a strong history of work in early years, work that is anti-discriminatory and anti-racist”* (Field notes: 12.5.11). This powerful order of discourse assumes that anti-discriminatory practice is an accepted fact, a ‘regime of truth’, along with its attendant discourse of an equal society. However, this did not appear to be the experience of the Pakistani and Somali support staff in the Edward Square.

Robertson (2016) uses the term ‘superdiversity’, reviewed in Chapter 1.4.iii, as a theoretical lens where the focus is changed from plurality to addressing the complexity of cultural diversity. Edward Square was located in the heart of a settled Black community of African-Caribbean heritage (see Chapter 4:4.i). Charlie, Rosi and Stella had worked within this community for many years in the Daycare Centre, when the demography was one of predominantly African-Caribbean and white working class families. Charlie, Rosi and Stella commented that they felt

that they knew the community and understood the needs of the children and their families. As the demography of the local area changed, the dominant faith moved from Christian to Muslim with the arrival of Pakistani and Somali immigrants (Census: 2011). Edward Square celebrated diverse festivals, ensuring that no religion was favoured. Eid and Christmas were celebrated for a similar length of time and religious leaders were invited to advise the centre. The children in this study were awarded free places in the nursery because their families met the criteria of disadvantage (C4EO: 2010). The reasons for meeting the criteria for free nursery places are complex, but often children from minority ethnic backgrounds fulfil the necessary requirements (Field 2010). This may lead to prejudice and misunderstandings unless carefully managed within an institution. National policy (Equality Act: 2010), and guidelines on anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and equal opportunities within education institutions have been constantly changing, thus unsettling discourses of childhood and notions of culture, and this resulted in confused and conflicting messages for staff at Edward Square.

In their concern for equality, the practitioners in this study said that they treated all children the same.

*Stella: You know, we're all equal so I treat all children the same. It doesn't matter where they come from. We've had children from all different countries here. They are all the same to me.* (Field notes: 6.10.10)

Brooker (2005) highlights how this attitude may unwittingly produce normalising assumptions that can influence early years care and education, and result in marginalising children from diverse backgrounds and social classes. Edward Square documentation clearly articulated the importance of respect for all and zero tolerance of discrimination, reflected in the following statement:

*'We are committed to eliminating unjustifiable discrimination of all kinds and encouraging diversity amongst our workforce. We will strive to make our service accessible to all children, parents and carers ... We are committed to creating an environment in which individual differences and everyone's contributions are recognised and valued and we believe in promoting dignity and respect for all.'* (ES: Equal Opportunities Policy 2012)

And yet within Edward Square and Class 2, the use of 'they' when staff referred to someone of a different ethnicity from white English was evidence of 'othering', although they may have

had the intention of accepting all people as equals. For example “**they** let them eat with their hands at home...**they** need to learn English,” and using ‘we’ when discussing their own practices, for example, “**we** do festivals like Eid and Divali for **them** as well as **our** Christmas” (Field notes: 06.06.10; emphasis mine). In a conversation about children’s learning at home, Beth commented:

Beth: *I always encourage the Somali and Pakistani families to play with their children in the bath. It’s such a good time to learn about water etc. and a relaxing time to be together. **They** don’t play with their children* (Field notes: 13.10.10).

When I was observing Aeshah and her cousin Maria playing outside with buckets of water and large brushes, Aayat, a member of bilingual support staff from Pakistan, commented to me that she always taught the Pakistani children to play with water at nursery because in their homes, water was a precious commodity, and not to be wasted (Field notes: 26.05.11). The bilingual support staff were not employed in Class 2, and were therefore unable to support staff to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different cultural groups represented there. Furthermore, the lack of involvement of bilingual support staff in planning the curriculum, or designing the physical environment and the daily routine resulted in a traditionally English nursery environment in which the home cultures and languages of the children were silenced.

As previously stated, there were many home languages spoken by the families of children in Class 2. Although Charlie and Stella articulated the view of the Centre policy to value all languages equally, there was a clear hierarchy expressed through comments such as; “*You are so clever, speaking French. I was never good at French at school*” (Stella: Field notes: 2.5.11), when talking to a French child, and “*They’ve gotta know English for school, so I just speak English and they’ll learn,*” speaking about the children speaking Punjabi (Charlie: Field notes: 8.12.10). These comments, and Jagdeep’s reluctance to use her home languages, suggested to me that bilingualism was essentially being silenced (Robertson, Drury & Cable: 2014). In their study of bilingual practitioners, Robertson, Drury & Cable (2014) noted that a monolingual approach, from policy rhetoric through to classroom practice, maintained the dominance of English, as well as the absence of linguistic resources that children have in their home languages to enrich their learning. English was not just the dominant language in terms of its usage; it was the only language used in Class 2. When I asked Beth about the policy of using home languages in Class 2, she remarked;

Beth: *All staff are encouraged to use clear English and body language to communicate with the children. If parents need interpreters, we use the bilingual support staff from Class 3, or if really necessary, we have to buy-in specialist interpreters – but obviously that costs money so we try to avoid it* (Field notes: 17.11.10).

The use of English as the dominant language made a powerful statement about the use of home languages. In analysing the positioning of families within the nursery, I was aware of the views that Nazneem and Nagat, bilingual support staff, held about British life and values, and tried to consider the ways in which these views affected their practice in the workplace. I analysed their relationship within the institution, and in particular, with the senior managers. Nagat and Nazneem told me how they regarded the British way of life and education as being superior, Nazneem saying “*you have to understand, Izzie, the raj is in our heads*” (Field notes: 02.02.11) as noted in Chapter 1. I asked what she meant. Nazneem answered, “*you know, authority*”, but clearly did not want to pursue this further. She looked at Nagat who said, “*We come to England because the education is best.*” In conversation with me, Nazneem and Nagat commented that they had tried to explain to the headteacher certain cultural and religious issues concerning families in the centre, but were not understood and they felt that they were not listened to they seemed to believe that their voices were not heard.

Nagat: *There are religious customs that are important to the families, but when we talk about them, nothing changes.*

Nazneem: *I speak with Nagat and together we speak with her [the headteacher]. She smile but she don't ask us what to do. We know what to do because we know the families. We are the same religion.*

Nagat: *We need someone English to speak to her for us. Then she will understand* (Field notes: 02.02.11).

Said (1994) argued that Western thought tends to view its own knowledge as both factual and natural, treating all other forms of knowledge as belief, myth or suspicion. Hall (1990: 225) developed this notion, stating, ‘*The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation*’. Foucault asserted that the power of the overt coercion of people, which he called ‘disciplinary power’, controls the management, organisation and shaping of populations in a particular direction (Ransom: 1997). Said (1994) developed Foucault’s argument in his writing on ‘Orientalism’, noting the dominant thought in

the western world of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. Perhaps this sense of powerlessness while working in a European context, could explain why bilingual support staff appeared to be reluctant to use their home languages overtly.

The bilingual support workers were the people who had first-hand knowledge of the cultures of many of the children, and knew how to support them in the nursery, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter. Perhaps the hierarchical structure of the centre and their role as bilingual support staff affected their confidence as communicators, yet the Vision and Values statement maintained, '*We go out of our way to learn from individuals*' (2011). The disparity between rhetoric and practice was apparent in this situation. Power can be productive in shaping people's dispositions, attitudes and practices when people's voices are listened to, understood and valued, positive change can take place. It could be argued that Nazneem and Nagat felt silenced by their position within the hierarchy of the institution. Foucault proposed the concept of the will-to-power: the notion that ideas, rules, knowledge, truths and discourses do not emerge naturally, but are produced in order to benefit or give value to a particular social group. Arguably, this was reflected in the positioning of bilingual support staff with respect to senior managers.

Two language hierarchies were apparent in Class 2; the language of government directives, policy documents and management, which contrasted with the language of the staff in the room, and the use of English as the dominant language. Rosi (who was bilingual) expressed concern about whether recent arrivals felt accepted within the community, but did not mention language. Rosi's experience of arriving in England without speaking English made her empathetic towards the children and their families. Stella and Charlie both commented on the diversity of languages within the nursery, and their ideal practice of using children's home languages, but in practice, their behaviour was disrespectful towards languages, reflecting a superior attitude towards English already identified in Edward Square;

*Charlie: We all learn some words in other languages, like 'hello' and 'thank you' so the children feel ok (Field notes: 06.20.20).*

*Stella: I tried to remember some words in Urdu, but my memory is bad and I just forget it straight away. We did learn a song in Urdu but it was so hard we ended up laughing cos we just didn't get it right (Field notes: 13.10.10).*

Although I did not observe any staff using other languages in their practice, Charlie and Stella recognised the importance of using children's known home languages. Their knowledge was subjugated to the discourse of English as the dominant language for education in Class 2.

#### **5.5.ii Valuing the cultural beliefs and expectations of parents**

*'Parents and carers are fundamental in their children's development and learning therefore we actively seek to learn from them and share with them in all aspects of their child's learning'*

(ES: Teaching and Learning Policy: 2011)

Aeshah, Abdilaahi and Rahaf were all two years old when they started nursery. None of them had attended crèches or other nurseries, and so their homes and families were their main formative early influence, and also the community as experienced by themselves and by their parents and siblings. All the children's families were devout Muslims, and this was reflected in the images in their homes, their dress and the traditions they kept. The children had Halal meals, and their mothers all wanted them to grow up with the teachings of Islam and attend mosque school when they were old enough. Aeshah and Abdilaahi's brothers already attended mosque school and were learning Arabic. At this early stage in the children's lives, their families were a strong influence and the children were learning the faith, traditions and languages of home. Each child learned their position in the family, experienced the importance of being part of an extended family and was aware of their gendered identity. Sadiqa commented that, *'Aeshah helps me with the baby and the cooking. She's a good girl and helps in the home as I did'* (Field notes: 21.01.11). His older cousin who works in Class 3 stated, *'Abdilaahi plays with his brothers. All her [Safia's] children are boys, so she says it's ok if he don't speak yet'* (Field notes: 09.02.11). The families had knowledges about their own cultures and experiences, and these 'funds of knowledge' could have been a valuable resource for Edward Square and specifically in my study, Class 2 (Moll et al: 1992; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti: 2005). Undisclosed, the opportunity for reciprocity and greater understanding between the parents, the bilingual support staff, the practitioners and senior managers appeared to be lost. The children's home cultures were silenced.

Sadiqa and Khadra both commented that an English education was good and that they wanted their children to be successful at school. Sadiqa, Khadra and Safiya all felt welcomed by Edward Square, and said that it was a safe place where everyone was friendly. They held the view that education happens at school, but not at home. They had little formal education

themselves and wanted their children to have a good education so that they would have a successful and secure future. The practitioners viewed their role towards the children as one of care and protection, and the parents, saw the nursery as a place where the children could learn - a place of education. Khadra, Sadiqa and Safiya all referred to Charlie, Rosi and Stella as 'teachers'. Charlie, Rosi and Stella indicated that when the young children started in Class 2, aged two years, they had little experience of life and needed to come to nursery to learn. Stella commented;

*Stella: It's our job to teach them and help them to learn how to look after themselves. They're so young and can't talk when they start so they learn to talk with us and we show them how to play. You know, they're like a sponge*  
(Field notes: 13.10.10).

This comment suggests that Stella held the view that as the children did not speak English, they were not already learning to talk before they started in Class 2. The children's home languages were not recognised and perhaps their home experiences were not valued. This conscious discourse denied the subjective experiences of gender, race, religion, disability, mental health and violence that were actually being experienced by the children and their families (see Chapter 4.4). In her study, Skattebol (2010) commented that a discourse that perceives children as blank slates, and that does not acknowledge individual and collective experiences of race and anti-racist practices, results in the failure to address issues of difference, and its affective impact on society. A discourse of childhood that views the child as innocent, or as a blank slate, or constructed by adults, will limit the experiences and opportunities that practitioners provide for young emergent bilingual children from minority ethnic communities. My analysis of the three children, Rahaf, Aeshah and Abdilaahi in the next chapter will indicate the degree to which this discourse influenced their participation and learning as they joined Class 2.

The power of the unspoken 'regime of truth' about English as the dominant language masked the silencing of other languages and their associated cultures. In addition, the dissonance between the articulated rhetoric of Edward Squares policy documents and the actual practice provided the power/knowledge nexus that shaped the individual developing subjectivities of the staff – Nazneem, Nagat, Charlie, Rosi and Stella. Nazneem and Nagat were marginalised, Rosi knew how it felt to be an outsider and Charlie and Stella were confused about the importance of home languages and an inclusive approach to cultural diversity.



## **5.6 Tensions in practice**

Early Childhood Education and Care had undergone at the time of my research two decades of immense change, as shown in Table 1. This chapter has demonstrated that Edward Square has faced the challenge of a sustained period of internal change within the institution as well as external change at the national level. Internally there were changes in discourse and regulation practices, staff structure, physical environment, policies and practice alongside national changes of discourse for early childhood education and care (ECEC) resulting in changes to qualifications, types of provision and the curriculum. Successive governments led by Conservative, New Labour and the Coalition introduced a raft of new legislation and policies. These brought changes in the focus of early years education from care to education, changes in the language used, and these were reflected in the policy documents.

In this chapter I have sought to analyse this change of focus in the dominant discourse, by examining the many changes that have taken place, identifying how the different tensions and dissonances arose, and trying to understand the resultant social practices. I have considered the effect of this changing discourse on Charlie, Rosi and Stella's perceptions of themselves as professionals and their practice, and ultimately, how changes in these layers of influence may have impacted the children's experiences. I have used concepts from Foucault's 'tool-kit' to understand how the key themes of power relations, language and power and diverse discourses of childhood can be traced through these layers of influence.

### **5.6.i The effect of change on power relations**

The cumulative changes to qualifications produced specific 'regimes of truth' that were imposed externally onto the professional status of Charlie, Rosi and Stella. An increasingly hierarchical structure, based on the level of the qualification, combined with the juxtaposing discourses of care and education, failed to acknowledge the experience of the practitioner, hidden as subjugated knowledge. As a result, Charlie, Rosi and Stella felt demeaned, and responded individually through conformity and resistance. The impact of constant change was disempowering, rather than constructive and creative for practitioners. There appeared to be no strategy for managing change across the institution, or any on-going consultation about the changing internal and external expectations of practitioners. Disciplinary power exerted through new regulations and inspection regimes created an atmosphere of surveillance, with staff working 'under the gaze', producing an atmosphere of distrust, and as Foucault (1977) noted, affecting the internal fear response of people. This meant that power relations generated tensions between people, policies and practice.

### **5.6.ii The effect of the use of language on practice**

As there was no clear articulation of the transition of discourse from care to education, and the importance of focusing on the learning for children had become lost in the process. This was compounded by a discrepancy between the rhetoric of the government and of Edward Square, and actual practice, providing contradictory information for practitioners. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were working within the practices of their initial training in 1994, which was to care for the needs of the youngest children, and had attempted to 'add on' new information without understanding it. The practice of cascading new information was ineffective, and with the amalgamation of two different institutions into the formation of one Children's Centre, important knowledge about the changing curriculum and assessment was overlooked. Knowledge is an exercise of power and power is a function of knowledge (Prado: 2000), and Charlie, Rosi and Stella were caught in the power/knowledge nexus – they did not have access to the new knowledge within the dominant discourse. There was insufficient professional development or professional support and guidance, and strategies to challenge perceived poor practice within Class 2 through staff training were inappropriate and discriminatory, and led to mistrust between practitioners and the senior managers.

### **5.6.iii Valuing the discourse of linguistic and cultural diversity**

Within Class 2 there were different conceptions of childhood that had not been explored, resulting in different attitudes towards work with young children. Staff had not discussed different views about childhood collaboratively and the key people had limited information about the children and their families. Without problematizing the hegemonic attitudes towards the different cultural values and practices, misunderstandings were perpetuated and children were caught in the confusion. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were not well informed about the culture and language of the families with whom they were working. Language and culture were silenced through the perception of English as the primary language for Class 2, the lack of bilingual support staff and the limited information about children's home languages and cultures. Kenner & Ruby (2012), discussed in Chapter 2:6.ii, noted that schools in the UK rarely recognise the wealth of knowledge and expertise from the children's funds of knowledge, and may well devalue some certain languages.

Furthermore, the increased focus on record keeping and documentation meant that they had less time to carry out detailed home visits and spend time with parents and carers. The discourse or learning adopted in the creation of Edward Square acknowledged the importance of the diversity of language and culture in its documentation, but in practice, home languages

and cultures became silenced, and Rosi, Jagdeep, Nazneem and Nagat appeared to be docile bodies, their cultural knowledge and experiences becoming subjugated.

### **5.7 In conclusion...**

The dominant discourse of Edward Square, one of education, marketisation and regulation was communicated through the written documentation, but the diverse discourses held in Class 2 were subjugated and not collectively agreed. These differently held views were not articulated clearly, and caused misunderstanding, marginalisation and tension, and the non-existence of a shared discourse can undermine professional confidence.

The evidence is clear that the merger of two very different early years institutions, with the senior managers of the former nursery school transitioning to take over the leadership of the newly formed institution, together with the continuous changes in national legislation and policy, all combined to create an atmosphere of contradiction and confusion for Charlie, Rosi and Stella. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were experienced qualified practitioners who had been confident in their previous professional role in the Daycare Centre. They knew what was expected and could be called 'old timers'. Now in Class 2, they were 'relative newcomers' in an unfamiliar work context. This chapter has demonstrated the complex repercussions on knowledge, practice, the provision for young emergent bilingual children aged 2 years in the nursery environment, and the positioning of individual professional early years workers experiencing such change.

The findings from this chapter inform my analysis of Abdilaahi, Aeshah and Khadija and their relationships with Charlie, Rosi and Stella in the next chapter. The third supporting question, *How do the children negotiate their participation?* helps to address the research question, *How do 2-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting?*

Chapter 6 shows how the theory of Communities of Practice (Wenger: 1998) acts as a theoretical framework, and the concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger: 1991) can act as a lens through which the children's attempts to make sense of the new nursery environment and the process of learning to participate as members of the community may be analysed.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Making Sense of the Nursery Environment from the Perspective of an Emergent Bilingual Two-year-old Child**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 established clear evidence that an atmosphere of contradiction and confusion was created for Charlie, Rosi and Stella by the merger of two very different early years institutions, the transition by the senior managers of the former nursery school as they took over the leadership of the newly formed institution, and the continuous changes in national legislation and policy. The analysis of my data demonstrated the complex repercussions on knowledge, practice, the provision for young emergent bilingual children aged 2 years in the nursery environment, and the positioning of individual professional early years workers experiencing such change. Chapter 6 investigates whether the resulting practice in Class 2, and specifically the practice of Charlie, Rosi and Stella, affected Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi as they made their transition from their homes to nursery and endeavoured to participate in the new learning context.

To help to answer my research question, *'How do two-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting?'* I address the final sub-question *'How do the children negotiate their participation?'* The characteristics of Wenger's 'Communities of Practice' are employed as the theoretical framework for the analysis, and Lave & Wenger's concept of legitimate peripheral participation is used as an appropriate tool to examine the children's participation (see Chapter 2:4). This enables a consideration of the impact of the findings in Chapter 5 on the children of the research.

#### **6.2 Edward Square as a Community of Practice**

Establishing a community of practice within the nursery, one in which there is a shared domain of interest, a community where the members engage in joint activities, building relationships that are mutual and respectful, and where members share practice through their shared repertoire, can provide a strong, supportive environment in which children can learn through increasing participation, as discussed in Chapter 2.4.

Within Edward Square, there was a shared discourse and expected pedagogical practice, in which staff engaged in joint activities, which were rooted in the cultural and historical context of early years education and care in England. All the staff employed had chosen to work in the

specific geographic location, with their primary aim to care for young children and enable them to increase their participation in the nursery through shared practice with adults and their peers. As a newly established Children's Centre, Edward Square conformed to the legal requirements but was creating its own identity. Although, as noted in Chapter 5, there were tensions and conflicts, common to all communities of practice (Wenger: 1998: 77), there was shared information, mutual relationships, and shared activities related to the practitioners work with the children and social events involving their families. Edward Square was a community of social complexity, made up of children and families from the local area and involving staff with different qualifications, experiences, ethnicities and ages. As new members of staff joined, they were initially supported by another more experienced person, to induct them and enable them to increase their participation in the centre. Regular staff meetings and staff development days provided opportunities for sharing information and potentially negotiating ideas communally. Certainly, between the senior managers and in Classes 3 & 4, where the majority of the staff had been employed in the previous Nursery School, there appeared to be effective communication, but in Class 2, many of the changes taking place within early childhood education were not understood by Charlie, Rosi and Stella. However, the participants were connected to each other in diverse and complex ways through the shared practice in Edward Square.

Wenger (1998) suggested that it is the combination of the three elements, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, (discussed in Chapter 2: 4, and analysed later in 6.9.1), that constitutes a community of practice, and developing these three elements in parallel forms such a community. Lave & Wenger (1991: 31), like other sociocultural thinkers such as Rogoff (1998), argued that learning is a social process that is situated in a cultural and historical context. I argue that as Edward Square was recently established through the amalgamation of two distinct organisations, it can be regarded as an evolving community of practice. As my research is focused in Class 2, rather than the entirety of Edward Square, I will examine whether the daily routine, the practice and the resources available in the environment in Class 2 delivered a shared *'living context that can give newcomers access to competence and personal experience of engagement'* (Wenger 1998: 214). The daily routine, the practice and resources provided the context for situated learning, with its opportunities for diverse patterns of participation and transformation. Children were expected to join in with each aspect of the routine, but to what degree did they choose to participate? This question is addressed by using the lens of legitimate peripheral participation with particular reference to Wenger's notion of

mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire in communities of practice (Wenger: 1998: 73).

### **6.3 Legitimate peripheral participation as a tool for analysis**

In this chapter, legitimate peripheral participation is defined as engagement in social practice which involves learning as a fundamental component, and 'peripheral participation' suggests that there are multiple ways of being engaged in participation, either more or less engaged (Lave & Wenger: 1991: 36). A community of practice involves 'old timers' who support 'newcomers' as they engage in sustained participation in the community. Defining these terms is complex – 'old timers' may be experienced full participants in the community of practice or they may be *relative* 'old timers' with respect to 'newcomers' (Lave & Wenger: 1991: 57). 'Newcomers' may become 'old timers' as they progress as legitimate peripheral participants. The focus on learning is social practice within an '*evolving form of membership*' (Lave & Wenger; 1991: 53). Legitimate peripheral participation is a useful tool for analysis, but needs to be viewed as being a multidimensional phenomenon with many possibilities (Boylan: 2010). It is described by Lave & Wenger (1991) as both a concept and a context for analysis as discussed in Chapter 2:4.

Within the context of Class 2, the daily routine provided a range of different opportunities for children to participate in social activities, joining with both large and small groups of children (See Appendices 3). 'Welcome Time', the family photographs on the 'Families' Board' and name pegs introduced children as newcomers to the concept of belonging, with the practitioners as the 'old-timers'. The practice of children having an allocated key person (see Chapter 5:3.ii) reinforced the expectation that children were members of the Class 2 community of practice and supported by an 'old-timer', or more knowledgeable person – and adults or peers who had been in Class 2 for a longer time. The newcomers could 'settle' into the new environment, take risks and try out the new practices from this position of the 'look out post' (Bligh: 2014). From this position the newcomer *could* contribute to the community and learn from the 'old timers' through mediation and the use of cultural tools, but, as my analysis will demonstrate, this was dependent on the 'old timers' acknowledgment of the contribution of the 'newcomers'. However, as Charlie, Rosi and Stella were still attempting to make sense of all the changes that were affecting their professional role, my findings indicate that they are 'newcomers' to the new regime whilst seeing themselves as 'old timers' in their known practice from the previous setting of Daycare Centre. Therefore, I am describing them as '*relative*' newcomers. This contributed to my finding that the children Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi,

were perceived as a 'problem' to the staff who did not know how to respond to them.

#### **6.4 Introduction to analysis of the children**

All children entering a nursery for the first time are on the periphery of that new community, and from different starting points make progress towards becoming full participants. The three children in this study, Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi, were all emergent bilingual children from ethnic minority communities, with very little prior experience of English language or culture. As they entered Class 2, their starting point was different from other children who spoke English and were familiar with the culture of the nursery environment. I will argue that Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were on the periphery but became increasingly unnoticed by their key-people within the community of practice in Edward Square. To develop this argument, I analyse observations of the children and consider their strategies to make sense of the new environment and establish relationships with their peers and adults. I also argue that although Edward Square shared Wenger's characteristics of a community of practice through its documentation and policies, Class 2 did not share the characteristics.

Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were eligible to attend the nursery three mornings a week throughout the year. In order to identify and analyse the ways of participating that each child adopted within the social context of Class 2, I selected a number of vignettes for each child. Although each vignette was a particular moment in time in a situated context, they were chosen as being typical of the observations I recorded of each child during the year that I carried out my research in Class 2. Rahaf and Aeshah were in Class 2 for one year and Abdilaahi for one term in Class 2 and two terms in Class 3.

The following vignettes are chosen from the context of the Class 2 classroom and the outdoor area where children from all the nursery classes played together (see Appendices 1 & 2). Each of the selected vignettes can be replicated by multiple examples of similar observed data throughout the research period, and these were chosen to represent the children's choices of relationships, activities and forms of communication. They are presented chronologically to provide evidence of the children's evolving strategies for making sense of the new environment of Edward Square and as members of Class 2.

The first six weeks of term was a transitional period, and the children were settling in, gradually spending more time in the nursery and separating from their parents. My first observations took place in week eight. I was not present in the nursery during Aeshah and Rahaf's initial

visits. Abdilaahi did not start nursery until the six-week period was over and had a shortened settling in period.

The selected vignettes and accompanying analysis of each child are presented in turn, starting with Aeshah, then Rahaf, and finishing with Abdilaahi, studying their unique social behaviours. This is followed by examining the issues that the children share in common, such as the role of language and culture, agency, silence, intent watching, staff focus on organisation and the role of staff who were bilingual. The similarities and differences between the children's strategies are discussed, followed by a consideration of the role of the adults in supporting the children's participation in Class 2.

## **6.5 Aeshah**

### **Introduction to Aeshah**

Aeshah was 2 years 2 months when she started attending Class 2 (see Chapter 2 for more details). Her home language was Urdu. Aeshah was quiet and rarely spoke with staff and children in Class 2. She did not appear to join in routine activities, and when Jagdeep (whose home language was Punjabi but also spoke Urdu) was on duty, Aeshah would shadow her. Charlie, Aeshah's key person, was concerned about her lack of speech and suggested referring her to the speech and language therapist. She also commented that Aeshah was being stubborn and chose to be silent out of defiance.

#### **6.5.1. Shadowing Jagdeep: 10.11.10 Aged 2 years 5 months**

'Welcome time' and Aeshah holds her name card. She is in Charlie's group and sitting on Jagdeep's lap watching the children sing the "Hello song" and place their names on the board. Charlie takes Aeshah's card from her when she does not get up to put her name on the board. As 'Welcome Time' finishes, Charlie takes Aeshah outside, leading her by the hand, "*Come on Aeshah*". She stands by Charlie as she shows her the junk modelling. Charlie takes her hand and they walk around outside while Charlie supervises play. Charlie lets go of her hand and Aeshah stands by the door. Rosi opens the door. "*Come and do some playdough*", and sits Aeshah on a small chair at the playdough table. Aeshah picks up a small piece and holds it as she watches other children in the nursery. She looks round the room. Rosi offers her a rolling pin. "*Would you like a rolling pin to roll your dough?*" Aeshah takes the rolling pin and rolls her dough mechanically, still looking round the room. She remains silent.



Jagdeep is sitting nearby writing an observation. A group of children laugh at the other end of the room. Aeshah looks at them then turns back to the playdough and begins to manipulate it while watching the other children at her table. Jagdeep gets up and goes to the other end of the room. Aeshah gets up and follows her. A child says 'sand' to Jagdeep, who goes to find a hat for the child. She then goes to the cupboard for a camera. Aeshah follows her and they go back to the sand. Jagdeep sits by the sand and Aeshah joins another child putting sand in a box then emptying it. Aeshah stands up and stabs the sand with her spade as Jagdeep asks the other child questions. "Do you want this bucket? And the spade? What are you going to build?" The child takes the bucket and spade and continues digging. Jagdeep moves to the table. Aeshah watches her go then follows her to the craft table. Jagdeep watches two children briefly and takes a photograph, then goes to the other end of the nursery and Aeshah follows her.

Charlie asks Jagdeep to get the snack. In silence Jagdeep and Aeshah go together to collect the milk and fruit from the kitchen out of the nursery. (I do not know if there was any conversation when they were outside as I did not follow them but they returned in silence). Aeshah watches as Jagdeep prepares the fruit at a small table. Jagdeep calls out, "snack time" and Aeshah stands eating fruit by the table as other children come to sit. She stands close to Jagdeep throughout, moving to be close to her as she washes out some cloths at the sink and takes them outside to dry. As Jagdeep clears the snack table, Aeshah helps to collect the plates – both are silent.

Charlie asks Jagdeep to change Aeshah's nappy. They go into the bathroom together. I stay in the nursery but watch as Jagdeep tells Aeshah in Urdu to wash her hands. Aeshah looks up at Jagdeep and smiles then washes her hands. They come back into the nursery and Jagdeep goes over to the wooden blocks, holding Aeshah's hand. They sit down and play together with the blocks. Aeshah's body appears to be relaxed and she is smiling as she concentrates on building. Another child joins them. Charlie calls "Five minutes to tidy up time". None of them look up but continue to build alone but alongside each other.

## **Analysis**

Throughout this vignette Aeshah is predominantly silent and passive in her shadowing of Jagdeep, but appearing to want to be near her. On closer examination, Aeshah is responsive to the environment of Class 2. She holds her name card, takes Charlie's hand and walks with her outside, accepts Rosi's invitation to play with playdough and picks up, rolls with a rolling pin and manipulates the playdough. Later Aeshah joins another child in the sandpit, filling and emptying a box and stabs the sand with a spade. She eats fruit at snack time and helps collect the plates after snack and plays with blocks alongside Jagdeep and other children. Aeshah was an active observer. She watched intently, looked around and copied activities she observed others doing, such as the playdough and the sand, but her predominant interest was proximity to her chosen adults. Charlie, Rosi and Jagdeep interacted verbally with Aeshah, and gave her some support in having access to the learning resources during the routine activities. Aeshah appeared to understand Charlie and Rosi's approaches to her, supported by their actions – to take her hand, to provide a chair and hold out playdough while giving the instruction to use the rolling pin. In this way, the adults were mediating learning within the social environment of Class 2 using gestures, artefacts and speech.

Aeshah seemed to be 'lost' as she followed adults around and engaged half-heartedly in play, but this indicated that her aim was social. For the majority of the time, she stayed close to Jagdeep, following her as Jagdeep carried out her routine duties in Class 2. Jagdeep had accompanied Charlie on her home visit and communicated with her mother in Urdu when an interpreter was needed. On this occasion, as I observed her in the nursery, Aeshah appeared to be intentionally communicating to Jagdeep that she wanted her attention and support through her close proximity to her and by following her everywhere she went. This was confirmed when Jagdeep spoke to Aeshah in Urdu. Perhaps unwittingly, Jagdeep was mediating between Aeshah's home and the nursery which, if it was deliberate, was a powerful action and may have provided the connection that Aeshah needed to feel more of a participant within Class 2. When using Urdu, Aeshah could understand and may have been understood. Her strategy of persistence was successful this time. But significantly, Jagdeep only spoke to Aeshah in Urdu in the bathroom, not in the main nursery. I overheard their conversation as I was by the bathroom door, but she was not heard by other members of staff in Class 2, which is evidence of her perception of her role as an early years assistant and not a bilingual support staff. Or conceivably, she was aware of the consistent use of English as the dominant language in Class 2. Within this context, the roles were presented as being clearly delineated, which suggests no understanding of the relationship between language and learning.

### 6.5.2. Using questions: 24.11.10 Aged 2 years 5 months

It is 9.35am and 'Welcome Time' has finished. There were four children in Stella's group with Aeshah. The other three children have gone to the other end of the nursery with Stella. Aeshah is standing alone looking around the room. Charlie, has just arrived and after speaking to me, goes over to Aeshah and starts to talk to her.

Charlie: *"What do you like doing?"*

Aeshah looks at the floor and says nothing.

Charlie: *"Is your brother at school?"*

Aeshah says nothing and continues to look at the floor.

Charlie: *"Shall I read you a book?"*

Charlie: *"Do you want toast?"*

Aeshah has not responded to any questions and has not looked up.

Charlie moves away and goes to look at the rotas on the noticeboard.

Charlie: *"I'm not doing snack again today am I? I did it yesterday. Anyone want to swap, cos I'd rather be outside'.*

Jagdeep: *"Ok. I can do it'.* She leaves the room and Aeshah watches her leave.

Aeshah stands in the same place looking round the room and watching, Charlie gets her coat and goes outside. Aeshah is still standing there when Jagdeep comes into the room carrying the snack tray. Aeshah looks at Jagdeep and follows her to the other end of the room. She stands close to Jagdeep as she puts the fruit on the table and collects the cups and plates from the cupboard. She watches Jagdeep lay the table, cut up the fruit, follows her as she collects the milk from the fridge and fills the jug with water from the tap. Aeshah stands by Jagdeep as children come in for their snack. She watches the children. Charlie comes back into the room and joins the snack table, standing watching the children.

Charlie: *'Aren't you going to have snack Aeshah?'*

Aeshah looks at the floor, shakes her head, and stays standing by Jagdeep. Charlie goes to hang her coat up and leaves the room.

### Analysis

When Charlie entered the room, she was watching Aeshah and told me,

*Aeshah doesn't speak so I'm going to get her referred to the speech therapist.*

*She's an 'elective' mute – you heard of them? That's what I reckon anyway.*

*But she's a stubborn child. She knows what she's doing and she does it to wind us up.*

Charlie's questions were not contextualised. She and Aeshah were standing near the book corner and there was a plate of toast on a table nearby. Although Charlie gestured towards these as she asked the questions, Aeshah was looking down and may not have noticed the gestures. Aeshah made no facial acknowledgement of the questions and looked down at the floor throughout. She may not have understood, or not had time to respond to the questions, or she may have chosen silence.

Bligh & Drury (2015: 5) comment that as the bilingual learner becomes familiar with the new learning environment and is not afraid of the consequences of making mistakes, she can '*legitimately risk take*', *test the water and trial the practices whilst silently participating from the safe keeping of the 'look-out' post (legitimate peripheral participation)*'. But the confrontational approach to this interaction between Charlie, Aeshah's key-person, and Aeshah, isolated her rather than enabling her to risk take from her position from the 'look-out' post. Charlie's commanding position, physically standing taller above Aeshah, and asking a series of unrelated questions created a situation where power was being exercised, and Aeshah may have been resisting – where Aeshah may have felt powerless and needed to find support from Jagdeep. Unlike the previous vignette, this experience did not enable Aeshah to progress towards fuller participation.

Charlie's assessment of Aeshah demonstrated her own confusion and lack of knowledge about Aeshah's silence, interchanging a medical diagnosis for challenging behaviour. Her frustration was palpable, which may have added to Aeshah's discomfort, and certainly created tension.

The next vignette, presents Aeshah within a different context and in the company of her cousin, Maria. Aeshah's cousin, who was in Class 3.

### **6.5.3. Aeshah the talker: 21.01.11 Aged 2 years 7 months**

Aeshah comes into Class 2 from the garden with her cousin Maria who is in Class 3. They are holding hands and both of them are laughing. They are talking together in whispers and go over to the radiator behind the painting easel. Aeshah and Maria take their gloves off. Aeshah takes Maria's gloves from her and is laughing. Aeshah hides the gloves behind the radiator while

Maria is watching Rosi at the playdough table. Aeshah whispers to Maria and they run to the book area where Stella is reading to a child.

*Stella: Maria, go back to your own classroom. You can't come in here.*

Maria and Aeshah stand and look at Stella, then go back to the radiator. Stella comes over to the girls and takes Maria's hand and leads her to the door and directs her outside.

*Stella: Go and find your friends to play with.*

Stella closes the door. Aeshah stands by the door.

*Stella: Come and have a story with us.*

Aeshah does not respond. She looks at the floor and stays by the door as Stella goes back to the book area. Aeshah looks at the closed door (made of glass). She looks round the room where there are only two children at the playdough table with Rosi and one child in the book area with Stella.

Maria opens the door and comes back into Class 2. Aeshah turns around and sees her and smiles. She holds out her hand to Maria. The two girls walk to the radiator and Aeshah whispers to Maria. They both laugh. Aeshah retrieves the gloves from behind the radiator and speaks to Maria in Urdu, using the word 'gloves'. They put their gloves on and go outside together.

### **Analysis**

Maria and Aeshah are cousins and live in the same house. Aeshah's mother had told me that the two girls play together at home with their boy cousins (Field notes: 19.09.11). In this observation, Aeshah was transformed into a confident, talkative, energetic child, who took the lead in the relationship and showed a sense of humour. Her body language was different; it was open and relaxed, and she used hand gestures as she spoke and threw her head back when she laughed. Aeshah smiled, held Maria's hand, laughed, talked in Urdu, whispered, hid the gloves, ran to the book area. These are positive actions, expressing confidence. With Maria, Aeshah appears to belong in Class 2, asserting her participation in the physical space.

Without Maria, Aeshah reverted to a silent, withdrawn posture. She did not respond to Stella's invitation to join her, looked at the floor when spoken to and returned to her familiar practice of standing still and observing other people in the room. Aeshah and Maria shared their home language, their home culture and knew each other well. They were able to resume their play.

It appeared that their relationship was safe and predictable. Aeshah was confident in taking the lead and making choices.

Although I could not understand what she was saying when Aeshah was speaking Urdu, I identified her translanguaging. Translanguaging is a process in which the user utilises different linguistic and semiotic resources flexibly to make meaning and sense in their communications (Wei: 2018). Zhao & Flewitt (2019) suggest that translanguaging is an activity rather than a linguistic structure that the user accesses. Aeshah combined words from English with Urdu when she was playing with Maria. In this observation, it seemed that Aeshah learned about the rules for membership of Class 2, a class defined by its indoor classroom. She was learning that some people were accepted and that Maria did not belong. She was also making a choice about who she wanted to play with, which language and culture she identified with, and who she felt more confident with. Maria enabled Aeshah to engage socially, in contrast to earlier vignettes where she had not been supported by adults.

In the next vignette, Aeshah's social learning is explored further as she plays outside with Maria. When the children played outside, Aeshah and Maria chose to play together, speaking Urdu, usually in close proximity to Aayat. Aayat was employed as a bilingual support staff member from Classes 3 & 4 who supported the girls, speaking to them in their home language when they played outside.

#### **6.5.4. Playing outside with Maria: 05.06.11 Aged 2 years 11 months**

Aeshah is sitting outside with Maria, chalking on the steps and talking with her in Urdu. Aayat (a Pakistani bilingual support worker from Class 3) approaches them and joins in with their conversation. Aeshah turns to me and says:

*Aayat says draw your house.*

Aayat has gone over to the waterplay area and is with two children. Aeshah looks over to Aayat and speaks to Maria in Urdu. The two girls put down their chalk and go towards the waterplay area. Aeshah picks up a large bucket and gives it to Maria. Aeshah walks round the water box and picks up a large jug then goes back to Maria and takes her hand. They go to Aayat who fills their containers from the water tank and gives each of them a large paint brush. The girls walk back to the paving stones where they have been chalking earlier. Aeshah and Maria 'paint' the paving stones with water and large paintbrushes. Maria looks across to Aayat and takes her bucket of dirty water to her. Aeshah

follows her with her jug. Aayat shows them a drain and demonstrates how they can pour their dirty water away, speaking together in Urdu.

*Aayat (to me): I tell them how to throw their water away and tell them to clean the stones. They want to do work with the water.*

*Me: What do you mean by 'work with the water'?*

*Aayat: We do not play with water at home, so here I help the children to play with water by using it for work.*

Aeshah shows her empty jug to Aayat, who points towards the door to Class 4 where there is a tap. They go together to the tap and Aayat uses a hose to fill Maria's bucket and Aeshah's jug. Maria steps back as the hose starts to squirt water into her bucket. Aeshah puts her hands to her face and laughs. Maria moves back to Aeshah and they both watch Aayat. Aeshah starts to paint the table. Aayat speaks to her and points to the paving stones. The two girls return to the paving stones and resume painting. I am sitting near the paving with another child. The two girls resume painting the stones. Aeshah speaks to Maria and it seems that she is directing Maria to paint on a particular stone where there are chalk marks. Maria starts to paint that stone. They look at each other and laugh. Aeshah says to me;

*We cleaning.*

Aeshah looks at Maria and they laugh. Beth stands by the door to Class 2 calls to all the children.

*Beth: Class 2, stop and listen. Time to come for tidy up time – everyone come in now.*

Aeshah looks up then turns to Maria. Classes 3 & 4 are also being called in. Aeshah and Maria stand up. Aeshah hugs Maria and goes to the Class 2 door and goes inside.

### **Analysis**

Aeshah and Maria are working together as reciprocal partners, talking together in Urdu, laughing and playing together. When Aayat joined them, I looked across at them. Aayat spoke to them and Aeshah interpreted for me. Often, when the girls were playing together, Aayat would interpret their conversations for me. Now Aeshah had taken on the role of the interpreter. She had learned alongside Aayat as a young apprentice (Rogoff: 2000), she knew my language

limitations and knew how to support me. Aeshah was in control of her learning and empowered as a developing knowledgeable linguist. Aayat, as a cultural and linguistic mediator was including Aeshah as a legitimate peripheral participant. Peripherality is an empowering position (Lave & Wenger: 1991: 36), and as Aeshah played with Maria and was supported by Aayat, she was empowered to belong and participate in social interaction with others. In contrast to the first 2 vignettes, Aeshah was welcomed as a participant and included as a member of the group. Aayat was acting as a mediator, brokering between Aeshah's home culture and the practices of the nursery in playing with water, helping her to learn how to join in the social practices and use the resources of this new environment.

#### **6.5.5 Role playing the nursery outing: 22.06.11 (Aged 2 years 11 months)**

After I had observed this vignette, Beth (Class 2 room leader) told me that the previous day all the families from Edward Square had gone on an outing to Castle Park, using several coaches to transport them. The families had particularly enjoyed playing in a large sand pit in the children's play area. On the return journey, the coach driver from the coach that Aeshah's family had travelled on had difficulty fitting all the buggies in the boot and had to keep getting out of the coach to shut the boot door.

Aeshah goes outside and sees her cousin, Maria. She calls to her in Urdu. The two girls go together to the building blocks and start to move blocks to construct what looks like a car. Three boys join them. Aeshah speaks to the children in Urdu, and tells them where to put the blocks. They work together to lift the bigger blocks. Aeshah sits at the front of the construction and pretends to drive. She speaks to Maria who sits next to her, then runs to the back of the construction and pushes. Maria joins her. Aeshah speaks to Maria and they go back to sit down. Aeshah pretends to drive. Aayat interprets for me as the children repeat this action several times while I watch:

*Aeshah say that this is a bus. She tells the boys, 'This is a bus we make'. Aeshah like to be the driver and Maria want to as well. Aeshah tell her what to do. She says, 'It won't close.*

*Aeshah sees me and says in English, 'We're going to the sandcastle.'*

#### **Analysis**

At the start of this observation Aeshah and her cousin were talking together in Urdu and other Urdu-speaking children joined them. The blocks facilitated Aeshah's re-enactment of an event,



symbolising a coach, providing a shared structure where she could work with others, communicating and making the connection between her memory of an event. All the children she played with were in Classes 3 & 4 and spoke Urdu as their home language.

Aeshah initiated this activity with this group of children through their shared language and culture. She used spoken language to give instructions, and the children responded to her reinforcing her learning about using language effectively to inform others in this group context, replaying the script in her memory of the previous day, thus displaying her leadership skills, which were hidden in the Class 2 classroom. In contrast to Charlie's opinions of her linguistic skills noted in 6.5, she also signified her understanding by using different languages for specific contexts when she translated for me in English. Using the word 'sandcastle' showed that Aeshah remembered the word 'castle' as the place they went to and the activity they had shared when building sandcastles.

Significantly, in this vignette, Aeshah was learning to participate as she engaged with the group of children and initiated the building of a coach and the re-enactment of the nursery trip. She was able to take risks, make mistakes, enabling her to move from the periphery because she was confident to communicate in her home language and playing with others who shared this knowledge with her. She belonged, which is a crucial element of learning (Lave & Wenger: 1991). Aeshah was located and belonged in the social world, so different from her experiences in Class 2's classroom.

As in the previous observations, and many others, I noted that Aayat's role in supporting Aeshah and Maria was critical in facilitating their play and their participation outside, communicating together in Urdu (Field notes: 25.05.11).

#### **6.5.6 Aeshah's experience as a newcomer**

Aeshah's strategies of looking around, silently watching, following an adult and being persistent enabled her to learn more about the activities that took place in Class 2. She could learn who was present, how the adults related to the children and how to gain the attention she needed in this community. Aeshah was learning to communicate in her home language although she was a newcomer and a beginner in the English-speaking environment of Class 2. She watched intently, assimilating the events and daily activities in Class 2. Aeshah's mother commented that every day she would tell her everything that had happened, naming the staff and recalling the details. Her strategy of silently watching enabled her to learn about

the cultural practices, the relationships and the use of language in Class 2. As discussed in Chapter 2:6.iii, during this phase, also called the non-verbal period, the child needs time to adjust to their new environment and make sense of what is expected and to listen in to the new sounds around them. Interestingly, her silence drew attention to her, because Charlie was challenged by it.

When Aeshah was with her cousin Maria and other Urdu-speaking children for Classes 3 & 4, she was confident in speaking with others. Communication, whether through spoken or written language, or silently communicating through body language and positioning herself in proximity to others, were valuable strategies. Aeshah's pattern of key strategies to enable her to participate in the new nursery environment and attain the support of more knowledgeable adults and familiar peers was careful observation through silently watching, communicating, resisting and initiating. Without the support of adults such as Jagdeep, Aeshah did not know how to participate in Class 2, and I did not observe her participating with other children in that group.

Aeshah was learning with Maria and facilitated by Aayat. Rogoff et al (2003: 178) define the term 'intent participation' as '*keenly observing and listening in anticipation of or in the process of engaging in an endeavour*'. As Aeshah played with Maria they were learning with Aayat, who showed them how to get water, how to use the water constructively, what to do with dirty water and how to use the hose. Learning through intent community participation encouraged Aeshah to be attentive to what was happening around her, to use her initiative and to make sense of playing with water in the nursery environment (Rogoff: 2012). Aayat was knowledgeable about Aeshah's home culture and was able to draw on her 'funds of knowledge' from home (Moll et al: 1992). Aayat was exemplifying Vygotsky's concept of ZPD as she supported Aeshah in extending her experience of water play. In their interpretation of ZPD, Lave & Wenger (1991: 49) emphasise the aspect of sociocultural transformation, noting the '*changing relations between the newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice*'. In this context, Aayat shared Aeshah's culture and home language, but was an old-timer in Edward Square, able to support Aeshah in a context in which she could make sense of what she saw and heard, promoting progress in her participation in the community of the nursery. Despite the importance of Aayat's role for Aeshah, the interactions only happened informally outside and not in Class 2 where she needed the support. For example, Aayat could not contribute to observations of Aeshah's waterplay, so her language and learning to participate was not acknowledged in her Learning Diary. Using her initiative enabled Aeshah to join in with the

group of older children with whom she played near her family home. Playing with children who shared her language and culture and using her home language gave Aeshah the confidence to take a lead, express her imagination and creativity, resolve problems and interact with others. This was a joint activity of which Aeshah was a participant. Lave and Wenger (1991:93) state that, *'Learning itself is an improvised practice'*. They consider the role of participation to be central to learning, and based on, *'situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in the world'* (Lave and Wenger, 1991:52). Aeshah was learning about belonging to the community as she negotiated with others and re-enacted shared experiences.

## **6.6 Rahaf**

### **Introduction to Rahaf**

Rahaf was 2 years 3 months when she started attending Class 2. Her mother said that the nursery was Rahaf's first experience of speaking English. Her home language was Somali, and she and her mother always spoke it together as their language at home and when Rahaf was dropped off and collected from Class 2. There was no Somali bilingual support staff in Class 2, and Rahaf did not have support from bilingual support staff from Classes 1, 3 or 4. Rahaf appeared to want to be near adults during the nursery day and looked for adult support if she had conflicts with other children. She was always ready for group times such as 'Welcome Time', 'Snack Time' and 'Circle Time'. Staff in Class 2 commented that she always wanted to be at the centre of any group activity.

#### **6.6.1. Playing with name cards: 20.10.10: Aged 2 years 5 months**

'Welcome Time' has finished and the board of name cards is left in the welcome area. Rahaf is walking round the room looking at the different activities. She looks at the name cards and goes over to them and squats on the floor. Rahaf takes the name cards off the board and looks at each name closely. She walks to the family photograph board near her and stands by holding a card and looks attentively for the family that corresponds to the name card. She points to the photograph saying, "Look." Rahaf goes back to the pile of name cards and repeats this action three times. Then she sits on the floor and one by one picks up the name cards and says, 'Rahaf, Abdullah, Simea, Anna, Musa' the names of the children who were in her 'Welcome Time' group today. Rahaf continues to look at the cards. Charlie is standing near the door and looks across the room at her and calls out,

*Put those names back where they belong and leave them alone Rahaf.*

Rahaf looks across at Charlie, leaves the cards on the floor and walks away to the other end of the room.

### **Analysis**

Rahaf became involved in a self-chosen activity, engaging with the written language on the cards and learning about their symbolism as she became familiar with seeing her name and the other names written in English script. She was making connections between the name cards (there were no photographs or images on the cards) and the images on the photographs as she identified the correct child and their family with the name on the card, identifying the written symbols with the real person. Rahaf was *looking intently* at the names and the photographs, moving from her position on the floor with the cards to stand by the photograph board with the relevant card in her hand. This repeated action signified the thought processes that Rahaf was going through in her home language. Although Rahaf remained mostly silent, she vocalised “*look*”, using the context to rehearse the use of an English word, or it could be to gain attention and invite the involvement of others to join in her activity. But she continued with her activity when there was no response. Possibly her vocalisation was to herself, providing a commentary on her actions. Certainly, she was drawing attention to her accurate connections between the words and the photographs. Through this activity, Rahaf was also *identifying* the members of the group, including herself. She was learning about joining a group.

Charlie’s concern was with the use of the name cards for a specific purpose and the organisation of these cards, but did not support Rahaf’s learning about the symbolism of letters to create meaning, and the use of names to identify people and role play a familiar activity in Class 2. This would be a significant feeling for what it was like to be a participant in the group. She seemed to be enculturating herself even though her learning was not legitimised by Charlie. I am using the term ‘legitimise’ to denote acknowledgement that an action or intention is regarded as acceptable, and actively participating in conformity with the community of practice. Rahaf may not have understood the words that Charlie was saying but she knew through her tone of voice and gestures what Charlie meant. Although Rahaf showed some resistance by walking away and not putting the cards away, she did not return to play with them.

In this observation Rahaf used the strategies of looking intently, vocalising, repeating and memorising to help her learn about language. Perhaps she thought that by making connections between the names and photographs of people in Class 2, and naming them, including her

own name, she was identifying herself as a member of this group. Through repetition Rahaf was able to reinforce her thinking. She also learned that playing with name cards was not acceptable in Class 2, and what resistance felt like. Rahaf continued to respond to Charlie's instructions to stop engaging in activities with resistance, creating a pattern for their future relationship.

#### **6.6.2. Playing with others and 'joining in': 10.11.10: Aged 2 years 6 months**

Rahaf sits down at the playdough table. There are two other children waiting to play. She sees me and calls, "*Hello Izzie*". Rosi joins the children at the playdough table and shares out the playdough and the tools. Rahaf holds her playdough and looks round the room. Another child takes her playdough. Rahaf cries and looks at Rosi who gives her more playdough. Then the child takes her knife. Rahaf cries loudly, again looking at Rosi. Rosi says, "*We need to share*". Rahaf takes the child's playdough and hides it in her lap. Rosi says, "*Please give me the playdough*" and takes the playdough from both of the children and shares it out equally. Rahaf and the other child keep trying to snatch each other's playdough. Another adult comes and takes the child away. Rahaf focuses on the playdough, using the knife to cut it and then stick it back together – repeating this activity. Rosi: "*What are you making?*" Rahaf looks at Rosi, then looks down at her playdough. The other child says, "*Me make cakes for my mummy*". Rahaf looks up at her, looks round the room, gets up and leaves the playdough. Rahaf goes to the other end of the room and rummages in the dressing up box. She picks out a pink bag and runs back to Rosi. She opens the bag and takes out a purse. Rosi: "*Purse. Is there money in the purse?*" Rahaf opens the purse and shakes her head. ... Rosi starts to sing 'The Jumping Bean' song. Rahaf watches them and walks towards them. A child puts his hand in one of her bags and takes her purse. Rahaf cries loudly. Rosi goes to help Rahaf and asks the boy for the purse. He gives it to her. Rosi opens it and finds playdough. Rosi says to Rahaf, '*Not playdough in the purse*'. Rosi takes the playdough and Rahaf cries as Stella tells the children to come for Circle Time. Charlie is leading Circle Time... Rahaf sits next to Charlie. She joins in all the actions and when they sing a song while rolling the ball to each child, Rahaf squeals and laughs when the ball is rolled to her. She picks the ball up and throws it back to Charlie. "*No Rahaf, roll the ball*"...They sing, 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes' in English. Charlie says to the adults, '*Let's do it in Somali. Can you remember it?*' They start to sing but none of them can remember

it and they all laugh. Charlie says, *'Forget that. What shall we do? Yeah, let's sing 'The Jumping Song again. We all know that'.* Rahaf jumps vigorously.

One month later, Rahaf initiates Circle Time as she walks round the room singing, *"Let's make a circle"* loudly. This is the song that is routinely sung to invite the children to come and sit in a circle. Jagdeep joins in the song. The children sit down, and Jagdeep, who is sitting opposite Rahaf, tells the children that they are going to count 1, 2, 3. As she says this Rahaf counts 1,2,3 with her. Jagdeep looks at Rahaf and shakes her head [indicating to Rahaf to stop counting with her]. Jagdeep repeats to the children that they are going to count in English. The rest of the children watch as Jagdeep counts "1, 2, 3" and Rahaf joins in with her. Jagdeep has a bag of props and takes out a trowel. Rahaf is watching intently and starts to sing *"I dig my garden."* Jagdeep looks at Rahaf and asks all the children to join in the song, and begins the song again. Rahaf joins in, on and off, while looking round at the other children. Only a few children are joining in.

### **Analysis**

Rosi commented that Rahaf loves to be at the centre of action (Field notes: 10.11.10) and in this vignette, Rahaf demonstrates her intentions to belong and participate in social practices with the support of her key person, Rosi. Rahaf was playing alongside other children, and finding it hard to resolve conflict. She looked to Rosi, who was her keyperson, for support as she turned to look at her when another child took her playdough and when a child took her purse. Learning to relate to other children her own age was a new experience as she had no siblings and was always with her mother (Field notes: 21.01.11). Rahaf used her known English words to communicate effectively – *'look'* and *'come'*, encouraging social activity with others. Throughout the observation Rahaf used playdough, the purse, bags and spoken language as mediators to connect with people.

In Circle Time, Rahaf was imitating an activity that she saw carried out every day, and possibly repeating in English what she had heard. She knew that English, not Somali, was necessary to be a member of the group. Rahaf was learning to participate as she initiated the start of the event with Jagdeep's support, used the prop to introduce a new song, and was taking risks in doing so. Rahaf was signalling that she wanted to belong to this group. She had seen Jagdeep collecting the laminated cards and the props bag used each day in 'Circle Time' and had pre-empted her by initiating the song. Rahaf had learned this song, and in singing it was able to

articulate a long message to the rest of her peers in English, something that she was as yet unable to do through her spoken English language. She was learning what this fluency in English felt like and its power to communicate effectively with others. Rahaf's competence in initiating 'Circle Time' was reinforced as Jagdeep joined in the song and the children came and sat down. Counting with Jagdeep reinforced her ability to use English as a spoken language, although Jagdeep showed her disapproval of Rahaf joining in with her at this stage. The songs and props enabled Rahaf to remember the appropriate actions, which helped her to join in the group on the periphery. Rahaf was receiving support from Jagdeep who understood her intentions and legitimised her actions. However, although she did not appear to react, Rahaf experienced adult disapproval of her leadership when Jagdeep shook her head and re-started activities to assert herself as the leader. Charlie said "*Rahaf is always in your face. She wants attention all the time*" (Field notes: 20.10.10). Perhaps this was how Charlie interpreted Rahaf's strategies to participate, or maybe she found Rahaf demanding and wanting extra attention. Throughout this vignette, Rahaf was communicating her aim to be social and engage with others. Rahaf did not appear to respond to the staff trying to sing in Somali. Perhaps she didn't recognise their use of her language, and she was quick to join in the actions of the next song. However, she may have internalised the disrespect for her language.

### **6.6.3 Stories and writing: 08.12.10: Aged 2 years 7 months**

Beth, the room leader and a qualified teacher, had recently instigated a twice daily Storytime. One book was selected for the week and props were chosen to use with the book. Every member of staff was on the rota for Storytime. Previously I had observed a Storytime when Rahaf was present, and the book was 'Dear Zoo', using animals from the Class 2 animal basket.

After 'Welcome Time', Rahaf goes to the book area and chooses 'Dear Zoo', taking it to Charlie.

Charlie: *Do you want me to read the story?*

Rahaf nods.

Charlie: *Come up here*

Rahaf follows Charlie to the carpet and they sit down. Charlie starts to read,

*I wrote to the zoo to send me a pet...*

Rahaf gets up and goes to the basket of animals, and Charlie watches her as she picks one out and goes back to Charlie. Charlie continues reading,

*They found me...*

Rahaf gets up and goes back to the basket and looks in it.

Charlie: *What are you looking for? Rahaf, what are you looking for?*

Rahaf looks at Charlie and goes back to sit down next to her, but then gets up again. Charlie turns to read a different book to another child. Rahaf looks at Charlie then picks up 'Dear Zoo' and walks across the room, leaving the book in the animal basket. She picks up a biro.

Charlie: *Put that pen down. It's mine. Get one from the writing table* (pointing to the table).

Rahaf puts Charlie's pen down and goes to the writing table, picks up a crayon and starts mark making. She picks up the paper and moves to the craft table and continues to mark make. She gets scissors and cuts her paper. Another child tries to take her scissors. Rahaf looks at her and gets another pair of scissors, handing them to the child. The child cries, *'I want those'*, pointing at Rahaf's. Rahaf gives them to her and continues cutting her paper with the other pair. She takes her cutting to Charlie and gives it to her. Charlie looks up and takes it. Rahaf goes back and cuts another piece of her writing and takes it to Rosi. Rosi smiles, *'Thank you Rahaf'*, and comes over to the table where Rahaf has been writing next to me and shows me the display she has made with a photograph of Rahaf writing. Rosi tells me, *'Rahaf did some drawing like letters for my display. I'm doing a display about children starting to write'*. Rahaf puts her arm round my neck and points at the photograph. *'Me'*, then as Rosi continues to talk to me, Rahaf starts to write in my book, from left to right, using my pen. Rosi goes to work on her display and Rahaf sticks a shape in my book and continues to write around it. She runs off to another adult and says, *'writing'*, pointing to the writing table.

### **Analysis**

In this observation, Rahaf chose the book and accepted Charlie's offer of a story. It appears that Rahaf was reminded of the props as soon as they reached the first animal, 'I wrote to the zoo to send me a pet...', as she went to the basket of animals. Rahaf was re-enacting a Class 2 routine activity that she had previously observed. Charlie's tone of voice was impatient and she repeated her question, and ultimately stopped reading with Rahaf and turned to another child. Charlie may not have understood Rahaf's intentions, but Rahaf's actions indicated her thinking process. She was intentional and knew exactly what she wanted. Lave & Wenger (1991: 36) comment that not being allowed to participate is disempowering. Conceivably Rahaf



was trying to participate in the social activities of the nursery environment through recreating Storytime in the same way that she had in the previous vignette at Circle Time.

Picking up the biro was a purposeful action, because when she was told to leave it by Charlie, she followed Charlie's directions and went to the writing table. Charlie did not appear to understand Rahaf's intentions. Rahaf did not get Charlie's support for her writing, failing to legitimise her activity. Rahaf showed pride in her writing skills as she looked at her photograph, continued to write and was pleased to show her writing to other adults. Rahaf's activity was legitimised by Rosi through her encouragement of her writing skills. Being included on a display about writers supported Rahaf's membership of this group. She was included as a writer.

Writing in books was a familiar activity for Rahaf. She saw her mother writing, she watched me writing, she watched the register being marked, staff wrote observations and completed the children's Learning Diaries in the classroom. Writing was an activity that happened in Class 2 as well as at home. Rahaf's interest in it may have helped her to make sense of this environment and be part of it. It may have helped Rahaf to transition from home to nursery. Following this event, Rahaf often carried a notebook and pen around with her and wrote in her own book.

#### **6.6.4. The bird feeders: 02.02.11: Aged 2 years 9 months**

Another example of Rahaf's participation was making birdfeeders. Rahaf would often point to the birds outside and watch the seagulls squawk noisily from the roofs of neighbouring buildings. She appeared to have an ambivalent relationship with them, pointing enthusiastically at them but bowing her head with her hands over her ears when they became too noisy.

One morning as I enter the nursery, Rahaf comes over, takes my hand and points to the noticeboard where there is a new display of annotated photographs of children, including Rahaf, making birdfeeders and putting them on the bird table with Charlie. She says '*bird food*' to an adult who says, '*You have to wait until Charlie comes*'. Rahaf and I go to the window at the other end of the room and see some pigeons.

*Rahaf: Two birds*

showing me 3 fingers. Rahaf picks up some playdough and sits at the playdough table with 3 other children. She manipulates the playdough but is

more focused on looking towards the door. Eventually Charlie arrives. Rahaf runs towards the door shouting,

*Charlie here. Charlie here.*

Someone tells Charlie that Rahaf wants to feed the birds.

Charlie says,

*Who wants to feed the birds? Put your coats on.*

She collects birdseed from the cupboard. Rahaf puts on her coat and hat and runs to the door. Charlie and 3 children go outside and check the bird table and two other feeders. At each feeder Rahaf says, 'Me', and puts birdseed on the table. Charlie talks with another adult outside about her own child. The children are called in for snack time and Charlie says,

*Go inside now. Yes, now (pointing to the door)*

They all go inside. Rahaf stays by the window as the other children go to the snack table.

*Rahaf: It's not working*

She runs across to the other window.

*Rahaf: It's not working,*

she repeats, looking across at the bird table. (No birds have appeared. The garden is full of Class 3 children). Jagdeep calls to Rahaf,

*Come for snack Rahaf. Here, sit here (pointing to an empty chair).*

Rahaf looks then turns back to the window and says, 'Charlie'. She stays by the window waiting for Charlie. Charlie does not come back into the nursery.

## **Analysis**

Rahaf had clearly enjoyed the adult-led activity with Charlie and had been part of the group making bird food, and wanted to participate again. Rahaf waited until it was possible, manipulating playdough to 'occupy' her as she waited, purposefully, her gaze focused on the entrance door. Although it was a routine activity, she may have chosen playdough as Rosi, her key person was there. Rahaf wanted to be with Charlie sharing in a joint activity - the photographs on the display showed the social group working together. She also made it clear that she was waiting for Charlie, by the entrance door before Charlie arrived and then near the garden door after they had fed the birds. Rahaf had accompanied Charlie outside, but Charlie appeared to be less interested in the bird feeding. Rahaf's use of the space, her positioning by the window, the focus of her gaze, her language and her resistance to joining others for snack communicated what was on her mind, and her intentional focus to participate with

Charlie in a shared activity. Rahaf was more vocal in this activity, using language to comment and to signal her intentions. She articulated her thoughts clearly and showed her disappointment through her positioning by the window and her comments.

#### **6.6.5. Rahaf – singing in Hindi 10.06.11: Aged 3 years 1 month**

Staff informed me that earlier in the week, on one of Rahaf's nursery days, the children had danced to Indian music as part of a 'Cultural Week' in Edward Square. Rahaf had played the same song every day since then. The staff were not aware that Rahaf knew how to use the CD player as it was not usually available for children. They had been surprised to see her with it at first. Stella commented, *'We don't know where she found it, mind you, she doesn't miss a trick'*. This was further evidence of Rahaf's observational skills and her interest in objects around her.

Rahaf arrived with her mother at 9.15, after Welcome Time. She was tearful and didn't want her mother, Khadra, to leave, clinging on to her mother's coat. Khadra said to a member of staff, *"I'm late for college"*, took Rahaf's hand from her coat, kissed her and left quickly. Rahaf stood alone and looked round the room. She saw a CD player on the cupboard and picked it up. Rahaf went over to the window and sat on a small chair, clutching the CD player. She pressed various switches and when the song began, Rahaf sang along with the song, her body gently rocking. She knew the words. (I could not understand them and asked a practitioner what the language was. It was Hindi). As the song finished, Rahaf stopped the player, pressed some buttons and found the song and played it again. She then got up and went outside for a few minutes and wandered around the garden before returning to the CD player. She sat down again, with the CD player on her lap and pressing the buttons, remembering which ones to use to find the song again.

#### **Analysis**

When Rahaf was sitting with the CD player, I initially thought that she was fascinated by the technology, working out how to stop and start a CD and find a particular track, but as I watched more closely, I realised that she was actually singing the words accurately. Hindi was an unfamiliar language for her in the same way that English had been unfamiliar when she started the nursery, although it is possible that Rahaf had watched Bollywood films, which are in Hindi, with her mother, as her mother had commented that she enjoyed watching Arabic films (Chapter 4.7.ii). There are cultural links which make Bollywood films popular in Somalia (Mail & Guardian: 2019). Rahaf had heard this Hindi song during the week and joining in with the

song enabled her to participate in an activity related to Class 2. Her body rocked with the rhythm and she appeared to be in a trance-like state, only disturbed by stopping and starting the machine. The combination of Rahaf's memory, acute hearing, sense of rhythm and attunement to language were synchronised, enabling her to be immersed in the experience. Previous vignettes have demonstrated how Rahaf sought to participate in social activities. Rahaf had been distressed when she arrived in nursery and no one had supported her emotionally, so perhaps this activity was calming for her. Rahaf used the nursery resources to support her own needs.

This activity was self-chosen and solitary. This observation was carried out towards the end of the academic year. Rahaf was increasingly choosing to do activities on her own although she continued to join in 'Welcome Time' and 'Circle Time' enthusiastically. There were no Hindi speaking children in Class 2, so this choice of music for 'Cultural Week' appeared to be tokenistic, and not representative of the languages and cultures of the children and their families. For Rahaf, there may have been connection with her 'funds of knowledge' from her home experiences, as her mother played music at home. But it is unlikely that the monolingual staff would have known if there was any connection for Rahaf, and it had not been learning as an integral part of social practice in the lived-in world of the nursery (Lave & Wenger: 1991).

#### **6.6.6 Rahaf's experience as a newcomer**

Rahaf's interest in making connections with people and practices in Class 2 was evident through her focus on language as a tool for communication. She was only exposed to English from adults as there were no Somali bilingual support workers in Class 2, and I never noticed Nagat, in Class 3 & 4, who spoke Somali, speaking with Rahaf. Rahaf may have been interested in written language with its symbolic codes, demonstrated through her mark making activities. But it was the images of faces in the photographs on the Families Board representing the actual people in the group associated with the name cards that indicated that in one way she was aware of others in the group. Rahaf engaged with different forms of communication for different purposes, initiating and joining in with singing and counting, using gesture and touch, connecting with objects and vocalising. She enjoyed books and storytelling. To support her communication, Rahaf relied on watching and copying, and sometimes initiating and leading. This pattern of strategies was evident throughout my observations of Rahaf during her year in Class 2, as she worked hard to make connections with others. Rahaf was often in close proximity to an adult but there was very little interaction between them, and no recognition of her developing language skills as this section of her Learning Diary stated, 'says one-word

answers to questions' (Field notes: 10.06.11). Her resistance to instructions from adults was also a feature of Rahaf's behaviour, always silent, but always clearly communicating through her actions.

Rahaf used the resources in the environment, such as bags, dolls, CD player and birdseed, and moved throughout the space, for example the baby room, to support her activities, mediating her learning and making connections with others. Rahaf employed her strategies of repeating and rehearsing and using her memory in her attempt to engage in a familiar activity. There was always an adult in the book area and the playdough table, so perhaps these were safe places for Rahaf, where she could be in the company of an adult. Rahaf was always with her mother when she was not in nursery. Khadra stated,

*We do everything together – she is always with me. We share the same bed and do the same things* (Field notes: 21.01.11).

Throughout the observations, Rahaf initiated her activity and chose who she wanted to be with. She provided evidence of her energy and interest in her surroundings, and her need for adult help to learn how to resolve conflict. She tried to be involved. But much of the adult response to her was disciplinary – either spoken or through body language, for example, when Charlie told her to leave the name cards, stopped reading to her or told her to put her pen back.

Rahaf was learning about forming relationships in Class 2, and how English language works in written and spoken forms. She was also learning about the role of some of the adults in Class 2, looking to Rosi for support and wanting Charlie's attention, for example when feeding the birds. In Chapter 2.4.i I discussed Wenger's (1998) concept of a legitimate peripheral participant being an active participant in the practices of their social communities, leading to the construction of identities in relation to those communities. Rahaf was actively trying to become a participant. She wanted to be involved with adults and other children, especially Amy, but as they were less involved with her, she increasingly chose to play alone, choosing solitary activities. As discussed in Chapter 2.4.ii, Bohm (1996) suggested that 'taking part in' is to join in an activity without the sense of belonging, whereas 'partaking' is the actual engagement with a sense of connection, enabling identity formation through situated practice. Rahaf exemplifies this distinction when she is in an individual and group situation.

## 6.7 Abdilaahi

### Introduction to Abdilaahi

Abdilaahi was one of the older children in Class 2 and was taller than the others. He was 2 years 8 months when he started attending (see Chapter 2 for more details). Abdilaahi's home language was Somali. As recent arrivals to the UK, his family lived with other relatives, and one of his older cousins worked in Class 3 as an early years practitioner. Abdilaahi had a wide smile, and he smiled and called 'Helloa' to all the visitors entering the main door to Class 2. He always arrived late, and so he did not attend 'Welcome Time'. Each morning he went to the toy car drawer and selected a car, which he carried or kept in his pocket throughout the session. He watched the other children and adults, mostly from a distance. He did not want to take his coat off throughout his time in Class 2. After only his first term, Abdilaahi, despite his confusion so evident in the following vignettes, was moved into Class 3 because there was a vacancy, and a waiting list for Class 2. He was so unsettled by this move that the lead teacher in Class 3 recommended that he had a phased start, only attending for three 2-hour sessions per week. He cried when he arrived and when he left and did not interact with any of the adults or children in the group. Eventually his attendance was changed to one five-hour session a week because staff thought that he was getting too upset when he was dropped off and picked up. These observations were made during Abdilaahi's first term in Class 2.

#### 6.7.1 Singing with Rosi: 10.11.10: Aged 2 years 9 months

Classes 3 & 4 have lit a small campfire outside and are sitting round it. Abdilaahi has been standing by the window watching them. He goes to the door, opens it and goes outside, and stands outside the circle of children next to Charlie, watching the fire. Charlie says something to Abdilaahi who looks at her (I couldn't hear as I was inside), and she takes his hand and brings him to the door, opens it and puts Abdilaahi inside before she closes the door and returns to the fire. Abdilaahi stands by the door and looks round the room. Rosi is at the other end of the room singing 'The Jumping Bean' with a few children who are doing the actions. Abdilaahi picks up a car from the car box and walks up to them and stands and watches them jumping. Abdilaahi starts to jump.

*Rosi says: Everyone show a sad face,*  
pulling a sad face and showing it to the children. Abdilaahi looks at her and smiles.

*Rosi: Is that your happy face?*

Abdilaahi shakes his head. Rosi starts to sing again and Abdilaahi turns away and walks across some blocks. He stands looking round the room watching the children putting toys away as Rosi asks everyone to tidy up for Circle Time.

Rosi: *Come on everybody. Let's make a circle for Circle Time.*

Stella comes and takes Abdilaahi's hand and shows him where to sit in the circle.

Stella: *Sit here.*

Abdilaahi sits down between two other boys. Rosi is leading Circle Time and she shows the group a big laminated picture of a mouth with white teeth.

Rosi: *We have a talking mouth.*

Abdilaahi is looking at the big picture and touches his teeth. He continues to touch his teeth, looking round at the other children while Rosi shows the picture of ears, saying,

*We have listening ears.*

Throughout Circle Time, Abdilaahi watches the children, smiling all the time. He stands up when the other children stand and sits down when they do, and watches the children continually but does not join in with the singing or the actions until the last song, 'The Jumping Bean', and the children stand up and jump to the song. Abdilaahi jumps vigorously. Rosi and the other adults finish singing and Rosi says,

*Sit down now. It's time to wash our hands.*

Abdilaahi is still jumping. Stella gets up and helps Abdilaahi to sit.

Stella: *Sit down now and wait until it's your turn to wash your hands.*

Abdilaahi looks at Stella and turns to look at the other children. He is still smiling.

## **Analysis**

Abdilaahi showed his interest in the activity taking place outside by his positioning at the window and his gaze towards the fire. This was the first time the fire pit was used. Although it was not time for Class 2 children to play outside, Abdilaahi was intentional in his movement as he went to get closer to the activity. He appeared to understand that he was not allowed to be outside and chose to join another adult-led activity. Abdilaahi acknowledged Rosi's question by shaking his head, but he demonstrated by his actions that he had not understood. During Circle Time, Abdilaahi watched intently, responding to the image of the mouth and copying the children. His actions suggested that he enjoyed jumping and was absorbed in the action and

in his enthusiasm was unaware of the rest of the group, and perhaps he didn't understand the instructions to sit down. Throughout this observation, Abdilaahi's positioning, chosen activities, response to images and his direction of gaze indicated his thinking. He moved towards groups of people where activity was taking place and often watched what other children were doing and copied them. Abdilaahi indicated that he wanted to participate with the social group from the 'lookout' post as he stood near people without fully joining in. This enabled him to see what takes place in this social context and what there is to be learned. In terms of legitimate peripheral participation, from this safe position of the observational 'look out' post (Lave & Wenger: 1991), it would be possible for him to settle in to this community and he could test out their practices without the fear of making mistakes (Bligh: 2014).

### **6.7.2 Wearing his coat: 17.11.10: Aged 2 years 9 months**

This observation took place in November. Abdilaahi had a new coat. He had arrived late and was dropped off by a relative. Abdilaahi had picked out two toy cars from the car box and had been standing in silence looking round the room for over nine minutes.

Abdilaahi is silently standing watching two boys building with the small blocks. He is holding a car in each hand. He turns to watch Rosi who is sorting out the doll's house. Rosi looks at him and says,

*Take your coat off Abdilaahi, take your coat off. You don't wear your coat in here.*

Abdilaahi smiles at her and turns back to watch the boys. Stella comes into the room and sees Abdilaahi.

*Stella: Why are you wearing your coat? We don't wear coats inside do we? Take your coat off.*

Abdilaahi turns his head to look at her then turns back to watch the boys who are fighting over the cars.

*Stella: You heard what I said, Abdilaahi. Take your coat off now and hang it up.*

One of the boys starts shouting and Stella goes over to them. Another adult comes to help Stella with the fighting boys. She looks at Abdilaahi who is still watching the boys fighting over the cars. He looks at the car in his hand and puts it behind his back. The other adult turns to Rosi, and says to her,

*Abdilaahi must take his coat off. He can't wear it in here.*

Rosi approaches Abdilaahi and tries to help him take off his coat,



Rosi: *You must take your coat off.*

He shakes his shoulders, moves away and goes towards the main nursery door and stands there looking into the room at the boys who have been fighting, still wearing his coat and holding his car. Rosi continues to sort out the doll's house and Stella is talking with the other boys.

### **Analysis**

In such an unknown environment, Abdilaahi seemed to need something familiar to help him feel safe and connect his different worlds. He was usually compliant when requested to do something, like being shown where to sit by Stella in the previous vignette, but he was very resistant to taking his coat off, and did not give in. Abdilaahi may not have understood Rosi and Stella's instructions as they were de-contextualised. It may have been threatening for him when Rosi tried to remove his coat. But he was determined and resistant. Moving to stand by the door may have signified that Abdilaahi wanted to leave the nursery, or at least, that he did not want to join in and be part of the group. He did not appear to want to be close to adults, but moved to watch their activities, yet remaining solitary and apart from them during his time in Class 2. Abdilaahi's coat connected him with home – something familiar to cover him in this unfamiliar and confusing environment.

Abdilaahi's main attention was the group of boys, and this was a daily focus, noted in observations throughout the research period. Watching other children was a critical strategy for Abdilaahi where he could learn about the practices and relationships in this community. His interest in the boys and their activities was intense and intentional, and he was learning how to be a participant through watching the ways in which they participated in their shared activities. He was silent, using gesture to communicate when necessary, perhaps signalling his wish to participate. As he observed the boys, he was learning how they communicated with each other. Lave & Wenger (1991: 109) argue that for 'newcomers', learning *to* talk rather than learning *from* talk is the key to legitimate peripheral participation. Their view is that newcomers need to use, and not just to hear the specific language of the community to become part of it. Abdilaahi had recently arrived in England and his main experience of learning English was through the specific language of the community. Still at an early stage of learning to talk, he was confused through learning *from* talk, demonstrated above and by the lunch-time vignette presented below, and was in the very early stages of learning *to* talk in English. Abdilaahi was also learning that resistance, physically shaking his shoulders and moving away, was an effective mode of communicating, as the staff did not continue to remove his coat, and

Abdilaahi wore it each day until he left Class 2. But this episode also reflected his confusion about expectations and practices in Class 2. In 6.8.ii I will suggest how Abdilaahi responded to this challenge.

### **6.7.3 Sensory play: 24.11.10: Aged 2 years 10 months**

Abdilaahi was in the sandpit and I was sitting on the floor next to it. He had no shoes on and when he lifted up his foot he looked at his footprint in the sand.

*Me: Footprint. It's your footprint*

He smiled then placed his foot on another area and looked at me.

*Me: Footprint. It's your footprint*

Again, he smiled then placed his foot on another area and looked at me.

*Me: Footprint. It's your footprint*

He repeats this again, each time looking at me after I had spoken. I point to each footprint and say,

*Me: One, two, three, four footprints.*

Abdullah fills a bucket with sand, tips it out and jumps on it with both feet. He laughs, moves to one side and looks at his footprints.

*Me: Two footprints. One, two [pointing at each print].*

Another child joins with a small car in his hand. Abdullah looks at the boy then looks at his hand. He gets out of the sandpit and goes to the car box, picks out two cars and carries them back, one in each hand. He stands by the sandpit and watches the other boy. Neither of the boys speak.

The door has been opened and children are going outside to play. Abdilaahi goes outside and goes across to the other side of the garden where boys from Classes 3 & 4 are playing. Abdulaahi sits on a log watching the other children playing in the autumn leaves on the ground, throwing the leaves into the air. A teacher calls the children to go inside. Abdulaahi gets up and runs around, stopping to watch the boys going inside, then runs around again. He falls onto a pile of leaves. Another child comes to join him, and an adult also joined them. Abdilaahi throws leaves into the air. The other child watches him and then the adult says, "Come", and they go inside. Abdilaahi lies down and covers himself with leaves. He gets up, runs around then returns to leaves. He sits down and covers himself, looking round at the empty playground. He stands up, walks to the corner of the building and looks towards the windows of Class 4. He looks around the garden. There are no other children or adults in the garden.

Abdilaahi returns to the leaves, sits down and covers his legs. A teacher from Class 4 sees him from the window and comes out. She smiles at him and takes his hand,

Teacher: *You should be in Class 2 now. Let's go*

As she takes him back to Class 2. He doesn't have the cars with him.

### **Analysis**

Abdilaahi appeared to enjoy interacting with an adult through his repetition of making imprints of his feet in the sand, and indicated that he wanted me to continue to play with him through looking at me. Seeing the other boy's car and finding ones for himself showed a willingness to be silently sociable and joining in with another child. Abdilaahi went outside as soon as the door was opened and watched children play, then copying their activity when they go inside. He appeared to enjoy the physical action of running and throwing leaves in the air and the space. Although he seemed to be absorbed in his sensory play, perhaps he was looking towards Class 4 to see if any other people were there, and he may not have been aware that he was alone in the garden. Abdilaahi had chosen to go over to the far side of the garden to watch a particular activity, and then to imitate what he had seen the boys doing. This was the only time I ever witnessed such exuberance from Abdilaahi. Observing and copying other children revealed a strategy through which he could increase his degree of participation, but in this observation, in reality he was alone.

#### **6.7.4 Lunchtime: 01.12.10: Aged 2 years 10 months**

All the children had lunch together in Class 2. There were six children and one member of staff on each table. A lunchtime assistant served the food from a central trolley. Abdilaahi sits with other children eating with his fingers and watching the other children at the table. He indicates that he wants seconds by standing up and waving his plate. Charlie tells him to sit down and wait. Abdilaahi looks at her and stands still, continuing to watch Charlie until he is given more food, then he sits down and continues to eat with his fingers. Charlie speaks to Abdilaahi,

Charlie: *Don't use your hands; use your knife and fork. That's how we eat here. Pass it here and I'll cut up your food,*"

She holds out her hand to him. Abdilaahi looks up at Charlie and continues eating. Charlie takes his fork and spoon and says, *'Pass your knife'* while holding out her hand. Abdilaahi looks at Charlie, then looks at the other children

who continue eating, and gives his name card to her. She takes his plate, cuts up his food and gives it back to him.

Charlie: *Now eat with your knife and fork.*

Abdilaahi looks at his plate and continues to eat with his fingers.

### **Analysis**

Unfamiliar with English, Abdilaahi used gesture to communicate, and tried to make sense of talk directed at him. He expressed his intention of wanting more food through body language, by standing up and waving his plate. He indicated that he knew Charlie wanted something from him, but clearly did not understand what she was saying as he continued to eat with his fingers – and continued to eat using his hands every day following this observation. Using his hands to eat demonstrated his knowledge of his home culture. Abdilaahi had not yet understood that this was not the expectation for eating in the nursery. He knew which his name card was, because each child sat at the table by their cards. His response to Charlie indicated his thinking. Abdilaahi tried to respond, using gesture to communicate, and attempted to understand Charlie's body language, but was ignored by her. In this vignette, Abdilaahi was trying to make sense of what Charlie was saying by using his knowledge of common practices in the group i.e. by handing her his name card. He was trying to work out what was expected from him with no help from an adult. Perhaps Abdilaahi was attempting to be part of the group by handing his name card to Charlie, but he was on the periphery without support. Abdilaahi continually watched other children and adults to make sense of this new environment and attempted to join in, in a new language with cultural conflicts, but was isolated and bewildered.

#### **6.7.5 Playing with the scooters: 08.12.10: Aged 2 years 11 months**

During 'free play' the children from Class 2 could choose to play outside with children from Classes 3 & 4. There were seven scooters parked near a small paved track surrounding some large bushes. On this occasion, the boys on the scooters were playing a chasing game, calling to each other as they rode round and round the circuit.

Abdilaahi goes over to the area where four boys are riding scooters round the bushes on the cycle track. They are chasing each other in a game and calling out to each other. The boys balance precariously at times, lifting one leg, and crash into each other. Abdilaahi stands and watches them, smiling all the time, and from time to time he turns to look at three other children on scooters in

another area. The children from Classes 3 & 4 are called to go back inside. Two scooters become available and Abdilaahi goes to get one. He joins the four boys who are still on the cycle track, and follows them round. The boys appear not to notice Abdilaahi and continue with their scooting together. Abdilaahi stops and pulls his scooter to the side and calls 'Helloa' to a practitioner before he turns back to watch the boys. Abdilaahi then joins them on the track and continues to follow them round and round the circuit, this time lifting one leg and balancing. A man has come into the garden and is talking loudly in Somali on his phone. Abdilaahi stops and stares at the man until he moves away, and the boys scoot past him. Abdilaahi then starts to scoot again round the circuit.

### **Analysis**

Watching boys was a key strategy for Abdilaahi, whether he was in the class or outside. He copied their actions yet did not join in with their game or interact with them, but he joined in their activity. The boys did not appear to notice Abdilaahi. Joining the circuit enabled him to do the activity and be on the periphery of the group. He was on the edge, silently copying their actions but not joining in their calling out to each other, which was in English. Abdilaahi was learning about how groups of boys play and communicate together, and how to engage in social activity in Class 2. Tabor (1997; 2008) comments on the interdependence of social interaction and language acquisition for emergent bilingual children and calls it a 'double bind'. Although the boys were not excluding Abdilaahi, he was not part of their group. In order to learn English, he needed to be socially accepted by the children, but to be socially accepted by them he had to be able to speak English. From this position of watching, copying and following the boys round and round the circuit, Abdilaahi was not joining in as part of the group, but he was including himself in their activity. From this position he was able to learn about how to join in and become a member of that particular community of boys, who were members of the community of Edward Square. When the man caught his attention Abdilaahi appeared to be interested in hearing Somali being spoken, a familiar language that he did not usually hear in this context.

#### **6.7.6 Abdilaahi's experience as a newcomer**

Abdilaahi's positioning, intentionally moving towards activities, and his gaze indicated his choices about who to spend time close to, which activities he wanted to do and how he was learning to participate socially with others. Adopting other strategies, of being alone and silently

watching, copying other children, and responding to others enabled Abdilaahi to observe the practices in Class 2, the roles of children and adults and to see how relationships were managed when they were engaged in particular activities, such as boys fighting and playing on scooters. Abdilaahi could not yet use spoken language to communicate with others because he had only been in England for a few weeks and was still developing his home language, Somali, and could not understand what was being said to him. His older cousin, Yolande, who worked in Class 3 stated, *'He hardly talks in our house. His brothers do all the talking. Anyway, he is still in the early stages of learning to speak'* (Field notes: 09.02.11). Having heard Somali in his home since his birth in Sweden, Abdilaahi was now acquiring another language, English, and dependent on other forms of communication to express his thoughts and intentions. He may have chosen silence because he had only been in England for a few weeks, or because he was confused. His resistance to interventions that he did not like from others, such as the removal of his coat, communicated his intentions and his confusion. He chose to learn the daily practices in Class 2 through playing alongside the boys and through watching, listening and copying from a 'look-out' position. Abdilaahi was isolated and became even more isolated when he was moved into Class 3 after one term in Class 2. These vignettes were typical of the observations I recorded of Abdilaahi in my research data. He was often alone, always looking bewildered, and without adult interaction or interventions to support his learning and participation in the group. He only received organisational instructions, and these were always in English. His coat was an important possession, possibly a connection with home, while the car symbolised joining in with the social group of boys. Throughout the vignettes, Abdilaahi's intentionality was clear as he chose to spend time near the group of boys. The group of boys were also technically 'newcomers' as they had all started in Edward Square in September 2010, but they were English speakers so possibly they were more familiar with the culture of the nursery. These boys shared the language of the staff and they appeared to understand the expectations and experienced a familiarity that was not available to Abdilaahi. He was learning alongside these 'newcomers' and the adults in Class 2 about the shared practice of Edward Square. As I noted in Chapter 2. 4, Lave suggested that participation may involve learning trajectories that do not necessarily lead to 'full' participation, as I have noted in my observations of Abdilaahi. I maintain that he did not have a learning trajectory, but may have developed one if he had stayed in Class 2 with familiar adults and peers.

### **6.8 How do the children negotiate their participation?**

I have examined the children's individual attempts to participate. But they were unique, and although they had a similar starting position, there were differences between them in their family

contexts, their dispositions and their experiences. As I have demonstrated in the analysis of the children's vignettes, their individual response to the challenge of making sense of an English nursery, and in particular, Class 2 in Edward Square, and learning how to belong was distinctive for each child.

The children started in the nursery aged two years old when they were developing their home languages and embracing the familiar culture of their immediate and extended family, and were transitioning to the unfamiliar culture and language of the setting - English language in an English educational context. In this next section I will analysis the role of language and culture, agency, silence and intent watching. I will develop this analysis through investigating the support and mediation from the three practitioners and the role of bilingual staff. This scrutiny of data will provide the context for my findings and conclusions. Throughout this section I argue that although the three children exercise some control through resistance, the children and the bilingual staff are '*powerless*' in certain contexts. Foucault claimed that relationships of power determine the ideologies espoused within social situations, such as Edward Square, and may exercise power over others, subjugating the knowledge of the other (1980). It is in this sense that I use the word '*powerless*'.

### **6.8.i Language and culture**

The dominance of English as the accepted language for communication in Class 2 meant that children created a power inequity. The children were powerless to change this situation which affected their status in Class 2. For each child, language development, whether in the home languages or English, was a critical factor for participation in Class 2. Vygotsky (1978) argued that language is a communicative tool, supporting children's learning and thinking. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were developing their language skills in their home language. The tacit domination of English as the language for communication in Class 2 overshadowed the children's actual competence in communication and literacy (Kenner & Ruby: 2012). Foucault (2002) argued that promoting dominant forms of knowledge is a way in which institutions may seek to transform society through normalisation, imposing hierarchies and centralisation. This was demonstrated by prioritising English within Class 2, in contrast to the articulated aims and policies of Edward Square. The children were learning that to be part of the community of practice they had to speak English, except in certain subversive spaces such as the bathroom and the outside area. This created issues around identity for both the adults and children and signified important messages about the marginalisation of home languages other than English.

For the children, as Cummins (1991) argued, the absence of their home languages may have affected their sense of belonging and the process of learning. Aeshah's strategy of silence in the Class 2 classroom and seeking support from her cousin Maria and Aayat in the outdoor area enabled her to use her home language and demonstrated her leadership skills, which were not evident in other contexts. Rahaf and Abdilaahi did not have support with their home language. Rahaf used her strategies of silent watching and joining in the whole group activity of 'Circle Time'. She appeared to enjoy language and learned the songs and the stories from the books, using their words to provide her with new experiences of fluency in English as well as becoming familiar with English script. Rahaf could recite songs, complete storybooks such as 'Dear Zoo'. Using her memory for words enabled her to join in with Circle Time and share stories with small groups of children and an adult. When Charlie and the other adults laughed when they tried to sing a song in Somali, Rahaf and Abdilaahi's language, was being actively devalued, and implied Charlie and the other staff's lack of knowledge and understanding of the importance of valuing diverse languages and cultures, similarly noted by Robertson & Auger (2016). It also indicated their silencing of the children. Abdilaahi had very little spoken language in Somali, his home language. His cousin commented that he only used single words at home, but he had been exposed to and had been assimilating Somali from his extended family since birth. As a two-year-old, he was immersed in an English-speaking nursery, with no Somali speaker to support him. Abdilaahi relied on looking for visual clues and watching other people to provide a compass to direct him, attempting to understand English instructions, and using his strategy of silent watching in order to learn (Bligh: 2014), but still resisting.

Signs and words provided the children with social contact. As emergent bilingual children with limited access to English, Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi all used their gaze, gestures and body language to express their thinking and to communicate their needs. Each of the children indicated their ways of expressing their own needs as well as finding out about the practices and relations in Class 2. For example, Aeshah used her proximity to Jagdeep, Rahaf used touch and Abdilaahi used facial gestures to communicate with others. Understanding the contextual meanings of their non-verbal communication indicated their 'mother-tongue thinking' (Bligh: 2014). Vygotsky (1981: 139-140) stated that language is a symbolic tool that transforms mental functioning and affects thinking. As the three children observed the social practices in the nursery, they created meanings in their minds about what was happening and this may have transformed their thinking in their home language. Interpreting my observations of Aeshah, watching her gaze seemed to communicate what she wanted to do, who she wanted



to be with and when she wanted to be alone, whereas Rahaf and Abdilaahi's gaze indicated what they were interested in.

In the English-speaking environment of Class 2, where Somali and Urdu were not spoken and where there was little focus on language development, the children's own linguistic skills were critical in their choices about where they placed themselves in Class 2. This influenced what they learned, how they made meaning of the culture, language, practices and relations in Class 2, and the degree to which they became participants. Although there were displays using different representative languages in the entrance foyer of Edward Square, all displays and notices in Class 2 used English only. There were books with images representing cultural diversity, but no bilingual books or books in other languages. In her research, Kenner (2000) suggested that including children's home languages on displays and noticeboards, and literary artefacts from their homes helps to bridge the gap between home and school. Gonzales et al (2005) argue that it is important for teachers to recognise the children's 'funds of knowledge', which they define as the '*historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills*' (Moll et al: 1992: 133). The practitioners in Class 2 did not display value for the children's own cultural experiences or recognise that the three children were competent. Without accurate knowledge of the children's home cultures, the staff failed to acknowledge that the children's life experiences had given them 'funds of knowledge'. I was surprised that I never heard the Somali children communicating with each other in Somali – only with their parents or carers when they were dropped off or picked up. In a conversation with Rosi and Beth, they commented that they had not noticed this. Beth suggested that the families may not know each other and did not meet in the nursery (Field notes: 08.12.10). Kahin (1997: 47) notes that Somali has '*several different dialects and local accents that are not always mutually intelligible*'. Or perhaps the children may already have had internalised that to belong in Class 2 they had to speak English. Apart from the family photograph board, there was little in Class 2 to help the children make connections between their home culture and this new culture, but each child found mediation – Aeshah played with Maria and was supported by Aayat, Rahaf made the connection with her mother's study materials through books, writing and bags, and Abdilaahi kept his coat on and carried cars around with him every day providing continuity and a sense of security in a confusing and bewildering environment. But within the nursery, their home languages and cultures were silenced – yet the children were participating in their own ways.

### **6.8.ii The children's agency**

In this section I will discuss the ways in which Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi made individual choices as social actors and agents in becoming participants within Class 2. Agency is the ability of individuals to make their own choices and act independently of others. Agents can and do make choices, but their choices are both enabled and constrained by who they are and by their social context at the time of the choice (Mayall: 2002). As noted in the previous section (6.8.i), the three children's lives had been primarily shaped by their home cultures, creating their 'funds of knowledge'. Mayall argues that children's agency is influenced by the parameters of their status in relation to adults, including power relations (discussed in Chapter 3:4.ii) commenting that children's voices are not always heard within society in general, reinforcing the child's powerlessness. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were just two years old when they joined Class 2. I previously argued that as emergent bilingual children they did not share the dominant language and culture of the community and had no language support within the classroom. My initial reflections on my research data were that Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were successful social actors, able to control their engagement and participation in Class 2. However, closer analysis identified that they were agentive but needed more support to gain a strong sense of belonging and mutual understanding. Although each of the children often appeared to be confused, they were proactive in becoming engaged in specific self-chosen social contexts. Rahaf and Aeshah used their strategy of initiating and leading an activity to gain a sense of belonging. Aeshah was a member of her Urdu-speaking group of peers, but she remained isolated in Class 2, as her attempt to seek the support of Jagdeep, a fellow Urdu speaker, was largely unsuccessful. Rahaf tried to join in through Circle Time and her interest in knowing about the children in Class 2 through the name cards and Families Board, but was less successful in engaging Charlie's positive attention. Looking in and copying was a strategy that Abdilaahi used while he was becoming accustomed to the new language, and in order to try and participate even though he was always on the margin. But at no point did he appear to have the support or understanding of an adult to legitimate what he was trying to do. This may have helped him to interact or participate with others.

All the children were resistant to particular expectations from adults. Aeshah resisted when she did not want to join in an activity in which she was expected to participate, when she stood, head bowed, next to Jagdeep. Rahaf resisted when she did not agree with a decision, for example when Charlie told her to put away the cards. Abdilaahi resisted when he was uneasy about having his coat removed, affecting his sense of security and familiarity with his own possession, and moved to the main door – the only time Abdilaahi used this door was to enter

or leave the nursery. This was his route home. Each child communicated their wishes through conformity or resistance. In their research based in Greece with children under the age of three, Katsiada et al (2018), investigated the children's interactions with practitioners and ancillary staff to explore young children's agency. They noted that while the practitioners' physically remote style of interactions inhibited emotionally close relationships with less verbally skilled children, the children were able to exercise their agency and decision-making with regard to group participation and resistance to the practitioners' authority. Resistance enabled Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi to make independent choices about their actions (Foucault: 1980), and could have empowered the children to choose the degree to which they became participants or not in an unfamiliar environment where the structure appeared to provide them with little opportunity for choice and limited support. Nonetheless, Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were very young children, seemingly powerless in an unfamiliar cultural environment, separated from their families for the first time and expected to become members of this community of practice. Being unsupported by some of the adult perceived 'old timers' who were powerful, as they controlled the daily routine and social practice in Class 2, restricted the children's participation in this community and their possibilities for learning.

But despite this, I argue that Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi became agents of their own learning through their chosen strategies. They indicated their interest in different activities and routine events and joined in with or were in close proximity to other children, although, they were less successful in gaining support from adults, and this inhibited their actual participation. Nevertheless, they all appropriated specific resources to support their attempts to participate in the cultural practices and social organisation of the community of practice. Aeshah's silent watching in the classroom was in sharp contrast with her active engagement when she was outside in the shared area supported by her cousin Maria who was in Class 3, a group of Urdu speaking children and Aayat, the bilingual support worker. Rahaf appeared to be more confident in routine group activities. Routines and repetition seemed to be an important means of participation for her. Rahaf initiated activities, whether it was playing on her own with the name cards or with a large group in 'Circle Time'. Abdilaahi used resources in the nursery in unexpected ways, such as selecting cars and carrying them with him either in his hand or his pocket throughout the nursery session. He chose to play with tactile materials such as the sand and the leaves, and signalled his desire to join in on the margins of the boys' play with bikes.

### **6.8.iii Being silent and watching intently**

Children faced with the social context of a monolingual, monocultural English setting where use of their home language does not help them to understand the dominant language being spoken may lead to a phase of silence known as the 'silent' period, (see Chapter 2:6.iii) or as Tabors (2006) suggests, more accurately described as the 'non-verbal' period as the children are still communicating non-verbally. However, it is important to note that the 'silent' period can also be a cognitive space and a time of intense and self-mediated learning (Ohta: 2001; Bligh: 2011), when the children are able to tune in to English sounds and become familiar with the new environment (Drury: 2013). Tabors (2005: 45-46) suggests that children in the 'non-verbal' period use strategies to make requests, gain attention and protest, as I also noted in my observations of Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi. These are significant strategies for becoming familiar with English and engaging in participation with others. Lave & Wenger (1991: 52) characterised learning as participation.

Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were all silent much of the time, and the purposes of silence appeared to vary. For Aeshah it seemed at times that her strategy of silence was resistance, combined with not making eye contact with others, and at other times choosing to stay as a 'look out', watching intently rather than participating with the community. At times it was silent participation, when Rahaf played alongside Amy in silence, or sitting with Rosi at the playdough table. Abdilaahi silently imitated actions during 'Circle Time' and copied the boys on the scooters in silence, and silently watched children playing. Like the children in Drury's study of three girls (2010) and Bligh's research (2014), Aeshah and Rahaf, may have been non-verbal (Drury 2013), whereas Abdilaahi may have been in the silent period as he was in the early stage of acquisition of two languages. Sadiqa, Aeshah's mother and Khadra, Rahaf's mother commented that their daughters told them about the activities and the staff in nursery every day. Aeshah and Rahaf were internalising the language and communication surrounding them, using their home languages to support their thinking as they recounted their day in nursery (Vygotsky: 1986). Conceivably, recounting their day may have helped the girls in understanding more of the social practices of the nursery.

Although some monolingual children are silenced when they first start in an early education service, it is important to note that many young emergent bilingual children pass through a silent period when they are transitioning from home to nursery where their home language is not understood (Drury: 2013 and Bligh & Drury: 2015). Aeshah was silently passive most of the time. As Aeshah continued to watch in silence, shadowing Jagdeep persistently within the

Class 2 classroom, often with her head bowed, she was unconfident or unwilling to participate without the support of an adult, but able to observe and absorb the new language and culture (Drury: 2007). Although Rahaf was often silent, she was always looking around at the activities of other children and adults, learning how to participate from her observation of others. She was actively silent, always busy and moving around the environment. Abdilaahi appeared to be bewildered in the classroom but more relaxed outside. Eating was a familiar daily activity, but the western cultural practices in Class 2 were different from his familiar home culture and he was unable to understand or be understood by the adults, who offered little support, and at times ignored him as if he was invisible (Tabors: 2008: 49), as the staff did not seem to know how to respond to him. This confusion about language and expectations dominated Abdilaahi's experience in Class 2, and his chosen strategies of silent watching and resisting did not support participation.

Rogoff et al (2003) suggest that there is a distinction between merely observing passively and 'intent participation', stating that in 'the latter case, the observer's close observation is attentive and intentional and generally motivated by wanting to participate. Abdilaahi looked intently at groups of boys as they played together. He was learning how they participated together. Abdilaahi was more confident when he was with the group of boys and copying them enabled him to move closer to participation. This progress paused when he was moved into Class 3 at the beginning of his second term, separated from Stella, his key person and the familiar people and practices of Class 2. In Class 3, Abdilaahi was unable to settle and join in, He had experienced too many changes without adequate support and did not appear to be emotionally or linguistically ready to participate in a social environment (see Chapter 4.7.iii).

#### **6.8.iv Looking for support from adults**

In Chapter 3. I discussed Rogoff's (1990) definition of intersubjectivity and noted that intersubjectivity is the shared understanding of participants within an activity. Mediation is central to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and categorised by Kozulin (2002) as both human and symbolic (see Chapter 2). Lave & Wenger (1991) suggest that engagement in activities, conversations and other forms of personal connections enable participation in social life (Chapter 2:4). This supports learning, which takes place in the participation framework, and is the process of '*being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to those communities*' (Wenger: 1998: 4). As noted above, Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were silently tuning in to the language and social practices of Class 2, looking to the practitioners for support in becoming participants. Aeshah shadowed Jagdeep, Rahaf took

risks as she initiated 'Circle Time', and Abdilaahi chose to join the group with the fire pit, but there was little evidence of apprenticeship between the adults and the children, supporting them in becoming active participants in Class 2. Lave & Wenger (1991: 29), argue that legitimate peripheral participation is the process by which 'newcomers', ie Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi, become part of that community of practice. They are inducted by the 'old timers', who grant them legitimacy (Wenger: 1998: 101). Charlie, Rosi and Stella had been 'old timers' in the Daycare Centre where they had worked together, but they were 'newcomers' in the Edward Square community of practice, as they were still confused about their role and the practices expected from them in this new institution. This context made it difficult for them to grant legitimacy to the three children.

However, Charlie, Rosi and Stella were more focused on organisation. In Chapter 5: 3.iv I argue that the focus on accountability to external agencies such as OfSTED and the local authority inspections and internal surveillance resulted in record keeping, writing assessments of the children and organisational activities taking precedence over time to interact with the children. In her research investigating professional identities in early childhood Osgood (2012: 126) identified how the challenges of changing government policies, greater scrutiny and more paperwork had increased the workload for practitioners, arguing that practitioners become technicians. My findings concur with Osgood, but I argue that the additional internal power relations in Edward Square and the lack of knowledge and understanding of the children's existing 'funds of knowledge' affected the mediating role of Charlie, Rosi and Stella with the three children. Rahaf's use of the name cards, and taking Charlie's biro, Maria coming into Class 2 to join Aeshah, Abdilaahi's meal time practices and refusing to take his coat off, were interfering with the organisation of the day and the assigned use of resources. The children were seen as disruptive through their behaviour – not speaking, inappropriate use of resources and resisting instructions. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi may have internalised the looks and comments, or sensed the tension when they did not comply with the wishes of the staff.

Each of the children indicated their need for adult support. Aeshah wanted the support of an adult within a small group and communicated this clearly through shadowing Jagdeep and playing with Aayat and Maria. Her changed behaviour and body language was noticeable when she had Aayat's support, and this enabled her to feel what it was like to participate. Rahaf seemed to have an ambivalent need for adult support. She participated with adults in 'Circle Time' and was confident in resisting Charlie. Her play with the name cards, which included her name, suggested an interest in knowing who belonged to the group, as well as her own sense

of belonging. Abdilaahi appeared to cut himself off from adults and looked towards other children, but he always said 'Helloa' to visiting adults, possibly signalling that he was looking for a way to belong.

Rogoff's (1998) concept of apprenticeships through guided participation (see Chapter 2), demonstrates how adults can help children to make connections between the familiar context of home and the new context of the nursery. Sustained shared thinking, a concept originally proposed by Sylva et al (2004) and included in the Early Years Foundation Stage (2008) as an element of good practice, highlights the importance of developing meaningful conversations with children. Many opportunities to support the children and extend their learning were missed through the staff's lack of engagement, as discussed in this chapter. The children drew upon the practitioners to mediate their learning, but this was limited by the degree to which the practitioners were confident as 'old timers' to provide support for access to the community of practice for the children.

#### **6.8.v The role of staff who were bilingual**

For the *adults* in this setting who were bilingual, the dominance of English as the language of education and the one used by the staff working with children reinforced their view that English language and culture were superior to theirs (Robertson, Drury & Cable: 2014), and therefore they felt that their opinions and ideas were of little significance to the senior managers. The comment made by Nazneem, '*the raj is in our heads*' (Field notes: 02.02.11), indicates that this view goes back generations and is historically embedded. It could be argued that the value of using the home language of children and adults had become subjugated knowledge (Foucault 2002). This resulted in English being the accepted language for learning, and practitioners who spoke diverse home languages only speaking English in Class 2 (Cable, Drury & Robertson: 2009).

Jagdeep and Rosi were bilingual adults in Class 2. Jagdeep shared Aeshah's language and Rosi understood the experience of operating within an unfamiliar language and culture. Their knowledge could have enabled them to be brokers for the children between their languages and cultures and those of the nursery, but, as discussed in Chapter 5, their lack of power within the nursery was constraining, and there were clear boundaries between the roles of staff. Jagdeep and Rosi's perception of their role as qualified early years practitioners employed in Edward Square, as distinct from the role of bilingual support staff (who were unqualified), made them appear powerless to support the children culturally. Jagdeep stated that as an 'early

years assistant' her role was to help the children learn, and the role of the bilingual support workers was to help interpret for children and especially for their parents (Field notes: 21.01.11). Rosi acknowledged that it was difficult to be a non-English speaker in the nursery, and her concern was to help the children settle and be happy (Field notes: 13.10.10).

Aayat was a significant person for Aeshah and she was able to help Aeshah and Maria make sense of water play and help them to participate in the new culture of the nursery environment. There was a notable change in Aeshah's behaviour when sensitive adults supported her, shown in her positive body language and joining in compared with her more usual position in Class 2 of keeping her head down and remaining silent. Aayat enhanced Aeshah's learning through the zone of proximal development as she helped her to learn new skills and engage with others. But despite her extensive knowledge about Pakistani culture and languages, as a bilingual support worker, Aayat was also powerless, as the unspoken discourse predicated that English was the 'lingua franca' in Edward Square. Foucault (1980) maintained that language is powerful and can be used to transmit hidden messages, and can be disempowering. In addition, Aayat was employed in Class 3, and her knowledge about Aeshah's learning was not included in the reports in Class 2.

#### **6.8.vi Mediation through cultural tools**

Using cultural tools extends the thinking process and supports future learning (Vygotsky: 1986). Cultural tools, particularly language, are powerful mediational means that children use to support their thinking and learning, and the way that the children appropriated these demonstrated the degree to which they were becoming participants. Cultural tools are tools that are shaped by the particular social and cultural environments; for example, Aeshah only had access to her home language when she played outside or on the occasion when Jagdeep changed her nappy. An interest in written language enabled Rahaf to transform her social relations and practices as she learned the names of other members of the group and used her interest and knowledge of storybooks to join in with others. This supported her developing identities as an initiator and communicator, and her acquisition of new skills. Rahaf and Aeshah used their memory, one of the higher mental processes, as strategies for taking a lead in activities and joining in with others. Abdilaahi's experience was qualitatively different. He appeared to be confused when people spoke to him. Without the support of an adult, he was an isolated observer rather than a participant.



### **6.8.vii Transformation of identity**

Participation is transformational, as technical skills are developed within the matrix of social situations and learning is embodied in practice (Lave: 2011). However, participation and learning are not just the acquisition of skills and information; they change who we are, and our developing identities (Wenger: 1998). Lave & Wenger (1991: 33) argue that legitimate peripheral participation provides the “*transformative possibilities of being and becoming complex, full cultural-historical participants...*”. Rahaf, Aeshah and Abdilaahi’s identities were being transformed in a continual process of construction through the everyday practices and relationships in Class 2. Being emergent bilinguals contributed to the multiple aspects of their sense of self (Kenner & Ruby: 2012). But the lack of opportunity to use their home languages in the nursery limited the development of their multiple identities (Creese et al: 2006).

A sociocultural perspective of identity reflects a complex relationship between the social and the personal, viewing the individual as a ‘*person in the world, member of a sociocultural community*’ (Lave & Wenger: 1991: 52). But what messages were they receiving about their home communities, cultures and languages? Without overt recognition of these, Class 2 was disregarding the children’s existing cultural identities, and their negotiation of a new identity as a participant in this new community. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi had important knowledge about their languages and cultures, and shared information from their families about their distinctive cultures could have enriched the lives of all the members of Class 2 (Moll et al: 1992). In reality, the practices in Class 2 reproduced the ‘*coercive relations of power operating in wider society*’ instead of enabling transformational inclusive practice (Cummins: 2001: 136), empowering all the children, not just Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi.

### **6.9 Findings and Conclusions**

The question I set out to answer in this chapter was ‘How do the children negotiate their participation?’ I analysed a range of observations of the children presented as vignettes, using the theoretical lens of legitimate peripheral participation within a community of practice. I concluded that although they were often bewildered, the two-year-old emergent bilingual children, Rahaf, Aeshah and Abdilaahi, were proactive in adopting specific strategies to support themselves in their drive to be social in the process of participation in Class 2. This enabled them to learn about the cultural and linguistic practices of this new community. Yet this was not recognised by their key people. Drury’s research (2007) with bilingual children aged four years indicated how they were able to take control of their learning, but that this was often unnoticed by their teachers. My study builds on Drury’s research in demonstrating that

even younger children aged two can be active agents in making sense of their new environment and finding ways to participate with the group, dependent on their prior experiences. My data demonstrates how each of the children developed their own distinctive strategies for observing and participating. However, the findings of this inner layer of analysis suggests that emergent bilingualism, linguistic development and children's diverse cultural backgrounds were disregarded due mainly to the dominance of English as the only language of education and practice in the nursery. Despite their agency in seeking support to be part of the group, the children lacked the support of mediators who could empower them to experience the transformation of ways of being and thinking through increasing participation.

### **6.9.1 Class 2 operating in the community of practice**

Legitimate peripheral participation is dependent on being located in a community of practice. My hypothesis was that Class 2 could be defined as part of a community of practice through its daily routine, assessment methods and shared practice, providing a shared *'living context that can give newcomers access to competence and personal experience of engagement'* (Wenger 1998: 214). Wenger's three characteristics of a community of practice can be further expressed through the following statements:

- i. MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT: Through mutual engagement, participation can be interconnected
- ii. JOINT ENTERPRISE: This can create relations of mutual accountability
- iii. SHARED REPERTOIRE: This can provide resources for negotiating meaning

However, the confusion, disempowerment and contradictions experienced by Charlie, Rosi and Stella, may have resulted in limited understanding about learning as participation as defined by Lave & Wenger, and in particular, its relationship to cultural and linguistic experience, as discussed in Chapter 5, resulted in a *'fragmented'* community (Hodkinson & Hodkinson: 2004), as illustrated in this chapter. Class 2 was a *'fragmented'* community within the community of practice of Edward Square.

#### **6.9.1.i Mutual engagement**

According to Wenger (1998), mutual engagement includes building relationships and doing things together in which the meanings of actions are negotiated with each other. Although all the staff followed the daily routine, taking turns on a rota to share out the activities fairly, there was little mutual engagement in which information could be shared, little understanding of social complexity, and the existing power relationships within Edward Square created tension, mistrust and uncertainty. For example, in Class 2, each key person carried out observations

on their key children, and did not include comments from other practitioners. As a result, important information such as Aeshah's communication skills in Urdu, Rahaf's interest in stories, and Abdilaahi's isolation were not shared or recorded. Had it been shared; this information could have been used to support the children more effectively. As I noted in Chapter 5, home visits were brief with little shared information about the children's cultural experiences or language skills in their home languages.

Mutual engagement involves acknowledging the competence of all participants. In Class 2, the limited view of the roles of the bilingual staff silenced their cultural knowledge and limited their support for the children – they were unable to act as brokers between the two cultures for the children. For example, Abdilaahi's cousin, Yolande, who worked in Class 3 only shared information with me when I asked her questions, but that information had not been shared between the classes with his keyperson, Stella, in Class 2. In addition, due to the ethos of each class operating discretely, and the bilingual support workers feeling under-valued within the centre, Aeshah's social and linguistic skills, although recognised by Aayat, were not acknowledged in Class 2. The importance of taking account of the diverse cultural experiences of the children and families was noted in policies and information for parents, but not evident in practice in my data.

#### **6.9.1.ii Joint enterprise**

Wenger (1998) argues that joint enterprise is the result of the process of negotiation that takes place in mutual engagement and the ownership by the participants of the outcomes of their negotiations. This results in their mutual accountability, which becomes a fundamental aspect of their practice. The focus of accountability was external to the community of Class 2, with a focus on OfSTED and Local Authority inspections and appraisals with senior managers. This appeared to leave no space for relations of mutual accountability between the staff team. Charlie, Rosi and Stella felt they were being judged externally. Their record keeping and assessments of the children were maintained for external scrutiny, and as noted in Chapter 5, they were concerned about being under surveillance. Although the team met most weeks for a staff meeting, this was concerned with the practical care issues and rotas. Although monitoring Learning Diaries was on the agenda on two occasions, concerns about who would change nappies predominated the first week, and planning for the Christmas party took precedence in the other week. This concurred with my findings in Chapter 5 that the joint enterprise was around organisational factors rather than pedagogical ones.

### **6.9.1.iii Shared repertoire**

The notion of a shared repertoire in which there was effective communication, and an interpretation of how the children's non-verbal and verbal communication could be understood, did not exist. Effective communication existed between the staff team and other English speakers. The lack of an effective community of practice in Class 2 affected the children's attempts to become participants. The community they were joining was insecure without adults to mediate, encourage meaningful interactions and support children's participation and their sense of belonging. Lave & Wenger (1991: 36) acknowledge that as social structures, communities of practice involve power relations, and that the way power is applied can cause legitimate peripheral participation to be an empowering or disempowering experience. Charlie, Rosi and Stella, as 'newcomers' in the Edward Square community of practice, learning for themselves as participants, may have felt threatened as they were expected to support 'newcomers' (Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi) who were experiencing a new language and culture for the first time. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were 'old timers' through past experience yet 'newcomers' now. This added to the tension within the community – *“granting legitimate peripheral participation to newcomers with all their own viewpoints introduces into any community of practice all the tensions of continuity – displacement contradiction”* (Lave & Wenger: 1991: 116). I have argued that hierarchical power relations and conflicting expectations within Edward Square created tension and poor communication, rather than a shared repertoire.

So, although I contend that Class 2 shared some of the features of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, this was a fragmented community as Charlie, Rosi and Stella were *relative newcomers*, more concerned with maintaining organisational matters within an English cultural context. Their lack of knowledge and understanding of language and culture, combined with their uncertainty about the expectations of themselves as professionals in the newly formed Edward Square, meant that they were unable to give newcomers, such as Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi access *‘to competence and personal experience of engagement’*. It was difficult for them to legitimise the children's actions and intentions.

### **6.9.2 Status of the staff**

When the institution of Edward Square was formed, the aims, policies and documented practices were created for the whole centre. All the staff were employed and contracted to follow the same policies and the curriculum stipulated by the senior managers. As I have argued earlier in this chapter (6.2), Edward Square was in the process of evolving as a community of

practice, - one in which there was a shared domain of interest, a community where the members engage in joint activities, building relationships that are mutual and respectful, and where members share practice through their shared repertoire. My findings in Chapter 5 provide the evidence that Charlie, Rosi and Stella did not participate fully in the Edward Square community of practice because they were still trying to understand the new curriculum, new methods for assessment and new expectations for their role as early years assistants.

I have argued that Charlie, Rosi and Stella were confused and conflicted with regard to their professional status and roles. Undoubtedly, they were 'old timers' as early years workers – qualified, experienced and had worked for many years in the previous Daycare Centre. However, I maintain that within the new context of Edward Square, Charlie, Rosi and Stella were '*relative newcomers*', and were on the periphery of the community of practice – legitimate but peripheral, trying to make sense of the organisation for themselves.

I identified in Chapter 5 that Charlie, Rosi and Stella were confused about the external legislative and curriculum framework that was being embedded in the policies and practices of Edward Square. This inevitably affected their position within the community of practice of Edward Square, left them unprepared to focus on interacting with the children and supporting their efforts to belong. This was evidenced by a lack of engaging in 'apprenticeship' with the children (Rogoff: 1998, Rogoff et al: 2003), their concern for maintaining organisation within a culture of performativity (Ball: 2003, Osgood: 2008), and the silencing of the children's home languages, cultures, skills and interests. 'Old timers' are central members, supporting 'newcomers' in the context of situated learning to become enculturated into the community of practice. I have given evidence of the practitioners 'managing' the children's activities rather than supporting their learning as participants in the cultural and social practices of Class 2.

### **6.9.3 Positioning of the children**

The concept of legitimate peripheral participation may provide a context for a young emergent bilingual learner, in which the child can settle into the new environment, try out the new relationships and practices and make mistakes, from a safe position (Lave & Wenger: 1991). Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi used a range of strategies to negotiate and make some sense of the nursery environment. They were demonstrating their agency based on their developing skills, interests, personal histories and prior experiences. Wenger (1998: 4) defines participation as "*a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities*". In her

research, Bligh (2012) argues that through increasing participation in the social practices of the community of practice, and through actively and intentionally copying the practice of other members, the emergent bilingual learners are legitimate peripheral participants, however incidental the modelling of practices may be. However, while I have contended that Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were actively and intentionally seeking to make sense of their new community of practice through silent watching, copying others and seeking the support of an adult, my findings suggest that at times they appeared to be on the borders of peripherality. Aeshah and Rahaf had to work hard, with little support to participate on the periphery of the community of practice. Aeshah and Rahaf moved in and out of participation depending on the context, between the 'look-out post' (Bligh: 2012), and 'partaking' and 'taking part' discussed earlier. Abdilaahi's intentions recorded in the vignettes were not legitimated. He remained at the 'look-out post' bewildered and confused and on the margins of participation.

I have used the term '*relative newcomer*' to signify the position of Charlie, Rosi and Stella, as they were preoccupied with familiarising themselves with the new community of Edward Square and not encouraging the children to become full members of the community through drawing on their own 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al: 1992) – their language, culture, experiences and identity. These children were only two years old when they started in Class 2, had never been separated from their families and did not speak or understand English. Their starting point was different from the children who were already familiar with English language and culture. Bligh (2012: 29) suggests that although young emergent bilingual children cannot speak the dominant discourse of English in the early years community of practice, they have access through '*non-pressurised participation*'. But from the evidence in my research, I contend that the combination of continuous external and internal change (Chapter 5) and a limited knowledge and understanding of cultural and linguistic experience, meant that Charlie, Rosi and Stella did not enable '*non-pressurised participation*'. I have argued that the practitioners did not acknowledge the children's attempts to participate, therefore failing to legitimise their actions and forms of communication, which was exacerbated by Charlie and Stella's lack of knowledge about the role of language and cultural experience in becoming members of the community, although at times, Rosi appeared to acknowledge the children's efforts to participate. She may have understood about the role of language and cultural experience, but did not feel she had the power or confidence to express it.

The children's unique identities highlighted in this chapter were unnoticed by Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and led to their isolation. 'Newcomers' may pose a threat to 'old timers', but when the

expected 'old timers' are *themselves* 'newcomers' and on the periphery, the tension becomes more complex when the staff do not understand how to help the children feel that they belong. The children's attempts to participate appeared to be ignored by the practitioners who didn't seem to know how to respond to their needs, or were so preoccupied with organisational matters that they failed to notice the children's intentions.

### **6.10 In conclusion**

In this chapter I have argued that Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi started in Class 2 from a different starting point from other children who were already familiar with the English language which could support their introduction to the nursery culture. As children aged two years, they were developing their home language, and like many other very young children, were experiencing separation from their primary carers and families for the first time. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi had no prior experience of being totally immersed in an English language setting. Unsurprisingly, they all looked to adults for support in their transition from home to nursery as they endeavoured to negotiate their participation, because relationships are at the heart of social learning (Rogoff: 2000; 2003; Rogoff et al: 2003). Through analysis of the vignettes, I have highlighted the strategies that the children developed in their attempts to understand the social practices of Class 2, to engage with adults, and to explore the environment. I have noted that although the children were unique, they shared much in common.

In this chapter I have demonstrated from my data, the limited interactions between the children and Charlie, Rosi and Stella. In her research on the context of interactions between adults and children, Degotardi (2010) concluded that interactions between adults and infants within the context of play were more sensitive and stimulating than interactions within routine activities. As illustrated by the vignettes used in my research, at times the interaction was decontextualized and random. Aeshah's experience with Aayat during an activity of playing with water was totally different, as Aeshah learned about how water was used for play in the nursery, but regarded as a vital resource at home.

I have considered the cumulative effect of continuous change, both external (at government level) and internal (at the institutional level) on Charlie, Rosi and Stella's professional practice and perceived roles with the children. I have argued that Charlie, Rosi and Stella were '*relative newcomers*' in the community of practice of Edward Square and have provided my rationale for that decision. As '*relative newcomers*' they were unable to acknowledge the contribution that the children, as '*newcomers*', had to share from their existing 'funds of knowledge' of

cultural diversity. But my data also provides strong evidence that the children were actively agentive and resourceful. They made clear choices and attempted to make sense of the nursery environment in different ways, including Aeshah's choice to seek a safe place within her own Pakistani community, Rahaf's use of mediating artefacts, and Abdilaahi's choices of different spaces. As their year in Class 2 progressed, Rahaf and Abdilaahi became increasingly isolated and Aeshah spent more time with Aayat and Maria.

The findings from Chapters 5 & 6 raise many important issues for early years institutions and early years practitioners working with emergent bilingual children aged 2 years in the superdiverse context of England. These issues are discussed in the next chapter.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusions

#### 7.1 Summary of thesis

Although this research has focused on three emergent bilingual children aged two years in an English nursery, my findings also highlight many concerns for practitioners working with these children. This concluding chapter outlines my findings and their significance; states my contribution to research, to policy development and pedagogy; and is where I make my recommendations.

Informed by theoretical perspectives in the previous empirical chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, I explored the interactions between the three emergent bilingual two-year-old children and their key people as they negotiated their participation in the community of practice in Edward Square Children's Centre, making sense of the new culture and language. This involved investigating the impact of change on the practice of three practitioners, and how it affected their engagement with the children. I have endeavoured to respond to my research question, '*How do two-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting?*' by investigating three supporting questions:

- iv. '*How do practitioners understand their role in their work with emergent bilingual children?*'
- v. '*How does the nursery environment support the children?*'
- vi. '*How do individual children negotiate their participation?*'

Applying sociocultural frameworks about learning as participation, when analysing how the children became enculturated, I used Wenger's characteristics of 'Communities of Practice' as the theoretical framework and Lave & Wenger's concept of legitimate peripheral participation as an apposite tool to examine the children's participation. I began by analysing the outer layers around the children in Class 2 (Chapter 5). Due to changes in government, new legislation and policies and an increasing marketisation of education nationally, I argued that this time of immense change in early years education had affected the professionalism and practice of the three practitioners in my research. This was intensified by the creation of a new Children's Centre by the amalgamation of two existing early years institutions, which was part of the national plan for early years. The style of management of this merger, in which the SMT from the former nursery school became the SMT for the Children's Centre, appeared to be more autocratic than democratic in their approach to managing newly formed centre. This

approach which alienated and excluded some members of staff became clear during my research process.

Through qualitative interviews, written records of conversations, direct observation in Class 2 and the outdoor area, and reading the centre policies and information for parents/carers, I carried out an ethnographic study, immersing myself in the daily activities in the nursery for one day a week over a period of eighteen months. Using the lens of Foucauldian thought (Chapter 3), I analysed the relationships of power and resistance, disciplinary power and linguistic and cultural diversity, focusing on the themes of power relations, language and power, and the dissonance between the discourses of education and care.

## **7.2 Synthesis of key findings**

My empirical research started with scrutinising the children's experience, and this led me to explore the experience of the staff., which is recorded as the findings in Chapter 5 in response to the questions '*How do practitioners understand their role in their work with 2-year-old emergent bilingual children?*' and '*How does the nursery environment support the children?*' As discussed in Chapters 2: 4 and 6.9, I have examined how the recognised practices of early childhood education and care correspond to the requisite characteristics of a community of practice, based on Wenger's hypothesis (2000: 72-85). Taking the theoretical framework of communities of practice (Wenger: 1998), and the lens of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger: 1991), I analysed vignettes of each of the children, with particular reference to their interactions with practitioners and peers, to examine how the children were becoming enculturated into the nursery through their participation. I explored the impact of the dominance of English language and culture and the role of the bilingual staff in mediating children's experiences between home and school.

The children's agency and the attention from adults who were able to recognise and support their intentions, enabled the children to feel what it was like to belong, and begin the process of enculturation. This was my main over-arching finding in response to my research question. I have argued that the three children, in characteristically different ways, based on their prior experiences, expressed their agency. Aeshah and Rahaf actively sought communication with adults, whereas Abdilaahi did not seem to, although he did try to respond to their communication with him. They all pursued communication with other children in their attempts to integrate themselves into the nursery.

### 7.2.i. Agency of children

Rahaf, Aeshah and Abdilaahi demonstrated their agency through the choices they made about the activities they carried out, the adults and peers they preferred to be close to, and the specific cultural tools and resources that they chose to support their attempts to make meaning of the sociocultural environment in Class 2. As I noted in Chapter 3, children are not passive bodies, but are competent and active agents. This notion of having agency means seeing children as being capable of making decisions and reflecting upon things that concern them. Young children are also capable of recognising that their actions have consequences. Although I stated in Chapter 3 that children's agency is limited by the parameters of their status in relation to adults, each of the three children in this study demonstrated that they were active agents despite the power relations and the limited attention they received from adults. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were just two years old when they started in Class 2. As very young children, separated from their families for the first time, unfamiliar with the English language and culture of the nursery, they were proactively engaged in adopting strategies for participation and belonging. The following examples (discussed in length in Chapter 6) illustrate the children's active agency.

When Aeshah shadowed Jagdeep inside Class 2 (6.5.1) and played with Maria and Aayat outside (6.5.4), she used her observational skills, her knowledge of who could communicate with her in her own language, and how to gain their attention, even though this meant that she only spoke Urdu with them in subversive locations and not in the dominant English-speaking spaces. Her silent watching and positioning demonstrated her agentic activity.

The staff described Rahaf as '*being in your face*' because she wanted to join in all aspects of the daily routine. Her strategies of close observation and resistance facilitated her agency in joining activities, with or without the welcome of adults, and enabled her to be involved in the group, even if on the periphery. Her activity with the name cards and their association with the photographs on the Family Board (6.6.1), and waiting intentionally for Charlie to arrive so that she could feed the birds (6.6.4) exemplified that like Aeshah, her chosen strategies supported her learning within this new community.

Abdilaahi appeared to be confused and bewildered, and was often isolated. However, his agency was visible. For example, in the lunchtime vignette, (6.7.4) he actively responded to Charlie, offering his name card as she clearly wanted him to pass something to her. Choosing to hold cars and ride scooters gave him access to the group of boys (6.7.5). Abdilaahi was

working hard, using his own initiative to learn in this new group of people, in an environment that was so different from his previous experiences. Unfortunately, the adults did not appear to be aware of what he was communicating through his actions.

Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi had different characteristics, and came from diverse family cultures and previous lived experiences. But they shared a similar starting place in the nursery as emergent bilingual children from minority ethnic communities, which was different from children whose families spoke English so were familiar with the English language which would have supported their introduction into the culture of the nursery. Individually, Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were proactive in assuming particular strategies to support themselves in their determination to learn through the social process of participation in Class 2. Yet this was not recognised by their key people, who were more focused on adjusting to the changes in their professional roles.

#### **7.2.ii Confusion about their professional role**

The sustained external and internal changes over a period of twenty years led to confusion about pedagogy and practice in Edward Square. There was little opportunity for collaborative reflection and professional development that may have enabled staff to understand the underpinning philosophies and pedagogical principles governing the changes that had been part of the former Nursery School and therefore familiar to all the senior managers and most of the staff in Classes 3 & 4, but new and unfamiliar to the staff in Class 2. This had a profound impact on how the practitioners understood their role in supporting young emergent bilingual children in becoming enculturated into the nursery environment.

The continuous changes were disempowering for the early years practitioners. The changes caused confusion about their professional role in their work with children aged 2 years and led to strained hierarchical power relations within the early years institution. The new curriculum, EYFS (2008) was delivered as a 'regime of truth', and produced relations of domination and subjugation, which had the effect of uncertainty and disempowerment for Charlie, Rosi and Stella.

This lack of knowledge and understanding about, or even less, agreement with the changes that had taken place and were on-going (changes both external to the institution at governmental level, and internal within the institution), created a division between the staff from the former Nursery School, working with children aged 3-4 years and the staff working with

children under 3 years. It became clear that there was a disparity between the pedagogy and expectations of the role of a nursery nurse held by Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and the role expected of them in the newly formed Edward Square. The knowledge and practice that they had gained in their initial training, and their roles in the former Daycare Centre, were very different from the new roles that were expected in Edward Square (see Chapter 5). Change had been imposed upon the workforce without Charlie, Rosi and Stella having had the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and understanding of critical issues that impacted their practice, as discussed in Chapter 6. There were new forms of assessment, a new mandatory curriculum for children from birth to the end of Reception Year and a change in status for practitioners from the Daycare Centre who held NNEB qualifications.

The tension created between Charlie, Rosi and Stella's perception of their role and the new curriculum was exacerbated by the lack of a clear articulation of the difference between a focus on *care* and a focus on *education*, and that of becoming a key *person* rather than a key *worker*, as discussed in Chapter 5. Although this situation highlighted the need for the emotionally sensitive role of a key person, the underlying ethos of the nursery practitioner was to remain professional and to contain any work-related emotions. There was no avenue for them to express the impact of their concerns arising from their work with the children and their families, or to engage in critical reflection with others. This was further exacerbated by the different views of childhood detailed in government documentation. For example, the Early Years Foundation Stage (2008) was seen as preparation for school, and contradictory government reports that identified children as either needy or competent (see Chapter 1). Another element in the confusion was the interchange of focus between education and care. These views were reflected within Edward Square through their documented aims and values, policies and information for parents, and the views held by individual staff members.

The integration of education and care of young children as an holistic approach was introduced by the MacMillan sisters (critiqued in Chapter 3). Jarvis (2014: 8) states with reference to MacMillan: *'Her philosophy of 'educare' in the early years is still alive today in England, enshrined in the national guidance document for early years education and care, the Early Years Foundation Stage'*, yet current training courses for early years practitioners focus on education, and the practitioners in my research viewed education and care as distinct aspects of work with young children.

### **7.2.iii Focus on organisational matters**

Most of my findings were inter-related, because many of the tensions within Edward Square and experienced in Class 2 were due to poor communication. There were repeated discrepancies between the views articulated by the aims, values and expectations as set out in the policies of Edward Square, written by the senior managers, and the actual practice with children in Class 2. I have argued how the differences between the articulated 'truths' of the EYFS (2008), the policies produced by the Children's Centre, and the practices of the former Daycare Centre, revealed different ideologies, and created tension and confusion for Charlie, Rosi and Stella rather than synergy, and this impacted on the children. The language of education needs to be understood by all practitioners (DfE: 2011). The confusion experienced by Charlie, Rosi and Stella, and the increasing demand for paperwork, resulted in an overemphasis on organisation, completing documentation about the children, and the required record keeping. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were faced with the external requirement of a new curriculum and a new method for assessment of their key children, and new job roles for them as key people. In addition, there were internal changes, with new managers and a new staff structure. But there had been little opportunity for training and professional development, and little time to adjust to the internal changes. The resulting confusion led the three staff members to focus on practical matters of organisation and caring for the physical needs of the children, matters that were explicit and defined.

### **7.2.iv Impact on the children**

As I argued in Chapters 5 & 6, there was less of a focus on language development and interactions with the children, who were new to the culture and dominant language of the nursery, because organisational matters were seen as a priority. The concept of super-diversity (Chapter 1) acknowledges the necessity of considering the multi-dimensional conditions and processes affecting immigrants in contemporary society. Noted in Chapter 4.4, and critiqued in Chapter 2, Edward Square was located in an area of superdiversity, with many of the children and their families living as first generation immigrants from diverse global locations. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi's families were relatively new to England, although Aeshah's father had moved to the UK as a child. All three children were in the process of acquiring their home languages and had little experience of English language and culture. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi were communicating clearly in different ways through their agentic actions, but they were not heard. I maintain that the children's agency to make sense of their time in Class 2 was not acknowledged by staff.

When analysing the children's learning, the data in my field notes demonstrated the contrast between the children's positive experiences of learning when interacting with adults who understood their intentions, and also their resistance and isolation when they were not understood. This highlighted my conviction that the children would have benefitted from the support of a knowledgeable adult who understood their transition from their home languages and cultures into the English-speaking nursery environment. This view concurs with the findings of other researchers who studied children in nursery aged 3-5 years, discussed in Chapter 2.

Although the Children's Centre interacted with the local community through its involvement in the annual carnival and offering support groups for parents, within Class 2 there was little focus on the actual current cultural issues in the local community and limited information about the individual children's home cultures and languages. This led to assumptions being made about children's behaviour, for example, when Abdilaahi ate his lunch using his fingers rather than a knife and fork. The key person system provided opportunities for home visits and developing partnerships with the children's families, but my findings demonstrated that, in reality, this system did nothing to support these children. Aeshah and Rahaf chose approaches to engage with others who supported them, although Abdilaahi did not appear to do so. But without mediators, they could only remain on the periphery of the group, despite their own attempts to progress along the continuum of participation. For example, Aeshah was confused by Charlie's questions; Rahaf's interest in the name cards and family photographs was not acknowledged, and Abdilaahi's absence went unnoticed when he played outside with the leaves. I have concluded that the three children were often isolated in Class 2, without the support of adults to mediate for them between Class 2 and their homes, their home languages and their home cultures. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi all failed to receive sufficient support in the areas of language and communication, and lacked emotional, social and cultural support within Class 2.

### **7.3 Contributions to the field of early years education**

My contribution to the field of early years education relates to management policy as well as pedagogy. This study has important recommendations for strategies and structures to ensure that children are not put in the situation identified through my research and do get the support they need.

Firstly, I identify my contributions to early years in terms of my study of emergent bilingual children aged two years; an under-researched cohort of children. As I have argued, two years old is a significant period in a child's life, when they are developing their language skills and becoming increasingly aware of the world around them. For many children, this is an age when they are separating from their families as they begin in part-time or full-time early years provision. My significant contribution to early years is my identification of the children's individual strategies as active agents, who were determined to find ways of becoming social participants in an unfamiliar environment without much support from knowledgeable adults who understood their 'funds of knowledge' from their homes and previous experiences.

My contribution to theory relates to the practitioners in my research. I used the theoretical framework of communities of practice and the lens of legitimate peripheral participation to support my analysis of how Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi, as newcomers to the community, made their transition from their homes to nursery and endeavoured to participate in the new learning context. This included analysing how Charlie, Rosi and Stella's practice impacted on the children's attempts to become enculturated into the nursery. As I have noted in Chapters 2 & 5, Charlie, Rosi and Stella had achieved the NNEB qualifications and had worked for several years, gaining experience in their work with young children. In their previous employment in the Daycare Centre, they were 'old timers', but in this new Children's Centre, the policies, practices and expectations were new and unfamiliar. As a result, I identified Charlie, Rosi and Stella as '*relative newcomers*' in Chapter 6, introducing an additional phase in the continuum from 'newcomer' to 'old timer' in Lave & Wenger's concept of communities of practice, environments that can provide a strong, supportive environment in which children are able to learn through increasing participation.

#### **7.4 Policy development and appropriate pedagogy**

This section highlights the importance of policy development and an appropriate pedagogy for working with children aged two years.

##### **7.4.i Creating a pedagogy for working with emergent bilingual children aged two years**

I defined the term pedagogy as the thinking and practice about how teaching and learning happens within the early years context. This includes how practitioners might integrate care and education holistically to facilitate learning through participation within the community of practice. Pedagogy covers the planning and use of the physical environment and how it supports and encourages learners to explore and experiment as well as including other aspects such as staff ratios, qualifications and resources.



In my research, Charlie and Stella commented that they preferred to work with older children because the children were able to communicate and be more independent. Working with children aged two years is significantly different from working with older children. However, there has been little research into children's participation within this age group.

As noted in Chapter 3, various studies (Roberts: 2011; National College: 2013; O'Sullivan & Chambers: 2014; and Georgeson et al: 2014) have commented on the complexities of working with children aged two years, highlighting their specific needs. At this age, very young children need support in separating from their parents and carers as they transition into nursery, highlighting the importance of establishing attachments with their key people. Two year old children are learning to speak English, but children from bilingual homes are still acquiring their home languages, and practitioners need sensitivity in listening to the children through *all* their forms of communication. Aeshah was able to communicate in Urdu, speaking to Aayat, Maria and her cousins, but needed other adults to understand what she was communicating through her body language. Rahaf communicated in Somali with her mother, and made some attempts to communicate in English in the nursery, for example, when she was interested in feeding the birds (6.6.4). Roberts (2011) coined the term 'companionable learning' to express the notion that learning for the very young child emanates from active engagement with the sociocultural world, emphasising the reciprocal learning involving the adult and the child within a framework of well-being. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi attempted to get support from adults and worked hard to participate, but did not experience companionable learning. Companionable learning includes developing relationships with their key person (Elfer, Goldschmied, & Selleck 2003), developing apprenticeship through guided participation (Rogoff: 1990) and a sense of belonging in the nursery environment. It could be that one reason why the concept of apprenticeship is less common in English nurseries is due to the perceived importance of becoming independent in very early childhood (Roberts: 2011) and therefore less emphasis on interdependence. This concept of companionable learning creates the space for interdependence for young children through the synergy of positive attachments with carers and children's agency in making independent choices. My research noted that the focus of the staff was on organisational matters, and perhaps they felt that they were encouraging independence, but my findings showed that the children were often isolated and confused. Based on the findings documented in this thesis, I would argue that supporting children in developing interdependence in their relationships is essential for their holistic development and learning through participation. Providing guided participation while young children become

independent relies on a skilful sensitivity in maintaining a balance between offering two-year-olds support and supporting their journey towards both interdependence and independence. This was clearly evident in the way that Aayat provided guided participation for Aeshah as she learned to play with water outside. Strong supportive relationships and effective partnerships with parents are essential elements of successful pedagogy when working with children aged two years. I would maintain that this stage should be regarded as a time that is important in its own right, and not just as a preparation for school, nor for a nursery to enable parents to return to work, nor to produce future economic citizens, as assumed in some government policy documents (see Chapter 1).

There are additional challenges for practitioners working with children in this age group who start attending an English-speaking nursery or childcare centre and come from homes with diverse languages and cultures. I maintain that children's 'funds of knowledge' need to be acknowledged and supported in the nursery (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti: 2005; Drury: 2007). Practitioners need to be well informed about the children's 'funds of knowledge' from their home culture, know key words in the children's home languages and have a reciprocal and respectful relationship with the children's parents. Home visits need to be developed to ensure that practitioners become familiar with children's home cultures and experiences, which will equip them to support the children and make significant individual connections for children between home and nursery. However, it is important to protect the confidentiality of the individual families, and information gained and recorded during the home visit needs to be kept securely. At the beginning of the visit, families must be informed with whom their information will be shared and how it will be stored. Where families are living in shared accommodation, the privacy of each family must be respected, and if necessary, the 'home visit' could take place in a quiet room in the early years setting. The home visit is an opportunity to develop a relationship of trust between the setting and the family.

Practitioners should have regular continuing professional development (CPD) concerning acquisition of language and be well informed about providing appropriate support for children who are becoming bilingual. Effective pedagogy is about co-construction of learning between adults and children in which the children's needs are to be regarded as paramount. To provide this, bilingual practitioners and bilingual support staff are critically important members of the staff team, able to use their knowledge and understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity to support other practitioners and all the children, especially emergent bilingual children, discussed in Chapter 2. If Charlie, Rosi and Stella had access to the practice and knowledge

I have suggested, the experience for all the children they worked with, including Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi could have been so different.

#### **7.4.ii Implications for training**

Teachers and practitioners who are knowledgeable about children's home languages and cultures are more able to strengthen the relationship between the child's first and subsequent languages and build their common underlying proficiency, as Cummins observed (2000). Employing bilingual support staff to work with young children provides possibilities for a stronger partnership with families, a greater understanding of the complexities of living between diverse cultures, better language support and an acknowledgement of an equal importance for other languages within the nursery (Robertson, Drury & Cable: 2014; Drury 2007).

By 2017, a report by the Sutton Trust (Stewart & Waldfogel: 2017) highlighted the effect of reducing financial support for graduate training, the withdrawal of funding for local authorities to provide CPD, and a lack of response by the government to the changes to initial training courses recommended by Nutbrown (2012), who commented that *'the current early years qualifications system is not systematically equipping practitioners with the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to give babies and young children high quality experiences'* (Nutbrown: 2012: 5). My research highlights the need for practitioners to be equipped with relevant theoretical knowledge about and an understanding of the pedagogical principles and practice for working with very young emergent bilingual children.

In response to my research, I maintain that measures to support practitioners working within our superdiverse society could be assimilated into CPD courses for practitioners, and particularly into initial training programmes. These should include language acquisition, taking account of children's languages, and the importance of supporting young children's early language development based on current research. Concepts such as communities of practice (Wenger: 1998) and legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger: 1991), and guided participation (Rogoff: 2000) could enable teachers and practitioners to understand how young children can become enculturated into the new language and culture of an English nursery and become participants. Specific training for staff working with children under three years and their families would support practitioners to understand the particular needs of very young children at this important stage in their lives. This would be beneficial for providing practitioners with knowledge and skills for working with all children, but even more important when working

with emergent bilingual children under three years of age. One important skill would be understanding how to make observations that will help practitioners guide children's learning.

CPD needs to be more affordable (PACEY: 2017) and the *quality* of education and care needs to be more important than the *quantity* (Stewart & Waldfogel: 2017). In addition, the 2018 Sutton Trust report documents the increasing closure of Children's Centres and the change of focus from the original idea of a national 'open offer' for all families with young children, to intervention for referred families (Smith et al: 2018).

#### **7.4.iii Practice into policy**

Although recent research has provided evidence to show that higher qualified practitioners improved the outcomes for the youngest children (Meade et al: 2012, Mathers et al: 2014), despite the introduction of the Early Years Practitioner Status to raise the qualification standards of work with children under three years, staff qualifications for this age group remain low (Goouch & Powell: 2013). My research supported these findings.

I have noted the intense attention to policy and reforms that have taken place in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC); for example, the Children's Workforce Strategy, (DfES: 2005) which focused on the skills, training and qualification needs within the sector, stating that these reforms would give children the best start in life. But despite this responsible role, the pay and conditions and professional career structure for practitioners remains unchanged. My research demonstrates that practitioners working with young children need to be educated in early childhood education and care theory as well as practice, as advocated by Margaret McMillan (Liebovich: 2014), and I concur with Osgood (2012) that initial vocational-based courses produce competent technicians but may fail to provide practitioners with an understanding of theoretical underpinning knowledge. I also suggest that every nursery group for children under 3 years should employ an NQT qualified early years teacher, suggested by Sylva et al (2004), and that regular attendance at CPD programmes is a condition for continuing to work with young children. However, I recognise that this would have financial implications. The practitioners in my study had completed course-based training based on the principles of care and were expected to update their knowledge through cascaded information. Nutbrown (2012) made 19 recommendations to the government of the day. Many of these recommendations have not been adopted. A recent report evaluation of Sure Start (Cattan et al: 2019) noted above, indicates the positive impact of Sure Start centres and expresses concern at the continuing closure of Children's Centres despite the findings of Government

funded research carried out by Sylva and her team (2004). The findings of their longitudinal study, which followed the children from nursery to secondary school, state that attendance at a high-quality nursery has a long-term positive impact on children's cognitive, social and emotional development (Taggart et al: 2015). Early years policy needs to address the particular needs of the youngest children by ensuring that practitioners working with children under three are led by qualified teachers who are employed to work in the nursery class with the children.

## **7.5 Recommendations**

In this chapter, I have summarised my key findings, identified my original contributions to theory and argued for policy development and an appropriate pedagogy for working with very young emergent bilingual children. This final section makes recommendations based on the findings of my research.

### **7.5.i Policy changes in the Centre**

Did the policy, inspection and funding changes necessarily have led to the confusion and disempowerment of Charlie, Rosie and Stella as professionals working in early childhood education and care (ECEC)? Changes within ECEC are continuing to affect early childhood institutions, and so I would argue that there needs to be an intentional focus on policy and professionalism that will enable practitioners to raise the quality of provision for very young emergent bilingual children. In this section I make recommendations that could have created a better environment for the children to negotiate their enculturation into the nursery.

Diverse languages should be recognised as being a vital and valued component of the languages used in the Children's Centre and bilingual support staff recognised as key members of staff in the nursery (Drury: 2007), demonstrated through provision of training and equal status as practitioners within the centre. This would empower bilingual support staff to use their linguistic and cultural knowledge, especially with the younger children who are developing home languages as well as the language of the nursery. As noted by other researchers, such as Kenner (2000), artefacts, books, information on notice boards and displays that correspond to languages and cultures should be represented within the nursery classroom and in the outdoor area.

Cable, Drury & Robertson (2009) drew on the concept of 'funds of knowledge', theorised by Moll et al (1992) and explained by Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti (2005) as the experiences, skills and understandings that we acquire through significant people, and which shape our perceptions of the world. Moll et al (1992) argued that some children's 'funds of knowledge'

would correlate with school, while others' 'funds of knowledge' might not be recognised and acknowledged. Vygotsky (1978) argued that the development of abstract thought is dependent on cultural practices and language. As I have argued through this research, practitioners who can make connections for themselves across languages and their different cultural worlds are more able to understand the cognitive processes of the emergent bilingual child and support them in their learning. This is particularly important for very young emergent bilingual children aged two years.

To support this practice, I advocate that each bilingual family has two keypersons. One would be a bilingual support worker, who could provide cultural and linguistic understanding and support for the families and their children. In a superdiverse community, the bilingual support worker would not necessarily share the language and culture of the family, but would understand the experience of making links between diverse linguistic and cultural worlds of nursery and home. The other would be an English-speaking practitioner, whose practice would be helpfully informed by knowledge supplied by the bilingual support worker. Having two key persons for each young child would also provide continuity of care when staff are working on shifts and the opportunity to learn from each other. The additional benefits would be positive partnerships between parents/carers and the keypersons, reciprocal relationships built on shared information, and more knowledgeable practitioners.

#### **7.5.ii Professionalism in the Centre**

To raise the quality of education and care in the centre, and ensure that all young children's languages and cultures are supported, highly qualified staff should be employed to work with the youngest children. This would necessitate all staff receiving training on language development, an understanding of the complexities of superdiversity, recognising individual's 'funds of knowledge', and an awareness of the diverse cultures within the demographic location of the centre. This would assist practitioners in *listening* to young emergent bilingual children through their different modes of communication.

It is accepted practice within early years settings for all practitioners to have an annual appraisal. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were confused by all the changes that were taking place externally and internally. To avoid a culture of confusion amongst staff, the addition of mentoring for new staff and regular supervision for existing staff could provide opportunities to learn about and understand any changes in their workplace. This would provide the opportunity to ensure that all staff had knowledge and understanding about any changes in practice, such

as planning, assessment or the daily routine. Staff meetings should include time for dialogue between staff to encourage reflective practice and to share new ideas and examples of best practice.

## **7.6 Early years workforce**

Early childhood education and care has been at the heart of government policy for many years (Chapter 1). Successive governments have recognised the importance of strong foundations for the nation's future economic success (Public Health England: 2016), but have constantly changed legislation, policies, curriculum, qualifications and funding, and also failed to address the pay and conditions for nursery practitioners (Bonetti: 2019). I have argued that the result of this has created stressful conditions for those working with the youngest children. At the time of my research, changes in early years provision were taking place at a national level, and are continuing to change. The implementation of Sure Start followed by the introduction of Children's Centres, with the 2004 target of opening 3,500 Children's Centres by 2010 resulted in the rapid restructuring of early years institutions, and many centres were formed by merging distinct early years settings, as exemplified by Edward Square in my research. In their report, Bouchal & Norris (2012:7) record that a senior government minister commented:

*'What we were trying to achieve was hugely ambitious. We wanted welfare to work. We wanted nurturing. We wanted to develop parenting skills. We wanted childcare, which we got right in terms of numbers but not quality. We wanted to be working with dads. We bit off more than we could chew by trying to do everything.'*

Osgood (2012) stated that the discourses of regulation, inspection and expected performativity of early childhood promoted by the government and the media fail to recognise and celebrate the vital and important contribution that early childhood education and care makes to society and to the lives of individual children. In addition, I would argue, based on my research, that the lived experiences of practitioners and children within early years care and education settings have not been acknowledged. The impact of continuous changes in expectations and working conditions has been disempowering and has affected the quality of practice in nurseries. In their report Bouchal & Norris (2012:15) quote Grenier's comments that there was *'no obvious mechanism to feedback on what was going well and what was not...[and] we never had enough time to stop and learn because of the pace, the numbers'*. In the same report Naomi Eisenstadt, the first director of Sure Start, commented that *'failure to pay attention to the workforce issue was one of the biggest implementation mistakes'* (2012: 15). My research

studied the impact of change on the workforce in one Children's Centre, but I argue that it could be representative of what was happening to many other early years settings in England at that time (Osgood: 2012). As I have indicated in this chapter, changes in policy within early years education and care continues. Centre closures, the withdrawal of central funding, the introduction of the Foundation Stage profile, and the new Ofsted Education Inspection Framework are just some changes taking place as this thesis goes to print.

## **7.7 Final comments**

This research project was carried out several years ago with a small cohort in one early years setting, therefore the study does not generalise to a wider population. However, as I argued in this conclusion, it tries to draw attention to some theoretical issues within early years education and care, and the detailed analyses within this study allows the reader to draw their own conclusions.

This research has covered several years, and as I have noted, national changes in ECEC continue. In October 2019 the government launched a consultation document 'Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms'. These reforms have been contested by different organisations working within early childhood education, arguing that the proposed changes seek to extend formal schooling to the youngest children and fail to recognise the needs of children from ethnic minority communities. Challenges to the reforms can be summarised by the following comment from Liz Bayram, Chief Executive of PACEY:

*There is a strong consensus within the sector that the proposals currently being piloted in 24 primary schools are likely to encourage a top-down, tick-box, one size fits all approach that will not be suitable for many children, especially those with SEND, English as an additional language (EAL) or the summer-born. Initial proposals for changes to the EYFS Profile are not always supported by evidence of child development, and must recognise the EYFS curriculum is for children 0-5. (Bayram: 2019).*

I set out to investigate 'How do two-year-old emergent bilingual children become enculturated into a nursery setting?' I have acknowledged that it is essential for the educators of young children to move beyond assumptions about cultural differences, and acknowledge ethnocentric views in order to consider other cultural perspectives. To do this, it is important to accept that there are diverse goals of development, multiple ways of raising children and



various discourses of childhood. Although my focus was on the children, I recognised the necessity of investigating the wider issues that shaped the practice in Class 2. Within this study, I have researched the lives of adults and children from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds – practitioners, parents and children. It is important to remember that cultural practices change as people develop through their participation in the sociocultural practices of their communities.

Despite all the confusion experienced by the staff and their focus on organisational matters, my research demonstrates that very young children will adopt strategies that can enable them to make sense of a new language and culture. Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi, at the age of two years, were newcomers to English language and culture, yet they worked hard to participate with others in the nursery. But to become enculturated as participants within a nursery, they would require the support of knowledgeable and emotionally intelligent adults who acknowledged the children's existing 'funds of knowledge', observed children attentively, understood their intentions and legitimated and enhanced their strategies for participation. Young emergent bilingual children aged two years do not enter nursery as 'empty vessels'. They have developed cognitive skills in their homes and with their families, and with the support of knowledgeable adults in nursery, the children's journey becomes less fragmented and more participative as they become enculturated in a new social environment and a new language.

As Aeshah, Rahaf and Abdilaahi started in Class 2, they were learning to make sense of their changing world. Charlie, Rosi and Stella were attempting to make sense of their changing world of work. I am grateful to each of them for allowing me to be involved with their lives throughout the time of my research.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Informal Interviews with Key People

1. How long have you been working in this centre?
2. Why did you choose to work with young children?
3. What was school like?
4. What did you do when you left school?
5. What training did you do to work with children?
6. What did you study in your training?
7. You have been here for .... years. What changes have taken place?
8. How have these changes affected you?
9. Has the local area changed?
10. What do you think about the multicultural nature of the setting?
11. What are the benefits for children & their families attending this CC?
12. How do you support children who are becoming bilingual?
13. What would you like to be doing in 5 years time?



## **Appendix 2: Extracts from interview with a key person**

Been working here for 6 years in June at the Day Nursery. Came here on a temporary contract and stayed. Previously worked in a private day nursery for 7 years. It was the last placement from college. Fell pregnant and Yasmin went to nursery with me and there were issues with her so I left. Wouldn't go back to a private day nursery. There was no gratitude at all, worked from 7.30 to 6.00 each day. I either wanted to work with children or animals. I had a work experience working in Social Services and seeing what they do steered me the way I wanted to go.

I grew up in the countryside, out in the fields. We had lots of animals. My dad had a horse when he was younger and I had a horse from when I was 4 or 5. My sister is a veterinary nurse and that is where my rescue animals come from. I am an outside person. I went to primary & secondary school in Bristol. I liked school because I had 3 months off for counselling so my mum had to fight for me. I got good GCSE's; if I am interested I will apply myself if it applies to me. The Forest School training I like because I am always outside with my animals and my daughter is a tomboy. When I was growing up we didn't have all the electronics kids have today. You entertained yourself, made dens, built a tree house and even if it fell down the next day you could say, I made it. Kids today have no imagination. My 13-year-old niece is like that, I say come and play outside and she says, what with. My childhood was better than kids have today. Kids don't know how to play.

I went to college and done the NNEB. It was good fun. We learned a lot about looking after children. We did nurseries, family homes, schools – you know, we done everything about children. Stuff like illnesses, hygiene, potty training, development.

It was a stressful change when we were being amalgamated. We had to move out and went to the satellite centre – just the day nursery. We were still bussing the children up from here. Coach would arrive in the morning, we put the car seats in and the children then the same on the way back. It was the year from hell. We had so many children here that we had to do that. The nursery school had their building and they didn't have to move. At the end of the year we had to pack up again and move back here and set up in the new buildings. Parents had to be on time and do the full day. Pick up in the morning and most of the parents arrived on time and were really quite good.

The first year we were here I was between 2-3's and nursery so I would spend half of the week up there and half of the week down here. I've been with the 2's permanently for 1 year. I prefer to have a mix of working and liked the 2 halves of my week. I like being with older children because they can talk to you. They make me laugh. The little ones don't talk, so it's hard being with them.

BLP was new to us when we joined. We started discussing it just before we amalgamated and that it is something else we have had to take on board. I don't get it but I think maybe it is useful.... Long pause. It makes you think about how you would talk to children. We have to use the language of BLP eg. You need to say I can see you are imitating .... or keep persevering.... when you are talking with to them. When it was first introduced there was so much to take in and we were all like wow....

The room seems to be happier than it was in September. The first year when we opened it was like trial and error with daily routines and changing times and we were all toying with different ideas but now that we have played around with it we roughly know what works and what doesn't work, so it seems to work a lot better. We all use the rotas.

Me: How do you negotiate behaviour or expectations between the staff in the nursery?

It depends on what sort of behaviour it is. None of us like the hitting and we are all on the same sort of wavelength. If you get a child swear at you, that's the one I find difficult because if you say to a child no I don't like that and they are telling you to fuck off, the management say you are supposed to repeat it back to him. I can't because he is 2 or 3 and I have never sworn at my daughter. I can see the headteacher's point of view – which part of the sentence are you saying that you don't want. I've never sworn at my mum or dad. Perhaps it is the upbringing. Other staff feel the same as me but they are able to do it but I can't. We use conflict resolution but there are some individual things that we are not agreed on.

We have Somalian, Urdu, French, Spanish, Czech, Polish and Dutch children. A lot of our Somalian support workers speak other languages so a lot of the help comes from a close relationship with the parents and if we need to we use interpreters from outside agencies. We learn their language and they learn ours. Especially language like Czech and Polish which we haven't had before.

The area hasn't changed but it is more accessible for other languages. Before with the 2 centres there was a mix of languages but we are less of a daunting place and we have lots of groups here with outreach groups. We have always done home visits. You get to that they may talk at home but not in nursery so you know they can speak. Some change but some don't depending on the child and the family circumstances.

Benefits of coming to nursery for families, it opens a door to help that they might not personally think they can get on their own, we have support groups for different things. We have an Urdu-speaking group specifically for them and people that are here that can help you with finances and benefits. Because it is all in one place they know the staff that have got their children so they are more likely to ask for other help. If you haven't got the right skill or relationship to start off with they wouldn't ask for help. I don't do any of the groups.

It took I a very long time to settle. She came in for a couple of hours for a few months to settle. K makes me laugh. Children are all different. Sometimes they will speak to me other times they won't.

### **Appendix 3: Letter of consent: Headteacher, SMT & Governors**

Isobel MacDougall  
15 Cranleigh Gardens  
Bristol BS9 1HD  
[isobel.macdougall@btinternet.com](mailto:isobel.macdougall@btinternet.com)

September 2010

Dear Headteacher, Senior Management Team and Governors,

I am a PHD student with Goldsmith's, London University. I am interested in researching the way in which very young bilingual children develop positive attitudes towards themselves as learners within English education and care settings. To do this, I would like to study a small cohort of children, their families and their main carers in the nursery class of a Children's Centre.

I have chosen ... Children's Centre and nursery due to its multicultural context, city-centre location and the demographic information from the latest census. I believe that I share the philosophy of this setting with regard to working with all families, children, staff and the local community.

I will ensure that this research conforms to the ethical requirements. I will be asking for informed consent from:

- i. Headteacher, senior management and governors
- ii. Lead teacher and team of 2/3's room
- iii. Individual staff selected for study
- iv. Families willing to be research cohort
- v. Children as appropriate
- vi. Interpreters

I would like to carry out observations of the interactions between the specific keypeople and children within the research group. I will also be carrying out interviews with the children's families in their homes with an interpreter, the keypeople and the Class 2 Room Leader, the Class 2 Lead Teacher, and the Headteacher. I will be reading the Children's Centre policies and information for staff and families.

All names will be changed and the research will be as anonymous as possible to protect the identity of the cohort and ensure the safe guarding of all involved in the setting. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet, electronic data being stored on a separate hard drive in the locked cabinet. I do not intend to send any images electronically. If I want to use any photographs or video footage for conferences or publications, this will only be done with separate informed consent from the individuals concerned. You will have access to any written reports and be able to discuss the research project with me at any time. You are also free to withdraw at any time if you are not happy with the project.

I have worked within the field of education for 40 years and specifically within early years for over 30 years. Currently I lead The Sector Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years at the City of Bristol College and teach on the Early Years Professional Status programme with Bath Spa University. I am studying with Goldsmiths as I completed an MA in Early Years Education with them and they are a centre of expertise in culture and language. This research will be the property of the researcher and I will need to ensure that the study remains my own original work. This year I will be collecting data and I hope to complete the data analysis and writing up the report by the end of 2015. However, I will be sharing my findings with you throughout this time.

I am very grateful to you for allowing me to work with you and learn from you. I hope that I will be able to be supportive and that this will be a mutual learning journey.

## Appendix 4: Letter of consent: Class 2 Lead Teacher and Class 2 team

Isobel MacDougall  
15 Cranleigh Gardens  
Bristol BS9 1HD  
[isobel.macdougall@btinternet.com](mailto:isobel.macdougall@btinternet.com)

September 2010

Dear R... and the team

I am a PhD student with Goldsmith's, London University. I am interested in researching the way in which very young bilingual children develop positive attitudes towards themselves as learners within English education and care settings. To do this, I would like to study a small cohort of children, their families and their main carers in the nursery class of a Children's Centre.

I have chosen ... Children's Centre and nursery due to its multicultural context, city-centre location and the demographic information from the latest census.

I would like to carry out observations of the interactions between the specific keypeople and children within the research group. I will also be carrying out interviews with the children's families in their homes with an interpreter, the keypeople and the Class 2 Room Leader, the Class 2 Lead Teacher, and the Headteacher. I will be reading the Children's Centre policies and information for staff and families.

All names will be changed and the research will be as anonymous as possible to protect the identity of the cohort and ensure the safe guarding of all involved in the setting. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet, electronic data being stored on a separate hard drive in the locked cabinet. I do not intend to send any images electronically. If I want to use any photographs this will only be done with separate informed consent from the individuals concerned. You will have access to any written reports and be able to discuss the research project with me at any time. You are also free to withdraw at any time if you are not happy with the project.

I will be working in the nursery for a year and will be with you in Class 2 most Wednesday mornings. I am not there to judge you or record any observations without your consent. Please do let me know if I am intrusive or doing anything that is wrong or unhelpful.

This research will be the property of the researcher and I will need to ensure that the study remains my own original work as this is the requirement for a PhD. This year I will be collecting data and I hope to complete the data analysis and writing up the report by the end of 2015. However, I will be sharing my findings with you throughout this time.

I am looking forward to getting to know you. Thank you for your support. I hope I will be a support to you.

Yours sincerely,

R..., if you are willing for your team to continue with the research, please will you sign the form below. Thank you.

I, ....., lead teacher, am willing for my team to take part in this research. I have read the above information and understand the area of research, the methods for collecting data and the confidentiality clause for this research. I know that we are able to withdraw at anytime.

Signed:

Printed name:

Date:

## Appendix 5: Letter of consent: Key people

Isobel MacDougall  
15 Cranleigh Gardens  
Bristol BS9 1HD  
[isobel.macdougall@btinternet.com](mailto:isobel.macdougall@btinternet.com)

September 2010

Dear

I am a PHD student with Goldsmith's, London University. I am interested in researching the way in which very young bilingual children develop positive attitudes towards themselves as learners within English education and care settings. To do this, I would like to study a small group of children, their families and their main carers in the nursery class of a Children's Centre.

Thank you for being willing to take part in my PhD research. I am writing to ask for your permission to work with you and to collect data based on my observations of you with your key children. I would like to interview you to ask you about your own experiences of school, your training, and your experience of working with young children in a multicultural centre.

I would like to carry out observations of the interactions between you and your key children within the research group. I will also be carrying out interviews with the children's families in their homes with an interpreter, the Class 2 Room Leader, the Class 2 Lead Teacher, and the Headteacher. I will be reading the Children's Centre policies and information for staff and families.

All names will be changed and the research will be as anonymous as possible to protect the identity of all the people in the centre and to ensure the safe guarding of all involved in the setting. All data will be stored in a locked cabinet, electronic data being stored on a separate hard drive in the locked cabinet. I do not intend to send any images electronically. If I want to use any photographs, this will only be done with separate informed consent from the individuals concerned. You will have access to any written reports and be able to discuss the research project with me at any time. You are also free to withdraw at any time if you are not happy with the project.

Thank you for your time.

If you are willing to continue with the research, please will you sign the form below. Thank you.

I, ..... am willing to take part in this research project as a key person. I have read the above information and understand the area of research, the methods for collecting data and the confidentiality clause for this research. I know that I am able to withdraw at anytime.

Signed:

Printed name:

Date:

## Appendix 6: Page from my field notes: Personal reflections

J 2hr 25 mins is sometimes occupied but not involved - but mainly follow N. She says nothing all morning, but her body language changed when N. spoke to her in ~~the room~~. They were alone in the barrow.

Gr. told me that 1-1 she will have a conversation + that she talks when her cousin are around.

Is she quiet at home? What does she make of all she sees? J. watches very intently. Does N. feel "she should not use" languages other than English in the nursery? Does she feel embarrassed.

J. is passive in most of the morning. What is the learning? Why is she so disempowered?

### Key questions

- What would the difference be if N. engages with J + other children in a group - draw her in?
- What is J. interested in doing?
- How are the setting supporting her linguistically and culturally?

TO DO: Arrange to visit homes. What about translator?

## Appendix 7: Page from my field notes: Possible lines of inquiry

DO A TIME SAMPLE FOR (K) my own questions to reflect on

- Why lunch time supervisors?
- what does this say about the significance of meal times?
- Long transitions - brief setting then work
- Why do Arian + Team come on different days?
- Why is there no Jollyman support staff in 2-3's?
- Percentage of ethnic groups across classes?
- What is so important about origini partner that it is foregrounded?
- Roles - responsibilities? Line manager?
- How do the staff see their role in the nursery?

K + I talked about (G) + ask after her. Interesting!

- Observations - little/no focus on his & Leah's Diaries. ANALYSIS of obs?
- Limited interactions with key people.
- Opportunities for consolidation of language
- Training to support bilingual children?
- are children occupied busy or involved? ? adults?
- With a focus on interests is there a danger of overlooking observed needs eg language?

## Appendix 8: Observational notes 1

I arrived early with mum and they sit outside looking at her learning diary together. They chat together. At 9:00 I walk past, greet mum + J. + ask if I can watch the kids (sides) then. When I return they are still enjoying the diary together.

At 9:00, I enter the nursery with mum, takes her coat off + hangs it on the peg + goes with mum to sit in circle. Mum says goodbye affectionately, they exchange a few words + mum leaves. I sit in the circle quietly watching others. Mum returns with her + J, speaks with I in Urdu + leaves. I continues to sit watch other children. She picks up a book + moves towards ~~table~~.

~~After~~  
After welcome time, I just follows ~~her~~ + does some sticking with her. They then go to look at a book. I says nothing.

~~After~~  
I continues to follow ~~her~~, collecting snack, clean the table etc. I says nothing.

10:50 I sits at the scissors etc close to ~~her~~ while ~~her~~ clears up after snack.

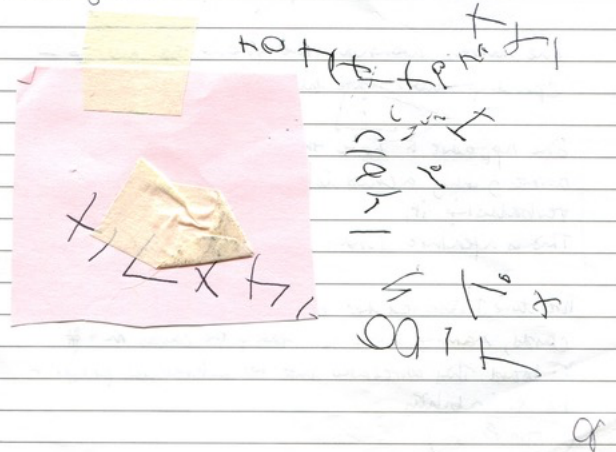
11:05 sitting next to ~~her~~, stacking blocks while ~~her~~ talks with another child.

11:25 tidying up table - I washes her hands independently.



## Appendix 9: Observational notes 2

pleased + comes over to the table + shows me the photograph display with K's writing + numbers. K immediately starts to write numbers from right to left. She then writes letters from left to right. She cuts out a shape + takes it to another child (she goes to this child for time to time but the contact does not seem to be reciprocated). Someone comes to mend the changing bed. K goes in + watches them work. She returns to the table, collects the book + then goes off to tell N. that she is writing "100".



## Appendix 10: Observational notes 2

He joins a group of boys playing with cars on the edge. There is some negotiation but then there is a fight over cars + 2 different practitioners try to help the 2 boys to resolve their conflict. Claire suggests they build a track. Within a minute they start to fight again. Claire sits with them to resolve their differences. They each choose a car each + for their cars to go outside.

10:46 He comes down to the nursery + joins the group but watches them from the edge of the group.

10:56 @ had a choice, still clutching 2 cars + rides with boy (the one who was in conflict with).

A. signifies to me that he wants me to come out, pull the He indicated that his car is stuck down a pipe. I suggest that they get an adult. They use water to try to push it out. A. is interested and gets involved. He comes inside + goes to the water. Adult tells him to get an apron. He does + goes to play in the water. He splashes, pours + appears to enjoy the watching the water as he pours it from different heights, over his arm, splashing with his fingers. Says nothing. 10:57 tidying up toys. A. watches other boys + changes his jumper.

## Appendix 11: Physical environment of Edward Square

At the back of the building, behind the nursery classes, was an extensive garden that provided opportunities for outdoor play throughout each day and in all seasons for all the age groups. This supported the ethos of the centre for *'life-long learning, creativity and inclusion'* (ES website) and enabled siblings and mixed-aged groups to meet together and play in the shared space. The garden was a natural environment devoid of plastic climbing frames and constructions and full of open-ended play materials, encouraging exploration, experimentation and inquire. As this was a city centre service for children, and the surrounding area was mainly blocks of flats and tightly packed narrow streets of terraced housing, outdoor space was seen as essential for the children attending this centre. Being considered as situated in a prime area of disadvantage, Edward Square was able to access the generous Capital Funding grants (see Chapter 1) provided by the government in 2009 (NDMA: 2008) to refurbish and landscape their garden. All the rooms had direct access to the outdoor area and all children spent much of the day outside. A diagram of the outdoor area can be seen in Figure 1.

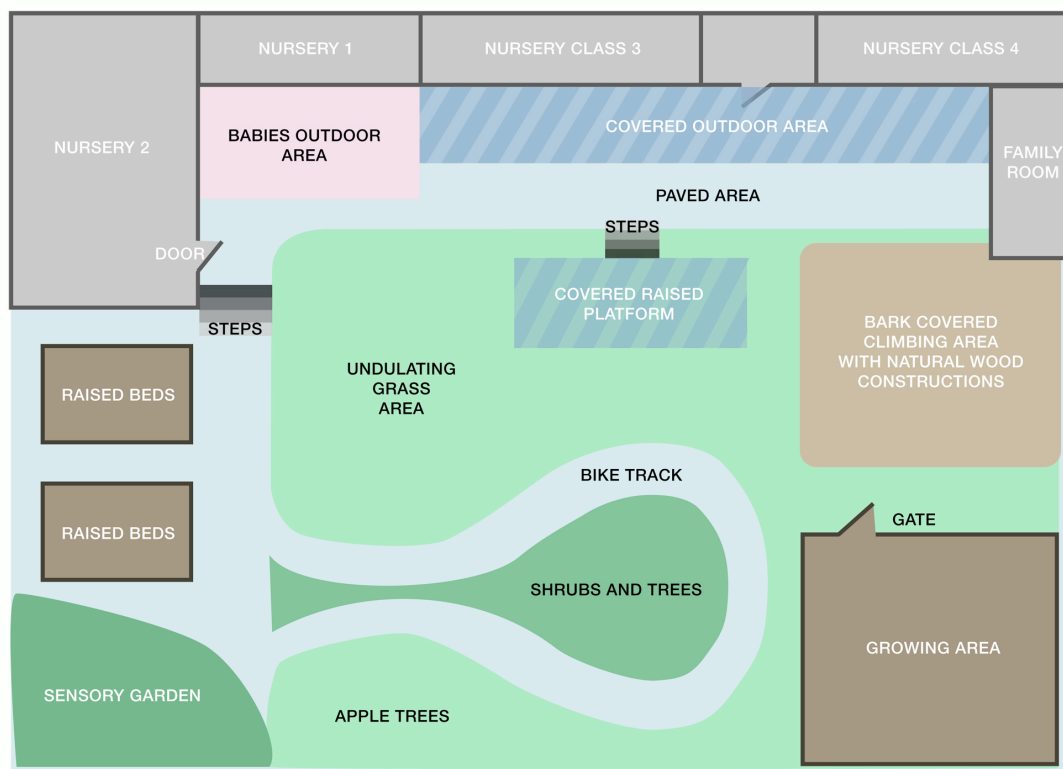
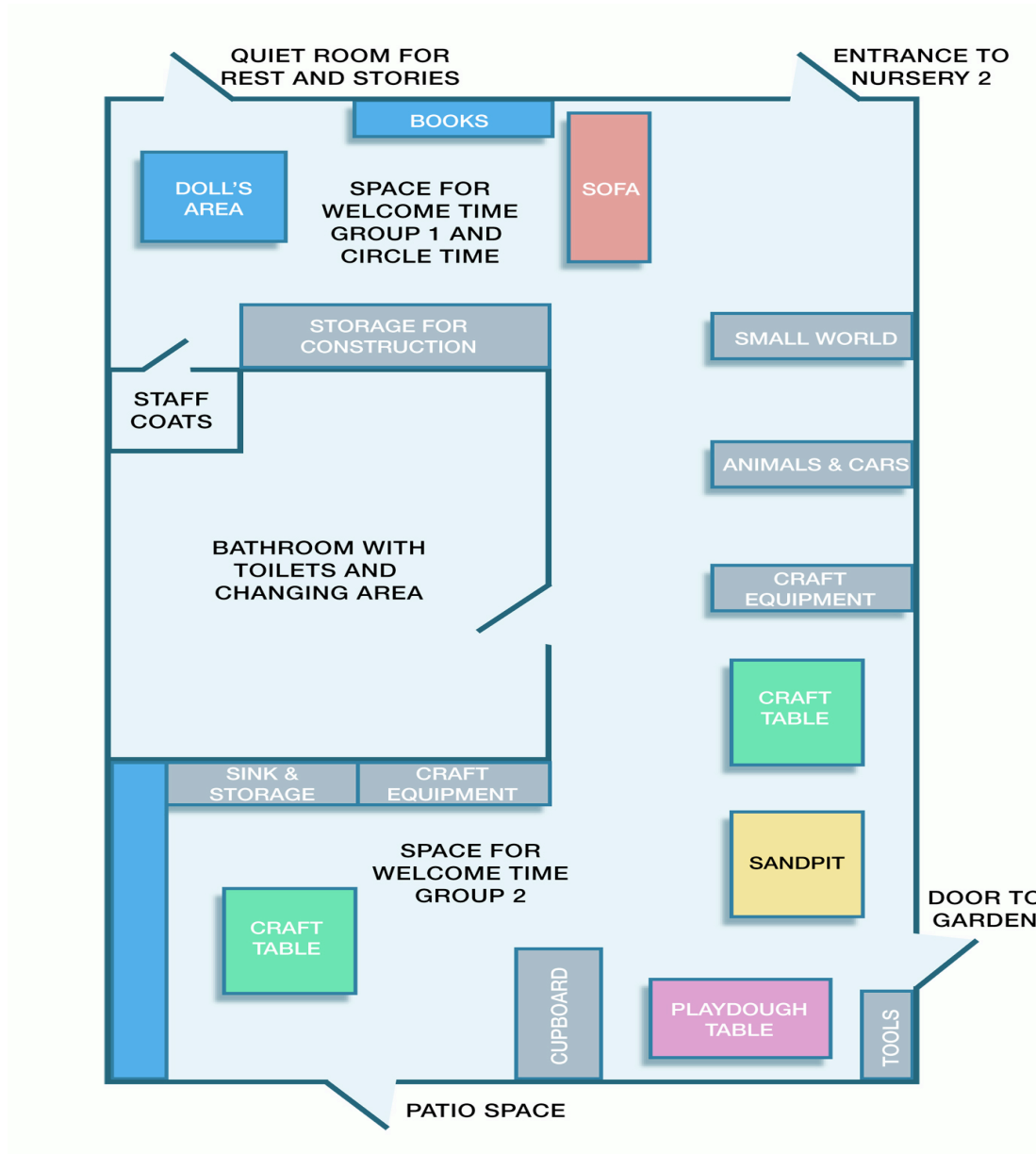


Figure 1: Outdoor area for all classes to use

## Appendix 12: Class 2 classroom

Class 2 catered for children aged two to three years. Most of the children started their nursery experience in this room, although a few children progressed to this room from Class 1. Class 2 was a converted portacabin, which was originally intended as a temporary building.



### Appendix 13: Class 2 daily routine

Each day the staff team in Class 2 carried out the following routine, which was explained to me by Beth, the lead teacher (Field notes: 08.09.10). I have noted her comments in the right-hand column.

Welcome time	As the children arrive they join one of two groups where an activity is set up on the mat, and when most of the group has arrived, using their name cards name sing the Welcome song, placing their name on the board in turn. The staff on the early shift lead each group.
Snack time	One member of staff on the rota leads snack time each day and the children are invited to come for milk or water and fruit.
Circle time	Staff take turns to lead circle time, with songs, rhymes and circle activities before lunch. All the children are involved in this activity together and most of the staff team support the children.
Lunch time	Lunchtime supervisors help out with lunchtime and the staff team members are rotated for lunch duty each day to enable all staff to have their lunch breaks over the lunchtime period. The children sit at small tables, 5 children and 1 adult on each table. The adult serves the food and eats with the children, engaging in conversation with them.
Outdoor play	The lunchtime staff supervise the children outside. During this time some of the children will be collected by parents, other children will arrive for the afternoon session and others may be taken by staff team member to sleep in the quiet room. Children's sleep time is noted on the chart for parents on the noticeboard.
Free play	Afternoon session begins, and all staff are back on duty. Children may play inside or out in freely chosen play. As the sleeping children wake up they are changed and join the others for play.
Snack time	Staff member on the rota leads the snack time each day and the children are invited to come for milk or water and fruit
Circle time	Staff rotate turns for leading circle time, which includes songs and rhymes before tea. All the children take part in this activity together and most of the staff support the children while others prepare tea. Some children join the group from Classes 3 & 4 for wrap-around care.
Tea time	Children sit at tables with the staff for tea. Children may be collected by their parents from now until 6.00pm.
Stories and play	Children settle with staff for stories then they can play freely until they are collected.

Figure 3: Daily routine in Class 2