THE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS, PARENTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN ON FACTORS THAT AFFECT EAL LEARNING AT AN INFANT SCHOOL IN THE SOUTH OF ENGLAND.

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Abstract

With an ever increasing number of ethnic minority children enrolling into British schools it is necessary to establish the factors that affect them in their learning of English as a second or additional language (EAL). This qualitative study was aimed at investigating the perceptions of teachers, parents and young children on factors that affect EAL learning at an infant school in the south of England. The participants in the study were 30 children, 8 teachers and 25 parents. The sample of children was drawn from a sampling frame of the 270 children at the school. The majority of the children in the study population come from non-English speaking backgrounds where one or both parents have limited English.

Data for the study was collected through focus group interviews, personal interviews and observation. The thematic data analysis procedure which followed Gee's (2005) recommendations to examine only one piece of data at a time uncovered emerging themes such as factors perceived by children, teachers and parents to affect young children's EAL learning, teachers' perceptions of the role played by parents in their children's learning and the problems faced by parents in supporting their children's learning. The results of the study showed that the learning of EAL is embedded in a complex network of factors that include linguistic factors such as linguistic distance between L1 and L2, home background factors such as parental support and availability of literacy resources, cultural factors and support from peers and other adults such as teachers and bilingual support assistants. It was evident from the study that while teachers considered the parents to be uninterested in supporting their children's learning, the parents revealed that they were eager to help their children but did not know how to do it as they felt they did not possess the language, knowledge or skills to perform the expected role effectively. It is therefore important to find out about participants' perceptions on phenomena that affect them as this highlights their views, beliefs and opinions as well as the nature of problems they encounter, from their own point of view.

Since children's EAL learning is affected by numerous factors it is imperative for further research to be done with younger children to establish in greater detail how these factors affect their acquisition of EAL and how language difficulties and other problems encountered by both parents and children can be rectified. While bilingual assistants have been shown to be indispensable in supporting young EAL learners by interpreting for them, supporting them in speaking, reading and other activities it has been sadly observed that their roles and responsibilities are under-researched. This, therefore, calls for more research into their roles and responsibilities as well as the training they need to perform their roles efficiently.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This chapter begins by highlighting the purpose of the study. It then goes on to explain its background and context. The chapter also gives definitions of terms used and provides a brief overview of the structure of the thesis. The theoretical framework for the thesis is outlined in the next chapter.

1.1 Purpose of the study and its importance

The aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers, parents and young children on factors that affect the learning of English as a second or additional language (what is called EAL in the UK). The purpose was to gain a better understanding of the interplay of these factors and based on that to come up with strategies that may help to facilitate this process. The term young children in this particular context, refers to children aged between five and seven years of age. The majority of the people in the population under study come from non- English speaking backgrounds and a few of them already speak two languages other than English (e.g. Punjabi and Urdu) before starting school.

The research problem is quite significant to education because it highlights the teachers', parents' and children's perceptions of factors that affect the learning of English at the most critical stage – early childhood. Although much research has been done with older children (eight years and above) very little has been done with younger children (Heshusius and Ballard 1996, Levine 1990 and Tough 1981). This view is shared by August and Hakuta (1998) cited in Hinkel 2005), who argue that research is needed to investigate, among other things, the effects of the social environment on the linguistic, social and cognitive development of younger children. The research problem is also important because of the increasing numbers of immigrants in many British schools today and the numerous challenges that they encounter in learning EAL. However, as pointed out by Morrow and Richards (1996), children's voices are not

usually heard as they are not usually involved in research concerning them. It is hoped that this study, which not only explored factors influencing children's second language learning but also involved the children in articulating their views and preferences in the teaching/learning of EAL, will help teachers and other people who work with young children to become aware of the ways in which they learn English and the factors that influence their efforts to communicate. It may be argued that children of this age are not old enough to know what is good for them but knowing what they enjoy doing and how they prefer to learn may provide teachers with ideas on how to teach them effectively. This researcher argues that knowing what children's subjective perceptions are is as important as what adults might think is objectively the case because it reflects their perception, preferences and what they enjoy doing. If educators take the former into consideration and incorporate them in their planning, it can contribute immensely to children's learning.

In its attempt to answer the overarching question: What are the perceptions of teachers, parents and children on factors that affect young children's EAL learning? This study set out to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' and TAs' perceptions of children's EAL learning?
2. What do the children themselves say about the learning of EAL?
3. What do the parents say about factors that affect children's EAL learning?
4. How do the TAs support the children's EAL learning?

There are numerous factors that may affect a child's learning of EAL some of which are the learner's age, proficiency in the learner's first language (L1), teaching /learning factors, home environment , socio-cultural background (Burke et al 1998), opportunities to use the target language, motivation to learn the target language and parental support. This study is by no means exhaustive of all the factors that affect children's learning of EAL.

The following diagram highlights the factors that were the major focus of this study.

Figure 1: Some of the factors influencing children's learning of EAL

Factors affecting children's learning of EAL

Linguistic background	Cultural factors	Home background	Adult support
Proficiency in L1	LI Culture	Parental support	Teacher support
Motivation	L2 Culture	Availability of	Support from
Age	L1-L2 contrast	resources	other adults
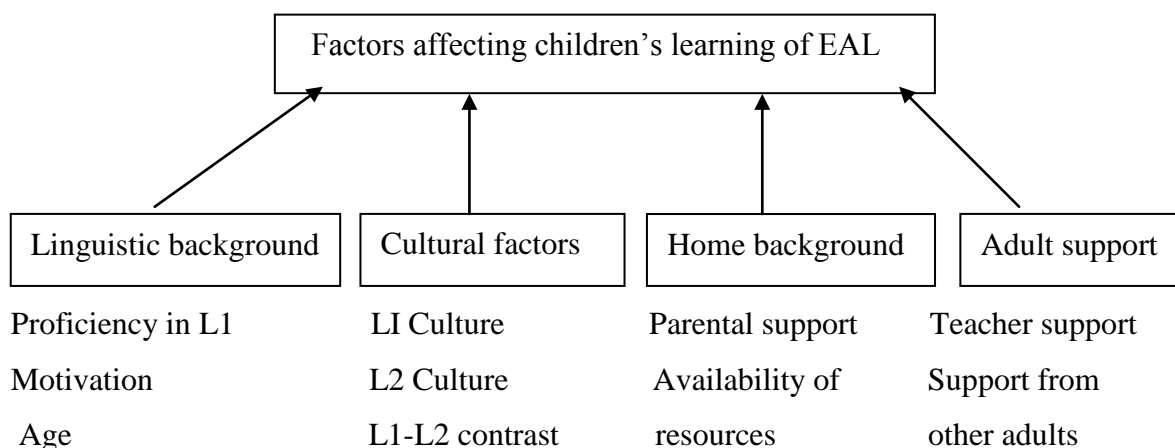
The above factors, which form the basis of this thesis, are believed to be among the most important factors that affect children's learning of EAL as they contribute significantly to shaping the attitudes and motivation required in learning a new language. Linguistic background factors include aspects such as the learner's ability to speak her/his first language well as this is believed to impact on second language learning (Ellis 1997), what motivates him/her to learn the target language, (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009), the learner's age (Singleton and Ryan 2004), as well as other factors such as the similarities or differences between the first language and the target language (Ellis 1994). Cultural factors include the similarities/differences between the two cultures which may help to facilitate or further compound challenges in the acculturation process. (Walqui 2000). Home background factors include such aspects as the home environment, parental support and availability of literacy resources in the home (Walqui 2000 and Burke et al 1998). Last but not least is adult support which refers to all other adults apart from parents, who support the child's EAL learning such as relatives, family friends, teachers and their support staff. This study therefore seeks to reveal the factors that affect young children's learning of EAL and how they affect it. Such information is crucial for the development of strategies and materials useful for the teaching of EAL. The next section discusses the background to and context of the study.

1.2 Background to and context of the study

This study was set at a small infants' school in Slough, a fast expanding town which is in the south of England. The school, where I teach, has a total enrolment of 270 pupils. Their approximate numbers and levels of fluency are as follows – 30 pupils speak English fluently but not native like, about 70 speak moderate English, 100 pupils speak basic English, just enough to get by, and the remaining 70 pupils are beginners who use simple words and emerging sentences such as 'I go Tesco' 'Me no go.' These approximate figures have been arrived at on the basis of information supplied by the teachers based on the distribution of pupils per class. As a teacher I have worked and continue to work with classes of up to 30 children most of who speak EAL. The linguistic composition of the teachers in the study is as follows: Four are English, and the other four are bilingual. In addition to English the four bilingual teachers each speak one of the following four languages that is Punjabi, Urdu, Welsh and Shona. This means that only two of the bilingual teachers speak the languages that the majority of the children speak. Only one child speaks Shona and none of the children speak Welsh.

The school serves a multi-cultural community with children from a range of ethnic and religious backgrounds. There are currently eighteen different languages spoken throughout the school and these include Urdu, Punjabi, Somali, Dutch, Tamil, Gujarati, Shona and others. The languages spoken by the teachers are quite limited compared to the range of languages spoken by the children. This means that a lot of the children do not have bilingual support from their teachers as they do not speak their languages. However, a group of skilled bilingual assistants support children in their lessons as well as during play times thereby helping them to access the curriculum and participate fully and meaningfully in the life of the school, although not all the languages spoken at the school are covered. The use of bilingual assistants is an aspect of the school's work that was highly commended by a team of visiting OFSTED inspectors as both impressive and outstanding and is also strongly valued by parents and carers of the pupils.

Bilingual assistants, most of whom are female, play a wide range of roles in UK schools and these roles vary from setting to setting. In some settings they work as classroom assistants carrying out all the duties relating to that role such as acting as the bridge between home and school (Bourne 1989) and interpreting the world of school for the children and their parents (Mills and Mills 1995). Bilingual assistants who speak the

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same language as most of the children and their parents are not only able to talk to them in that language but can clear misunderstandings due to cultural differences between the teacher and pupils and among different cultural groups (DfEE 2000).

According to Balshaw (1991: 8) the duties of special needs assistants tend to fall into the following categories: educational, pastoral, liaison physical and ancillary. This view is echoed by Mills in Blackledge (1994 and Mills and Mills (1995), who contend that most of the duties carried out by special needs assistants mirror those performed by most classroom assistants but have a bilingual dimension. However, at my school both the special needs assistants and classroom assistants are bilingual, speaking the two languages (Punjabi and Urdu) mostly spoken by the children. While educational tasks include supporting children in small groups on speaking, reading and writing activities set by the teacher and making the necessary parallel translations; ancillary tasks include photocopying, tidying up and general classroom maintenance. On the other hand, pastoral care involves comforting children, helping them with hygiene or dressing while liaison tasks include translating for teachers/parents and helping to organize school events (Balshaw 1991). Physical tasks, which might be included in pastoral tasks, include providing physical comfort such as tying shoelaces, fixing hair and providing tissues and words of comfort to a crying child (Mills and Mills 1995). They go on to say that bilingual assistants also help to monitor and support children's behaviour at school. In cases where interaction with pupils is only limited to translating for the teacher, the bilingual assistant's role is rather constrained.

The role of bilingual assistants in young children's EAL learning is vital because their shared language and culture enables them to penetrate into the child's understanding in a way that a monolingual teacher may not be able to and this can facilitate their explanations of difficult concepts to the child.

It has been my wish since joining the school to identify the factors that positively or negatively affect the children's learning of English and find ways of promoting or overcoming them respectively. I have been teaching EAL children at the school under study for over 8 years and have taught all the Year 1 children in the study. I was specifically trained to teach infant and junior school children and have a flair for languages. I am an insider in this research study and the only researcher, although I have elicited the help of colleagues in conducting the group interviews. During my

teaching career, including during this study, I have observed that one of the challenges that some EAL children face is that at the same time they are learning English some of them are learning Arabic, their L1, which has different conventions to English. For example children learning Arabic read and write from right to left whereas in English it is the opposite.

Similar to the school under study and the surrounding communities, the UK population is made up of various ethnic groups comprising immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean islands, Asia and others, most of whom speak EAL. However, because the main language spoken monolingually by the majority of the population is English, it is the only official language and the language of instruction in most UK schools except in Wales. This and the overall spread of English across the world, due to a variety of reasons such as (1) the spread of the British Empire which resulted in English gaining a strong position in its colonies (2) the need for a common language to link countries with different languages which needed to contact each other and (3) the declaration of English as an international language in many countries, has created an impetus for people not only in the UK but all over the world to learn English (Graddol et al 1996). For children, in addition to the immediate need for English at school, the global importance of English is an added incentive to master the language. It is a particular issue in this study because despite the popular perception that children learn languages very easily because of a natural ability to learn languages (Gordon 2007), if they are deprived of the social-psychological, linguistic and physical environment that fosters second language learning they may not succeed in learning their target language.

The purpose for EAL children learning English is to use the language at school and outside in the British context. For example as stated by Dillon (2006) people living in Britain, particularly British citizens, are expected to speak English well so that they can integrate and participate in British society. Thus, language is a social and cultural phenomenon which plays a communicative and integrative role in people's lives. However, it is important to note that in addition to its social communicative purposes, English is also vital for commercial purposes. As pointed out by Darder et al (1997: 68), "education is highly regarded as the social and economic equalizer and as a prerequisite to improving the social and economic status…" Most of the parents of the children who

took part in this study were very keen for their children to learn English because they realise the importance of English for commercial and other purposes.

While acknowledging the importance of English, Graddol (2004) argues that English may not be the dominant language of the future due to demographic and technological changes as well as changes in international communication. This he argues can enhance the need to be multilingual. If and when this happens some of the children and their parents in the study will have an advantage because they can speak two languages already and are well on their way to multilingualism.

To put this study into its proper perspective the terms culture, language, second language, acquisition and learning are defined in the following chapter. However, this section would not be complete without an attempt to clear up the misconception that people often have over the terms 'English as a second language' (ESL) and 'English as a foreign language' (EFL).

1.3 Distinction between second language, foreign language and additional language
According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), this distinction is based on the geographical context in which a language is spoken. In a typical ESL context English is widely used in such fields as commerce, administration and education whereas in an EFL context English plays no such role. ESL usually refers to the English used or learnt by people with a long stay or permanent residence in an English speaking country. The term EFL is often used in a situation where non native speakers of English are learning English in a country which is not their permanent residence, or in another country where English is not predominantly spoken (Johnson and Johnson 1999). In addition, the term 'Second language learning', on the other hand, tends to be a general term including both foreign language and second language contexts (Mitchell and Myles 2004:5).

For a small percentage of the children in this study whose families do not speak English and who have limited contact with English speakers and who perhaps watch television in their L1 it is quite debatable whether English is indeed a second or foreign language. What is certain, however, is that the majority of the pupils in this study are learning English in the context of living in an English speaking community. The term EAL is therefore preferred to all other terms because it relates directly to the participants in the study.

1.4 **Overview of thesis**

The thesis is divided into six chapters. This chapter which introduces the research study has provided some background to the study and is followed by Chapter 2 which defines the terms used in the study and provides a theoretical framework for the study through its discussion of how children learn second languages. It also reviews existing literature on the subject under study that is factors affecting children's learning of EAL. The chapter also indicates how the study is linked to previous research as well as highlighting issues in previous research that the current study is trying to address. Chapter 3, which is concerned with the empirical aspect of the study, describes the research design / methodology. This methods section discusses aspects such as participants and how they were selected, instruments, variables and procedures used as well as validity and ethical issues relating to the study. It discusses in detail the method used to collect the data through personal interviews, focus groups and observations. The findings of the study are presented and analysed in chapter 4 followed by a discussion of the findings in chapter 5. Finally, chapter 6 summarises the main findings, highlighting what is original and of importance then draws conclusions based on the findings and offers recommendations for the improvement of the teaching /learning of EAL to young children. Limitations of the study will also be discussed as well as suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

This chapter starts by defining the concepts and terms that are pertinent to the study. Then it goes on to provide a theoretical framework for the study by drawing upon various author' perceptions of children as language learners and how they learn second or additional languages. This in turn is followed by a discussion of the various factors that affect children's learning of EAL. In discussing these factors, existing literature will be reviewed and links with previous and current research will be explored. The chapter ends by reviewing literature on perception studies and linking it with the research questions.

2.1 Definitions of terms- presentation

2.1.1 Language

Language has been defined by Douglas (2000) as a system of symbols and rules that is used for meaningful communication. This view is echoed by The Chambers Dictionary (2008:861) which perceives language as 'mode of expression' and a '…system of signs and symbols, with rules for forming intelligible communication.' Another view expressed by Oxford Dictionary (2003: 458) is of language as 'a whole body of words and methods of combination of words used by a nation, people or race'. These definitions provide some common features of language such as symbols, people and meaningful communication. Byram (1989: 41) also contends that language is used to refer beyond itself pointing to the values and meanings of a particular social grouping. Kramsch (1998:3) simply defines language as a system of signs that is seen as and having itself a cultural value. This implies therefore that language cannot operate in a vacuum but within a cultural setting.

The purpose of defining 'language' in this discussion is to show the relationship between language and culture. The connection between culture and language is that language is inseparable from 'the … socially inherited assemblages of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives' [culture] (Swoyer 2003 and Sapir 1921:207 quoted in Chandler 1995:18). This view is supported by Brown (1994:165) who argues that

> 'A language is part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.'

Also supporting this view, Jiang (2000) contends that language and culture make a living organism: Language being the flesh and culture the blood. He argues that language would be dead without culture and that culture would be shapeless without language. Similarly language may be viewed as a swimming skill and culture as the water. When both are present people swim well (effective communication) but without water there is no swimming. This seems to imply that language and culture cannot exist without each other. An important link between culture and language is that propounded by Sapir and Whorf cited in Nunan and Choi (2010) who argue that the way one thinks is shaped by the language and culture into which one is born. Since it is possible for people to learn other cultures it might also make sense to add that the way a person thinks is also to some extent affected by the other cultures or languages he learns or acquires.

Yet another link between language and culture is in the function of language, for example the fact that language is vital in social activities and that it is used everywhere (Gee 1999). This seems to imply therefore that language and culture are inseparable. Does this, however, mean that to learn a language one has to learn the culture of the target language as this study seeks to establish? If so what then does the term culture mean? These questions will be addressed in the following section.

2.1.2 Culture (Definitions / dimensions)
The term 'culture' has numerous definitions and dimensions. Greey (1994) views it as a learned system of values, beliefs and /or norms among a group of people. On the other hand, Rosaldo (1984), cited by Hinkel (1999:1) posits that culture is "far more than a mere catalogue of rituals and beliefs". She argues that culture is derived from the world in which people live and the realities they construct. This view is supported by Condon (1973) who perceives culture simply as a way of life. His argument is that no matter where people live their behaviours and thoughts tend to follow and these are usually based on their cultures. Brown (2007) postulates that culture is a way of life; the context within which people exist, think, feel and relate to others, as the 'glue' (p188) that binds groups of people together. Therefore, culture refers to the totality of human experience, a people's way of life which includes their values and customs. There are numerous definitions of culture and as Tang (2006) rightly argues there is no single definition of culture that satisfies everyone.

In addition to values and customs other dimensions of culture include ideas, beliefs, skills, arts and tools as well as material objects that reflect a group of people's way of life. Culture influences people's attitudes and can also affect people's hobbies and the way they think, speak, act and interact with others. Samovar et al (1981) also contend that culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only determines who speaks to whom and about what but also how the messages are conveyed and interpreted. According to Yonkers (1996) children cannot master a new language until they have mastered the cultural context in which the new language occurs. This is because culture is inherent in people's lives and it enables them to interact with others and learn about them thereby increasing their knowledge and language base. Pragmatically this is illustrated by Hofstede (1991) who compares culture to an onion by viewing it as a multi-layered concept with values at the centre. The layers include such things as rituals (greetings/ social and religious ceremonies) and symbols such as words, gestures, objects and clothes with 'practice cutting through all the layers and enabling cultural values to be promoted.

An interesting view of culture which is also used by Hofstede (1984) is that which compares it to an iceberg (See illustration in Fig 2). The illustration shows that culture is like an iceberg which you can only see a little of with the rest hidden below the surface.
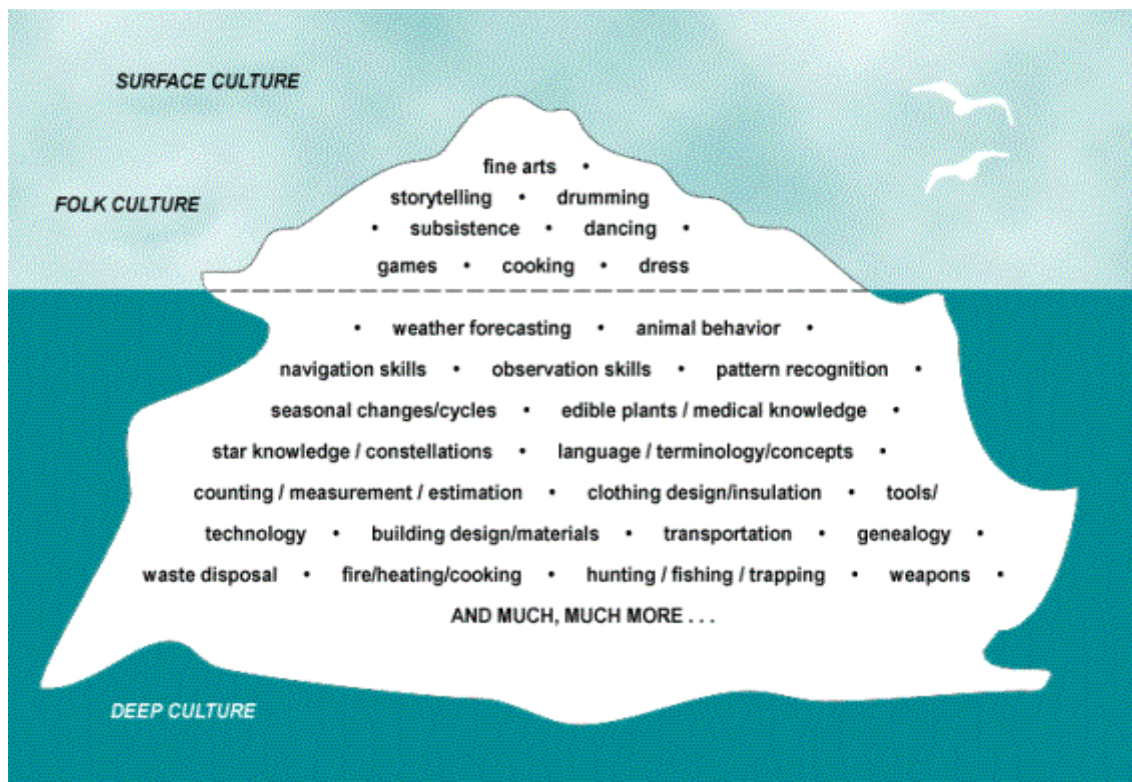
Fig 2: Illustration of the iceberg metaphor adopted from
http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/curriculum/articles/raybarnhardt/pbe_ankn_chapter.html

As shown in the 'Culture Iceberg' illustration above, elements such as food, entertainment and clothes are superficial and only make up the tip of the iceberg. The larger and more important components of culture such as cultural values which include knowledge, self concepts, general world view, ideas about hunting, fishing, observation skills and cultural expectations are out of view, hidden below the surface and beyond consciousness (Hall and Hall 1990). Despite being an all-encompassing 'core of culture' (Hofstede 1984) and vital to the way we operate in the world, values remain largely unconscious and hardly articulated. Unless one makes a real effort to see them from the outside, it is not possible to know or understand what they are or the effect they have on people from different cultures.

Hence, teachers and other people working with young EAL learners have to make a special effort to help them to know and understand the culture of their target language in order to learn the language effectively. If this is not done there might be a culture clash resulting in ineffective learning of the language or what may be termed metaphorically as 'hitting the cultural iceberg and sinking'. For example in many Asian and African cultures it is disrespectful to look into an adult's eyes whereas in the English culture not

looking straight into someone's eyes when talking to them is deemed disrespectful or can give an impression of a shifty, untrustworthy character. It is therefore important for EAL learners to learn the various subtle differences in the cultural backgrounds of their target language and their L1. Although the 'hidden' aspects of a culture can be learnt through collaboration with native or other experienced speakers of the language and better still in the country where the target language is spoken, Cummins in Nunan and Choi (2010) discovered from experience that it is not always easy to learn a language from native speakers due to socio-cultural factors. It must be born in mind that being 'thrown in at the deep end 'can be very traumatic as it could result in a negative attitude towards the target language and the target culture. For some learners getting acquainted with the target language and culture in a foreign language (FL) context first and arriving in the UK only later (e.g. at 8-9 years of age) might be preferable. Unfortunately not many families are able to choose because, as pointed out by Pollock and Van Reken (2009) in 'Third culture kids' there are numerous reasons why families end up living abroad or outside their own culture some of which are to study abroad, to escape from civil unrest and war, parents pursuing 'careers in international business, the diplomatic corps, the military or religious missions.

Yet another interesting view of culture is the one put forward by Holliday (1999) which portrays two paradigms for the study of culture, namely 'small' and 'large' cultures. The idea of a large culture is based on the notion that every ethnic/national/ international social grouping has its own different culture. Researchers or children studying a particular culture have to try and find out particular details such as its values, how the social group shows respect or what they consider to be polite or rude. In the context of this study, large cultures would be the ethnic / national cultures of the community such as the Punjabi speaking community, the Urdu speaking community and the Urdu/Punjabi speaking community. The large culture perspective allows the researcher to make generalization, e.g. about Urdu/Punjabi speaker's values and behaviours or the assumption that the Dutch value directness while the Japanese prefer to be indirect.

On the other hand, the notion of a small culture does not simply imply small in size or having a link to a bigger/larger community such as an ethnic/national/international group (Holliday 1999:63). It does not imply a Russian doll or onion-skin relationship. It

sees culture as relating to any cohesive social grouping which does not necessarily have a link or subordination to a larger social group. Examples of small cultures would include the culture of a particular family, classroom, year group, or school. It is useful for researchers to identify the small cultures because relying on the large culture can result in stereotyping and 'otherization' (Holliday 1999). Otherization is the result of judging others, categorizing them and deciding what they would or would not do before finding out more about them and what they are like as individuals, e.g. Urdu/Punjabi speakers 'are like this' although this may not apply to any of the Urdu/Punjabi speakers in a particular context. One way of avoiding otherization is to communicate with the people concerned and get to know them well before reducing them to what they are not. This study has adopted a small culture perspective by focusing on one particular school. Attempts have also been made to avoid stereotyping and otherization by getting the views of the participants and an understanding of the people concerned from them on the basis of their own experiences.

2.1.3 Language Proficiency

Another term that warrants defining is 'proficiency'. The term language proficiency refers to competence or the ability to speak/read/write/use a language well both inside and outside the classroom. According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (1983) a 'limited English proficient student' is one who comes from a non-English speaking background and

> …who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such an individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English or to participate fully in [the English speaking] society.

A child's lack of proficiency may be due to lack of exposure to the language because no one in the family speaks English or speaks it well. However with appropriate home and school environment, regular opportunities to interact with other speakers and appropriate support from adults and peers such a child can become a proficient English speaker. The consequences of limited proficiency in children may be that the child may lose self confidence and become withdrawn and this can result in low educational attainment and possible fossilization at puberty or eventually dropping out from school.

The following two sections provide an insight into how children learn languages and the factors that affect them in their learning of EAL.

2.2 Theoretical background to the study:

2.2.1 Children as language learners.

Numerous views have been expressed by various authorities on how children learn languages and the factors that affect them in their language learning. This section is going to focus on how children learn languages while the next section focuses more specifically on factors that affect their EAL learning. The views discussed in this chapter are not only of theoretical relevance and interest but they are also of practical importance as they provide insights which can help teachers and other people working with children to be more effective in promoting the children's language learning.

When children begin to learn a second language they do not approach it empty handed as they already know at least one language, their mother tongue (Gordon 2007; Lightbown and Spada 2006). Their L1 is therefore an important knowledge base which teachers and other people working them can use to help them develop their L2 learning. Research has also shown that sometimes when children are immersed in an L2 situation in which they cannot speak the second language they tend to speak their mother tongue in the hope that this will enable them to communicate with others (Gordon 2007). This is a familiar situation at the school under study particularly at the beginning of the year among reception children who have had no or limited access to English prior to commencing school. It is also not surprising to see two children use their different home languages to try and communicate with each other.

In the absence of a lingua franca it is possible for children to create their own form of communication even if they are just signs. Gordon (2007) argues that this form of communication can work quite well in cases where the meaning of what has been said is clarified by the context in which it is said, for example if they are playing a game where they alternate touching an object or throwing a ball. Unfortunately it does not work when the context fails to clarify what has been said. In some cases when this happens it can cause the children to become frustrated and withdraw into the silent mode or what is commonly known as the Silent Period or Rejection period (Gordon 2007: 58). This period varies from child to child but can be quite productive because during this period

the child may, through just listening to others become more aware of the sound system of the target language and may begin to develop a better understanding of it.

The following section which precedes the section on children as facile language learners focuses on the 'Critical Period Hypothesis' and how it is believed to affect children's language learning.

2.2.2 The 'Critical Period Hypothesis' (CPH)

Proponents of the Critical Period Hypothesis generally believe that children learn languages better than adults and that the ability to learn a second language gets worse as a learner gets older and her/his brain laterizes. (Lenneberg 1984 and Singleton and Ryan 2004). This view is supported by Fromkin and Rodman (1993:413) who contend that this is the period when 'language learning proceeds easily, swiftly and without external intervention' but after puberty grammatical acquisition becomes difficult limiting the ability to learn languages. To prove their point Fromkin and Rodman (1993) cite examples of children some as young as eighteen months, who having been left with wild animals, alone in the woods or confined to a small room with minimal human contact were unable to learn a language even after being reintroduced to society. It is important to consider though that this might have been due to the lack of any linguistic input or the trauma they experienced.

Singleton (1995) contends that older EAL learners progress faster than children in the initial stages but they hardly ever achieve the native like fluency that younger learners display. This is disputed by Nikolov (2000) and Neufield (2001) who argue that adults are capable of achieving high, even native-like levels of proficiency in L2 under the right conditions. Kennedy, in Oller and Richards (1973), also believes that older learners can benefit from their more mature cognition, longer attention span, longer short term memory spam and reasoning skills. They, like (Singleton 1995, Lenneberg 1984 and Schumann 1975) argue that the main advantage young learners have over adults, is the longer time they have to master the language and the ability to achieve native-like pronunciation.

CPH is surrounded by controversy (McLaughlin 1985, Genesee 1987) and despite the numerous studies undertaken on it there is no conclusive evidence to show that it exists. These and other critiques who subscribe to the current views of CPH argue that children

do not necessarily perform better than older learners and that the reasons behind different rates in second language learning may be psychological and or social rather than biological. For example children may be motivated to speak English because they are desperate to communicate their weekend or other news to peers at school whereas an adult who does not need to use English because there are other people who speak her/his L1 may not be motivated to learn it. Marinova-Todd (2003) in Pinter (2011) contends that it is not just age but other factors such as exposure to good L2 input and teaching that produce the best results for children's language learning. My teaching experience has also shown that children's L2 learning is also affected by such factors s as their desire to explore the world around them including languages spoken by others and availability of literacy resources such as books and toys as well as regular opportunities to practice speaking L2 with peers and adults. The following section focuses on children's facility in second language learning.

2.2.3 Children as facile second language learners
According to Gordon (2007:44) children are facile second language learners while adults tend to struggle when learning a second language. This view is supported by McGlothlin cited in The Internet TESL Journal (1997) who contends that children, unlike adults, learn new languages quite easily. This is in line with Lenneberg's (1984) assertion that children have an instinctive (inborn) facility for language or a genetic predisposition for language learning. Chomsky (1986), who also supports this view, contends that children have an inborn capacity known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), which enables them to learn the complex rules of language. It is the LAD that enables children to produce grammatical structures that they have not heard before. Chomsky also argued that when young children interact with their parents and others and are exposed to language their inbuilt Universal Grammar (UG) tunes itself in to the grammar of the particular language to which they are exposed. This unconscious tuning in allows children to acquire the grammar of their mother language intuitively by natural means (Johnstone 2002). The Chomskyan position views UG as part of the brain and argues that instead of 'learning' a language the child's mind 'grows' into the adult's language as long as certain environmental conditions are available, in a similar way to how a bulb grows into a flower (Cook 2002). While Chomsky's and Lenneberg's assertions refer mainly to L1 acquisition/learning, Lakshman (1995) argues that to some

extend second language learning, like L1, is indeed influenced by UG. While I do not rule out that UG may well play an important role in language acquisition, I believe there are also environmental and social factors that influence language learning such as a child's physical and social environment which includes access to a variety of literacy resources and opportunities to practise speaking the language being learnt.

However, McGlothlin (1997) argues that what enables children to learn languages easily is the fact that they are not normally under pressure to learn a language and usually there is no time limit for them to learn it whereas adults tend to be kept motivated and on task by pressure, tests and time limits. According to him such pressures do not seem to affect children who continue learning the language because they want to communicate and play with others. However, McLaughlin et al (1995) calls on teachers to understand that children's learning of a second language is a much longer, harder and more complex process than they have been made to believe. He warns that children can be harmed if teachers have unrealistically high expectations and inadequate knowledge/understanding of how children learn. My own experience as a teacher has also shown that the widely held view that children just 'effortlessly pick up' second or additional languages can be quite misleading. As pointed out by Gordon (2007:49) "...in the initial stages of second language learning, little children advance more slowly than do older children and adults." Indeed, during the early stages of second language learning young children struggle and like adults they can experience the pressure to learn a language because of their desire to communicate with others. For example it can be quite frustrating for a child when his/her peers or teacher(s) do not understand what he/she is saying or when he/she does not understand what they are saying. I have seen some children get so frustrated with learning English that they have refused to speak it for lengths of time up to a month or longer. I have also seen other children get upset and unsettled to such an extent that they physically shake when called upon to perform or speak to others in the Target language they are not very familiar with. However with continuous exposure to the target language and relevant support from adults and peers they eventually grasp the language and speak it fluently eventually outperforming the adults, particularly in pronunciation.

2.2.4 Children as creative language learners

It has also been observed that children are creative language learners who do not merely reproduce the language they hear (Bikerton in Gordon 2007). In his comparison of language patterns used by adults and children he notes that children are capable of introducing grammatical structures into the 'grammatically less complex language patterns used by adults' (Gordon 2007:48). It should be noted though that the grammatical structures that children create are not necessarily correct, for example "I goed Tesco with my mum", but they are nevertheless consistent with those in the language, proving the validity of Chomsky's UG Theory. It is this ability to create simple grammatical patterns that enabled the children in Bikerton's studies, cited in Gordon (2007), to developed pidgin languages into Creole in an attempt to communicate effectively with each other.

Supporting children's language creativity, Wood (1998) posits that children are neither passive nor consistently compliant learners. Although he disagrees with other aspects of Piaget's theories, such as the extent of the impact of social interaction on children's learning, he concurs with Piaget's view that children actively 'construct' their knowledge of the world (Wood 1998). He posits that "Children construct their own knowledge by acting upon objects in space and time". This implies that children learn through spontaneous play and by interacting with things in their environment such as the objects they handle and explore. It also refers to their social interactions which he accuses Piaget of underplaying. In Wood's (1998) view, social interactions especially with other children has a strong, positive impact on children's language development as it exposes them to similar and different points of views which can help them to form their own opinion of things. This was evidenced by the Focus group interviews conducted in this study where children's ideas bounced off from each other enabling them to develop each other's ideas as well as to come up with their own ideas.

In addition to social interaction with peers ,Wood (1998:17) also argues that social interaction with adults or more experienced members of one's culture/society, through general discussions and asking questions, helps to enhance a child's understanding through 'joint construction' of meaning. He also argues that with adult help children are eventually able to do what they were not able to do by themselves. He cites an example from one of his studies where children below seven years of age were unable to perform certain tasks but after being taught (scaffolding), "...children as young as three

succeeded in doing it alone..." This is in line with Vygotsky's (1962) perception of a child as an active learner surrounded by people who help him/her to learn. He views a child's development as occurring in a social context where s/he first learns through interaction with adults and other children but eventually learns to think and do things independently (Cameron 2001). Vygotsky (1962) highlights the crucial role played by the social environment and in particular the role played by more experienced members of the child's society. The rationale behind such external and social activities is that from the assisted learning the child internalises what s/he has learnt and uses it to regulate his/her own thinking. The role played by adults in fostering a child's linguistic development by supporting them and nurturing their efforts to learn is   discussed later in this chapter under 'Adult support'.

2.2.5 Learning through exposure to the language and through social interaction
According to Gordon (2007), children learn everyday words from incidental exposure to those words, for example through repetitive use. For example the words register, reading record, and homework are regularly used in school and in contexts where their meanings are either automatically or gradually revealed. Children also learn new words incidentally through practical experiences, stories/poems/rhymes/songs/games and role play. For example the children can be helped to understand the concept of darkness through the shared experience of going into a dark room to look for something, through pictures/gestures or through sharing stories with them such as 'The owl who was afraid of the dark as well as through dramatisation of the story or through games. The fact that children learn words through incidental exposure is supported by Elley, cited in Gordon (2007), who expresses the view that young language learners learn more words through interesting stories or conversations than actual vocabulary exercises. This is because certain words are more easily explained through a story than by mere, isolated verbal explanations.

The strategies that children use also help them in language learning. Children tend to focus their attention less on learning a language than on their play and interactions with others. McGlothlin (1997) contends that a child does not pay attention to grammatical rules or pronunciation and all he/she is worried about is getting the response s/he wants.

Children learn language through a strategy which Pinter (2011:20) refers to as 'fast mapping'. This is when children acquire and start using a word that they have heard used in familiar contexts. In support of this view, Gordon (2007) surmises that children of 3-4 years old can even learn a word after a single exposure that lasts only 3 seconds and remember it a week after hearing it. This reminds me of the word tobogganing which I introduced to my Year 1 class once when discussing the movements made by penguins. Shortly after using the word and asking children to pretend they were penguins and to toboggan from one end of the room to the other, I lost count of the number of times I heard them use it and other words learnt in similar contexts. Similarly, after exposure to the words 'nicest' and 'oldest' while reading the children's story book, 'The toy shop' by Wendy Body some of my students could not help using the words to describe the nice, old people they knew. What was even more interesting was hearing them apply this 'new' knowledge to their everyday life through comments such as 'This is the biggest/tallest/cutest... I have seen/heard' as they interacted with their peers in the class 'toy-shop role-play area' or outside in the playground. They also creatively came up with their own forms of superlatives such as **goodest, handsomest** and **beautifulest** which we praised but gently corrected through recasting and modelling the correct forms of the words. This however shows that children do not just copy adult speech but are capable of creating their own forms grammatical patterns which they have not heard before.

It is typical of children to experiment like this with language they have just heard and to use their success in communicating to build their confidence (McGlothlin 1997). My experience in teaching young children has shown that it is this kind of confidence that makes children want to experiment with new language even more thereby resulting in more success, more reinforcement and enhanced confidence. It is also important to note that unlike adults, children, by nature, are able to maintain this confidence cycle which arises from successful usage of the language and keep it going even when things get difficult.

It is not always that children hear a word the first time and want to use it. Pinter (2011) observes that sometimes children may hear a word used in a relevant context and not understand it straight away. However, if they hear the same word several times and in different contexts they may begin to understand what it actually means. This brings us

to yet another way in which children learn languages which is through repetition. Whenever things are repeated in their life it helps them to understand more about the related language better. For instance, when children are repeatedly exposed to certain words through conversation, stories, rhymes and/or songs they may begin to understand what the words means and start using them as well.

2.2.6 Children can be selective learners

It should also be noted that children focus their attention on things that interest them and the language they learn first is related to those things. In his study of his son, McGlothlin (1997) concluded that children do not simply let language pour over them and seep into their minds but that they are quite selective about the language they pay attention to. Unlike adults who get confused when too much information is received at the same time, children are not usually thrown by such situations. They do not try to take in everything at the same time. They are in control and decide what they like best and ignore everything else. In a similar way to how some children are picky about their food they can also be selective listeners, choosing what they want to hear. McGlothlin (1997) argues that they are generally good at shutting or blanking out what does not interest them and focus their attention on things that interest them, those that are around them or things that they find easy to understand. An example that illustrates how children show interest is when they try to imitate others around them. Sometimes this makes younger children say things they do not understand because they are simply copying others. For example in a childhood fishing game I used to play with other children there was a part which required players to spell the word 'fish'. However, some of the younger children were heard calling out the letters 'siss' because that is what they thought their siblings / peers were saying only to realise when they were older that they were meant to be spelling the word fish.

2.3 Children's use of schema in second language learning

Another interesting dimension of how children learn a new language is dealt with by the schema theory, whose proponents include Emmott and Alexander (2010), Stockwell (2002), Davis 1991 and McClelland and Rumelhart (1986). The term 'schema' (plural schemata) has been defined differently by various authors. Stockwell (2002) views it as a cognitive model consisting of interrelated categories set up socially or culturally and based on individual experience. Emmott and Alexander (2010) argue that schemata are

cognitive structures representing generic knowledge and vocabulary stored in the memory. They go on to say that the structures do not contain specific but general information about entities, instances and events. Emmott and Alexander (2010) concur with others (Stockwell 2002 and McClelland and Rumelhart 1986) that children's schemata represent a mental image of various aspects of life such as people met, places visited, stories heard, vocabulary acquired or life experiences. Without these mental representations or structures it becomes difficult for people to understand what they see, hear or read. It is the role of adults (parents, teachers, bilingual assistants) to help children build up their language schemata (vocabulary) through shared experiences or exposure to appropriate experiences and language which will promote their learning of the target language.

The following diagram illustrates the notion of a schema.

Fig 3: Illustration of a schema. From Davis 1991: 21

Figure 3 shows some of the components that might be included in a person's schema of 'egg' and also illustrates the interrelatedness of components of an egg schema.

Although this particular example is based on an egg, similar schemata can be transferred or formulated for many other objects or topics such as English food or customs. In fact there are schemata for everything (objects, events, languages, situations and settings/locations) and it is also important to note that schema theory can be applied to any learning situation including EAL e.g. through the inclusion of bilingual texts and related visuals or artefacts. For example an 'English culture' schema might contain information about what clothes are worn for different occasions, special English food, greetings, leisure time activities and English folk traditions. One important thing to remember is that long before they come to school, pupils develop schemata about their experiences and their schemata continue to expand with more experiences.

Adults and children alike use schemata not only to interpret but to predict situations occurring in their environment/setting (Emmott and Alexander 2010). For example while observing two Reception class boys playing in the sand tray one day I heard one child ask another to pass him the 'thingy'. The other child was able to correctly interpret 'thingy' to mean the small plastic bucket he was holding earlier. The little boy probably activated his schema of sand play to envisage what his friend wanted. From my teaching experience I have also observed on numerous occasions children completing each other's sentences and /or explaining to adults what another child means. While in such cases teachers almost always remind the children to let their friends speak for themselves it is important to note that such things do happen and that such incidents might indicate how one may use one's content and formal schemata to fill in the gaps.

As with any other areas of learning, schema theory can be used to help children enhance their reading skills. For example readers can develop a good understanding of text by combining textual information with the information they already have. As it is rare and often unnecessary for texts to contain all the detail required for them to be fully understood, children use their schemata to make sense of events and descriptions by providing default background information for comprehension (Emmott and Alexander 2010). The reader's schemata therefore compensates for any knowledge gaps in the text. However, as schemata are situational and socio-culturally dependent, some readers will naturally come up with more information from their schemata than their counterparts. Hence Herman (2002) and Emmott (1997) argue that although schema theory is important, readers need to supplement general knowledge with the knowledge acquired

from the text. This implies that children should be encouraged to use their schemata as well as textual information to understand what they are reading about.

EAL children can be helped to activate their existing schemata related to the new text they are reading through the use of meta-cognitive strategies such as shared reading and discussion of the title/heading of the text/key vocabulary, discussing the pictures in the story and making predictions based on the title or pictures, and making comparisons of what they are reading about with objects or events in their own lives. Other ways in which relevant schemata can be constructed or built upon include the use of visual aids, demonstrations, real life experiences and role play (Emmott and Alexander 2010). Another useful activity might be to, for example, show children a video of a farm before asking them to read a text about farms. However these activities might not be sufficient on their own so teachers may need to supply additional information or experiences including appropriate vocabulary to talk about farms in order to help them construct a meaningful schema of farms.

It would be naïve to overlook the problems that might arise when applying schema theory in the classroom. Schema-related research has highlighted reader problems related to absent or culture-specific (alternate) schemata, as well as non-activation of schemata, and even overuse of background knowledge (Carrell et al1988:4). Also, there might be schema interference where dominant or negative schemata are activated or pupils might simply not use the contextual and background information provided. Teachers may over emphasize the schema perspective at the expense of other approaches (McCarthy 1991:168 and Eskey 1988:93) or apply the theory incorrectly. They might also overlook the fact that children might have insufficient background knowledge to build up a schema of something they are learning about (Emmott and Alexander 2010 and Carrell 1988:245). The same authors go on to say that where schema deficiencies are culture-specific, it might be useful for the teachers to provide local texts [or texts based on the children's experiences].

There may also be problems with research which uses schema theory or with ways in which the theory has been applied to teaching and learning. For example the schemata construct in Brewer and Treyens' (1981) work allowed the researchers to understand what was going on. In their experiment participants were requested to wait in a room identified as an 'academic's study'. Later, when asked about the room's contents some

of the participants recalled having seen 'expected' items such as books in the study whereas none were present and some thought the notepad was on the table whereas it was on a chair. Incompatible items such as a brick were hardly remembered. Brewer and Treyens (1981) therefore concluded that the participants' expectations that there were books in the study were enough to prevent their accurate recollection of the scenes. The theory therefore demonstrated that schemata processing can influence or even hinder the correct recollection of things (Brewer and Treyens (1981). For example one may remember seeing a dirty and ragged looking boy running away with stolen goods from a shop when it was actually a smart teenager who did it.

This and other numerous examples show that while the schema theory is quite useful and can yield positive results it can also result in errors. Therefore, teachers need to use it with care, monitoring to see if the expected effects are occurring and paying attention to possible schema interference or non- activation of the schema.

The next section reviews literature on factors affecting children's learning of EAL such as linguistic factors, home background, culture and adult support.

2.4 Factors that affect children's learning of EAL

While a lot has been written about methodologies in second language teaching and learning very little has been written regarding the contextual factors that affect young children's learning of EAL. It is hoped that this study will help to fill some of the gaps. As pointed out by Reilly (1988) language acquisition and maintenance depend on a variety of factors including instructional factors relating to how the language is initially acquired, cultural factors such as the value of the language in society and personality factors such as the individual characteristics of the learner. On the other hand, Walqui (2000) views the contextual factors from such perspectives as the language, the learner and the learning process. Language related factors include among other things the linguistic distance between the native language of the learner and the second (target) language. Learner related factors, on the other hand, include such aspects as the learner's linguistic background, home background, culture, age and individual differences while learning process related factors include learning styles, motivation and classroom interaction. Some of these factors will be discussed in greater detail in the following subsections.

2.4.1 Linguistic factors

According to results from Walqui's (2000) studies some of the factors affecting EAL learners include the linguistic, social and psychological distances between the two languages, learners' level of proficiency in their first language (L1), their knowledge of the second language, their dialect, the status of L1 in their community and societal attitudes towards their native language. Although in Walqui's studies these factors were linked to adolescents they also apply to young children.

Language distance refers to the differences between the native and target languages. As pointed out by Schumann (1978), if the target language is similar to L1 then it will be easier to learn than one which is different from the language already known by the learner. If the target language is very different from L1 then the learner has more to learn and this might mean learning completely new and different speech patterns to those they are accustomed to in L1. Foertsch (1998), Snow (1992) and Gay (1988) argue that discrepancies between the structures, values and expectations of the home language and school language may put children at a disadvantage in their success in early reading tasks. They agree with Schumann (1978) that the more similar the structures, values and expectations between home and school the more likely the child will succeed in their early reading skills.

While this may affect older children and adults it does not seem to affect young children in the same way, maybe because of the way they learn languages, just picking them up through interaction with others. This view is opposed by Young and Helot (2002) who contend that the more different a language is, the more motivated the children are to understand it.

Social and psychological distance, however, has an immense impact on a learner's second language learning. According to Schumann (1978) the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group determines the degree to which s/he acquires the language. From this perspective second language acquisition may be greatly affected by the social and psychological distance between the L1 and L2 cultures (McLaughlin1987). Social distance refers to the differences in social life (customs, beliefs etc) between the learner who is a member of one social group and another social group whose members speak the learner's target language. Psychological distance, on the other hand, results from numerous affective factors such as language shock, culture

shock and culture stress that can affect individuals learning another language. If the social/psychological distance is great then acculturation is impeded and their learning of the target language may be 'fossilized' (Ellis 1997), which means it does not progress.

Another important linguistic factor is the level of a learner's proficiency in their own language. Research has shown that proficiency in the second language depends on first language proficiency (Foertsch 1998, Rehbein 1984 cited in Blackledge 1994 and McLaughlin 1986). If a learner has high native language proficiency then it will most likely be easier for them to learn L2 but if they lack L1 proficiency they are likely to experience more difficulties in their L2 learning. This is because many of the first language skills learnt will transfer to the second language. In this way their knowledge of L1 will act as a springboard for L2 and further language learning. The implication of this for young learners is that there are individual differences and there is great variability in EAL learning but there is also great potential for L2 learning particularly for those who have a high proficiency level in L1.

The status of one's L1 in society might also affect one's learning of the language. As pointed out by Diaz-Rico (2000) it can be quite difficult for children to feel proud of their language and culture if they suffer from low status. This can negatively impact their L2 learning. In support, Walqui (2000) argues that children whose native language has a low status when compared to the second may lose their first, perhaps feeling that they are losing their inferior language and culture and gaining a more prestigious one. On the other hand, some children may try to hold on to their own language and culture too much in fear of losing them and sometimes at the expense of learning the target language. In some cases intercultural insecurities may occur. For example some of the Asian pupils in the study speak Urdu while others speak Punjabi. Some of the children believed that Urdu is superior to Punjabi. Some of the parents have also confirmed that learning English makes some Punjabi speakers feel more confident as they consider English to be superior to both Punjabi and Urdu. However, as there is no linguistic ground for judging one language superior or inferior this belief is therefore scientifically speaking wrong.

It is important for the learners, their families and everybody else involved in children's learning of EAL to develop a positive attitude towards L2 that will foster the development of their language learning. This is because the attitudes and motivation of

the learner, their peers, parents, the school, neighborhood communities and society can have a positive or negative impact on the learner's second language learning (Walqui 2000). If the learners view second language learning as a replacement of their native language they may not be as keen to learn it as they would if they viewed it as a way of learning an additional language that will help to expand their repertoires (Walqui 2000). Similarly if they see it as a language of oppression they may not be eager to learn it but if they value the language for how it can empower them in their life they may be motivated to learn it.

This view was supported by Young and Helot's (2003) study, which exposed children in a monolingual French school to a variety of different languages in taster sessions before allowing them to choose a language to learn. It provides a good illustration of how socio-cultural and linguistic pluralism can be promoted by raising an awareness of the various languages spoken within the community. Because they know some of the languages are real and relevant to their lives the children are likely to identify with the languages and learn more from such an experience than by being exposed to a single foreign language, such as German or Czech that might not even have any relevance to their lives.

2.4.2 Individual differences

In addition to linguistic factors, children's learning of EAL is also affected by individual characteristics or individual differences because every individual is unique. Pinter (2006) argues that not only are there considerable differences between children of the same age in different cultures and educational contexts but also between same aged children working within the same context. Pinter (2006:2) contends this is because 'children learn at their own speed: they change quickly and develop new skills and abilities in spurts'. My experience in teaching young children has also shown that regardless of their similarities or differences in age, interests, socio-cultural or educational contexts children are diverse and unique learners who learn languages differently and at different paces.

EAL learners like everybody else come from diverse backgrounds and have diverse needs. In Skehan's (1989) view, it is also important to remember that learners have different learning styles. Learning styles refer to an individual's natural and

preferred way of acquiring, retaining and retrieving information or simply, ways of learning. While Walqui (2000) identifies three learning styles visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK), Felder et al (1995) breaks learning styles into five categories namely:

• Sensory vs. intuitive;

• Visual vs. verbal;

• Active vs. reflective;

• Sequential vs. global; and

• Inductive vs. deductive

Although it is argued that learning style research (Dunn and Griggs (2003, Walqui 2000, Dunn and Dunn 1972) has shown that matching teaching with learning styles has a positive impact on students' achievement it does not mean that the best way to teach is to exclusively use students' preferred learning styles. It is important to note that a person can have several learning styles underlying a more predominant one for example, a visual learner might also be a kinesthetic learner and similarly a learner with musical ability might also be a linguistic learner. Although the Dunn and Dunn (1972) learning styles model asserts that it is beneficial to teach the students in their preferred style, it appears that the implication of learning styles on children's language learning is to include different types of experiences in children's language learning. This is supported by Gill (2005) who posits that it is helpful to expose learners to a variety of learning experiences as this widens their repertoire of learning styles. For example a visual learner who learns best by seeing objects or visual images of what s/he is learning about can also benefit from listening to the teacher or to a recording or Music about her/his subject of interest. Exposure to different ways of learning including appropriate child friendly instruction, which involves use of all their senses, may help to facilitate and perhaps quicken language acquisition. In my opinion this is good because it not only opens up to children diverse ways of learning but also empowers them to use a wider range of learning strategies which enables them to be more effective learners. L2 learners in particular, who need to be self directed as they do not always have guidance or instruction, especially out of school (Kang 1999) benefit from being able to use

various learning strategies. This may help them to achieve competence and autonomy in EAL learning.

The learning styles discussed have been included for their apparent popularity, practicality and simplicity which may be why the VAK model in particular has been widely used in schools. Dunn and Griggs (2003) and other proponents of the VAK theory assert that it not only acknowledges individual differences in preferred perception processes but also broadens input to include not just auditory but visual and kinesthetic aspects. The more comprehensive Dunn and Dunn (1972) model is believed to include other factors as well (environmental, social, emotional, physiological etc). Dunn and Griggs (2003) posit that the model has been peer reviewed and numerous studies on it published in many universities and that the model has been validated in a range of geographic and ethnically diverse settings. However, despite their strengths learning styles theories have their own weaknesses such as overreliance on learners' strengths rather than weaknesses. Opponents of the theories contend that they have not been thoroughly researched. For example Coffield et al (2004) have raised questions about the design, reliability and or validity of some of the learning styles instruments used. They deemed Dunn and Dunn's (1972) VAK model to be unsuitable because of the strong claims made for its impact and also because no independent research was done on it (Coffield et al 2004). After analysis of authors' claims and empirical evidence on their effect on student learning Coffield's team raised concerns about such issues as the idea of learning cycles, the consistency of VAK preferences and the benefits of matching teaching with learning styles implying the need for more research on learning theories to determine their usefulness in education.

Apart from learning styles individual differences may also include factors such as personality, age, sex, intelligence and language aptitude as well as affective factors (discussed in the next session) which can affect their language learning styles (Rossiter 2003). Bialystok and Fröhlich (1978) and Gardner and MacIntyre (1993, 1992) sum up individual difference factors into two basic categories: cognitive and affective variables. Commenting on cognitive factors Mitchell and Myles (2004) contend that pupils with above average intelligence tend to do well in second language learning. In support, Harley and Hart (1997) posit that those with phonetic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, good memory and inductive learning ability also tend to perform well in their language learning. Metacognition, which is defined simply as thinking about

thinking (Anderson 1999), is vital in second language learning. Learners who are metacognitively aware usually have a good idea of what strategies to use to find out what they do not know such as using their phonic knowledge to tackle reading unfamiliar words or using visual or contextual clues to deduce their meaning.

2.4.3 Affective factors

Researchers agree that children's EAL learning may be adversely influenced by affective factors and that attitudes and motivation are significant factors in determining linguistic proficiency and achievement (Gardner 1985, 2001, 2004, Norton 2000, Oxford 1996, Dörnyei 1996, Oxford and Shearin 1994 and Krashen, 1985). Affective factors have been described by Ehrman et al (2003: 319) as reflections of affective variables such as '… attitudes, motivation, self-efficacy, tolerance of ambiguity, and anxiety ...' They go on to argue that many other affective factors exist but they are all in some way related to motivation. These factors include defense mechanisms, internal attitudes, self-esteem, alertness required to act, self-regulation, self-management, beliefs and emotional intelligence such as handling of shock or stress and the ability to cope with unknown situations that may arise as a result of exposure to, and interaction within the native (as well as their own language) community. All of these factors play an important role in promoting or preventing learner autonomy (p.322). As acknowledged by many other researchers in the field (Dörnyei 2003, Rossiter 2003, Kristmanson 2000 and Sparks and Ganschow 1991), affective contributions should be given considerable thought because of their centrality in second language learning.

The main issue with affective states is what causes them and the effect they can have on language learning. As pointed out by Gordon (2007) negative emotions can inhibit language production. For example when a child feels intimidated, tense or overwhelmed s/he can 'freeze', go blank , have a mental block or become speechless whereas when a child is relaxed and happy they are likely to be more prepared to understand or speak the target language. Similarly the emotional upheaval of moving into a new environment with a new culture (which is the case with most of the children in the study) can be nerve wrecking for any child (Haynes 2005). This view is shared by Brown (2007), who contends that the culture shock experienced by people learning L2 in a second culture ranges from being a mild irritation to a deep psychological panic and crisis. Other situations that may give rise to similar affective states include not having

adequate interaction with speakers of L2, limited [L1 and L2] proficiency and low motivation (Gass and Schachter 1989). Negative attitudes or adverse comments of native speakers of L2 can also cause learners of the language anguish. Although this tends to affect older children and adults most it can also easily upset younger children.

In their study on Canadian children learning French as a second language Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) found a consistent relationship between affective factors such as language attitudes, motivation and second language achievement with the strongest relationship between motivation and achievement. However, such relationships are complex because the factors interact with each other and influence each other. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint one factor as having more impact than the others. Although their research was on adults the same may apply to young children.

Attitudes and motivation are only two of several but very important types of individual differences of EAL children that affect achievement in the study of the target language. An attitude has been defined by Gardner (1985: 9) as an 'evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent'. Hence according to this definition attitudes influence the individual's response to a phenomenon or situation but do not determine them. Procter (1993: 117) contends that an attitude is 'a hypothetical construct because it is not visible or touchable.' He observes that 'what seems to be common among most definitions is that they view an attitude as a predisposition to behave in a particular way' (p117). For example if someone with limited English proficiency enjoys the company of native English speakers, hangs out with English speaking friends, enrolls for English classes and makes every effort to learn the English culture one could safely say this person has a positive attitude towards English and English speaking people.

In a similar vein, Mugglestone (1977) defines motivation as the central force in second language learning which establishes whether a learner will decide to do something, how much effort they will put into the task/activity and how long they will stay on the task. Deci and Ryan (1985) contend that intrinsic motivation is related to basic human needs for competence, autonomy and success. Gan (2004) sums it all up by describing motivation as a complex phenomenon which includes various aspects such as the individual's drive, the need for achievement and success, desire for stimulation and new

experiences. Therefore this may suggest that motivation to learn a second language is a combination of effort, desire and favorable attitudes towards the language.

As Gan (2004) says, language learning is a cyclical process emanating from strong motivation to positive attitudes and effective learning effort which may result in increased language attainment and the feeling of progress, which may in turn enhance motivation and facilitate further effort. Giving children the opportunity to socialize and be physically active or creative, for example through role play /drama/ picture making, may motivate them to learn English. Since language is needed for most social interaction if lessons give opportunities for interaction that the EAL learner would very much like to participate in, this could motivate him/her to try and use the linguistic resources for this purpose. For young children this is likely to facilitate the development of the target language. It would be naïve, however to assume that enjoyment = motivation = language learning because it does not always work out that way. This is because a learner may enjoy certain activities but not learn anything from them. One way of motivating young children to learn involves engaging them in practical activities involving language such as creating a picture or painting, acting out a story or engaging them in some social interaction such as a small group discussion or working collaboratively on a project. It is therefore vital for those working with young EAL learners to engage them in activities that can motivate them to acquire L2 through involvement in numerous activities and through interaction with others. As pointed out by Gordon (2007), learning can be fun and it should be made appealing.

2.4.4 Personality

Some studies have found a relationship between personality and language learning. Brown (1980:103) argues that 'the more a person is open-minded, enthusiastic, active, unethnocentric…the better he/she learns a second or foreign language'. Brown goes on to say that self esteem is another factor and that '… no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self esteem, self confidence… and belief in your own capabilities for that activity.' Supporting these views and on the basis of a study they conducted to predict language learning behaviour based on personality, Broadkey and Shore (1976:153) state that 'personality elements clearly affect classroom behaviour and language learning outcomes'. Their study included children's appraisal of their knowledge of target languages, situational self esteem and

their esteem of performing certain tasks in English. In the study, participants were asked to state their opinions and attitudes towards language learning in general and learning English in particular, their reasons for learning English and their attitude towards English culture and towards English speaking people. The results of the study showed that positive attitudes and interest in the target language and in English speaking people play a critical role in second language learning. Parents, teachers and all those concerned with children's learning of EAL should therefore strive to develop positive attitudes in them so that they are motivated to learn.

This section has discussed a variety of individual learner variables but the study of such variables is not easy and the results of research are not entirely satisfactory, partly because of the lack of clear definitions and methods of measuring the individual characteristics and partly because of the complex interactions of those characteristics. For example it is generally assumed that extroverts are well suited to language learning but this assertion is not supported by research (Lightbown and Spada 2006). On the contrary some research has established that in some cases introverts have made greater progress than extroverts (Lily Wong Filmore 1979 cited in Lightbown and Spada 2006). I have also observed that on some occasions some of my soft spoken, quiet and reserved students have outshone the extroverted ones in second language learning. Also individual characteristics such as personality are very complex and difficult to measure because they have many traits such as anxiety, willingness to participate, self esteem, empathy, dominance inter alia and research has not found a direct link between personality traits and language learning (Lightbown and Spada 2006). Therefore it remains difficult to make precise predictions or even conclusions about how a particular individual's characteristics influence his/her success as a language learner. Other factors discussed in the following section include availability of appropriate resources and a conducive home and school environment with supportive adults.

2.4.5 Home background and parental support

Home background plays a vital role in children's learning of a second language. With young EAL learners, factors such as the level of parental support and availability of resources can strongly affect the desire and ability to learn the target language. In a study conducted by Griffin et al (2004) it was discovered that EAL learners tended to do well at English if they had a positive attitude towards social use of English, if they had

supportive parents who took a keen interest in their studies and encouraged them to work hard, provided access to many books in any language at home or school as well as providing regular opportunities to speak English outside school.

The study also found that the educational achievement of parents was strongly related to measures of an enriched home background for English learning such as availability of literacy resources and assistance with English homework. The same sentiments are shared by Schickedanz (1999) and Braunger et al (1997) who contend that from birth till about 8 years families, care givers and childhood educators have significant impact on children's language and emerging literacy skills. These authors concur that a child's literacy development is affected by the language and literacy experiences shared by family members as well as the books and other literacy materials found at home which confirms the strong influence that home background has on children' language learning. It should be remembered that there are numerous aspects of parental support which include assistance with homework, attendance at parent –teacher meetings, parental aspirations or expectations for their children's educational support and many others.

In support Bloom (1980) suggests that family research should focus on alterable variables that can make an impact on children's learning. The author argues that parental attitudes influence their children's attitudes. Findings from their studies also show that children's second language and academic success is influenced by such variables as rich parent - child verbal interactions, opportunities for children to be imaginative and to investigate and find things out for themselves with the adults' support and become independent learners. If parents could be helped to enrich their home learning environments this may help to promote their children's learning because the home environment not only shapes a child's initial views of learning but continues to influence them later in their lives.

Parents are believed to have a major role in their children's second language learning process. Gardner (2001) identifies two roles for parents: active or passive. The first refers to parents' conscious promotion of their children's language learning as they interact with them verbally, teaching them the language through modeling and as they monitor their progress and praise their success. The latter may include encouraging and supervising children's work but sometimes transmitting negative attitudes towards learning the target language. This can be manifested openly or discretely through

comments about English speakers, the importance of learning English or indirectly showing apathy towards the language. For example parents may encourage children to learn English and stress the importance of doing well in their studies but at the same time showing negative attitudes towards the English people, thus undermining their active role. This results in creating confusion in the children about the real importance and use of learning English (Phinney et al 2001).

Several studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between parental attitudes and children's successful L2 learning (Cummins 2010, Paratore et al 2003, Epstein and Sanders 2000 and Lareau 1989). In their study Gardner et al (1999) discovered that integratively oriented children with positive attitudes came from integratively oriented parents who showed positive attitudes towards the target language group. They concluded that the degree of skill attained by the learner depends on the attitudinal atmosphere and literacy support provided in the home.

Many parents of the EAL learners in this study hope their children will become proficient in two languages, their home language and English in order to maintain a sense of their identity as well as to function effectively in school and other social settings, but they may find it difficult to strike a balance between the two languages. Baker and Jones (1998) and Fillmore (1991) contend that if children are exposed to one language at home and another at school at the expense of the home language they may experience subtractive bilingualism (loss of a language) instead of gaining a language (additive bilingualism). This is a situation in which some of the children in this study find themselves when their parents feel it is better for their children to receive only English input at any cost.

The same researchers believe that EAL learning will be enhanced if parents of learners speak only English at home but such a view overlooks the fact that learning a new language is affected by numerous physical, psychological and emotional factors rather than just speaking or hearing the target language. In any case language loss can have a great and negative effect on children's learning of EAL. Parents who are English language learners themselves will inadvertently supply less than rich, optimal language input in a second language of which their own command may just be emerging. This can impact and often does affect language learning experiences. An example that may

serve to illustrate the consequence of home language literacy is the case of a child X who had a Cantonese mother and a Mexican father who were both not proficient English speakers but who tried to tutor their child in English daily despite their many grammatical and articulatory errors in English. This child had expressive limitations but it was not because he had difficulty learning English. Rather it was due to the language models in the home and their impact on the child's speech patterns.

Such situations can be avoided if parents value both languages and support their children in whatever language they are comfortable with even if it is only home language. According to Cummins (1983) and Snow (1992) if the L1 is nurtured and strong, this foundation will positively impact the development of the second language. The use of the home language enables the child to avoid falling behind in school work, and it also provides a mutually reinforcing bond between the home and the school. In fact, the home language acts as a bridge for children, enabling them to participate more effectively in school activities while they are learning English.

While it is important to advocate parental involvement in their children's language learning it is equally important to acknowledge the fact that some parents might not be in a position to support their children due to a number of reasons. Kauffman et al (2001) surmise that the lack of family literacy may be caused by parental lack of time due to child- rearing or work obligations and that this can impact negatively on a young child's learning of EAL. Language itself can also be a barrier to successful parent involvement. Some parents lack confidence in their abilities to support their children in school work that uses a language they are struggling to learn. Furthermore, minority-language parents are less likely than their dominant language counterparts to be familiar with the technical language used by teachers to describe curriculum, instructional strategies, and educational goals (Smrekar, 1996).

Moles (1993) also argues that parents who have experienced discrimination during their own school experiences or who face ongoing economic stress may feel uncomfortable and fearful when visiting their children's schools let alone asking the teachers for help on how to support their children at home. Moles (1993:33) explains that "disadvantaged parents and teachers may be entangled by various psychological obstacles to mutual involvement such as misperceptions and misunderstandings, negative expectations, stereotypes, intimidation, and distrust". All this has a ripple

effect on children's learning of EAL. Another factor that affects children's EAL learning is culture which is discussed later in this chapter.

2.4.6 Support from other adults.

In addition to support from their parents and their peers EAL learners may also benefit from the support of other adults such as relatives, family friends, teachers and bilingual assistants who can be role models and demonstrate the value of being proficient in more than one language. Bruner (1990) and Vygotsky (1962), cited in Cameron (2001) concur that adults are vital in supporting a child's language learning. Bruner (1990) refers to the kind of adult talk that helps children to perform certain activities and activities that are repeatedly done as routines as scaffolding and argues that these help to reinforce a child's learning. Examples of scaffolding used by teachers, bilingual assistants and other adults include motivating a child, keeping him/her on track and modeling language. However, as pointed out by Wood (1998) not all scaffolding is successful. Cameron (2001) elaborates on this by arguing that good scaffolding should be tuned to the child's needs and modified as the child becomes more competent. The problem is that sometimes children are given too much or too little support. Too little support can be frustrating for the learners while too much support results in them not being stretched /challenged enough (Cameron 2001)

According to Robinet in Burt et al (1977), bilingual assistants and teachers play a vital role in second language teaching/learning but they need to possess personal characteristics such as patience, tolerance, warmth, flexibility, sensitivity, open mindedness and self confidence as well as professional qualities such as subject knowledge, effective teaching techniques, ability to inspire children, proficiency in the target language and ability to impart knowledge. Robinet cited in Burt et al (1977) goes on to say that teachers need to fully understand the target culture, how language reflects culture, how language varies from one region to another, how it is learned and how it influences people as well as manifesting a positive attitude towards the target language. I think it is also vital for the teacher to have a sound knowledge and understanding of his/her students, their L1 culture and their perception of and attitudes towards them so that there is mutual understanding of factors that affect them in their learning in order to help them more effectively in their language learning.

Commenting on the important role teachers in motivating their students Robinet in Burt et al (1977) argues that teachers even impact other motivational sources like peers, friends, siblings, parents, school organization, other teachers and support assistants so that those who are directly concerned with classroom activities can work in harmony with them. Teachers themselves are also a strong motivational force in the second language learning environment. They need to be confident not only about their ability to teach and use English but also about appropriate methods of teaching English to young learners. For example, research has shown that it is important, when teaching a new language to young children to keep them motivated through the use of stories, songs, rhymes, role play, puppets and dance (Cameron 2001 and Brumfit et al 1991). In their study on group work, Galton and Williamson (1992) discovered that 'cooperative group work seems to improve pupils' self esteem and motivation'. They also found that children performed best in practical tasks as these involved interaction and conversation. Equipped with this knowledge and the knowledge of children's individual differences and their different learning styles, teachers may be in a better position to help EAL learners in their learning of English. However, teachers need to share their knowledge and experiences of teaching English to young learners with bilingual and other classroom assistants to provide maximum benefit to their pupils. This implies the teacher working collaboratively with their bilingual assistants, planning together and sharing knowledge, strategies and approaches that help to promote children's learning.

The value of bilingual assistants' support to EAL learners should never be underestimated. Classroom assistants play a variety of roles within the classroom to support pupils (OFSTED, 1995). Just like bilingual teachers they can encourage timid EAL learners to 'open up their linguistic and cultural world' because they are able to penetrate their pupils' culture through language (Blackledge 1994:115). For example, it is easy for a Punjabi speaking teacher or bilingual assistant to negotiate meaning with a Punjabi speaking EAL learner because of their shared cultural experiences and knowledge. Bilingual support assistants play an important role in helping children to learn English through various ways, for example explaining concepts in mother tongue (L1). They, together with teachers and other adults, often use corrective 'recasting', a well documented way of responding to young children by correcting their speech / written work in a subtle way to help them correct their errors as shown in the following

example of a conversation between a five year old girl (Mary) and a Year 1 teacher (Miss Jones) which was taken from my observation field notes. The names used are fictitious to protect the true identity of the people concerned.

> Mary**:** *My mum go to Asda yesterday.*
>
> Miss Jones**:** *Oh your mum **went** to Asda yesterday, did she?*
>
> Mary**:** *Yes she went to Asda and buyed me a Bratz doll.*
>
> Miss Jones**:** *She **bought** you a bratz doll*! *What a lucky girl you are…*

A study carried out in North Western England classrooms to investigate the implementation of bilingual schemes and the nature and purpose of bilingual support revealed that bilingual assistants may work in just one class or in several classes, with groups of children or alongside the teacher with the whole class in what is referred to as 'tandem teaching' (Bourne 1989). The study also established that when bilingual assistants were given the chance to engage in open-ended discussions with children, they summoned their verbal and non-verbal resources and used them to link home and school-based contexts to aid learning. The links were contextualized through code switching, non-verbally and through reference to religious and cultural practices as well as practical daily activities (Martin-Jones and Saxena 2003). It was also established from the study that code switching was not only used as a contextualizing cue but also to address individual children and for class management, another important role of bilingual assistants.

In a study on bilingual assistants, Boulter (2008) revealed yet another of their role which is that of assessing pupils. In the case study that s/he carried out, the bilingual assistant in a Year 3 class was asked to undertake an L1 assessment of a pupil with special educational needs. The assessment revealed that although the child misunderstood several English words s/he was able to make fluent and comprehensive observations in L1. This confirms that children do not come to school empty- handed but bring with them funds of knowledge which help them to learn a new language (Heath 1983, Tough 1981, Burke et al 1998). The same study also revealed that EAL support assistants, in their interactions with children, can easily pick out vocabulary confusions or language misunderstandings or peculiarities that teachers may fail to note thereby highlighting their importance in children's education.

Despite their important role in promoting the teaching/ learning of EAL, Balshaw (1991) has sadly observed that the roles and responsibilities of bilingual assistants are generally under-researched. Mills in Blackledge (1994) also highlights some of the problems that bilingual assistants encounter during the course of their work such as failing to express themselves effectively due to limited English vocabulary. The same author argues that sometimes bilingual assistants are called to do work that they have not been trained for or even prepared for such as translating between an irate parent and a member of staff in an attempt to diffuse conflict or clear a misunderstanding between them. Despite not being trained the bilingual assistant sometimes has to use social skills and diplomacy so that she is not seen as taking sides with any of the people involved in the dispute/misunderstanding. Therefore, it is important that they should be given appropriate training and support to enable them to carry out their roles efficiently.

2.4.7 Cultural factors

As mentioned earlier language and culture are intertwined. This means that the two factors interact with each other during the linguistic development of a language learner's life. An individual's second language learning cannot be understood without simultaneous attention to the larger socio-cultural and sociolinguistic framework within which learning a second language is occurring. As pointed out by Peterson and Coltrane (2003), children need to be taught about the target culture so that they can be in a position to understand how and why the people who speak the target language do things in certain ways (e.g. making a request or introducing new people to each other), and also to develop in them an awareness of the similarities and differences between different cultures. The more the learners know about the target culture the less the social/cultural distance between the two cultures and the smaller the cultural shock they experience. On the other hand, as pointed out by Walqui (2000) the bigger the gap the greater the culture shock.

Cognitive challenges associated with L2 acquisition such as learning new phonological, grammatical, semantic, and interactional rules also come into play but such factors also interact with the socio-cultural and sociolinguistic factors influencing acquisition and maintenance of a second language. Moll (1992) contends that the student's learning environment affects the development of attitudinal /motivational characteristics and their achievement. For example in a cultural community where everyone is expected to

learn English, children are likely to be highly motivated to learn the language but if children have no opportunity to use the language in their immediate environment they may not see any point in learning the language.

Cultural attitudes among parents, towards for example, school authority or the value of education, can also have a profound impact on their children's learning. As Moles (1993:35) explains "Many Hispanic and Southeast Asian immigrant parents believe that they are being helpful by maintaining a respectful distance from the education system". Parents' preferred style of communication, influenced by cultural norms may also differ substantially from the communication norms of the school causing them to assume a submissive position (Bermudez, 1993) and sometimes results in them being unfairly labeled by school officials. For example in a study of low achieving schools, conducted by Comer (1986) teachers and principals wrongly considered parents' absence from school functions as a sign of unwillingness to participate in their children's education and thus stereotyped them as uncooperative, unconcerned, and uncaring about their children's education. However when parents were asked about this they explained that their lack of participation was due to the fact that they were uncomfortable at the school because they did not know enough about school procedures to participate meaningfully in school life.

Similarly children may appear not to be interested or not making progress in learning the target language when in actual fact they are still trying to come to terms with the English culture. Children from certain cultural backgrounds may be extremely anxious when singled out and asked to perform in a language they are still learning. Like their adult counterparts, children may also get embarrassed when asked to speak or act in a second language before their peers. This cultural shock may make a learner anxious, shy, fidgety or restless and the discomfort which may emanate from one's culture will not go away quickly unless it is appropriately handled. If not it can make the learner quiet and withdrawn resulting in his/her silent period in school being prolonged.

Another cultural variable that might affect children's L2 learning is that in some cultures children are more accustomed to learning from peers than from adults (Walqui 2000). From an early age they might have been looked after and cared for by their older siblings. They might also have learnt to be quiet in the presence of adults and might have had little experience in interacting with them. When such children go to school

they are more likely to pay attention to what their peers are doing than to what the teacher is saying. To them, at this stage, other children are more important than adults. Adults who are aware of this and understand how young children learn languages can promote interaction among the children so that they can learn from each other.

2.4.8 Studies on perceptions

This chapter would not be complete without discussing other studies that report perceptions on EAL learning. It should be pointed out though that there is a gap in such studies. A study conducted by Ladky and Peterson (2008) presents the perspectives of 21 immigrant parents with those of 61 teachers and 32 principals working with EAL learners and encouraging parental involvement in their children's learning. In their study the teachers and principals viewed the parents as the children's primary literacy teachers. In support another teacher posited:

> Immigrant parents should be doing exactly what the English-speaking parents are doing: reading to their child everyday, talking about what they're reading and having conversations with their child. It can be in their mother tongue. It doesn't need to be in English (Ladky and Peterson 2008:85).

The teachers perceived parents as teachers and role models in their children's EAL learning but seem to have overlooked that not all parents are aware of this role or how to play it. As in my own study the parents admitted that they could not read or support their children because they were not only illiterate in English but in their own languages as well, a concern that was shared by some of the teachers. They also did not seem to know that it was valuable to discuss children's learning in home language. Commenting on the parents' anxieties one of the principals in the study said that the parents were apologetic that their English was poor which made them hesitate to help their children (Ladky and Peterson 2008). Furthermore, some of the parents indicated that they worked full time jobs, had young children to look after and were taking ESL courses all of which hampered their involvement in school activities. This seems to indicate that more research needs to be done to establish what schools could do to enable parents to support their children more effectively.

Another study that discusses perceptions is the ethnographic study conducted by Huss-Keeler (1997). In this study it was evident that teachers perceived Asian parents who were unable to use traditional means of supporting their children (helping with homework, participating at school events and attending parent evening meeting) as being uninterested. Unlike in my study and in that of Ladky and Peterson (2008) where deliberate attempts were made by the school to reach out to parents, initially in Huss-Keeler's (1997) study the teachers saw no point in reaching out to the parents by sending progress reports because they argued that they 'would not be able to read them.' Also, hardly any information was shared with the parents on methods of teaching used in school and yet parents were expected to use the methods at home. Due to their language difficulties and inability to speak English most of the Asian parents preferred to participate in school events such as cake sales, cultural festivals and occasions which did not require them to converse with school personnel and where they could simply watch their children perform. However, the teachers considered such participation to be passive compared to that of their white and black counterparts who spoke English well and were more actively involved in school life. Their choice to support their children's learning in a culturally different way was misinterpreted for lack of interest, a perspective shared by teachers in my study as well as those in Ladky and Peterson (2008). This supports Moles' (1993) contention that parents' limited contact with their children's school is often perceived by teachers as a sign of not being interested in their children's learning.

The teachers in Huss - Keeler's (1997) study also had a skewed view of the home life of Asian children. They thought that there was no literacy learning in most of the homes simply because the mothers could not speak English. They did not envisage that other family members (uncles, aunts, siblings etc) could support the children in their learning. The teachers did not even think the children had their own books at home or went to the library for that matter. They had very low perceptions of the children's home background which in turn lowered their expectations of them. Sadly, teachers' low expectations of their pupils can result in them not adequately providing for them academically and also in missed opportunities to notice when the children make improvements in their learning and need to be moved on.

It was only after visiting an Asian child's home that the teachers realized that parents can still be interested in their child's learning despite their inability to speak English. The researchers also realized from interviewing the parents and the children that the picture painted by the teachers contrasted with that of the parents and their children. For example the home backgrounds were not as impoverished as the teachers had made them believe. On the contrary many of the children lived in very large and well furnished houses and had access to English, Arabic and Urdu through languages spoken at home, TV, books or regular visits to the library. It was evident therefore from the parents' and children's interviews that the teachers' perceptions of the children's home backgrounds were based on assumptions and therefore not well informed. This seems to further highlight the need for and importance of close collaboration between parents and teachers to enhance stakeholders' perceptions of prevailing factors and to promote children's EAL learning. For example the parents in this study, similar to those in mine and others mentioned before, supported their children in line with their culturally acceptable forms of involvement which differed from school expectations. This resulted in the 'uninterested' parent stereotype by the teachers. If the teachers had reached out to the parents and given them the relevant information needed to support their children or if the parents had sought this information from the teachers this misunderstanding might have been averted.

In yet another study (Kim 2011), some EAL parents perceived L1 as a possible hindrance to their children's English learning. As a result one father in the study, whom I will call X decided to speak only English at home in order to improve his English and that of his daughter, Y. This resulted in a lot of miscommunication in both L1 and L2. For example at times Y could not understand her father's poor English and when she tried to clear up a misunderstanding in Korean it got worse as her Korean was very limited. As Y rapidly lost her L1 proficiency and X's English proficiency failed to develop quickly enough the linguistic gap between them increased and the miscommunications intensified. There were also incidents when Y's mum expected her to respond in a culturally appropriate way and she would respond in an 'English way'. For example while on time out Y passed gas and said "Excuse me" to her mum but in their culture she was not expected to speak while being punished as that showed absolute rudeness and rebellion towards her. Y's mum was frustrated and confused about which culture she wanted her child to follow. Kim (2011) argues that when this

happens parents are unable to communicate effectively with their children who in turn are unable to access the socio-cultural resources that they could have obtained from their parents. Furthermore, the cultural gap between them widens. This is yet another indication that there is need for research on what needs to be done to enhance positive perceptions and improve children's EAL learning.

While some of the above examples mirror some aspects and shared perceptions in my current study there is yet another study where the perceptions of children amplify the need to give children a voice. In a study which involved thirteen young Spanish bilingual children, aged between 7-13 years Soto (2002) explored the children's views on their own bilingualism and biliteracy and elicited the advice they might want to give to other children who wanted to become bilingual. Speaking on the elimination of a bilingual program in their school, one of the students lamented the program loss by asserting that she hated the school because it took away her language. She felt that she was being robbed of her own language and culture and forced see life through an alien language and culture. The 'English – only' policy caused another child to feel like a small goat in a "cage with lions" (Soto 2002: 601).

 The policy makers in this study did not seem to understand or care about the feelings of the bilingual learners and the importance of L1 in learning L2. They also did not seem to think about what the children needed to participate effectively in their new cultural environment. On the other hand the children were very eager to participate in the research and let their views be known. In their interviews as well as in their narratives, drawings and collages the children depicted the value of being bilingual (helping others through translations or interpretations, getting a better job and the joy of helping others to speak another language). This may also be an indication of what EAL learners feel and expect from others, including their teachers when they are learning a new language.

Summary
The findings from these previous studies on perceptions match those from my study where the parents seemed to be interested in their children's learning but were unaware of what they needed to do to help them. The teachers also mistakenly perceived parents to be uninterested in and unwilling to support their children because they did not use the traditional and expected ways of supporting their children such as helping in the school. Some of the children in these studies were excited at the prospect of participating in

research and having their voices heard on how to help other bilingual learners. Other children resented the idea of being stripped of their language and the prospect of starting life in a new language and culture. Family members were frustrated because they could no longer communicate effectively with their parents due to the diversity of their linguistic abilities. On the other hand the parents were torn between helping their children to learn English and having their own language and culture destroyed. However these perceptions are vital to researchers because they reveal what the participants think and value or detest and may also be an indication of some of the important factors that affect EAL learning.

A good understanding of participants' perceptions can guide educators and policy makers and program designers in designing programs or strategies that help to improve EAL learning while at the same time preserving the languages and cultures of immigrant populations. Teachers and parents who should all have a voice in their children's school should work collaboratively to address the factors such as language difficulties, uninformed attitudes and lack of knowledge on how to support children all of which can hamper children's EAL learning.

This chapter has defined the terms used in the study, discussed the theoretical background of the study by outlining some views on children as language learners and has also reviewed previous and more recent literature on some of the factors that affect children's second language learning such as individual differences, cultural factors, home background and adult support. It must be pointed out at this stage that the factors discussed are by no means comprehensive as the focus has been on those factors that mainly affect younger children's learning. It has been concluded that there is a gap in perception studies particularly those that that relate to children.

The next chapter will describe the research design/methodology. It will explain how the research was conducted and will focus on aspects such as the population, sample, sampling procedures used, instruments, ethical issues and data collection procedures used.

CHAPTER 3: Research Design/Methodology

As mentioned in Chapter 1 the aim of this study was to investigate teachers', parents' and children's perceptions of factors that affect young children's learning of EAL. The children in this study were quite young (between the ages of 5 -7). All thirty of them were EAL learners and although twelve of them could speak English clearly but with an accent the rest of them were not fluent speakers of English. The characteristics of the children in this study, from what I have observed, resemble those of most children in that they enjoy playing and engaging in role play which involves imitating their parents, teachers and other people. They are generally very active and fun loving and need breaks from adult – initiated activities. Children also like to practise what they have learnt including exploring new sounds and words (Pinter 2011). They like to talk and although they tend to become quieter and shy around adults they are desperate for adult attention and approval in their activities, particularly the younger ones. In a supportive environment they are not afraid to make mistakes but they become quiet and withdrawn when laughed at or made fun of by others as revealed by this study.

The study sought to find answers to the following questions:
1. What are the teachers' and TAs' perceptions of children's EAL learning?
2. What do the children themselves say about the learning of EAL?
3. What do the parents say about factors that affect children's EAL learning?
4. How do the TAs support the children's EAL learning?

This chapter which is concerned with the empirical aspect of the study describes the research paradigm on which the research was based and the research design / methodology used to carry out the investigation. It discusses aspects such as the participants and how they were selected, instruments and procedures used as well as validity and ethical issues relating to the study. It also discusses and justifies the use of interviews and observation to collect data for the study. The findings of the study will be presented in chapter 4.

3.1 Research Paradigm

There are two main paradigms (sets of beliefs, perspectives or approaches) that influence researchers in their search of knowledge and these are positivism and

interpretivism (Cohen et al 2007). Each paradigm is based on a set of assumptions and views research and the nature of the world from different perspectives. Positivism, which originated from hard sciences, represents a normative attitude to human knowledge. It assumes a realist perspective; that reality is out there [to be collected] and can be measured and quantified objectively in numbers (Hammersley 1993). Interpretivism, on the other hand, originated from social sciences and is people oriented. Unlike positivism it is grounded in people's experiences. It is concerned with meaning and strives to understand the subjective world of people from within. It represents an attitude that is based on the premise that reality emerges from the shared subjectivity of the researcher and the researched (Fryer 1991). Therefore, to interpretivists, knowledge is how the world or a particular phenomenon is interpreted and acted upon by the people experiencing it (Cresswell 2003).

It was vital to adopt the paradigm that best suited the topic. As Cohen et al (2000) contend, fitness for purpose should be the guiding principle when deciding which paradigm to choose. Due to the qualitative nature of this particular study the interpretive paradigm was found to be more appropriate as it enabled the researcher to interact with participants and to probe for more information thereby gaining a better understanding of their experiences and the impact that this had on the young learners' language acquisition. To facilitate this process interviews were used. For purposes of triangulation it was decided that questionnaires as well as observation would be used in the study. However the questionnaire was weakly constructed therefore it was mainly used as an exploratory tool to explore the perspectives of teachers on factors that affect children's EAL learning and was followed up by personal interviews.

3.2 The research design / methodology
Some aspects of ethnographic research were employed in this study. According to Fielding (1993:154) ethnography is 'a form of qualitative research which combines several methods including interviewing and observation.' Focusing on aspects of ethnography, Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) contend that ethnographic work usually contains the following features:

- Participants are studied in everyday contexts that is 'in the field'

- Various data sources may be used with the most common being participant observation and informal conversations.
- Smaller samples or fewer cases are often used to facilitate in-depth study.
- Analysis of the data involves interpreting the 'meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and institutional practices...' (p3)

The study is predominantly qualitative but triangulation of data collection was used for purposes of corroborating /refining findings. As pointed out by McMillan and Wergin (2006:96) triangulation is 'one of the most common techniques used to enhance credibility' in qualitative research. The reason for adopting a qualitative approach is that it suits the interpretive paradigm in which the study is embedded as it seeks to find out more about the phenomena under study (teachers', parents' and young children's perspectives on factors affecting EAL learning) directly from the people concerned.

If the aim of the study had been to establish objective descriptions or relationships between variables then descriptive or correlational research would have been used but this is more of an ethnographic type of study which involves interacting with the participants in their natural environment in order to understand their experiences better within their context. For this purpose, therefore the qualitative research design was found to be more appropriate for this study, a decision which supports Creswell's (2003) and Marshall and Rossman's (1999) argument that qualitative studies [such as this] seek to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the point of view of the people involved. Apart from the questionnaires which were used to explore teachers' perceptions and to construct the interview guide other research instruments used to collect data included personal interviews, focus group interviews and observation. These will be discussed after the next section which discusses the participants in the study and how they were selected.

3.3 Participants

The total sample for the study was comprised of 64 participants. As shown in table 1 below, the participants included 6 five year old Reception children, 12 six year old Year 1 children, 12 seven year old Year 2 children, 8 teachers, 1deputy head teacher and 25 parents. The total sample of 30 children was drawn from a sampling frame of all the 270 children enrolled at the school under study. In each of the nine classes at the school there were 30 children. The classes were diverse in academic abilities and behaviour,

but largely homogeneous in terms of the diversity of the language spoken at home. The majority of the children speak Punjabi or Urdu with up to three children in each class speaking other languages such as Somali, Shona or Dutch and up to four native speakers of English in each class.

Table 1: Research Participants

Research Participants	Number of participants
Reception: 5 Years old	6
Year 1 : 6 Years old	12
Year 2 : 7 Years old	12
Parents	25
Teachers	8
Deputy Head teacher	1

3.3.1 Students

Of the 30 children 6 reception children participated in the observed activities while 12 children (six in Year 1 and six in Year 2) only took part in the pilot study. The remaining 12 children whose composition is reflected in Table 2 below took part in the actual focus group interviews.

Table 2: Focus Group Participants

Age in years	Male	Female
6	3	3
7	3	3

Table 2 above shows the number, ages and sex of the children who participated in the focus group interviews and this was identical to the groups used in the pilot study.

The first group of six years olds was in Year 1 and the seven year olds were all in Year 2. Research by Lewis (1992) and Cooper (1993) has noted that very few, if any, focus group interviews have been held with primary school [let alone infant school] children, so I decided to interview these young children to find out more about what research with them might yield. The reason for separating the six and seven year olds both in the

pilot and actual study was to note any age related differences. In contrast to Nichols' (1991) view of having people of the same sex and similar backgrounds in the same group, mixed groups were used so that any gender differences could be clearly noticed within the group.

It was imperative that children be interviewed because they are the ones learning the target language and it would be interesting to hear what they felt about it and what factors they thought influence their learning as well as finding out what their preferred methods of learning were. This supports Cooper (1993) who views children as an important source of information about the type and quality of the services they get. My teaching experience has also shown that an important way of eliciting students' views on issues that affect them is listening to the students themselves. Older children in the school were chosen because they are more advanced meta cognitively than year 1 or Reception children and it was hoped their greater maturity would help to make them better able to reflect on their experiences and express them better.

Sampling can be quite an issue particularly in interviews because one or a few respondents may be atypical, and too many may be difficult to handle. It is not easy to hold discussions with large groups of people especially children as they can be noisy and unproductive. Purposive / judgmental sampling was used to select the sample of the year one and year two students and the sampling procedure used involved selecting only children with specific characteristics of interest (for example EAL learners only). This type of sampling was chosen for its simplicity and because it required subjects to be selected on the basis of their importance or relevance to the research rather than on their representativeness. As pointed out by Marshall and Rossman (1999) the purpose of qualitative research is to provide an illumination and understanding of complex issues relating to human behavior. So it was important not to worry about representativeness but to choose the people who would be able to provide information to help find answers to the research questions. To begin with the children had to be EAL learners and be able to speak fairly clearly even if they were not fluent. They also needed to be among those whose parents had indicated on the letters sent home to all the children that they were happy for their child to participate in the research**.** After obtaining class lists from the school office I went round to all the other 5 teachers of the Year 1/ Year 2 children and asked them to go through the list with me and tick off the children who met the criteria.

I also did the same for my class. After that I just chose twenty four children from the lists using both my knowledge of the children and the information from the teachers.

Purposive sampling was also used to select the six younger Reception children from their class lists which were also purposefully edited to include only EAL learners. Only two children, a boy and a girl, were selected from each of the three reception classes making a total of 6 children. The sample included 3 boys and 3 girls from different linguistic backgrounds (Somali/Punjabi/ Urdu/Shona speakers). With the help of their class teachers a decision was made to choose six children from different socio economic backgrounds. The reason for choosing children from different backgrounds was to have a cross section of the population and try to find out some of the factors that affect children's language learning through observing the children from various perspectives, in various situations and at various times.

3.3.2 Teachers

Eight of the thirteen teachers at the school (excluding the researcher), and the deputy head teacher took part in the study because they had all indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews after completion of the questionnaires. While the questionnaires were used as an exploratory tool to find out the teachers' and deputy head teacher's perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning the interviews were used to seek further information/ clarification on the questions asked in the questionnaires. All the teachers and the deputy head who are all female, had had experience in teaching EAL children. While six of the teachers and the deputy head had taught EAL children for over five years, two teachers had taught EAL children for three years, two for two years and the remaining two for nearly five years. Teachers were chosen because they are the ones who teach the children and it was hoped that their knowledge of the children in their classes and their general knowledge on how children learn as well as their knowledge and experience of the factors that affect their learning of EAL would be useful for the study. The teaching deputy head was chosen to determine whether or not her perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning differed from those of the teachers

3.3.3 *Parents*

The twenty five parents who took part in the study were selected from a sampling frame of almost four hundred parents. Parents were chosen because it was assumed they would be able to provide the researcher with general information about their children such as the languages spoken at home, literacy resources that are available to their children at home and what they do to assist their children in language learning. Also it was hoped that the parents could express their own perspectives of young children's learning of EAL. The information they provided would hopefully enable the researcher to make an informed judgment about some of the factors they thought might impact on their children's language learning.

The selection procedure involved choosing parents from a cross section of the target parent population. First the researcher read information held in the school office and on notes made by teachers about the parents of the EAL children enrolled at our school to establish the different types of parents within the school community. So, different types of parents were included in the sample such as male, female, old, young, married, Single, divorced, employed, unemployed, same sex parents and foster parents. To minimize subjectivity this information was gathered from teachers on the basis of recorded information and their knowledge of the parents and information gathered through parents' evenings and other parent - teacher meetings or encounters on school trips or with parent helpers. Therefore, the selected participants included parents who took an active part in the life of the school as well as those who did not, taking into consideration possible reasons for non participation in school activities such as work commitments, child rearing and many others. The reason for choosing different types of parents was to try and generate a wider range of perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning. Using the information collected and my own knowledge of parents whose children I had taught previously and information from other teachers I selected twenty parents. As the interviews were conducted and more data collected certain 'interesting' trends began to emerge and I decided to interview additional parents to see if any new ideas would come up. After the twenty - fifth interview I decided to stop as there were no more new ideas emerging.

3.4 The research timetable and Research Procedures

This section shows the timelines, instruments used and procedures followed in undertaking the study in chronological order of the research events.

3.4.1 Table 3: The research timetable

Data Source	Date	Number of participants	Male	Female	Participants
Pilot study	July 09	6	3 males	3 females	Pupils Year 1
		6	3 males	3 females	Pupils Year 2
Observation of pupils & Photos	Sep 09- Dec 09	6	3 males	3 females	Pupils (Reception)
Teacher Questionnaires	Oct 09	12	0 males	12 females	Teachers (including deputy head)
Teacher interviews	Dec 09	8	0 males	8 females	Teachers (including deputy head)
Focus Group	Jan 10	6	3 males	3 females	Pupils (Year 1)
Focus Group	Feb 10	6	3 males	3 females	Pupils (Year 2)
Parent Interviews	Mar 10	25	5 males	20 females	Parents

Table 3 above shows the times and order in which the data for the study was collected from the various participants. The following section discusses the instruments that were used to collect the data.

3.4.2 Instruments

To investigate the students', parents' and teachers' views / perceptions factors that affect young children's EAL learning, I used the following research instruments (i) a questionnaire for exploratory purposes and personal interviews to collect data from teachers (ii) a focus group interview to collect data from 6 – 7 year old Year 1 and Year 2 children (iii) A personal interview to collect data from parents and (iv) observation of Reception children and bilingual assistants working with them (which included field notes and photographs). The observations were aimed at determining the children's use

of language, the nature of their interactions with peers and the nature of adult support and how all these and other factors impact on their EAL learning. Each of these instruments is discussed more elaborately in the following subsections.

3.4.2. (i) *The focus group interviews*

Although there are different types of interviews that could have been used in this study such as personal one-one interviews, telephone interviews and focus group interviews the latter was found to be most appropriate for collecting data from young children for reasons discussed below. A focus group has been defined by Anderson (1996:200) quoted in Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003: 90) as

> … a carefully planned and moderated informal discussion where a person's ideas bounce off another's creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue. Its purpose is to address a specific topic, in depth, in a comfortable environment to elicit a wide range of opinions, attitudes, feelings or perceptions from a group of individuals who share some common experience relative to the dimension under study.

In support Kruger (2000:34) contends that focus group interview is a 'socially-oriented research procedure' implying that it is natural for people to listen to others and form their own opinions about a topic. His argument is that people are influenced by other people around them and what they say. A focus group, therefore, is a group of selected individuals expressing their shared and contrasting opinions about a phenomenon that they share.

Just as they have advantages, focus group interviews also have disadvantages. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003: 108) assert that 'the greatest strength of the focus groups – their group dynamics and interactions – can also be the main weakness. It is not possible to obtain individual opinions in focus group interviews as the members tend to influence each other. Another strength of focus group interviews is that they are a quick and cost effective way of collecting data from several people.

The reason for choosing the focus group interview method to obtain data from EAL learners in this study was not only to give the children the opportunity to be heard by expressing their sentiments about learning EAL but also to give them the opportunity to

participate in research in a non-threatening manner. As pointed out by Drever (1995) such an approach appears to create a more relaxed situation in which the children can interact with each other and appears to make young children less subdued when they meet an adult in a group. It was hoped that through the focus group interviews I would be able to get individual children's and their shared perspectives in an informal discussion thereby enabling me to determine how strong their beliefs were. The choice of the group interview method was also influenced by its advantages over individual interviews such as the promotion of discussion which helps to generate more ideas/perspectives among group members and also the reduced time and cost of interviewing a group of people at once rather than several people individually. Cohen et al (2000) contend that there are various factors that influence the choice of data gathering methods such as purpose, object, timing, amount of data to be collected and data availability. In support Mikkelsen (1995) mentions the purpose of the study and other factors such as feasibility of the study, its cost effectiveness, relevance and reliability. Since data collection methods should yield answers to certain questions they should only be used if they are relevant and able to generate answers to the questions.

The focus group interview method was also used because in a group, a line of discussion/argument launched by one participant is likely to trigger off responses from other members of the group (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). It was hoped that with some encouragement to voice their opinions the students would challenge or support each other's viewpoints and thus encourage a defense and more justification or even negative responses / rejection of each other's viewpoints which would enrich the data. It was also hoped that through this method I would be able to detect the nature of relationships among participants as they agreed, disagreed, supported, opposed, influenced, complemented, developed or elaborated on each other's ideas about factors that impact on their language learning. This method was also considered to be appropriate because it provided an easier way of collecting large quantities of data within a limited time.

The interview guide for the focus group interviews (See Appendix 1) had twelve questions. The first few questions were general and intended to put the respondents at ease while creating a warm rapport between the interviewer and interviewees. However, research by Drever (1995) and Tuckman (1994) suggests that it is often better to maintain distance between the interviewer and the interviewee in order to get better

explanations of things. I tried to maintain distance by allowing the children to talk freely about the questions asked but I had to steer them back when they sidetracked in order to keep them focused and also to avoid wasting time. The personal nature of the initial questions was also meant to identify if certain issues only related to people with specific background characteristics.

The questions on the focus group interview guide focused on such aspects as the different languages that children use when speaking to different people at home, their attitudes towards the English language and English speaking people, the support they get from parents and other people, their own views of factors that affect their learning of EAL as well as their preferred ways of learning. The researcher's role was to ask questions, encourage and prompt discussion among the participants.

3.4.2. (ii) *Teachers' and Parents' personal or one - to- one interviews*
Eight of the teachers in the school including the deputy head were interviewed to obtain their perceptions of children's EAL learning. Parents were also interviewed to get an insight into their views regarding their children's EAL learning. Personal interviews were used as the main data collection instruments to collect data from teachers and parents as they are a very powerful tool in understanding people's perspectives, beliefs and attitudes on different phenomena. (See appendices 2, 3 and 4 for the interview guides for teachers, D/H and parents respectively.) As pointed out by Best and Khan (1998) interviewing has numerous advantages over other types of data collection methods because of their interactive nature. An interview allows the researcher to interact with respondents on a higher level than other research instruments because it enables him/her to clarify questions and probe for more or deeper responses. In this way the semi structured interviews used therefore compensated for the weaknesses of the questionnaire such as its inflexible nature which does not give room for probing for additional information or elaboration of answers. Interviews also allowed respondents to say things they deemed important to the study but were not asked about.

Interviews, regardless of whether they are held with adults or children, are a very powerful tool used to understand people's perspectives, beliefs and attitudes and as pointed out by Hutchinson et al (1994) interviews give voice to the voiceless and disenfranchised. Examples may include children, some women and other disadvantaged people who may feel that they are not always listened to. The interactive

nature of interviews means it has advantages over other types of data collection strategies because through interviews people can tell their stories and as Heath (1993) contends people tell their stories to be listened to or to be heard.

Open-ended questions were mostly used to elicit more elaborate responses. Interviews were also used because they help to access respondents' perceptions, meanings and definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch 1998). They also facilitate observation of facial expressions and gestures thereby providing an insight into interviewees' real feelings and attitudes. The aim of the interviews was to explore teachers' and parents' ideas and feelings about the factors that affect children's learning of EAL. As alluded to by Marshall and Rossman (1999: 108) interviewing helps to explore general topics and to uncover the participant's views but '… respects how the participant frames and structures the responses'. As such the interview questions for teachers and parents, (See Appendix 2 and 4 respectively) were only used as a guide and not adhered to rigidly.

Despite their strengths interviews have several limitations. One limitation of interviews is that although they facilitate probing they are time consuming. Kitwood (1977), cited in Cohen et al (2007:350) has criticized interviews for generating some conflict between the notions of reliability and validity. His/her argument is that greater control of elements results in increased reliability of the interview but this in turn reduces its validity. For example reliability can be enhanced through structured interviews but the more structured the interview the less valid the data collected. This is because the more structured the interview is the less chances the respondents have of giving more elaborate responses which may reveal more about them. In this study such effects of structured interviews were minimized by using a semi structured format in parents' interviews and also incorporating the semi structured format within the children's group interview.

3.4.2. (iii) *Observation*

Observation played a pivotal role in obtaining data for this study which employed aspects of ethnography. Naturalists, who are proponents of ethnographic studies, propose that the social world should be studied in its 'natural state hence 'natural' settings should be the primary source of data. For example this study sought to explore

teachers', parents' and children's perceptions of factors that affect young children's EAL learning so it was conducted in the school setting where the researcher could observe the children in their learning context. Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) argue that the primary aim of ethnography is to study through observation and /or participation and describe what happens and how people involved see and talk about their own actions / experiences. This view is supported by Harris and Johnson (2000) who simply sum up ethnography as 'a portrait of a people'. Examples of ethnographic studies are Heath's (1983, Ochs (1988) and Foley (1997) who conducted studies on children's first language development in different communities. Another view expressed by Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) is that ethnography is a social science research method which relies heavily on personal experience, possible participation and observation to find out about the experiences and points of views of people in the domain being studied. According to Genzuk (2003), observation lies on a continuum which ranges from complete immersion in, to complete separation from the life and experiences of the people being observed.

Whatever the level of participation it is important to ensure that researchers understand the observed people's experiences and give outsiders a clear and correct picture of those experiences. Some situations allow the researcher to participate as a volunteer or parent helper in a setting, enabling him/her to develop an insider perspective in that role. However, it is not possible for researchers studying children to become children and experience a child's life from within. They can only experience it as adults as was the case in this study.

The field notes collected during the observation were guided by such questions as: What was the context? What was happening? Who was doing what? How did the children interact with each other? How did they interact with adults? Who said what and to whom? What was the response? and What did the adults do to support the children?

The instruments used in this study were found to be appropriate because of their numerous advantages over other types of data collection tools. For example, interviews have been extensively used in research for numerous reasons such as the fact that they can yield rich and vivid data (Denzin and Lincoln 1994 supported by Cohen et al 2000).

In Parker's (1997) view, when properly managed interviews are 'a sensitive and revealing tool in building our understanding of children…'

3.5 The Pilot study

In July 2009 a pilot study was carried out to give the focus group interview a trial run on pupils in similar conditions to the actual interview and with similar respondents. The reason for beginning with pilot interviews, argues Gilbert (1993), is to gather basic information about the field before using more precise and inflexible methods. Pilot interviews help to find out if the questions are easy to follow, difficult, unclear or confusing. The focus group interview schedule (See appendix 1) is a result of the revised pilot interview schedule which was designed around the research questions. According to Drever (1995) research questions usually serve as the starting point in the design of an interview schedule unless the interviewer likes to explore issues that may later be used to formulate research questions. In a semi-structured interview, be it at individual or group level, the interview schedule provides the framework around which the interview questions are presented. The schedule highlights the major questions to be asked as well probes or additional questions to be used as and when necessary. Fielding (1993) argues that on the schedule the probes do not have to be written in the exact way they will be asked. This is because of the discursive nature of the interview which allows the interviewee to develop their own answers at their own pace and depth. The schedule not only guides the interviewer but also prevents her/him from running dry, missing out important questions, going astray or confusing the respondents. It also ensures consistency in the questions asked across the interviews.

Before the pilot study and actual focus group interviews children were reminded that although they were free to agree or disagree with each other they were expected to answer questions as truthfully as they could. Although they were encouraged to give reasons or examples for their answers they were told they were not under any obligations to justify their answers if they did not wish to. However, as the discussion progressed more and more children opened up and said what they felt without much reservation. Misunderstandings were checked and corrected and meanings were clarified throughout the pilot interview process. According to Cohen et al (2000), this is one advantage of interviews. When questions were not clear they were clarified and when respondents tended to deviate from the topic they were tactfully kept on course by

additional questions and relevant prompts. It was however, evident that what the respondents were sharing, within the group, about their learning experiences had such richness of detail that might not have been revealed in one-to-one or other types of interviews. The children enjoyed the group interviews which supports the fact that research should not only be done on children but with children as they can have a lot to offer.

An attempt was also made to minimize interview bias. Bias is inherent in every interview and can stem from seemingly simple factors like the venue of the interview, timing of the interview, or the mere positioning of the interviewer and interviewee(s). Bias is also inherent in the way questions are asked or answered. For example a researcher may rephrase a question to make it less embarrassing to ask resulting in a biased answer or an interviewee may answer a question in a particular way to impress or please the interviewer. Great care was taken to minimize such biases as much as possible by negotiating the locations, times and seating arrangements that suited both the interviewees and the interviewer. In designing the interview schedule care was taken to minimize bias by asking questions that were clear and straightforward and by providing prompts such as pictures (stuck on the walls of the interview room) showing different activities children do at school and at home such as painting, singing, playing musical instruments, playing with toys and using computers. This not only helped to clarify questions but also to elicit more information from the children. Bias in interviews can also stem from poor rapport, biased sampling, poor questioning/ probing/prompting or selective recording of responses (Oppenheim 1992 and Tuckman 1994). Awareness of the existence of such biases helped the researcher to try to avoid or minimize them through careful selection of participants, recording responses verbatim and through a careful and informed evaluation of the pilot study.

As part of the evaluation of the pilot interview I asked the participants to answer some simple questions about the interviews. Before the post-interview evaluation and to make it easier for the children I gave each participant a foldable concertina like strip with three colour coded traffic sign sections (orange, green and red) and explained to them that they could hold these up for 'Yes' or 'No' and 'I don't know' respectively when answering the evaluation questions. Although most of the children were already familiar with such cards as they use them in their classrooms I explored these with them

asking general questions and showing them how to fold the sections easily to reveal the desired answer / colour. This helped to ensure they understood how to use them. Below are examples of the questions asked and children were encouraged to speak their answers instead of using the cards if they so wished but they all the Year 2 children opted to use both cards and speech while the younger children preferred to use the cards. Some of the questions asked included the following:

1. Was the question easy or difficult to answer?
2. Did you have enough time to answer the questions?
3. Did you enjoy the interview activity?
4. What did you like best?
5. What did you not like?

The older Year 2 children were also asked to suggest what they might want to do or have to make future interviews more interesting for them. Although not all the respondents of the focus group interviews gave spontaneous answers most of the responses from the older Year 2 children were specific and relevant.

Four children pointed out that questions 8 and 10 (See Appendix 1) were not very clear. This and my own reflection on these questions made me realise that these questions needed to be more specific to enable children to identify the other people who helped them and how they helped them (such as parents, teachers, bilingual assistants, carers and their peers). The pilot interview therefore helped to refine the interview guide for the actual study.

After the pilot studies school closed for the summer holidays giving me time to reflect on the results of the pilot study and prepare for the next steps in my research. After hearing the older children's discussions about their views about EAL I decided to carry out the observations of the younger children next and see if some of the things mentioned by the older children during the focus group interviews affected them as well for example what they like to do and possibly link it to their preferred ways of learning.

3.6 Observations of pupils
Soon after schools opened for the New Year in September 2009 a series of semi structured observations of students were made of children interactions outdoors as well as in their classrooms during the months of September to December. These observations

were carried out once every week for durations of up to twenty minutes each, at different times (before, during and after school) and in different locations such as the classrooms, playground and the dining room. Before and after school observations were done at times when children were dropped off at school by their parents/carers and when they were being collected at the end of the school day. Times for observations during lessons were negotiated with the school head as well as with the teachers concerned.

The classroom observations were carried out at a time when bilingual support assistants were working with children during or after teachers' tea breaks. Six five year old Reception children (3 boys and 3 girls) and three bilingual assistants were observed in various contexts. The observations were carried out over a period of one month to determine whether or not the behaviors observed were typical or uncharacteristic of the participants to ensure the collection of reliable data. Although I observed the children quietly at times they initiated conversation with me on what they were doing. For example one little girl said to me "Look at this isn't it lovely?" And I replied "Wow that is beautiful. Is it a butterfly?" Her face lit up and she said "How did you know?" Without waiting for an answer she ran off to one of her friends who was calling her, shouting "She said my butterfly is beautiful!"

Cohen et al (2007) posit that observation can be of facts, events, behaviours or qualities but the purpose of the observations in this study was twofold. Firstly I wanted to get an insight into the nature of the children's interactions with adults and peers to try and determine the factors that affect their language learning. Secondly I hoped that the observations would enable me to get a glimpse of the nature of adult support in children's EAL learning. Observation was also used as a form of data/method triangulation. Observation was used because it provides the best available means of studying social reality (Haralambos 1980). As with the children bilingual assistants (with their permission) were observed in various situations for example during lessons, in the dining hall, at play times and at home times to determine the nature of support they gave to the child participants in their learning of EAL.

However, it should be pointed out that as with adults, children tend to change their behaviour when they are aware they are being observed but tend to behave naturally when they are not aware of being observed. I tried to overcome this by observing them

regularly so that they would become used to me being around them and act more naturally and after a few sessions most of them hardly paid any attention to me except a few who occasionally tried to continue to engage me in conversation or their play.

Field notes were used as the main way of recording data and great care was taken to include such information as the date, place/location and the activity observed as well as any relevant contextual information. To make the recording more systematic I initially used a simple observation grid bearing the name of the child being observed and other information such as the subject/activity, time the activity was done and the duration of the activity. However, as I carried out more observations I decided to keep the headings but not use the grids as I found them limiting in that I might be restricted to write only enough information to fill the grids and leave out some vital information. So I adopted a free writing approach where I wrote almost everything that happened except what I was sure was not important.

The field notes were written in a notebook and although at first I tried to record the observations in a narrative, descriptive way sometimes events happened rapidly forcing me to write brief notes and then elaborate on them later. The danger of not writing detailed notes about what has been observed is that if left too late the details may be forgotten, resulting in incorrect or biased results. To try and avoid this I elaborated on the brief notes as soon after the observation as possible. In addition to a larger 'Field notes' journal I also used a smaller spiral-bound notebook as a diary to record additional questions I had, surprises, worries, expected and unexpected things inter alia. These different types of field notes, therefore served as a mode of capturing information that would provide answers to the research questions.

The observations made and comments recorded included what was seen and heard as well as non verbal behaviour such as gestures, periods of silence and sighs because as pointed out by Cohen et al (2007) what is not said or done may be more important than what is said or done.

Data for the observation was collected visually and also through audio recordings and photographs (see appendix 5) as well as through interviews with participants. Data triangulation was used because complex phenomena such as children's linguistic

experiences and the support they get from others are best approached through several methods which can enhance the study's validity. Photographs were used to portray an accurate picture of the reality observed as well as to illustrate the type of interactions adults have with children and how they support them. They have also been included because they served as an aide memoire (aid to the memory) to help me when elaborating on field notes after the observation. They also complimented information from other sources of data such as interviews and photographs.

Having observed for myself how the children interacted with other people including their peers, siblings, parents and support staff in the school it was time to explore teachers' perceptions of children's learning of EAL and the next section explains how this was done.

3.7 Teachers' personal Interviews

Soon after all the exploratory questionnaires were returned and used to compile the interview guide, on 1st December 2009 the first interview was held with the teachers who had earlier indicated their willingness to be interviewed and some who wanted to discuss the topic further. The interviews were held over one and a half weeks and each lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. The teachers were interviewed to probe for more information by asking them to clarify or elaborate on some of their responses. The interviews helped to shed light on and to confirm the teachers' individual and shared perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning. They also revealed contrasting views held by the teachers and parents on factors perceived to affect children's language learning.

3.8 Focus group interviews

During the second week of January, a week after the schools opened from the Christmas holidays the first focus group interview was held with Year 1 children. The same procedures used in the pilot study were followed in the actual focus group interviews which were conducted in January and February 2010. The only exception was that the participants were different and the interview guide had been modified in line with the evaluation of the questions which had resulted in questions 8 and 10 being simplified to make them easier for the children to understand. The responses to teachers' questionnaires and interview questions had shed more light on factors perceived to

affect children's EAL learning by their teachers and I was looking forward to finding out if the new participants had similar or different views from those of the children who had taken part in the pilot studies and also if their perceptions were similar or different from those of their teachers.

After having listened to and transcribed the recorded interviews I conducted the Year 2 Focus group interview on 10th February 2010. While I needed substantial help from my assistant in translating for some of the younger Year 1 children Year two children needed fewer translations and the discussions were less sporadic and much more smoother and sustained because the children appeared to have more to say and had better language to express their opinions. As EAL learners some still struggled to say what they wanted to say in a coherent way but it was easier getting what they wanted to say without repeatedly asking them to say it again or say it in their home language for the assistant to translate for them. Before the interviews I explained the purposes of the research in general and the focus group interviews in particular. I also reminded the children about the importance of their views and encouraged them to express their views freely so that their voices could be heard. A mock focus group interview was held with the children.

During the interview when a question was asked the children were encouraged to answer or comment on the questions one at a time and in line with Basit's (2010) suggestions I summarized the discussion every now and then to check if all participants agreed with the deductions made and encouraged those with similar or contrasting views to bring them up.

3.9 Parents' personal or one to one interviews

In March 2010, exactly a month after the focus group interviews I had the opportunity to interview the parents. Each interview took 45 minutes to an hour and about three interviews were done each day. It was good that I had time out of classroom when these interviews were carried out because sometimes the parents were not on time and on two occasions the parents did not turn up at all on the expected day and the interviews had to be rescheduled. The parents who needed interpretation were given this service by the same assistant who had translated for the children. The parents' interviews, like the teachers' were not tape recorded because they had requested not to. As a result I had to

record as much of what they said as I could to ensure collection of reliable data. The collection of data from parents took almost the whole month of March due to the rescheduled interviews which delayed the analysis of the data.

3.10 Data Analysis methods

Data for this study was analyzed manually because of the small numbers of respondents involved. Transcription of each set of data occurred soon after the collection of the data for example data on field notes was expanded on soon after the observations were completed and the same applied to all the different types of data collected. After each observation I examined each piece of data on the field notes I had written and started stock piling them. This entailed categorizing the data into groups according to similarities, differences, patterns, surprises and items of particular significance such as the nature of interactions with adults and peers, the language used when speaking to different people. The process included, among other things re-writing some of the observations on separate cards, coding the data in the field notes journal by highlighting it in different colours, cutting them out and piling them according to type or emerging patterns. As pointed out by (Bell 2002) interesting information means nothing unless it is categorized. Placing the data into categories helped me not only to sort the data but to collate it and begin to get to terms with it. Once this was done it was easier to analyze the data and to interpret it.

A thematic approach to data analysis was used and it followed Gee's (2005) recommendations to examine only one piece of data at a time for emerging themes. The data analysis procedure then progressed to ordering the collected data according to selected themes/topics, coding it, summarizing it and interpreting it. This was done by constantly referring to the collected data and transcripts and trying to establish patterns then coding the data by classifying them according to the patterns/themes. Wragg (2002) asserts that, analysis of interview data is time-consuming and ample time should be allocated for recording the interview, playing it back and transcribing it. In this study the tape recorded interviews were transcribed.

Some of the children were well spoken but it was rather difficult to capture on paper everything that was said because at times they spoke on top of each other. The

advantage of having full transcriptions from tapes was that I could refer back to them for finer detail whenever necessary. Taking notes might have hampered full concentration on the conversation but it was helpful in that I was able to observe participants' body language and note things that were not captured on the tape such as gestures/frowns/nods. If I were to do the study again I would get somebody else to take down detailed notes while I concentrated on the interview. The following section addresses important issues to consider when undertaking research with children.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Research with children, just as research involving adults, raises numerous ethical issues. In this study special attention was paid to ethical issues that involve working with children. Ethical research, for instance highlights the need for confidentiality and anonymity as well as requiring that participants should give informed consent to participate in any research. Efforts were made to avoid invading participants' privacy so fictitious names have been used in the study to ensure confidentiality. Obtaining informed consent from adults is easy but rather tricky for young children as it is not very clear if they completely understand what they are consenting to. However, their consent was sought because it was their human and ethical right. Special care was taken to carefully explain to them in very simple terms what the research was about so that they would understand what they were consenting to. Consent to participate in the study was sought from the students themselves as well as their parents and their teachers since they were minors. Instead of just seeking consent from one parent the researcher went further and requested that both parents sign the consent form, where possible. In two cases, however, just one parent signed as the other parents were out of the country but they had nevertheless been informed about it by their spouses. While most adults knew how to write their signatures onto the spaces provided on the consent form the children were asked to write their names/initials/smiley face or any other mark they wished to show their agreement. Before obtaining participants' consent, permission to undertake the study was sought from the head teacher, school governors and the local education authority.

At the beginning of the study I asked the children some questions to check how much they knew about the study and if they had given their consent knowingly and willingly. Some of the questions I asked were – Did you read the consent form to which all the

twelve year 2 children said yes. Three of the reception children said they had read it with their parents and four said their parents had read it to them. The remaining five reception children had neither read it nor had it read to them but they had nevertheless signed it because their parents had asked them to and that it was all right for them to. I also asked the children how they felt about being asked to take part in this study and most of them said it made them feel important, responsible and proud that they were being asked to decide for themselves if they wanted to do it or not. For most of them it was actually the first time they could remember signing any form at all. Others said it made them feel good that their views were being sought and knowing that there were people out there who actually wanted to listen to them. This shows that children are eager to be listened to and as the study was aimed it was important that their voices be heard. However those children who had not read the consent form said they did not feel anything when they signed the consent form, they just signed it because they were asked to. This highlighted to me the need for informed consent from these children.

So special effort was put into explaining to them again and all the other children what the study was all about and why it was being carried out then asking them if they still wanted to take part in it or not. For example I explained to the children that the study was aimed at finding out what different people (teachers, parents and the children themselves) thought about the factors that affect young children's learning of English as a second or additional language. I explained how it was particularly important for our school because most of the children there were learning EAL and that it would be good to use these views to try and come up with suggestions aimed at improving EAL learning among children. I told them I was particularly interested in their views since they were the ones learning the language. It was made clear to them that the results of the study would be shared with them, their parents and teachers and other people who are interested in children's learning of EAL. They were also assured of confidentiality regarding their identity. It was necessary to give them all the necessary information because informed consent entails providing participants with adequate information to enable them to decide whether or not to participate in the research and to withdraw from it at any stage if they so wish (Farrell 2005). It was imperative therefore to ensure that informed consent was given by these minors by explaining to them not only the purpose of the study but the proposed methods, what it meant for them to participate in the study and any possible risks involved.

It was also important to develop feelings of trust and confidence to enable the children to operate freely and without fear. Participants were therefore told they had the right to say 'no', 'stop' or 'pass' and to withdraw from the study at any time and that this would not in any way affect their care/education. Although they would be asked to explain, clarify or extend their responses; no pressure would be put on them as it would be unethical to do so (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, and Farrell 2005). Most of the ethical issues that relate to adults were also considered as they affect children, for example, the need to establish rapport, maintain confidentiality and ask clear, concise questions.

Ethical issues about my participant observer role also deserve to be mentioned as they were important. The fact that I was a researcher as well as a teacher at the school under study gave me advantages such as familiarity and greater acceptance by the participants. They were more open and trusting and acted more naturally than if I had been unknown to them and this enabled them to let me interact with them, observe them and share their personal experiences more willingly. Participant observation, however, has potential problems such as the participants assuming the researcher knows more about them and therefore not sharing their full experiences or behaving in a way that they think is expected of them. The researcher might also go native and fail to separate him/herself from the participants and this might result in clouded perceptions of reality. Participant observation also raises issues of trust. As pointed out by Cowles (1988:171) cited in Grafanaki (1996), "Participants may be less than open in providing personal information especially if it is perceived as highly sensitive..." or private.
My dual roles and role boundaries could also create potential tensions between the role of researcher and teacher. The relationship formed by being their children's teacher or former teacher, as in some of the cases in this research, might have made some of the adults or children feel obliged to participate in the research. I acknowledged the participants' perceived difficulty with this but assured them of my role in this study as a researcher rather than teacher and assured them of neutrality on the treatment of the data collected from them and all other participants in the study.

Despite being an insider and participant in the study in my role as teacher and researcher at the school under study I was also faced by the dilemma of being an

outsider in the sense that although I am bilingual I was an outsider in that I did not speak any of the languages spoken by the majority of the children. I have, however been learning a little Punjabi so participants were quite happy to hear me speaking their language.

Another ethical issue in participant observation of children is that they see things differently from adults because they do not understand things like grown ups and it is difficult to understand what they mean by the things they do. As pointed out by Fine and Sandstrom (1988), children live in an entirely different universe. Unlike older children and adults they also do not have control over the research conditions or over their behaviour for that matter so they need constant monitoring, guidance and protection as they can act unknowingly dangerously. In order to understand them therefore one needs to get as close to the data as possible. This might mean entering their world by participating in their activities, and possibly acting like a child to see or experience how they do things, solve problems and interpret reality. However, researchers should guard against getting carried away in the child role and overlooking things they should see as adults.

Although the following are not really ethical issues they were nevertheless found to be important as they affect respondents in one way or another during the data collection process. They were also considered to be important because they help to ensure the safety and comfort of the respondents. The venue for the interviews, for example, may appear a simple matter but in reality some interviews may be adversely affected by their location. People and children in particular, seem to respond better in certain environments than in others, though this may differ among individuals. In this case children were asked to choose between the library and the Nurture room, which were both available, and they chose the latter which is fairly new and quite popular. This room had the advantage of being quiet and free from distractions and disturbances which created a conducive atmosphere for the interviews.

The timing of interviews is also important and should be convenient to the interviewees (Powney and Watts 1987). Behaviour and attitudes can change remarkably over time so researchers should ensure that people are not interviewed in unconducive emotional conditions or moods. For example no one should be interviewed when unwell or upset

unless such a condition is part of the phenomenon under study. In the study the interviews lasted from forty five minutes (with the younger children) up to one hour (with the older children) and were held early in the afternoon before children got very tired. The interviews were held during activities time and the interviewees seemed to treat them as just other enjoyable activities because they enjoyed them and were reluctant to stop when they got to the end of the session. This was an appropriate time to hold the interviews because holding them at unsuitable times such as late in the afternoon or after school when both the interviewer and interviewees were tired might not have yielded good results.

The respondents were asked to decide which language they wanted the interview to be conducted in. Half of the Year 1 group (six children) chose English and the other half initially chose home language (Punjabi/Urdu) then two of them decided they wanted to use English, leaving four children who wanted to use Punjabi. My bilingual assistant kindly agreed to do the necessary translations/interpretations and offered to sit in and clarify concepts for the children as and when the need arose. The children were told to feel free to resort to home language at any point during the discussion if they so wished but they chose not to. Wragg (2002) states that there is need for someone to translate in situations involving people whose proficiency in English may be limited. The danger of having somebody translating is that there is a possibility of wrong translation resulting in distortion of the intended meaning and the transmission of wrong messages. Having worked with the assistant for two years, seeing her undertake her own research and my own understanding of Punjabi enhanced my confidence in her translations.

3.12 Reliability and validity

According to Best and Khan (1998) reliability is the degree of consistency that an instrument or data collection demonstrates, while validity is the quality of data collection that enables it to ensure what it is intended to measure. Reliability of the focus group interview guide was determined through a pilot study tested on six year one children and six year two children. The guide was deemed to have face validity as most of the children who participated in the pilot study understood most of the questions. In this study reliability was ensured by recording things as they happened. This was further enhanced by using a tape recorder during the focus group interviews to ensure that the children's ideas/ responses/ comments were accurately recorded. By taking photographs

of children's interactions and activities reliability was also enhanced because there was photographic evidence to show what had actually happened. Unfortunately photographs do not show what was said but this was captured on the tape /audio recorder as well as in the field.

To further enhance reliability of the data collected participants were asked to check and confirm that their views and perspectives had been accurately recorded. With most parents and children the researcher read out what she had written about what they had said and all they had to do was say whether it was right or wrong. However, teachers were asked to read the comments and notes that I had written and say whether or not they agreed with what I had written. McMillan and Wergin (2006) who refer to this as **member checking** also suggest a third way of increasing credibility called **cross-examination** which involves giving preliminary findings to an independent third party to help analyze the inferences made for sense /logic. I applied this approach during the data analysis stage when I involved other independent people such as other doctoral students in commenting on the inferences made from the collected data.

It should be pointed out though that the danger of member checking is that participants may become aware of the sensitivity or criticality of what they have said or contradictions they have made and may want them changed or deleted thereby depriving the researcher of potentially useful data. Fortunately for me this was not the case as most participants agreed with how I had recorded their views.

The validity of the instruments was checked and approved by both my previous and my current supervisors.

Validity or credibility of the study was also ensured through selective / purposeful selection of participants. This was done by choosing only people who would be able to provide answers to the research questions because they fitted certain criteria. For example the results of the study would not have been valid for example if native speakers of English had been included in the sample of children as this was a study involving children learning English as a second or additional language. Similarly, choosing only parents whose children were EAL learners helped to ensure that the answers they gave were relevant to the study. Selecting different types of parents such as single, divorced, working, and others helped to ensure a wider generation of factors that affect young children's EAL learning. Validity/credibility was also ensured through

triangulation of data sources and data collection instruments which is highly recommended by researchers such as McMillan and Wergin (2006).

3.13 Possible limitations of the study and steps taken to minimize them

The following may be considered as possible limitations to the study. Steps taken to minimize the effects of these limitations are also highlighted.

The sample of parents might be regarded as limited since the parent population was large. This was overcome by choosing parents from different strata of the population, such as male, female, single, married, same sex parents, young and old parents as well as parents of children from different minority languages groups. It must however be mentioned that the number of participants was in no way representative or proportionate to the larger population because for purposes of this study relevance of the sample to the study was more important than representativeness. It was more important to have the right people even if they were few or did not represent the entire population. The sample of students was also very small and not representative of the entire student population but again relevance to the study was regarded to be more important than representativeness. Also, when working with very small children it was considered to be better to limit their numbers and deal with smaller groups.

Using grandparents in one case where a child spent more time with grandparents rather than parents helped to generate useful and relevant data on what the child actually did at home from the grandparents' point of view. However critics may argue that these were not the child's actual parents. So to avoid leaving the parents completely out of the picture they were also invited to interviews but were unable to attend due to 'work commitments'.

Validity of data from students and parents was limited by lack of triangulation within each group but was enhanced by triangulation of methods across the groups.

Summary

This is a small scale interpretive study aimed at exploring the perspectives of teachers, parents and children on how factors such as linguistic background, home background, culture and adult support affect young children's learning of EAL. A purposive sample of twenty four 6 and 7 year old year 1 and year 2 children was used to explore the

collective views of children on factors that affect them in their learning of EAL. Twelve of these children took part in the pilot study and the other twelve participated in the actual study. An additional six purposefully selected five year old Reception children also participated in the study through a series of observations that were carried out by the researcher. Eight of the thirteen teachers at the school under study, except the researcher also participated in completing the exploratory questionnaires and the interviews. Twenty five purposefully selected parents also participated in interviews where they shared their perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning. In order to maximize validity I used a variety of data collection methods such as questionnaires, personal interviews, focus group interviews and observation. The qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis and the themes will be highlighted in the presentation of findings in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: Presentation of Findings

4.1 *Introduction*

This chapter is concerned with presentation of the findings of this study which set out to explore and gain an in-depth understanding of teachers', pupils' and parents' perspectives of factors that affect young children's learning of EAL at an English infant school. The data, which is presented in this chapter in groups (Teachers', children's and parents' perceptions), was collected through teacher interviews, children's focus group interviews, observations of children and parents' personal interviews. This chapter essentially provides answers to the overarching question: What are the factors according to parents, teachers and children that affect young children's learning of EAL in a primary school? Answers to this question have been addressed by drawing upon different aspects of the study such as what the participants and literature say about EAL as well as what I observed in the study.

In this section data from each group of participants (teachers, pupils and parents) is discussed separately for the sake of maintaining coherence in the data presentation. Data from teachers and the deputy head is discussed first followed by data from pupils then parents respectively and it is presented under the following broad categories: Teachers' perspectives / Pupils' perspectives and Parents' perspectives. The discussion includes the following themes that emerged from the data analysis: (1) the importance of young children's learning of EAL (2) Factors perceived by teachers/parents/pupils to affect young children's EAL learning. (3) Teachers' perceptions of the role played by parents in their children's learning. (4) Problems parents face in helping their children to learn EAL and lastly but not least (5) the role played by adults such as bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning. These themes were identified by reading and rereading the transcripts checking on the frequency and distribution of phenomena such as words, phrases and expressions. A brief outline of how the themes emerged is given below.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 the analysis of data presented in this chapter was inspired by Gee's (2005) recommendation to examine and reexamine each piece of data at a time for emerging themes or consistent linguistic patterns in the data for ways in which they provided evidence of the participants' perceptions about EAL. In line with this recommendation I read and reread the transcripts and field notes taken during the

observations repeatedly until I was intimately familiar with it. I also listened to the recordings of the interviews. This somehow facilitated the classification of themes emerging from the data. For example when analyzing teachers' comments about EAL, recurring words such as **vital, important, indispensible, official language, the common language, source to good education or a good job** and **the key that opens all doors to success**… denoted the importance of EAL. Similarly recurring words such as **difficult, not knowing what to do, confused, no one to ask and different from how we were taught** signified parental problems in supporting their children. The fact that some of these words repeatedly occurred in the data implied that they were significant. Hence it was through following these key threads or motifs that ran through the data that I was able to identify the themes by selecting extracts and ordering the data through establishing vital categories/subthemes.

In this chapter participant's speech on transcript excerpts is *italicised* and significant stressed words or phrases are **bolded.** Words or statements made by several people are bolded and underlined and words that are repeated are presented in CAPITAL LETTERS (See Appendix 6 for transcription conventions). Gee (2005) contends that people use different forms of language to express their activities and construe discourses that help to understand them better. Thus in this analysis I will also pay some attention to what participants said and point out how they used language to emphasise or highlight issues (e.g. through repetition, emphasis and use of special words such as metaphors) in order to portray their perceptions of children's EAL learning. This, in my view is allowing the data to speak for itself. The next section presents teachers' views on the importance of EAL then it goes on to focus on teachers' perspectives of factors that affect EAL teaching/learning.

4.2 Teachers' perspectives

This section presents and analyses the teachers' perceptions of the importance of young children's learning of EAL then moves on to their perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning (See Appendix 7 for sample of teachers' interview transcript).

4.2.1 The importance of EAL

At the beginning of the interviews teachers were asked if they thought it was important for young children to learn English and why they thought it was important or not. Although the question was asked as a general question to set the scene and help the

teachers to feel at ease it yielded some very important responses reflecting the teachers' generally positive perceptions of the importance of young children's EAL learning. All the eight teachers who participated in the interviews recognized English as the official teaching language used in all British schools and therefore considered it to be necessary for anyone learning in these schools. As pointed out by one teacher (T1) *"English is the official language of instruction in all schools in England and it enables people with different languages, culture and nationalities to communicate in one language".* A similar view was shared by T2 whose argument was that "*English is an international language and the common language of communication in different countries."* This seems to indicate therefore that in addition to being the main language of instruction it is a commonly shared language that enables people to communicate with others locally as well as internationally. This is in line with research which views English as a global language which has crossed many international boundaries and spread into many countries across the world (Crystal 2003, Darder et al 1997).

Another view that was commonly shared among the teachers, which illustrates the educative and economic function of English was that expressed by T3 that *"Without English one cannot get a good education or a good job*." The teachers' argument was that without English one would be disadvantaged as one would not be able to advance in education and on the job market. English was therefore considered to be a prerequisite for a successful life. This view was further supported by T4 who referred to English as *"**the key that opens all doors** to social and economic success."* He went on to explain that English is not only useful but essential as it enables a person to lead a successful social and economic life in which they have a good job and are able to communicate effectively with others. These extracts show that the teachers strongly perceive English to be indispensable hence their conviction that children should learn it. The indispensability of English was also demonstrated by the metaphor used above and the things that the teachers considered one could not do without English such as being unable to read and interpret instructions, inability to get a good job and the lack of social and economic development.

A common perception among the teachers was the fact that with no or limited English the children would be cut off from the rest of the world because they would not be able to communicate with others in English let alone use available, modern means of

communication. T4 and T5 concurred on this aspect and said that those without English **_"would not be able to use such things as mobile phones, iPods, satellites internet, mobile phones and many modern gadgets."_** This means that without English they would not be able to use these gadgets because in the UK instructions for using them are in English. It seems, therefore that the teachers view English as having a multifaceted role in people's lives because it enables people to communicate not only in person, but electronically as well.

4.2.2 Teachers perceptions of factors that affect young children's EAL learning

This section presents and analyses the teachers' perceptions of the various factors that affect young children's EAL learning based on their responses and comments during the interviews. The teachers' perceptions are presented and analysed under the relevant themes as shown below. Some of the factors that were believed to affect children's EAL learning include home background, attitudes towards English, cultural factors, teaching methods, learning styles and children's ages, individual differences such as motivation, intelligence, learning styles, interest in and attitudes towards other languages, exposure to the target language including opportunities to speak and use English at home and school. This is consistent with literature (Gardner et al 1999) which states that EAL learning is affected by a wide variety of factors and that the learning environment itself affects attitudes, motivation and achievement. Some of these factors are discussed below.

4.2.3 Home background and availability of resources:

All the eight teachers in the interviews viewed home background and the availability of literacy resources in the home as an important contributory factor to children's EAL learning. They agreed that having a conducive home environment with a variety of literacy resources and activities such as books, computers, TV, videos, games, conversation and role play provides enjoyment to the children and increases their knowledge and vocabulary. As T6 pointed out such resources *"expose children to useful words, expressions and cultural knowledge which are all very useful to English language learners."* T7 added that *"TVs and videos can also provide appropriate models for children to copy and practice using appropriate language which the parents themselves may not be able to provide."* Three teachers summed up this view by saying **_"the provision parents make for their children at home and whatever experiences they_**

**share with them, the children take back to school as funds of knowledge for teachers to build on.”** This means effort parents make to provide for their children may act as a foundation and contribute to their learning as teachers can build up on that and these shared experiences also help to build up children's schemata and knowledge base.

These views echo those expressed by Walqui (2000), Burke et al (1998), Grifin (2004) who contend that parents/care givers make a very considerable impact on children's emerging literacy skills when they provide them with a supportive home background in which there are a variety of literacy resources.

4.2.4 Parental support and the support of other adults

Most teachers considered parental support and the support of other adults such as teachers, teaching assistants, adult relatives and family friends to be a vital factor in children's EAL learning. Their perception of parental support was limited to learning based activities that parents engaged their children in both in and out of school such as discussing subject material/content, reading with them, supporting them in homework and getting involved in school based activities such as supporting small groups of children. As T7 pointed out, _“Parents who support their children in their homework help to foster their children's EAL learning and reinforce what they have learnt in school.”_ In support T8 posited _“The importance of parental support in a supportive home background should never be underestimated because when appropriately administered parents can actually help not only to consolidate but also extend what has been learnt at school”._ These extracts show teachers' perceptions of the importance of parental support and a supportive home environment where the parents show interest in their children's work and work with them to help them understand, consolidate and extend knowledge. More about parental support will be discussed later under the theme 'Teachers' perceptions of the role of parents…'

4.2.5 Parental attitudes and their influence on children's attitudes:

The findings revealed that teachers perceived parental attitudes to have a huge impact on children's EAL learning. Six of the teachers argued that parents' attitudes can have a positive or negative impact on their children's learning because the attitudes that parents have can be passed on to their children. The other two teachers argued that the parents can knowingly or unknowingly pass on good or bad attitudes to their children. This is in line with the views of Gardner (2004) who identifies two contrasting roles for

parents: active or passive. The first refers to parents' conscious promotion of their children's language learning as they monitor their progress and praise their success. The latter may include encouraging and supervising children's work but sometimes transmitting negative attitudes towards learning the target language. This can also be manifested openly or discretely through comments about English speakers, the importance of learning English or indirectly showing apathy towards the language. For example parents may encourage children to learn English and stress the importance of doing well in their studies but at the same time showing negative attitudes towards the English people, thus undermining their active role. Another example is when they encourage their children to learn English then criticize the English culture. This results in creating confusion in the children about the real importance and use of learning English (Phinney et al 2001) and as T1 said *"What parents consistently say to their children becomes **ingrained** in their minds"* a view that was unanimously shared by the other teachers. This showed the teachers' strong conviction of how what parents say can influence their children's thinking. It must be noted though that this division of attitudes does not affect all parents as some parents pass on consistent and not conflicting attitudes.

Teachers noted that parents should therefore promote positive attitudes towards the target language and motivate their children to enjoy learning it. Several studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between parental attitudes and children's successful L2 learning (Gardner et al 1999, Cummins 2010, Paratore et al 2003, Epstein and Sanders 2000 and Lareau 1989). In their study Gardner et al (1999) discovered that integratively oriented children with positive attitudes came from integratively oriented parents who showed positive attitudes towards the target language group. They concluded that the degree of skill attained by the learner depends on the attitudinal atmosphere and literacy support provided in the home. Therefore it is an important role for parents to foster positive attitudes towards the target language and English speakers as well as towards learning in general as this is likely to impact positively on their children's learning.

4.2.6 Learners 'attitudes towards English and towards the English people
The teachers' general feeling was that while attitude towards English has an impact on how one learns the language their attitude towards English speaking people was not

very important as it did not generally affect children's learning of English. One argument put across by T7 to support this view was *"If a child has a negative attitude towards his/her English or other teachers then this can make him/her anxious, worried or even stressed and it is likely to interfere with the child's language learning but seeing any other English speaking person does not upset them."* A similar view is shared by Dulay et al (1982) who contend that a learner's ability to learn a language is stifled when the learner is angry, worried, stressed or anxious. However six of the eight teachers in the study argued that "***negative attitudes towards English people in general do not seem to have that impact on learners, particularly if the children do not have a direct or regular sustained contact with them on a daily basis.***"

Only two teachers considered attitude towards the English people as having any impact on children's EAL learning. They believed that positive attitudes towards the English people can encourage children to want to speak their language while negative attitudes can act as a deterrent to EAL learning. The rest of the teachers held the opinion that even if a child disliked the English people in general s/he would still learn the English language well and grow to like it depending on how much s/he was exposed to it and the interactive ways in which it was taught. When this was elaborated on the teachers argued that this is because children's willingness or motivation to learn English may supersede any attitudes or feelings that they may have on English people.

As pointed out by Walqui (2000), Mitchell and Myles (2004) Gan (2004) the children's motivation to learn English may come from different sources such as parental encouragement, talking or reading about important /successful people and having role models around them at home /school or within their community. In general teachers believed that children's EAL learning is affected more by other factors than merely their attitudes towards the English people. They agreed with one of their outspoken colleagues (T6) who argued that children's learning is more likely to be *'...stifled by an unsettled background such as that of a newly arrived immigrant family reeling from the pressures caused by having to cope with emotional stresses of leaving their war torn countries then having to search for accommodation , employment and school places for their young ones and then having to adjust to a new language and culture....",* a situation faced by many immigrant families in Britain including some of the participants in this study.

4.2.7 Learners age

Another factor perceived to affect EAL learning by most of the teachers was the age of the learner. Six out of eight teachers argued that it was better for children to learn English whilst they were still young than wait until they were older as it would be more difficult to learn. One of the teachers (T5) postulated that the sooner children learn English the better "*while they still have the potential to learn it*" implying that this potential would deteriorate with age making it more difficult to learn a new language. These views concur with the critical age hypothesis (Lenneberg 1984 and Singleton and Ryan 2004), which asserts that before puberty children's brains have good elasticity enabling them to acquire languages easily and with native language proficiency but this diminishes after puberty.

On the other hand, two of the teacher's thought it was not ideal for children to learn English at an early age especially since some of the children are learning their mother tongue at the same time. These teachers thought it would be best for the children to learn to speak L1 fluently first before being exposed to a third language "*…as it will only confuse them and cause them a lot of frustration*" argued T6. T2 also argued that "*…it puts a lot of pressure on younger children to learn English at an early age.*" While acknowledging the fact that at this school there are lots of bilingual support assistants who support children in their learning of English she posited that a lot of minority language children go to the mosque everyday to learn their home languages and adding English is not right at all because the conventions of their minority languages are different from those of the English language and *"… it's expecting too much from these **poor** souls, **isn't it**?"* she continued. The combined use of the word **poor** and **isn't** it may be an indication that she not only felt sorry for the children who were subjected to learning English but also considered what she had said to be an obvious fact. However, all teachers agreed that children's main advantage over adults in EAL learning is their age because they have a much longer time to learn the language and they are capable of attaining native like fluency. What they probably did not realise is that, although rare it is possible, under the right conditions for an adult to learn a second language and achieve native-like proficiency (Nikolov 2000a, Bellingham 2000 and Neufield 2001).

4.2.8 Cultural factors

Yet another factor believed by teachers to affect children's EAL learning is culture. During the interviews while five of the teachers concurred that culture had an effect on EAL learning, two thought it had very little or no effect on EAL learning and one teacher abstained. The reasons they gave included *"One can have a good understanding of the English culture without being able to speak the language well."* (T2) *and "One can speak good English without a good understanding of English culture."* (T5).

Those who argued for it concurred that, *"Learning about culture can improve language learning because it widens the children's knowledge about the people who speak the target language"* (T8). They asserted that *"culture and language are inseparable and that as children learn English they learn about the English culture."* (T4). These extracts illustrate two main ideas: that culture is embodied in the language so as they learn one they automatically learn the other and that this enhances learning by widening children's knowledge about English speakers. This is in line with the views expressed by Brown (1994:165) that language and culture are part and parcel of each other and that the two are so "...intricately interwoven" it is difficult to separate one from the other without losing their essence/significance. The same view is also supported by Jiang (2000) who compares language and culture to a living organism where language is the flesh and culture the blood. His argument was that the two cannot function without each other.

Another view propounded by one of the most senior and experienced teachers T3 was *"My own teaching experience and the observations that I have made of young EAL learners show that as children interact with others they learn about their cultures through discussions and games as well as through the foods they eat and the clothes they wear."* This was supported by six other teachers who had similar experiences. This could mean that young children can learn about other cultures through interaction with others in various activities and learn their language at the same time. This might suggest that culture does not need to be taught but I disagree because there are other aspects of culture that children might not encounter in their play which may therefore need to be taught. Literature views language and culture as being intertwined and advocates the teaching of cultural information to enable children to understand more about the English culture (Peterson and Coltrane 2003).

To include cultural information in their teaching of English most of the teachers suggested using artefacts, pictures, films, videos, songs and role play to learn about the target culture and to compare aspects with those from their own culture. They also highlighted the role of bilingual assistants who are able to enter the children's' world through their shared culture and translate for them, acting as role models to them and helping them to assert and maintain their identity. However, because three of the teachers do not understand their children's culture they suggested it was important for them to learn about the minority cultures to enable them to understand and appreciate the cultural differences between their children' culture and the English culture so that they could support them more effectively. Although this does not reduce the cultural distance referred to by Walqui (2000) it could help to promote greater understanding of the English culture which in turn may promote English learning.

4.2.9 Teaching methods:

Appropriate teaching methods were also viewed by all teachers as an important factor that can affect children's EAL learning. They argued that good instructional methods have a positive impact on children's EAL learning while the opposite is also true. Six teachers suggested that one good method of teaching culture to young children is through engaging them in social and cultural activities which not only helps them extend their knowledge of their own culture as well as other people's cultures but also gives them the chance to interact with members of their family / society. This type of scenario not only portrays and supports the importance of good teaching (Everard and Morris 1996) and Richard (2002) but also supports Senge's (1990) and Vygotsky's (1978) ideas of the social context that helps to promote a child's language learning through socio-verbal interaction with others. It is also closely aligned to Bruner's (1990) view of scaffolding activities and language for children to learn because during the interactions a child is exposed to new experiences and vocabulary. Such experiences are instrumental in helping the child to formulate their own ideas and build on their experiences.

4.2.10 Children's learning styles:

The teachers also identified children's learning styles as a factor that may impact on their EAL learning arguing that if the learning styles of visual, audio, kinesthetic (VAK) and other learners are not catered for this would adversely affect their learning of

English. As T8 said "*A child who is a visual learner needs to see the things s/he is learning about otherwise they will not understand the concept.*" Although this was consistent with theory which advocates ensuring student's leaning styles are met it contrasted deeply with those who advocated exposing children to different learning styles in order to widen their repertoire of learning styles? For example a visual learner can also benefit from listening to stories and acting them out. In other words they need to be helped to access learning in different ways. In a similar view August and Hakuta (1997) posit that there is no best way to teach EAL and suggest that different approaches are necessary because of the various experiences of English learners and the diversity of conditions faced by different schools. Therefore, language teachers who use a combination of strategies such as written and verbal instructions, videos and pictures, overhead transparencies, hands on projects, experiments, audio books and computers, are likely to cater for more learners and consequently produce more effective learners. Gordon (2007) who contends that everyone can learn under the right conditions argues that by combining several approaches teachers can accommodate different learning styles.

Among the additional factors cited were intelligence, interest in and attitudes towards other languages, exposure to the target language including opportunities to speak and use English at home and school, socio-economic status and parental level of education. On level of education and parents' socio economic status ten of the teachers concurred that these were critical in a child's language learning. Some of their arguments were that the more educated and financially stable the parents were the more able they were to create a home background that is conducive to EAL learning because not only do they know the importance of learning but also have the financial ability to provide their children with resources such as televisions, educational toys, games, support with reading and experiences such as holidays, educational visits and other resources that help to promote their target language learning. All these things contribute to building a bank of knowledge/skills/visual and mental images etc which is strongly linked to the notion of schemata proposed by authorities in the field such as McClelland and Rumelhart (1986), Stockwell (2002), Davis (1991) and Carrell and Eisterhold (1983). However other researchers caution against the assumption that parents' socio-economic status or financial ability have a direct impact on children's EAL learning.

It would be naïve to assume that parental education and financial status or material resources alone can impact positively on children's EAL learning. Having the resources does not necessarily mean they are able to use them effectively and being educated does not imply a good knowledge of how young children learn a language. Money alone does not promote EAL learning but it has to be accompanied by a determination / willingness to help as well as knowledge and skills on how to support children in their language learning. In their interviews some teachers suggested that parents and other people (relatives or friends) should simply take time to talk to young children about different things including the importance of English and their aspirations and expectations for their future to motivate them to aspire for higher goals and then guide them towards achieving them through verbal interaction and role modelling. None of the other respondents mentioned ordinary talk /family time as a factor that affects EAL learning.

4.2.11 Bilingual assistants

Teachers considered bilingual assistants as a vital resource in children's EAL learning. They used words such as link, bridge, connection between home and school. They unanimously agreed that bilingual assistants   are important because they can translate for children, teachers and parents as they speak the children's first language. However T3 argued "It's *always good to have a bilingual support assistant but sometimes it is NOT POSSIBLE. This does not mean we can't teach EAL without them. It would be **difficult** to interpret for the children but there are other means that can be used to get them to understand… for example using visual aids like using real objects, actions, pictures or videos."* This extract positions bilingual assistants as valuable but acknowledges that sometimes situations [like in most poor countries] do not always allow one to have them, a view supported by seven other teachers.

4.2.12 Problems faced by EAL learners and how they can be overcome.

According to the teachers one of the main problems faced by children includes lack of understanding of English due to limited exposure. Other problems cited by the teachers include limited vocabulary that is not having enough vocabulary to express themselves and in some cases lack of confidence and fear of being laughed at.

On how EAL learning could be improved all eight teachers suggested promoting interaction among learners and sourcing for appropriate and adequate resources such as interesting outdoor and role play equipment , interactive toys and pictures to talk about

in language lessons. All these help to develop children's schema about various topics (Davis 1991) as well as giving children the opportunity to interact with each other linguistically. This view is shared by Tharp and Gallimore 1988 who contend that the collaborative interaction among learners is more important for language development than the transmission of knowledge. Other suggestions given included assisting parents in effectively supporting their children through regular parent teacher meetings and encouraging them to come for open days and view tester sessions that showed how different subjects or concept are taught.

Teachers also expressed the opinion that successful EAL learning means that children acquire an additional language and not that they gain L2 at the expense of L1. This entails ensuring that their children have opportunities to speak both L1 and L2. As pointed out by Fillmore (1991) teaching both languages results in additive bilingualism whereas focusing on L2 only can result in subtractive bilingualism where the indigenous language may be gradually lost. The teachers also suggested that parents and their children should also be encouraged to use the language of their choice at home without influencing them because as one of the teachers argued *"It is their own business what they want to speak''*

Another teacher also called on parents to use the language they were comfortable with even if it is only home language. According to Cummins (1983) and Snow (1992) if L1 is nurtured and strong, this foundation will positively impact the development of the second language. Other suggestions to make English learning more successful include English lessons for parents, buddy systems or older children mentoring younger children and setting up clubs to improve speaking/listening/reading/writing/drama and inviting parents to participate in these activities with teacher support.

The next section focuses on what teachers view to be the role and importance of parents in their children's EAL learning.

4.2.13 Teachers' perceptions of the role of parents as co-teachers of their children
All the teachers agreed that parents have an important role to play as co-teachers and supporters of their children's learning. They pointed out that parents should support their children by talking to them, listening to them read in English if possible and generally supporting them with their homework. They also believed that reading to

their children in L1 was useful whenever possible but two teachers saw no point in reading in L1 if the aim was to improve L2 acquisition. They advocated for the intensification of reading in English to further develop L2 acquisition and argued *"What's the point of reading in L1? Why not just teach them in L1?* This shows that these teachers like some of the parents did not realize the importance of L1 as forming the basis for L2 learning.

However the general feeling among teachers was that most parents did not put as much effort in performing that role as they should. They attributed this perceived lack of support to job commitments, family responsibilities, involvement in cultural activities, or unwillingness to help but admitted they had not actually spoken to the parents about this but gathered it from snippets of conversations they had with them or the children. This resulted in four of the teachers labeling the parents as *"unwilling to and uninterested in supporting their children's learning".* One teacher, supported by all her colleagues contented that *"Some parents don't even bother to talk about their children's work, or share their reading books with them or help them to do their homework."* What seems to stand out in these extracts is the fact that some parents were perceived as unconcerned and uncaring as they did not seem to take the trouble to support their children in their work. The teachers justified their claims by pointing out that reading cards and homework are often brought back to school uncompleted and unsigned showing that parents have not given them much attention. This might be taken to signal neglect, lack of willingness to help and lack of interest in their children's work. However the parents' views on the same issues were quite different as they gave their own reasons for not supporting their children's learning. This will be discussed in greater detail later under parent's perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning.

While three teachers thought the parents might not know how to support their children or might not speak English the others argued that they would seek help if they did not understand. Yet another teacher whose views concurred with those of her teaching colleagues   commented that *"**Even if** the parents themselves cannot speak English they can still **facilitate** their children's EAL through the provision of a supportive home environment and assist them with homework in their mother tongue."* The words **even if** implies that despite their lack of English, parents can still play an important role in

their children's learning. It portrays the role that parents are expected to play in supporting their children's learning using L1. This may be an indication that the teacher understands the impact L1 has on L2 which in turn supports literature on how knowledge learnt in L1 will later transfer to L2 (Foertsch 1998). However it should also be borne in mind that a non- English speaking parent cannot be expected to explain English homework to their child when they cannot read let alone understand it.

The teachers thought they simplified the homework enough but obviously they were not aware of the extent of the problems encountered by the parents in supporting their children because this was not brought to their attention. This might signal a breakdown in communication between the parents and teachers. The teachers all agreed that to enable the parents to perform their roles well they would need to meet the parents and find out what their problems were then provide them with some form of informal, on-the-job training and support to help them play their role of co–teacher well.

4.3 The Deputy Head's perceptions of factors affecting children's EAL learning

The deputy head's views on topics such as home background, parental support and availability of resources were similar to those of the majority of teachers but during the interview she brought to light certain things that the teachers had not mentioned or which she viewed things in a different light. During the interview (See Appendix 8) the Deputy head showed that she had noticed more parental involvement in school activities than the teachers for example when they accompanied children on educational tours or field trips and when they participated in fundraising activities such as cake sales. The Deputy Head had also noticed that attendance at parent evenings and other parent meetings was beginning to improve although it could still get better. She also mentioned that a few more parents had volunteered to help out in classrooms. On the other hand the teachers had not noticed these small but noticeable changes.

On parental support she had observed that parents were quite willing to help their children but they were not able to due to a number of reasons. Some of the reasons she mentioned were similar to those highlighted by the teachers and the parents themselves such as child minding, cultural activities, lack of knowledge of how to support their children and lack of awareness of what their role was in supporting their children. She also mentioned that the main reason for parents' non attendance at parent – teacher conferences or other meetings was not because they were uninterested or unwilling to

get involved in school activities as some of the teachers had suggested but they were not comfortable because they did not know the protocols. This tallies with the findings from Comer's (1986) studies on parental involvement of similar parents.

On how she thought the learning of EAL could be improved the Deputy Head said she wanted to see the interventions that had been started in the school continued as they were bearing fruit. Examples of the programmes included the following:

- booster groups run with the help of nursery nurses and bilingual assistants to support
  EAL learners and help them to catch up with their reading.
- The Early Literacy Support (ELS) which supports children needing a boost in language development
- 'Keeping up with children' a program aimed at equipping community members with literacy and numeracy skills for their own benefits as well as to enable them to assist their children with homework.
- Improved staff development and support for teachers and non teaching staff.
- Hiring of more bilingual support assistants.
- Having translators available at parent –teacher meetings
- Involving parents in school council meetings

Although she wanted the programs to continue she admitted that they were currently poorly attended and said that something needs to be done to encourage the parents to participate in them. She was thinking of setting up a crèche run by trained Nursery nurses so the parents' babies and toddlers would be well looked after while they attended the sessions.

Another factor that the Deputy Head said affected children's EAL learning was lack of reading practice. She contended that reading was a problem at the school because very few children had actually told her that they read with their parents or other adults at home while the rest were left to do the reading on their own. The reason she gave for them not doing it was because most of the parents did not see the value of reading to their children when they considered the children to be better readers than themselves. She also said that they feared mispronouncing words or reading with an accent. The Deputy Head also said that reading in home language was considered out of the

question by most of the parents because *"They do not see the point of reading in L1. They think it will confuse the children and also that it might lower their standards and affect their chances of going to university".* Similar views were expressed by the parents in their interviews and they supported findings in previous research on parental involvement (Kauffmann et al 2001, Peterson and Ladky 2007 and Comer 1986) which showed that parents did not seem to understand the effect of L1 on L2.

4.4. Children's perceptions
This section starts off by presenting the children's views on the importance of English then goes on to explore some of the factors they believe to affect their EAL learning (See Appendix 9 for sample of focus group interview transcript).

4.4.1 Importance of English
The majority of the children, like most of their parents and teachers agreed that it was important for them to learn English because of the effect that it has on their future education and employment. The general consensus among the children, particularly the older ones was that the better their English the better their chances of going into higher education (High school, College, University) and getting a good job. Both younger and older children perceived English as an important and necessary vehicle through which they could overcome some of life's challenges such as being able to communicate with other people, going to university/having a good education and a good job. These are extrinsic motives for learning English because they result in external rewards. However five of the twelve children who participated in the focus group interviews were also driven to learn English by intrinsic motives that seek inner satisfaction as illustrated by these extracts:

Ulla: *It makes you feel **proud** and **important** when you know how to speak it.*
Hajji*: It is **fun** to learn although it can be **difficult**.*
An excited Lamina also added *"ENGLISH make me talk to my ENGLISH friends little better. I enjoy it."*

These extracts show the pride and prestige (esteem), enjoyment (delight), and integration (communication with English friends) elements of English respectively as seen through the eyes and voices of the children themselves. In these examples the children are seeking inner satisfaction, not tangible rewards. This implies that speaking

English is an achievement that boosts these children's confidence and self esteem, making them feel important as Ulla suggests. The fact that they say it is fun also shows that they enjoy it despite it being difficult. Aamina's comments show the integrative aspect of English that of communicating better with her English friends. The use of you by Ulla might appear as if she is distancing herself from the statement but it is also an indirect way of referring to herself and others. Aamina on the other hand repeats the word English to distinguish the language and the friends she is referring to.

Just like their parents and teachers, the children also acknowledged, without using the term, 'the indispensable' nature of English. They all agreed that most things in life use English and that one cannot avoid English because it is everywhere. Elma and Jibril, Year 2 children commented that "*In this modern world **everything** needs English*" and cited examples of English all around us (in environmental print including notices and information on bill boards, buildings, newspapers and books). Other children who shared the same view also noted that English was the language used in most places (schools, shops, supermarkets, GP's, libraries etc). Jibril added *"There is English on the walls at school and at Tescos and in ami's (mum's) cookbook"* These examples illustrate yet another function of English that of being informative. For example through environmental print children and adults alike can generate information about a wide range of things including food recipes, health, education, fashion, entertainment, news inter alia. This may, in turn, spark a desire in some of the children to pursue a certain career or find out more about a certain phenomenon or subject of their own choice. Both individually and collectively children demonstrated a diverse awareness of how English is used in their daily lives as well as in preparation for the future. They viewed English as having a facilitative and economic role which helps to pave the way to higher education, employment and or business. As Sannah said *"My parents say without English you have **no job, no life**"* to which Amir chipped *"Yes my dad says it is **the** way to good life tomorrow*." These views support what Darder, Torres and Guitarrez (1997:68) mean when they refer to English as a 'social and economic equalizer' and therefore a must for improving socio-economic status. However, it was evident from the responses given by most of the children that their views were influenced by their parents because of such comments as 'My Parents/ my dad, my mum says …". Because they had been taught that they were quite convinced that their lives would not be successful without English and it appeared this was the driving force behind their

wanting to learn EAL. This shows that parents have a decisive influence on their children's attitudes (Gardner et al 1999, Cummins 2001, Paratore et al 2003 and Epstein and Sanders 2000). It was unclear though if children understood that it is not just English alone but other factors such as having the appropriate education, knowledge and skills that can get them the good jobs that they dream about.

4.4.2. Children's views of factors that affect their EAL learning
The following factors repeatedly came up during the children's focus group interviews showing their awareness of some of the factors that affect their EAL learning.

4.4.3 Language difficulties
Problems of language difficulties encountered in learning EAL were also perceived to be an important factor. Although seven of the children said they enjoyed learning English they admitted that it was not easy. However five argued that they did not like it. Of the five two said they did not enjoy it because it was boring and difficult but the other three abstained from saying why they did not like it. Tamwa despaired *"I try very hard but always get it wrong then others they laugh at me."* All five children who found English difficult surmised that it would have been easier to wait until they were older and understood more.

Nine of the children said they found writing of English sentences hard. They also had problems in finding English words to describe things that they were not very familiar with. Some of the children said that they really wanted to write some interesting sentences and make their teachers proud but they couldn't think of any interesting words when they started writing. As pointed out by Amir *"I know what I want to say but I can't think of the right words to use, to which Tamwa added "it always takes me long to answer questions because I think in Punjabi first then try to change it to English"*. This means that children like Amir are able to create a mental picture from their schema about the phenomena under study but find it difficult to write a sentence because of limited vocabulary. Such children may need help in constructing their sentences.

In a similar vein, Laminah said she always hesitated to answer questions due to fear of being laughed at adding that *"when they laugh I feel so embarrassed and then get angry*

with myself." Sometimes being laughed at has added pressure on the children because they can stop trying altogether. On the other hand, Sannah surmised that she often forgets what she wants to say because the words are still unfamiliar to her. She added that she too often takes long to answer questions debating them in her mind. She revealed her main worry as being worried because of not having enough time and being *"... afraid that the teacher will ask someone else"* and perhaps label her as being 'lazy' or 'not trying hard enough.' It is evident from the above extracts that children take long to answers questions because they need a long time to think and process the answers in their heads before saying them out. Others experience a sense of despair when they fail to get the answer out on time and others fear being laughed at or ridiculed by others due to their mistakes. All this can induce in young learners affective states/feelings such as fear, anxiety, worry which have an adverse impact on their learning.

4.4.4 Parental support, support from other adults and availability of resources
There was a general consensus among most children that they benefited from parental support in the form of encouragement to work hard, visits to the library, visits to places of interest such as Windsor Castle /London eye and provision of literacy resources such as English and bilingual books, toys and games. Having various resources such as books, puppets, toys and computers at home was considered beneficial because children could practice what they had learnt and other things at home. As pointed out by Elma *"My English is getting better because I have books, games and my own computer at 5home and my parents help me to find out and practice what I learn at school", a view that was shared by five of her peers.* This extract positions resources such as books and computers as vital since they enable learners not only to revisit what they have learnt but also to find out more about them and other topics such as English culture and extend their knowledge base. It also supports literature which says a child's literacy development is affected by the literacy experiences shared by family members as well as the books and other literacy materials found at home (Grifin et al 2004, Schickedanz 1999).

However while some children had many resources at home others hardly had any. For example three of the children admitted that they did not have resources such as books and computers at home and lamented the limited time they had to use computers at school- only one hour per week to enable other classes to use them. Children expressed

the view that having different resources and computers positively influenced their EAL learning because they did lots of activities which they enjoyed such as playing different types of games in which they interacted with other children. This echoes the call by researchers such as Long (1985), Ellis (2003) and Nunan (2005) to engage children in play based and interactive activities which they enjoy.

When it came to support with the actual homework just seven of the twelve children got support with reading and homework while the rest were frustrated because their parents were unable to help because they spoke little or no English. They had to be supported in their homework by older siblings and or relatives such as uncles or aunts. In some cases the homework was not done at all because neither the children nor the parents had an idea of what needed to be done and also because of other parental commitments such as child minding, family and other commitments as pointed out by Comer (1986). In worse cases the work was done for them by their siblings and the children could not explain it in school because they had not done it. All they could say when asked was ***"I don't know. My uncle/sister/brother done it for me."***

On support from other adults most of the children agreed that they received *"lots of help from our teachers and the other adults in the school who explain things in our own languages to help us understand"* said Shawn. In support Ibrahim professed that *"the teachers plans interesting lessons to help us learn English and when we do well we get praise or stickers"* This type of language promotion is in line with the views of Vygotsky cited in Cameron (2001) and Bruner (1990) who both strongly support the idea of adults supporting children's learning by fostering their language development and nurturing their efforts to learn. Other adults who were said to help them included support assistants, uncles, aunts, other relatives and family friends.

4.4.5 Ways children like to learn:
It was also evident from the study that the majority of the pupils believed that their EAL learning was affected by the ways they like to learn. This was reflected in some of their comments in the extracts below;

Jyoti: *I learn best when I **see** and handle the real thing. If I feel it and touch it with my hands and look at it I feel I know it better.*

Tommy: *I like to see things on the interactive whiteboard…and use the computer…*

Anwar: *I like the teacher or someone to **show** me how to do things.*

Lamina: *I like where we **make** or **do** different things.*

Tommy: *Me I want to **talk** about things with my friends.*

Sannah: *I like to listen to stories and music and to sing songs.*

Amir: *Acting stories help me remember.*

Although these extracts are not exhaustive they seem to reflect different learning styles (visul, auditory, kinesthetic etc). However the extracts alone are not enough to determine the children's learning styles. Proper assessments would need to be carried out to do that. One fun way of doing it might be to ask young children to say or draw pictures in response to a series of statements/questions such as what they would like to do in their free time (watch TV, listen to music or go out and play) or how they would like to learn a story (act it, watch it on TV or listen to it read). It is likely that children may reveal several preferred ways of learning. They could then be helped not only to identify their dominant learning styles but also to make the most of them.

Because of individual differences and the diverse backgrounds that children come from, their learning styles are bound to differ as shown in this study. This is why Gill (2005) advocates that teachers should expose learners to other learning styles to expand their repertoire of learning styles and empower them to use their learning styles creatively by combining them with others as and when appropriate.

4.4.6 Repetition

Another factor that came up during the discussion on ways they like to learn but which is not linked to learning style is repetition. There was a general consensus among the children that doing something several times helped them to remember it. Their argument was that repetition enhances familiarity which in turn, helps them to remember. As one of the children argued *"I easily forget a thing if I only do it once but remember what I have done lots of times"*. Another child said *"Doing something loads of times is like stamping it on my brain because I remember it very clearly"* Other children for whom repetition did not work very well argued that simply drawing or painting something they have learnt about helps them to remember it. One of the children mentioned that doing something with their best friend helped them to remember what they had done. The best friend who was in the group remembered an

experiment they did together and remarked that he would always remember exactly what they did and how they did it.

4.4.7 Language spoken at home and opportunities to speak English:
The languages spoken at home were also considered to affect EAL learning. Six of the twelve children were convinced that speaking L1 and having the chance to practice L2 at home were important factors in their learning of EAL which is quite true and supports Foertsch (1998) and Diaz-Rico (2000) who both believe that first language skills form the basis for second language acquisition. This is because the skills learnt in L1 will be transferred to the second language learning. However the other six and their parents thought it was important to speak more English to perform well in it. They argued that those who speak English at home and at school were more fluent than those who only speak English at school.

Seven of the children wished the adults in their households could speak English, so they would *"have more people to speak the language with"* as one Year 1 boy said. Another year 1 boy chipped in *"In my house only me and my dad speak English so I don't get to speak a lot of English coz my dad is always away with work".* A Year 2 girl then added *"If more people speak English in the house then it's ok and it's not **embarrassing** but if it's only me and my sister I get **embarrassed**."* As more and more children joined in the discussion it became clearer that the children believed that speaking English at home would help them improve their English but they were also aware that their parents wanted them to maintain their own language and culture. They obviously did not understand that proficiency in L1 had a positive impact on L2 as research (Foerrtsch 1998 and Diaz- Rico 2000) has shown.

4.4.8 Support from friends: Almost all the children concurred that they learn best in the company of their friends and classmates. They all seemed to value the support they get from their peers. They believed that they spend more time with their friends and they are the ones who influence their learning most. They surmised that they practice most of the things they learn in class with their friends at play and other times as shown in the following extracts:

Amir: *My friends help me to practice what we have learnt in class.*
Ulla: *We play teachers and children and the ones who speak good English is the*

> *teachers and they copy what the teacher do and teach us. It's a good way to learn because it's just **us alone**, **no adults**.*

Anwar: *In play we talk freely and play with each other making mistakes but we no laugh each other.*

Jibril: *Yes it's **fun** when we play teachers and children doing what we have done in class. It's really **fun**.*

So without realizing that they are learning children recreate the classroom or other learning situations and play their roles within it and enjoy it because it is fun. Such play may also help them to understand better, things they might have missed in class. Such interaction is vital and supports Ellis (1999) and Gill (2005)'s idea of the importance of student talk, interpersonal relationships and interaction which all help to promote EAL learning.

4.4.9   Attitudes towards English speaking people:

Just as the children's views on the importance of English seemed to have been influenced by their parents the children's views on attitudes towards the English people could equally have been influenced. This was reflected in their views which matched those of their parents. What made this influence apparent was the reference the children made to their parents as shown in the extracts below.

Hajji: *My mum said they are friendly but can be quite rude.*

Jibril: *My dad thinks they are helpful but not very clever.*

Ulla: *My mum said we must not trust some of them because they kidnap young children and take them away from their families.*

These extracts support what Gardner et al (1999) say about parental attitudes having an impact on their children's attitudes. However sometimes children are not that easily influenced and can have their own attitudes that are opposed to their parents.

When asked if their attitudes towards English people affect their EAL learning they agreed that it only affects them when the negative attributes are directed at them which can make them **"*sad, unhappy, angry, hate English and not bother learning it"*.**

With regards to culture they unanimously agreed that English culture was different from their own cultures although some aspects were the same. For example they pointed out

that while they stayed with their families until after marriage young English boys and girls often went to live on their own or with friends at an early age. One of them also said that she did not like the way some young English boys and girls speak to their parents and to other adults without any respect. At that point another child said *'I would not dare speak to my parents like that.'* To which others joined in with such comments as *'My parents would tell me off if I showed no respect'*, *'I would be sent upstairs to my room and not watch television'* *'I would not get any treats for a long time'* This utterance seems to point to perceived differences in child-parent relationships between the English speaking people and the cultural group to which the respondents belonged.

The conversation had to be brought back on track when children started going off on a tangent and talking about other unrelated matters which is typical of focus group interviews with children where they listen to others and create their own opinion about the topic (Kruger 2000 and Wilkinson and Birmingham 2003) but sometimes getting carried away. While eight children posited that their attitudes towards English culture do not affect their EAL learning four said they did for the following reasons:

Ulla: *It makes me not want to learn about their culture.*
Hajji: *It makes me choose to learn some things and not others.*
Ulla: *It makes me want to find out more things that are same or different.*
Elma: *It makes me not ashamed of bad things in my own culture.*

 It is interesting to see that the children have developed quite a sophisticated understanding. Ulla seems to realize she can learn the language without necessarily adopting the culture. At the same time she is intrigued by it and wants to explore it and her own culture to find similarities and differences between them. Hajji also understands that he has some choice in what he learns and Emma uses her knowledge of the L2 culture to reflect on her own culture. These extracts show that the children's attitudes towards the English culture actually affect them, positively or negatively. For example shunning the English culture can prevent them from learning about more interesting aspects of English life. On the other hand it may make them want to learn more to find out more about them. This seems to indicate that, just as much as children are selective in what they listen to (McGlothlin's 1997) they may also be selective in what they chose to learn about the L2 culture. This may depend on various reasons

some of which might be what interests them or the desire to learn about other people's lives.

4.5 Parental views on factors that affect their children's learning and the problems they face in helping their children to learn EAL

The following two sections present the findings on parental views on the factors that affect their children's EAL learning and the problems faced by the parents in supporting their children's EAL learning (See Appendix 10 for sample of parents' interview transcript).

4.5.1 The importance of EAL:

Like teachers, parents were convinced that it is a good thing for their children to learn EAL while they are still young because of what they stood to gain from it for example, communication skills and the chance to have a good education and good jobs. All but two parents contended that teaching English to young children is valuable because English is an international language and their children will be disadvantaged in terms of accessing education and jobs if they cannot speak or write it. Twenty parents also expressed the view that English is a tool of communication in a highly competitive world and they do not want their children to be left out in the '**race for jobs'** and other opportunities that might arise particularly when they are living in an English speaking country. Their concept of **racing for jobs** is an indication of the scarcity of jobs in the country and their belief that learning English would help to make the race easier as it would help them to gain the necessary skills to perform the jobs.

Another reason given was that they could not be proper British citizens if they did not have English. This view is highlighted in the British Citizenship Test Study Guide (2006) which most parents referred to as they were preparing for their citizenship tests. Referring to this one young mother (P1), who claimed to have just passed the citizenship tests, said *"It says British citizens need to speak English to **fit** into the British community"*. This shows an integrative element of English which agrees with findings from the teachers' responses to interviews. As pointed out by McLaughlin (1986) speaking English is only one element of integrating into the L2 community with the rest including elements such as modifying attitudes, knowledge and behavior to match those of the target language group.

However, the parents were also quick to point out that as much as they would like their children to learn English, they would also like them to learn to speak, read and write their own indigenous languages since inability to do so was perceived in their circles as loss of identity. One of the very outspoken fathers (P2) lamented *"This English is **wiping out** our language, our culture, our whole **identity**…"* a view which was unanimously supported by several other parents including his wife. This is an indication that they fear the potential loss of their identity through English. The strong use of the expression **wipe out** also shows they were afraid that English would eradicate their L1 and culture as well as consuming their whole identity. This was supported by another parent (P3) who alleged that *"English is necessary but now some of our older children **DON'T even want** to speak our language or follow our culture. They prefer English food and English clothes and English things."* These utterances may be an indication of cultural differences between the parents' and their children's views/values. It also shows that parents are torn between wanting their children to learn English and preserving their identity. The emphasis on 'Don't' may indicate their exasperation at the effect of English on their children yet they still believed that English was vital for their children's future.

Two of the fathers who resented the idea of young children's learning of English argued that such young children should not be in school anyway, let alone learning an additional language. They believed that ***"Children should enjoy being children and only start school when they are older, about seven or eight years old."*** (P4 and P5)One of the fathers even queried why younger children are not taught in their own languages and pointed out the fact that there were a lot of Punjabi speaking 'teachers' in the school who could do it. They thought the children were too young and did not enjoy learning English. They were unaware of age regulations for children in British schools. They also probably did not realize at the time that there were only three trained Punjabi speaking teachers at the school and that the many other Punjabi speaking 'teachers' they referred to were support assistants who were not trained to teach but nevertheless supported the children in their learning. They also may not have known that English is the medium of instruction in UK schools except in Wales where Welsh is used during the first few years of school in most schools. However, most of the parents viewed English as indispensable because they argued that there is nothing one can do to advance oneself without English.

4.5.2 Teachers and teaching assistants: All the parents agreed with the teachers and children on the importance of teachers and their teaching assistants in their children's EAL learning. They attributed the success that their children had made to the teachers and bilingual support assistants who they said were well trained, knew how to teach their children and worked really hard. They also gave their own children credit for working hard at learning English but sadly none of them mentioned the importance of the parents themselves maybe because they were not aware of the huge impact that they can make on their children's learning. Most of the parents pointed out that they were generally happy with their children's progress regardless of the fact that some still pronounce words incorrectly and lack confidence and fluency. Nine mothers pointed out that they started learning English three years ago but they still find it difficult to speak the language and yet their children can now speak the language more fluently than them. It could be tempting to explain this with the critical period hypothesis which views younger learners as better learners of second or additional languages but in this case it might not be safe to make such an assumption because the children and their mothers do not have comparable English input nor do they have the same opportunities to speak the language.

4.5.3 Enjoyment: Eighteen parents associated the enjoyment that children show in learning English with an increased ability in speaking the language. When asked whether their child/children enjoy learning English they seemed to think they did but pointed out that some of their children still seemed to find it difficult as they still cannot speak the language fluently. In contrast when the children were asked most of them indicated that they enjoyed English but some clearly said they did not because it was hard and boring. This discrepancy might be because the parents may not have asked their children how they really felt about learning English. Being a parent does not necessarily mean they know their children well especially when they cannot speak the language themselves. The majority of the parents were, however, pleased with the progress their children had made which they attributed to good teaching, availability of resources in the school and enjoyment in learning. It must, however, be borne in mind that ability and enjoyment are not always linked. One child can master a second language without much effort or enjoyment whereas another child might enjoy the language but struggle to learn it. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) surmise that there is much

more to learning a language than enjoyment. There is collaborative interaction and practice which promotes language learning to which Kent (1997) adds regular use of the target language.

4.5.4 Language spoken at home: Twelve of the parents thought that children's EAL learning was influenced by the language they speak at home and the opportunities they get to speak English out of school. In response to the question on what language(s) their children use at home to speak to them and other adults most parents reiterated their children's responses to a similar question by agreeing that home language is used to communicate with adults particularly grandparents. Some pointed out that sometimes their children use English when addressing them but never with their grandparents. Only four parents however said that their children speak to their grandparents in English because they understand it but they were quick to point out that it is culturally expected to use home language when addressing adults. However, they all unanimously agreed that the children generally used English to communicate with their siblings or friends often code switching to the home language as and when they felt the need to but almost always use L1 to talk to older family members and relatives as well as during cultural activities. Children with younger siblings usually did not have anyone to speak English with at home but they could still get to know about English and other cultures through their own language and culture. This is supported by Byram (1989) who argues that L1 language and culture can play a significant role in second language learning because they can be used to articulate the values and meanings of a particular social group.

 Six parents argued that the children spend their school day using English so they do not put pressure on them to speak English at home. Their argument was if they speak English at home and school then there was a danger of forgetting their own indigenous languages. However some of the parents were happy to see their children speak English every now and then at home adding that if they knew more English they would help their children more as they wanted them to improve in their learning. Six other young parents two of them a married couple, admitted that they insist on their children speaking only English at home because they want to ensure that ***"they are highly educated and get good jobs in future."*** However, this view of 'English at whatever cost' runs contrary to research which strongly supports the idea that use of one's home language is advantageous in L2 acquisition (August & Hakuta, 1997). A similar view is shared by Gay (1988) and Snow (1992) who assert that L1has a profound influence on

L2 because the home language of children provides the foundation for the emergence of reading and writing. Unfortunately not many parents seem to be aware of this

4.5.5. Parental attitudes and their effect on their children's attitudes
Parents concurred with teachers on the impact that their attitudes have on their children. The findings from the study indicated that

4.6 Problems faced by parents in helping their children to learn EAL

The problems faced by parents in supporting their children's EAL learning are discussed below under the following subthemes (i) Parents' problems in helping their children to learn English (ii) Parents' lack of awareness and understanding of their role in their children's learning (iii) The need to preserve their own language and culture and (iv) Parents' lack of understanding of current methods of teaching.

4.6.1 Parents' problems in helping their children to learn English
It was evident from most of the parents' responses to interview questions that some of them faced major problems in helping their children to learn English. Among the problems faced was assisting with homework. Almost half of the parents said they had problems in reading the homework and discussing it with their children. As parent (P1) said *"Sometimes I ask my child to read the homework to me and explain it in Punjabi but he **can't read or explain** it so it's **hard** for me to help him."* In this case the problem was compounded by the fact that the parent was illiterate and therefore could not read or understand the homework which is always written in English. This was a typical situation in more than a third of the participants' households. Such stressful situations were believed to have caused some of the parents to assign the homework to elder siblings or relatives who often did it for their younger children without even seeking their views. The extract therefore illustrates the dilemma that faces some illiterate parents when it is time to help children with their homework. The parent's frustration can be passed on to their children leading to utter despair.

The findings also revealed that apart from the problem of illiteracy faced by a number of the parents there was also a problem of lack of knowledge of subject content. As reflected in P3 's extract *"Most of us parents we feel unable to help our children because of bad English and no understanding of what children learn in school. We*

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don't know the correct words to use and we don't know the topics." This means that in addition to language problems they also lack knowledge of the subject content. Their limited English also makes it difficult for them to know and understand some of the subject specific terms or concepts that the children have learnt in school. P5 postulated that *"For some parents this creates a situation of despair but for others it's an opportunity to find out more about the topic with our children because if we don't' do it nobody will and we lose."* and for others the opportunity for them to learn together with their children. The majority of the parents admitted that they actually learnt about the topics from their children as well as through finding out things about the topics with them. They worried about their lack of English without being aware that they could equally help their children in their own languages which they not only knew and understood but which they were also comfortable with. It might have helped them to bear in mind Foertcsh's (1998)'s idea that L1 provides children with the basic foundation on which their literacy skills will emerge.

4.6.2 Parents' lack of awareness and understanding of their role in their children's learning.

The findings revealed that nine of the parents had very little awareness and understanding of the role that they should play in their children's EAL learning. For example, some of them did not realise how important it was to attend parent–teacher meetings that in some cases they simply did not turn up or else they sent their older children to represent them at these meetings. The reasons they gave for being unable to attend these meetings included child minding, work commitments or religious activities (Comer 1986).

An important finding from the parents' interview responses revealed that some of the reasons they gave for not getting more involved in their children's learning were quite 'legitimate'. For example, while some of the reasons were educational (inability to speak, read and write English) other reasons were cultural (staying out of the way). As pointed out by twelve parents, nine female and three male, their main reason for not getting involved in school activities was to acknowledge that they knew their children were in good hands and that there was no reason for them to interfere. As one mother, P6 put it *"In our culture we show respect by not meddling in other people's work so we stay away to enable the teachers to get on without disturbance."* This concurs with

findings from Moles (1993) cited in Peterson and Ladky (2007) who found that among some Southern Asian immigrant parents there was a cultural belief that it is helpful to maintain a respectful distance from the education system. In this case the parents thought they were doing the right thing by simply staying away to avoid 'constantly being in the teachers' way and distracting them from teaching'.

It is important to listen to participants in order to understand why they do certain things. For example in this study some teachers expressed the view that some of the parents do not seem to be aware of the role they need to play in their children's learning. However in their interviews the parents explained the reasons behind their apparent 'unwillingness' to take a more active part in their children's learning. They expressed their desire to support their children and indicated that they did not know how to help them. Their explanations of why they seemingly did not help their children contrasted with the views of the teachers who thought they were not willing to help and did not try hard enough to help.

A similar lack of awareness of parental roles was evident in the case of ten mothers who erroneously believed that the provision of literacy resources was in itself sufficient to help promote their children's EAL learning while they got on with their work. The other fifteen parents, ten females and five males had an idea that there was more to be done to help their children and some knew exactly what they needed to do as they always asked the teachers but some did not know how to help their children. Most of the parents blamed their limited English for not being able to provide their children with a sufficient support and a conducive home background and role models from which to learn their target language. They argued that if their English was good they would liaise with the teachers more to get ideas of how best they could improve their home backgrounds to support their children's EAL learning. For example if they knew better they would use a language they were more comfortable with rather than try to help in English which both they and their children were struggling with.

Another example that shows parental lack of awareness of their role in helping their children was evident in some of their arguments relating to teaching their children. For example eight parents, six of whom were couples and the other two fathers of different children expressed the view that it was the teacher's duty to teach their children English

because they are the ones who are trained to do it. They argued that asking parents to teach their children at home was not productive because besides being untrained some of the parents were not literate in their own languages and were actually struggling to learn English. As one father P7 pointed out *"most of the children speak better English than their parents. So how can the parents help them?"* He went on to suggest *that "teachers and their school administrators should train parents if they want them to be of good help in supporting their children at home."* What this parent said about some of the children being more articulate than their parents was quite true and was actually true which is why the parents were worried about their inability to support the children in their work. By training the parents administrators and teachers would not only be equipping them with knowledge and skills but also empowering them and preparing them for their role as co-teachers of their children.

A few mothers expressed the concern that sometimes they did not understand the homework instructions and therefore found it very difficult to help their children when they did not comprehend what had to be done. They requested that the homework be made very easy to follow or should always come with full instructions or examples of how to do the work. However, when asked if they had made attempts to inform the teachers about their problems some of them said no but others argued that *"it's common knowledge that the teachers should understand that these poor parents do not have the knowledge or skills to perform the role of a teacher that schools expect them to do."* (P2 and P8) What was believed to be common knowledge in this utterance was assumed knowledge. The teachers were not only expected to possess the knowledge of parents' problems but they were expected to train them as well. However, during the interviews teachers did not indicate that they had any knowledge about these problems that the parents were facing. They actually felt that parents could do more to support their children's EAL learning.

The lack of understanding of their role in supporting their children's learning also led some parents to think that only schools and not their homes should have literacy resources because they are learning institutions. One of the few elderly fathers (P9) who was really determined to put his view across argued *'When I went to school my parents were poor and uneducated and couldn't help me in any way. There was not a single book in my house but I did well from the limited resources we had at school, so modern*

day schools should be able to do better.' This extract *helps to* draws attention to the plight of less privileged children who may not have appropriate or adequate resources at home and positions the school as a potential saviour of children experiencing such a plight. It creates a situation of dialogue between the school and parents which could result in amicable solutions reached such as increasing book access to parents of children who need them. However, for such arrangements to be made the parents need to approach the teachers with their problems instead of trying to solve the problems in their own ways. Similarly it has been observed that teachers blame the parents for limited involvement in their children's learning because they are not aware of the actual reasons why parents do not get actively involved in school activities. This calls for dialogue between the teachers and parents in order to identify and resolve existing problems.

Yet another example that shows parental lack of awareness of their role in supporting their children's EAL leaning is the fact that very few parents seemed to understand the importance of showing interest in their children's work, discussing it with them and encouraging them to work hard. While most of the parents said they encouraged their children to work hard at their school and tried to support them in homework few parents, about eight actually ever discussed their children's work with them to find out what they were finding easy /difficult in school. It is through such interactions and discussions that children will eventually learn to think and do things for themselves based on the scaffolding and modelling done by the adults (Cameron 2001). There were also contradictions in what parents said e.g. P 10 asserted *"I help my child as much as I can but I really don't know how best to help him. Sometimes I don't talk about their school work because I can't do it don't know what to say".*

4.6.3 The need to preserve their culture

On culture and how it affects children's EAL learning, most parents acknowledged the fact that in learning English their children would need to learn about the English culture. This supports Yonkers (1996:27) view that 'children cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs.' However, they were very protective of their language and culture and were adamant that they wanted to preserve them. As one mother (P11) vehemently said *"Culture is a symbol of loyalty to our own country. Without our culture we are nothing".* This not

only shows allegiance to their country of origin but is also an expression of how much they value their culture which gives rise to a strong determination to preserve it. There was implicit fear that their culture would be swallowed up by the English culture and they did not want that to happen.

The subject of culture was discussed with such great passion by almost all the parents that it was clearly visible that they value their culture. There was a burning desire among all the parents to preserve their language and culture with some pointing out that they cannot watch helplessly as their languages and culture get eroded by English and the English culture. Five different parents, two of them male made comments such *as* ***"If WE are not careful WE will be a cultureless society soon because English is slowly taking over"*** (P7 and P9) When asked how they thought English was taking over their culture they said that the more their children spoke English and adapted to the English culture the less their own language and culture would continue to function and '*before **we** know it, it's gone, never to be catched again". (P12*). Although such a comment might show elements of stereotyping /otherization which are common between small and large cultures (Holliday 1999) it also shows that the parents realise the powerful nature of the English language. The repeated use of the word we also shows solidarity with other parents and members of their cultural group.

One very eloquent father (P9) pointed out how English 'sweeps away all the minority languages and cultures like a broom' and then went on to say, '*we can't stop it because that is the way it goes but we want to protect our young ones while they are still young. As they grow older and more confident they too will change as they try to fit into the English world.*' Another parent (P12) chipped in '*It's sad to lose our culture like that but who doesn't need English in this modern world.*' This is yet another indication of wanting to preserve their culture but at the same time realizing the importance and indispensable nature of English. While this indicates a clash of interests it also shows the supremacy of English.

4.6.4 *Parents' lack of understanding of current methods of teaching*
The findings of the study also revealed that ten parents openly admitted that they did not know what they were supposed to do to support their children in their learning. The argument put forward by some of the parents that the teaching of EAL to young children should be left to teachers and their assistants because they are the ones trained

to do the job may not only be taken as an indication of their limited understanding of their role as co-teachers of their children but may also be an indication of their limited understanding of current methods of teaching used in the school.

Some of the parents mentioned that they were very willing to help their children but were not sure how to do it. They expressed the following sentiments:

P 13 The *way we were taught is different from nowadays. Now children do clever things we don't do in the past.*

P14 The *way they do this adding now is different from what I did when I was at school.*

P15 *The methods used today are so different from those used when we went to school? For example the Maths we did is so different from the Maths our children do and this reading in sounds [phonics] is also so different that we get confused when we try to help our children at home.*

One of the major problems that parents faced was the fact that teaching methods used nowadays differ significantly from those they were familiar with. The parents emphasised that they were not familiar with the new methods of teaching Maths, and Reading that were currently used in the school. This means therefore that helping their children with homework would be difficult unless they too were trained to use the methods.

 Six parents expressed their concern that their children do not listen to them, openly telling them that they could not help them because they could not read the homework. Two of the mothers were almost in tears because they said they needed help. It was evident that they wanted to help their children but they had completely no idea of how to go about it. They knew they needed help but they did not know how to go about getting it.

Fourteen of the parents also commented on their lack of knowledge of the big and special words that were used in schools to describe the curriculum and all that goes on in the school. Research has shown that this is quite common among minority –language parents who are less likely than their English counterparts to understand concepts or technical language used by teachers to refer to aspects of the curriculum, instructional strategies and educational targets (Smrekar 1996). Below are some of the comments

made by some of the parents when asked what problems they face in helping their child to learn English at home.

P 19:   *I was trying to help my child the other day and she mentioned that she had Done similar work in her booster group but I don't understand what a booster group is. She often come up with these big words and most of the time I not understand what it means.*

A similar view was shared by another mother, P20 who expressed the view that she was not familiar with some of the terms used by teachers to refer to curriculum matters. She said she was too embarrassed to ask the teachers in case it turned out to be something quite obvious. This type of response kept coming from different parents during the interviews showing that the parents were reluctant to clarify things with the teachers. This may be due to cultural reasons of not wanting to interfere but it could also be due to insecurities and lack of confidence to approach the teachers.

On what they suggest could be done to improve the learning of English among young EAL learners most of the parents suggested that the teachers know best what would help so they called for more opportunities to meet the teachers so that they would advise them on what to do. They also suggested that the school should provide extra lessons for their children. A few requested for extra parental support from the school but emphasized that this should be done during school hours and definitely not in the evenings. Although only two parents indicated that they do not want to do any evening activities this may apply to more of them. They argued that evenings are when they want to be with their families and also engage in some cultural activities. This highlights the importance that they attach to their culture.

Ten parents also indicated that they would like the school to help them speak English better through programs tailored to help them. This, they argued would make them familiar with the terms used to refer to different things and this would , in turn, enable them to support their children more effectively in their learning. They also concurred with P 24 who said "*We would like more information and training on the new Reading and Maths schemes that have been introduced in the school to enable us to help our children*" This is an admission that they are not familiar with certain ways of doing things and that they need help. It is also an indication that equipped with the right information and skills, they would be in a better position to support their children's

learning and possibly perform their role as co-teachers of their children more effectively.

4.7 The role played by bilingual assistants in children's learning of EAL

This section presents and analyses the results of the findings from observations which were carried out in order to answer the research question on how adults support a child's language acquisition. Although there are numerous other adults who support children's language learning bilingual assistants were chosen because like teachers they spend a lot of time working with the children in the school under study. The aim of the observation was to identify the nature of support bilingual assistants give to children to support the EAL learning. The observational data was analysed by searching for patterns in ways children were supported in the three separate episodes that were observed. Although only three extracts from classroom observations are presented in this study (See Chapter 4) a total of six observations were carried out both inside and outside the Reception classrooms. The three extracts used were chosen because they are the ones that represented 'best practice' among them and also because they represented various ways in which the children were supported. The focus of the observations was to establish such things as the type of support given to children by bilingual assistants, the nature of interactions between the adults and children as well as among the children themselves as well as the language used by the participants.

Extract 1 below which was taken from a longer extract represented the first 5 minutes of the lesson and portrays a conversation between bilingual assistant Mrs Khan and Mustafa a child in a Reception class (not real names) during a science activity on 'smell'. (See Appendix 6 for transcription conventions)
 Mrs Khan put different smelling substances (onion, garlic, vinegar, soap and perfume) in well covered containers with holes on the lids. She blindfolded the children and asked them to smell and name the substances in English or mother tongue and to say whether they liked the smell or not and why.

Extract 1 - from a reception class science activity on 'smell'.

1   Mrs Khan: **< Hello Mustafa hum apne nark se** smell **karega. Yeh kesi. >**

                Smelling with our noses [uses gestures]

                (Hello Mustafa we are going to use our noses to smell. What does this

smell like?)

5 Mustafa**: < Pyaz >** *(Onion)*

  Mrs Khan: Well done ! What does mummy use it for at home? **< Shabash. >**

  (Well done.)

  < Garh mei ami yaan kis ke ley isthamall karthi hea? >

  Mustafa: **< Handi. Ammi jaan >** cut [pause] cook**.** *Cooking… Mum*

  cut…cook.

10 Mrs Khan: Yes **< Ammi jaan >** *(mum)* cuts it and cooks it at home.

   [Mrs Khan turns to give instructions to Andrew and Mary in English.]

  Mrs Khan: Andrew stop talking and Aneesa put that toy away, please.

   [Then she turns back to Mustafa and continues their conversation.]

  Mrs Khan: Mustafa, Do you know the English name for this vegetable?

15 Mustafa: **< Pyaz. >**

   Onion.

  Mrs Khan: Onion **< heh Mustafa. >** Onion **< kahoo >**

   (It's onion Mustafa. Say 'onion.')

  Mustafa: Onion, cut onion. [She asks him to smell the onion again.]

20 Mrs Khan*:* Yes cutting onion **< Y eh kashboo kehsi hea? >** **(***Do you like the*

   smell?)

  Mustafa: [He holds it, smells it, makes a face and says] Me no like it. Onion

   smell.

The lesson continued in a similar way with Mrs Khan interacting with each child individually then encouraging them to interact with each other guessing, describing and discussing the smells and whether they liked them or not and why. At the end of the lesson she asked them to remove the blind folds and share their experiences on what they had learnt as well as saying which smells they liked best or least.

In this teaching/learning episode Mrs Khan used Mustafa's home language (Urdu) English to elicit responses from him and to help him understand more about the smelling activity he was engaged in and she used English to teach the new vocabulary e.g. onion. Mixed sentences are a common strategy in many bilingual/multilingual classrooms as they seem to aid EAL learners' understanding of concepts. The responses that Mustafa gave showed some proficiency in his L1 and Mrs Khan may have used this knowledge to promote his learning of the English word onion. This would support

Rehbein (1984) cited in Blackledge (1994) and McLaughlin (1986) who contend that proficiency in own language can promote second language learning. Although this still has to be proved by research my own experience has shown that use of L2 can help understanding of English by clarifying meaning as in this example.

Extract 2 below, which was mainly in Punjabi came from a reception class activity on 'furnishing a play house' (small world play). Again the extract is from a much longer transcript occurring ten minutes after the start of a lesson. The bilingual assistant, Mrs Bhamra, was working with a group of six children of mixed abilities and the equipment used included a wooden house, carpet pieces and various pieces of furniture. Mrs Bhamra first discussed key words with the children then discussed what happens when they move houses and asked them to identify and name all the pieces of furniture to be used. She then asked them to imagine having moved to a new house and to decide what they would use each room for and the appropriate furniture. This is a good example of linking theory with practice and relating things to children's own experiences.

Extract 2- from a reception class activity on 'furnishing a play house' (small world play)

1   Mrs Bhamra**:** Imagine this is our new house < **nami ghar >** (*new house*) and
here is our furniture < **samaan >** (*furniture*) and carpets. What do we put first
in the house?

Sayeeda: < **Asen diecha bichande han. >** (*We put the carpets.)*

5   [Mrs Bhamra helped the children to put carpets into the various rooms according
to suitable colours, and to name the rooms and decide which should be upstairs /
downstairs, near or far away from each other and why. Children's attention was
also drawn to how furniture was set out at home thereby linking home-school
contexts.

10   Mrs Bhamra: What shall we put in our kitchen? **< Asen apne rasoe wich ki
pande Han? >** [Repeating in panjabi]

Hamzah: < Basin.   Memoona: chulla. > [simultaneously]

Sink   cooker

[Mrs Bhamra asked Hamzah to find the cooker and Memoona to find the sink
and put them in the kitchen which they did.]

15   Mrs Bhamra: **< Bachoo shabash ham kana kane wale kamre mein kia**

rakhtehen. >

Well done children. What do we put in the dining room now?

Imaan: **< chaarpae >** [in Urdu]

A bed

Mrs Bhamra: **< Khana kane wala kamra kane kae leeya hea >**

A dining room is for eating [pretending to eat] *and a bedroom is for*

20   *sleeping* [pretending to sleep]

[She went on to explain in Urdu, the difference between a dining

room and a bedroom and then asked her to find something to put in the

dining room.]

Imaan: [Picks up a dining table and some chairs and seeks BA's approval by

25   using the expression] < '**Tikka?**' > (*Ok?*)

Mrs Bhamra: **< Tikka. >**

Hamzah: Let's do the bedroom now.

Mrs Bhamra: Ok Hamzah [allowing him to assume a leading role] What

goes into the bedroom? Think of your own bedroom at home.

30   Faizan: **< Mera bistara ate meri almari. >**

My bed and my cupboard. [Picking the bed and cupboard and putting

them in one of the bedrooms]

Mrs Bhamra: Now work together and put the rest of the furniture into the

35   house [signaling with both hands before finally picking a cushion and

asking them 'Does this go under the chair or on the chair?' to which they

all chorused 'On the chair.']

After joining in their activity as one of them and modeling how to furnish a house Mrs
Bhamra then left the children to continue on their own and only came back to monitor
them with less support when necessary until all the furniture had been put away into the
various rooms. In her interactions with the children Mrs Bhamra encouraged them to
use adjectives and positional language such as in, on, under, bigger, smaller etc and let
them speak in L1or L2. Children also freely interacted with her and with each other as
they put the rest of the furniture into the house. She also reduced adult support once she
was sure children knew what to do. This supports Bruner's (1990) idea of scaffolding
and then reducing support to stretch pupils. When gradually left to continue on their
own, children worked with increased autonomy and even assuming a leading role as in
the case of Hamzah cited above. The use of code switching in this episode serves to

illustrate how two languages can be used to create contexts for understanding concepts in young children's EAL learning.

In extract 3 below, yet another reception class was observed. This extract also comes from a longer one. The bilingual assistant, Miss Sol, was supporting a small group of EAL children in a child initiated role play activity- making rotis. The extract (in English and Punjabi) is from the conversation between Miss Sol and two of the children Myra and Sita about five minutes after the beginning of the activity.

Extract 3- from a Reception role play activity on making roti.

1 Miss Sol: *Hello Myra. Mmmm! That smells good.* < **Edhi kushboo bahut sohni hai >** *(Nodding her head)*

Miss Sol: Sat Sri Akal Myra. Mmmmm! < **(apna seer helandi**) >

Myra: *Looks up then continues 'cooking'.*

5 Miss Sol: *What are you cooking?* tu kee benandi hai?

Nkosi: *Finish. Chick peas.* < **Hoon roti benarye hai**.> (*Now cooking roti).*

Miss Sol: *Wow! That's nice. Making Roti? I like roti*

[Sita comes over and says*: Here is the flour Myra.]*

Myra: **< Shukria >** (*Thank you.)*

10 Miss Sol: *Oh Flour!* <**Hoor tenu kee chayda? >** (*What else do you need?) [Using appropriate gestures]*

Sita: *Salt. We must have salt.* [Then she turns to Myra] **< Hoor ki Myra? >** *(What else Myra?)*

Myra: *Ghae (butter)*

15 Miss Sol: *Well done children.* < **Hoor sanu kee chija chaiydiah? >** *(What other ingredients do we need?)* [Prompts them by pointing to a picture on the wall]

Myra: *Wa-er. (Water)* <***Garam** wa-er >. (Warm water)*

Sita: *Anything else?*

Myra: [Silence]

20 Sita: *A pan. (She laughs). We forgot the pan. [Dashes off then brings back a pan and a spoon.]*

Miss Sol: *Well done for remembering the utensils, Sita. Two utensils, a pan and a spoon. What other **utensils** do we need? A pair of scissors? <* (**Ik kenchi?)** >

24 *Myra and Sita* [together] *Oh No!* [Then burst out laughing.]

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The children then went to collect the rest of the utensils then started measuring the ingredients. Miss Sol noticed Myra using her hands to measure the flour then acknowledged the traditional method of measuring but also introduced an alternative way of using a scale for measuring. During the activity she introduced new words such as ingredients, utensils and kneeding to the children and also modeled kneading of the dough. In this episode, therefore Miss Sol established explicit links between home and school practices of measuring using hands or scientifically using a scale. She made careful use of the children's L1 and L2 and also used visual cues (pictures of roti and the ingredients used) and objects to handle – ingredients, utensils and kneading the dough (Kinesthetic skills) which seemed to help them to understand and enjoy the activity. The combined use of a variety of senses – (sight, smell touch), humour (A pair of scissor?) active participation in the children's activity and code switching may have helped to unlock meaning and understanding of the cooking activity.

The findings from the observed episodes show that the job of bilingual assistants is multifaceted. This is in line with research (Blackledge 1994) who contends that a bilingual assistant's roles include educational, pastoral and liaison roles. In all episodes code switching was used to share new experiences and enhance meaning. The episodes differed in that while episode 1 involved prompting, eliciting and imparting knowledge in a 1-1 context with less participation in the actual activity by the adult, episodes 2 had more adult participation with good scaffolding to enable children to work independently. In episode three the TA also interacts more with the children than in episode 1 but less than in episode 2. The interactions in all three episodes show that both the adults and the children have the freedom to use LI with each other. Adult support which included modeling, code switching, reference to children's cultural practices and engagement in practical 'hands – on' activities may all have played an important role in promoting the children's EAL learning during the observed activities. This is yet another indication of the important role of bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning. However it would help if a lot more research could be carried out on the use of two or more languages to facilitate comprehension of concepts among EAL learners.

4.8 Additional observations made

In addition to the observations discussed above four additional observations were made of Reception children in various situations such as during free choice activities, during play time and at home times. I observed that generally the children interacted with their teachers in English and they used a combination of English and L1 to communicate with the bilingual assistants and their peers. During informal activities the children tended to use L1 but during formal lessons they almost always tried to converse with others in English.

It was evident from the observations that most of the interactions between the participants and their parents during these almost non-formal activities were in home language. For example on the four occasions I observed the parents picking up or dropping their children off at school they used L1 to communicate with their children. However, one could almost always hear the children code switching to English as soon as they got to within the teachers' earshot. As suggested earlier perhaps the children believe that English is very much a school language and that it has to be spoken within the school. This was observed over ten different families.

Similar random observations were made during play times when the children engaged in free play activities without being aware they were being observed. Reception children tended to use more L2 during their interactions with peers (most of who shared L1 with) than the older children. Year one children, on the other hand used more English with most of their peers occasionally code switching to L1. When Year 2 children were observed during their play times and home times contrary to what they said in their interviews some of them conversed with their peers with whom they shared L1 in English just as they did with their English speaking peers and the opposite also occurred. Even some siblings were seen talking to each other in English in the playgrounds but as they walked away with their parents at the end of the school day more and more of them began to use L1 to talk to their parents and friends.

Another observation that was made was that during their play most of the children reenacted or went over what they had learnt in school or what they had seen or done at home indicating how their environments affect their EAL learning. Although not all proficient L1 speakers spoke English well the general pattern observed during these

interactions was that those generally proficient in L1 were also heading towards proficiency in L2. This is a vital indication of the importance of L1 in the learning of L2 and supports Rehbein's (1984), Blackledge's (1994) and Mc Laughlin's (1987) argument about the positive impact of L1 on L2.

During the observations as well as during my own day to day teaching I also observed that both younger and older children had times when they kept silent when conversing with friends or adults and also when they were trying to explain something. When asked to explain what goes on during these silent spells the majority of the children indicated that they will be thinking about what to say. As some of the children pointed out:

Musa: *Sometimes it takes me a short time to think about what to say but other times it take long*

Researcher: *Do you worry when it takes you long to think about what to say?*

Musa: *Yes when it take long I start worry that teacher will choose another child to give answer and I worry because if I say wrong answer they laugh. Then I worry more and the answer does not come to my head. Then I hear teacher ask another child and I have the answer but too late now. I really sad now.*

This is a good example of a child's thinking process and what takes place during the time when they are trying to process information in their heads. Although similar in some ways this should not be confused with what Dulay (1982) and Krashen (1985) concur goes on during the silent period (processing thoughts, confusion, anxiety and even cultural shock).

Different roles of the bilingual assistants were also noted during the observations. These included supporting individual children in speaking/reading /writing/helping them to change into dry clothes if they wet themselves, supporting children in collaborative play and translating for the teachers, pupils and parents both during the school day and at the end of the day as and when necessary. This is in line with Blackledge (1994) who argues that in addition to educational tasks bilingual assistants also have pastoral and liaison tasks. In their interviews most of the teachers acknowledged the importance of bilingual assistants and the multifaceted nature of their roles. All teachers expressed the view that they would like at least one bilingual assistant in their classes. Even the bilingual teachers appreciated the role that bilingual assistants played in their classroom.

This highlights the role that they play in children's EAL learning. Children also stressed the importance of bilingual assistants in their learning of English. Because of their linguistic and cultural similarities the children seem to identify themselves more with the bilingual assistants than with their teachers sometimes. These results concur with Mills in Blackledge (1994) who believes that bilingual assistants are an important resource in children's EAL learning and that because of it they need appropriate training to perform their numerous roles effectively.

Another important role of the bilingual assistant is providing bilingual and focused support and translating for parents. However, there was disagreement among the teachers on the role that involves working alongside the teachers to model/demonstrate concepts or to engage in tandem teaching with them. Nine teachers agreed that if appropriately trained the bilingual assistants could effectively teach in collaboration with the teacher. The teachers who disagreed argued that most of the bilingual assistants are just like ordinary classroom assistants but with a bilingual dimension (Blackledge 1994). They argued that bilingual assistants are untrained and therefore unable to effectively teach the children without the teacher's support.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has presented and analysed the findings of the study on the basis of the themes that emerged from the data such as (i) the importance of young children's' learning of EAL,(ii) factors perceived by teachers/parents/children to affect children's EAL learning (iii) problems faced by parents in supporting their children's EAL learning (iv) teachers' perceptions of the role played by parents in supporting their children's EAL learning and (v) the role played bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning. In essence the chapter has tried to answer the question: What are the factors according to teachers, parents and children?

This study revealed that according to teachers the main factors were parental support and support from other adults such as bilingual assistants, a conducive home background, positive attitudes towards the English language, teaching methods and children's learning styles. While parents agreed with teachers on factors such as home background and availability of literacy resources for them the factors that seemed to stand out most were the role played by teachers and teaching assistants, the need to

preserve their culture and the problems they faced in supporting their children. The misunderstandings that seem to exist between teachers and parents over these problems will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

Some of the children's views matched those of their teachers and parents on factors such as home background and support from adults. However they felt that their EAL learning was also affected by such factors as the support they got from friends and peers, the language difficulties they face and the ways they like to learn.

The study also highlighted the multifaceted role of bilingual assistants and the fact that this vital role they play in supporting EAL learners should never be underestimated as it helps to bridge the link between home and school. Bilingual assistants play this role by entering the children's through their shared language and culture and comparing it with those of others. The study has also shown that bilingual assistants support children in diverse ways such as helping and assessing them, supporting the children in reading and other activities under the guidance of the teacher, and translating for teachers, parents and school administrators respectively. The data presented in this chapter will be critically discussed in the following chapter which will draw up the various perceptions carefully to create a wholesome picture of participants' views.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analyzed the results of the study along with samples of extracts from the data which helped to illuminate the participants' perspectives about factors that affect children's EAL learning. This chapter focuses on a critical discussion of the study findings, which includes an examination of children's views as stakeholders, how EAL issues are interpreted and understood by different participants such as teachers and parents. The chapter also provides an insight into how parents perceive themselves in relationship to the school. The study findings are closely linked to the literature review in an attempt to establish links or disparities between them and research. The first part of this chapter discusses the answers to the overarching question in this study: 'What are the factors according to teachers, the Deputy Head (DH), parents and children?' Answers to this question have been addressed by drawing upon different aspects of the study such as what the participants and literature say about EAL learning as well as what I observed in the study. Below I will bring the different perspectives together.

5.2 What are the factors according to teachers, parents and the children?

5.2.1 Shared perspectives.

Most of the participants (seven of twelve focus group pupils, the DH, all eight teachers and all but two parents) view the teaching of EAL to young children as important because of the numerous social, educational and economic benefits they believe are derived from it. Their shared view is that learning English empowers the children and enhances their chances of communication with other people as well as promoting access to higher education and employment. In this they seem to agree with Darder et al (1997:68) who describe it as a 'social and economic equalizer and a prerequisite to improving social, educational and economic status'. Hence EAL is viewed as a powerful tool or an asset because it enables people to obtain better opportunities in life as it is believed to be 'the key that opens doors' to social and economic success. The importance of English and the impact it has on one's future life was therefore considered by most of the participants to be the driving force behind EAL learning. However, whilst embracing the anticipated positive effects of EAL on their children's

future lives, parents were also aware of and apprehensive about the possible dangers of English and the potential threat it posed to their culture. This will be discussed later (see 5.6).

It is important to mention that the views of the children on the importance of EAL learning may have been influenced by others as reflected in the following responses:

Sannah: *My parents said without English you have no job, life.*

Amir: *My dad said it is the way to good life no …*

Elma*: My mum said English is the key to success*.

The extracts above illustrate how parents influence their children by what they say. As Bloom (1980) points out, children's attitudes are influenced by their parents' attitudes. It should be remembered though that children could also be influenced by other people such as older siblings, relatives and friends or could draw from other dominant modes of input such as video games, films, computers and TV. Attitudes may be imparted intentionally by parents repeatedly telling their children the importance of learning English or in everyday life by showing them how to value English e.g. through homework support, buying extra books or regularly taking the child to the library.

5.2.2 Teachers' views

Apart from the importance of English the main factors perceived by the teachers' and DH to affect children's EAL learning include a conducive home environment, availability of literacy resources, parental support, bilingual support, cultural factors, attitudes towards English, individual factors (interest in L2, personality, learning styles) and teaching methods. The teachers' surmised that a conducive home background where parents promote interest and a positive attitude towards English, discuss their children's work and support them in their school work and where a variety of literacy resources are provided, helps to promote EAL learning. This is in line with research which claims that EAL children tend to perform well in a supportive home environment where positive parental attitudes and support thrive and where there are resources to support their learning (Walqui 2000 and Griffin et al 2004). Such children do not come to school empty handed but bring funds of knowledge in the form of ideas, attitudes, and language even if it is only in their L1, that the teachers and other people working with them in school can build upon.

Teachers and the DH also believed that individual factors such as intelligence, an outgoing personality and motivation to learn English facilitate the learning of EAL while negative attributes such as lack of motivation to speak English, a withdrawn personality and lack of intelligence may inhibit EAL learning. However, Filmore (1979) cited in Lightbown and Spada (2006) argues that sometimes quiet/withdrawn or reserved children can outshine the extroverts in second language learning. Lightbown and Spada (2006) contend that this may be due to the complex nature of aspects such as personality and intelligence which have numerous traits and are therefore difficult to measure. In contrast to the parents' views, a more likely explanation is that, as my teaching experience has led me to believe, English is like Art in that anyone can excel at it regardless of their level of intelligence.

The learner's age was also considered to be an important factor in their EAL learning. Both the teachers and the DH concurred that the younger the learners the better their chances of succeeding in EAL learning and they all agreed that the initial progress might be slow but they would gradually improve with most children attaining native like proficiency. All but two teachers argued that children should learn English while they still had the potential and before the window of opportunity closes after puberty, showing their support for the CPH. The two opposing teachers believed that even after puberty the children could still continue to learn English. The results of research on the age factor are not conclusive but it seems that certain aspects of language learning become more difficult as one grows older (Singleton and Ryan 2004; Lenneberg 1984). However, the current view of 'critical age' is that if it does exist it is less definite than previously considered and that there may be different critical ages for different aspects of language. There seem to be an early critical age for the acquisition of native like pronunciation but it is unclear if there is a critical age for syntax.

Although teachers agreed on most aspects there were areas they perceived differently among themselves. For example while the majority of teachers agreed on the importance of reading to children in L1, when possible two teachers supported by some parents disagreed and saw no point in reading to children in L1 when the aim is to teach L2. Such a view contradicts research which heralds the positive effect of L1 on L2.

5.2.3 Parents' views

Parents shared some of the teachers' views on the main factors that affect children's EAL learning, such as availability of resources, individual factors (such as personality) and adult support from good teachers and support assistants. As for the age factor most parents believed that because the children were young they could just go on learning EAL until they got it indicating that their perspectives were more in line with the more current views of Gordon (2007) and other contemporary researchers than some of the teachers who seemed to believe strongly in the CPH.

While they acknowledged the importance of adult support and good methods of teaching they displayed a lack of awareness of their role as co–teachers of their children. However the mention of good teachers shows that they understand that language learning requires good teaching but it is unclear if they understood what good teaching entails. According to Wood (1998) good language teaching involves social interaction with peers and also with more experienced members of society such as adults. Taking a Vygotskyan perspective, Wood (1998) argues that peer interaction exposes children to similar or different opinions which can help them to formulate their own opinions while adult support can enable a child to do what they were unable to do by themselves through modeling or scaffolding. On the other hand, Emmott and Alexander (2010) surmise that teachers and other adults can help children to build up their language and other schemata through shared experiences and vocabulary which will help promote their language learning. Parents also agreed with teachers that enjoyment, repetition and practice enhance EAL learning because children like to repeat the things they enjoy and the more they repeat and practice them including languages the better they get at them.

Although adults are expected to help their children learn, the parents cited a number of problems they face in supporting their own children's learning as a vital factor because they believe this hampers their children's EAL learning. The fact that they had very little if any English made them think that they were unable to support their children's EAL learning. This, they said was confirmed by their own children who often openly told them that they were unable to help them due to their lack of English. But they argued that they were **good parents** because they provided resources for their children, asked others to support them in homework and even *'hired' tutors to help their children*

*speak with a **British accent'***. Although it is evident that the parents cited feel unable to support their children in homework their efforts to support them in ways they can (provision of resources, organizing and funding extra tuition etc) should be commended. The use of the term good parents may denote justification of their parental role and efforts made to improve their children's learning in order to develop native like fluency proficiency which they erroneously describe as an accent. This example could also symbolize an outcry for help in supporting their children, which if correctly identified schools can organize to support and empower such parents.

5.2.4 Children's views

The children believed that their EAL learning is affected by factors such as adult support, language difficulties, languages spoken at home and negative attitudes from other children who laugh at them or mock them when they make mistakes. They used interesting words, popularly known at the school as 'Wow words' (e.g. disappointed, glum, devastated, worried and horrified) to describe how they felt when others laughed at or ridiculed them. Research (Brown 2007, Gordon 2007) notes that negative emotions such as these can hamper language learning because when a child is sad, angry, tense or overwhelmed they can freeze, go blank, become anxious or agitated and become speechless whereas if they are relaxed and happy they may want to explore or experiment with the language they are learning. Children also felt anxious when unexpectedly picked upon to answer questions. This, they said makes them very anxious as well which could mean that they need more time than L1 English speaking children to process their thoughts. This seems to contradict popular assumptions that children easily pick up languages and instead confirms the view that in the initial stages of second language learning children actually progress much more slowly than older children and adults (Gordon 2007). Sometimes it helps to warm children that you will be asking them to share their views about something rather than calling on them unexpectedly. Giving them a longer time to think before answering a question also helps.

The study findings revealed that children often do not remember or fail to find the right words to express themselves which they find quite frustrating and is the reason why they sometimes keep quiet while trying to work out what to say or take long to answer

questions. They gave the following explanations (Translated into English) for what goes on during the times when they go silent when asked a question.

Elma: *Debating the answer in my mind.*

Lamina: *Processing the sentence in my mind and checking if the words are in the right order.*

Jyoti: *Anxious because I need more time.*

Sannah: *Sense of despair because I won't get it out on time.*

Even the quieter children were able to say why they sometimes remain quiet or are slow to answer questions *"I get shocked when my name is called out because I not asked to answer many days".* Such information is really important because it helps teachers and all those who work with children to understand why children behave in certain ways. However, a few of the children were not sure of the reasons why it takes them long to answer questions. When asked they either remained silent or simply said *"Don't know".* Maybe they genuinely did not know or they may not have wanted to disclose any information for some reasons best known to them. One solution to this problem is letting children work in pairs or smaller groups to discuss and support each other in answering the questions. Generally, the children in this study were quite young but the amount of information that was generated from working with them was great which goes to show what research with children can yield.

The children also seemed to think that speaking L1 at home and not having anyone to speak English with them at home is a major drawback to their language learning because they believe it hampers their linguistic progress. They need to be helped to understand that proficiency in L1 can help to develop proficiency in L2 because the skills learnt in L1 learning can transfer and act as a springboard for L2 learning. However, they commended the support they get from teachers and bilingual assistants who often model the correct ways of speaking and doing things and generally interpret the world of school for them and their parents (Mills and Mills 1995). Bilingual assistants, in particular can do the interpretation because they share the same language and culture with most of the children which allows them to penetrate into their understanding in a way that monolingual staff cannot do. They often use this opportunity to clarify things for them. Children also value the support they get from

peers and consider that it is great fun doing things with other children of their age. This implies that teachers should ensure regular interaction among the children to enable them to learn with and from each other. This can help them to continue learning the language because they want to communicate and play with others.

Like their parents and teachers children believe their EAL learning can be affected by availability of resources at home and school. They argued that resources such as computers, toys, books and malleable materials such as play dough are not only fun to use but also provide them with the opportunity to learn in the ways they like to learn such as through play and games, and through interaction with others and with materials which they can handle, feel, smell and where possible taste. This is in line with Wood's (1998) understanding of how children construct their own knowledge of the world by acting upon objects in their environment. The children also said they enjoy being exposed to different ways of learning which promotes Gill's (2005) idea of exposing children to a variety of learning styles. This may also include exposing children to a variety of resources and learning experiences such as through the use of pictures, drama, music, experiments and field trips as well as the chance to work individually, in pairs and small groups, with adults or peers. Social interaction with peers and adults exposes them to ideas and ways of doing things which can help them to form their own opinions and ways of doing things (Woods 1998).

5.3 Differences in perspectives expressed by teachers and the DH

The DH shared the teachers' view on factors such as the importance of home background and parental support but she perceived other things slightly differently. For example, while teachers considered parents to be apathetic and unwilling to support their children's learning the DH perceived parents as being interested in and willing to support their children's learning but unable to do so because of lack of knowledge on how to do it.

The DH and the teachers perceived the parents' level of participation in school activities differently. For example while the teachers lamented the lack of participation in school activities by most of the parents the DH observed that some of the parents actually participated in extracurricular activities such as supporting on school trips, organizing cake sales inter alia. The DH highlighted some of the reasons why parents behaved the

way they did which teachers probably did not know; she said she made an effort to find out from the parents themselves. It was evident that there was great need for the teachers and parents to engage in dialogue about the nature of their work as co-teachers of their children and to find ways of understanding each other's problems and supporting each other effectively. This would require summoning some of the personal characteristics such as sensitivity, open mindedness, patience, tolerance, warmth and others that Robinet in Burt et al (1977) suggests teachers should have, to deal with such situations.

5.4 Differences in perspectives expressed by parents and teachers

Teachers and parents also seemed to interpret and understand some EAL issues differently. All teachers perceived parents to be co-teachers of their children but the majority of the parents seemed not to be aware of this expectation with some parents arguing that it was the teachers' responsibility to teach their children because they are the ones who are trained to do the job. Research supports the view that with adult support children often end up doing what they were unable to do before (Woods 1998 and Bruner cited in Cameron 2001), but it is equally true that if parents are expected to be co-teachers of their children then they need to be made aware of the role as well as being shown how to do it.

Another discrepancy in perceptions between teachers and parents was apparent in that teachers expected the parents to approach them and tell them about any problems they had in supporting their children but, on the other hand, the parents expressed the culturally based belief that it was respectful to keep away from the teachers and allow them to get on with their 'important job' of teaching their children. They may have felt that asking many questions was tantamount to meddling or interfering in the teachers' work. As pointed out by Moles (1993:35) "Many Hispanic and Southeast Asian immigrant parents believe that they are being helpful by maintaining a respectful distance from the education system". Unless the teachers understand this cultural belief, parents may be unfairly labeled as 'unwilling' and 'uncooperative' as was the case in this study as well as in previous studies such as Comer (1986).

Teachers assumed that parents were capable of supporting their children with homework seemingly overlooking the fact that the children might not be able to explain

the homework to their parents most of whom have very little or no English. The teachers argued that at times they translated the homework into L1 for the parents but most of the parents were illiterate in English as well as in their home language. The teachers also seemed to assume that parents would be familiar enough with the content and methods of teaching to support their children in their homework. However, parents revealed that they were unaware of what they needed to do to assist their children. As some of the parents said *'This is so different from when we went to school'* referring to a method of vertical addition in Mathematics, practiced in the school. This, they argued is why they end up delegating the role of supporting their children in homework to other people including older siblings, relatives and friends who in most cases ended up doing the homework for them to support. Unfortunately, teachers misinterpreted this to be negligence on the part of parents. This illustrates the need for dialogue between teachers and parents to discuss and address such problems.

Teachers seemed to have a good understanding of the importance of teaching both LI and L2 thereby supporting Fillmore's (1991) idea of using L1 to lay the foundation on which to build L2. On the other hand, some parents had no idea of how a child's knowledge of L1 impacted their learning of L2. More than half the parents were of the view that speaking English only at home and at school would help their children to learn the language quicker and more effectively while the rest thought that if children speak English at school they should then speak L1 at home in order to avoid losing their mother tongue. Although their main reason for suggesting this was to avoid loss of their own L1, they did not realize that this would help them to lay a strong linguistic foundation on which to build L2 learning. Cummins' (1983) contends that the development of L1 impacts positively on L2 learning.

While teachers seemed to understand how having a variety of resources such as computers and books at home and supporting children in using them can positively affect a child's EAL learning (by exposing them to new knowledge and vocabulary and extending their learning) most parents seemed to think that it was enough just having the resources and letting the children use them on their own without their support. They seemed to be unaware of the important of the need to engage with children or at least show them through modeling how to use the resources for them to use them correctly and put them to good use. Rumelhart, (1980), Davis (1991) and Stockwell (2002) argue

that the shared experiences that families have with their children help them to build up their experiential schemata. The richer the experience the better the schemata and the vocabulary acquired which has the potential to contribute immensely to the child's EAL learning. These views concur with those of Schickedanz (1999) and Braunger et al (1997) who assert that children's literacy skills may be greatly influenced by literacy experiences in the home. For them to make a meaningful impact, it is important that young EAL learners share their resources and experiences with other members of their families.

For example the TV can have entertaining programs for children to watch and can provide opportunities for children to learn songs or see places, objects or features that they don't usually see. Children may also hear or pick occasional English words from the TV or other media but they are unable to learn English directly from such media because they cannot communicate with them. However they can learn English from conversing with others about what they have seen.

Another difference in the perspectives between teachers and parents is reflected in their understanding of parental support which teachers considered to be vital in children's EAL learning. Parents had split views on this. While eight of the parents and most of the mothers thought it was the teacher's job to teach their children the rest of them knew it was important for them to support their children but almost half did not know how to do it. Parents agreed with teachers that they face problems in supporting their children in their general learning and homework. Teachers' commented during their interviews that there was evidence of older children's and adults' writing in the children's books indicating that the homework had been completed by people other than those for whom it had been intended. For example T9 reported *"I have checked my pupils' homework books I have noticed adult writing in some of them suggesting that sometimes the homework is done by adults" a* concern that was shared by several teachers during the teacher interviews.

Teachers should understand the pressures put on some households by homework. Some discretion could be used in assigning homework to help ease off the burden for some parents. For example instead of sending written homework every week it might help to occasionally assign oral work so that families can just sit down and discuss given topics and the child can then report back to school. Parents should be encouraged to use the

language they are most comfortable with even if it means home language. In addition to giving families a break in recorded writing this approach promotes collaborative interaction as advocated for by Kent (1997) and Tharp and Gallimore (1988).

Yet another difference in perspectives between teachers and parents was in their views of how age impacts on children's EAL learning. The children's age was considered a big advantage for them by the teachers and DH who believed that younger children learn languages quickly, supporting Gordon's (2007) argument that children are facile language learners. More than half the parents along with the five children who said English was difficult were convinced that the older the better. The reason they gave was because they would understand it better. While this contradicts research that says lateralization of the brain after puberty makes grammatical acquisition difficult for learners (Lenneberg 1984 and Singleton and Ryan (2004), it supports research which argues that even after puberty people are capable of learning English with a few even acquiring native like proficiency (Gregg 1984). It appears therefore that age is not a critical factor as long as learners are given the right learning conditions such as a supportive environment, appropriate resources, support and the opportunity to interact with others and practise at speaking English.

5.5 Insight into parents' thinking about their relationship to schools

Coupled with the different perceptions that prevailed between teachers and parents, the findings gave an insight into parents' thinking about their relationship to the school. As mentioned, some of the parents stayed away from teachers as a form of cultural respect. However, the reasons were different for some of the parents who felt they did not have a sense of belonging to the school. These parents stayed away because they were hesitant to approach teachers for advice or support because they were not sure of how things were done at the school and if that was appropriate. A similar situation occurred in a study carried out by Commer (1986) where parents felt uncomfortable in the school because they hardly knew anything about the school procedures to participate meaningfully in school activities. While this may be misinterpreted to mean that the parents were unwilling to participate in school activities / in their child's learning this may also signal shortcomings in communication among the teachers and parent community.

5.6 Adult support (Support from bilingual assistants)

The observations conducted in and outside the classrooms yielded some useful information on the support that children get from other adults such as bilingual assistants. During the interviews children were able to identify different adults who support them in their EAL learning and these were parents, teachers, uncles, aunts, adult friends and bilingual support assistants. The analysis of the observational data revealed some patterns in how the children were supported by bilingual assistants over three episodes. For example the bilingual TAs used their shared L1 to explain concepts to the children they were working with. It was evident that the use of mixed sentences or combined use of L1 and L2 helped children to understand the task as well as learn some English vocabulary related to the tasks. However in some cases it appeared as if there was too much use of L1 which helped the children to complete the tasks but did not help them to learn much English. Also, in all three episodes there were times when the TA spoke in English then followed it up immediately with Punjabi and vice versa. While this can be helpful in helping the children to link meanings in the two languages easily overuse of such strategies can encourage children not to listen the first time because they know it will be said again in their L1.

Overall, however the support rendered by the TAs was invaluable because they modeled activities for the children by showing them how they are done then gradually reduced support which is recommended as good scaffolding by Wood (1998) and Brunner (1990). The TAs also established good links between home and school through reference to activities done at home and at school such as sorting furniture into rooms or through reference to shared cultural aspects such as the use of hands for measuring flour. In addition to supporting observational data in extracts 1 and 2 the photographs (see Appendix 5) also show pictorial evidence of some of the activities that TAs do to support children's EAL learning.

During the interviews the children also mentioned various ways in which TAs help them some of which are comforting them (in their L1) when they are upset or unwell, translating for them and for their parents and teachers, explaining difficult concepts in their L1 to facilitate understanding of concepts which illustrates the multifaceted role of TAs that Blackledge (1994) claims they play.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study by examining the perceptions of factors that affect children's EAL learning from the point of view of the various participants that is the DH, teachers, children and parents. The chapter has discussed shared views as well as differing views showing how EAL issues are perceived differently by teachers and the DH and by the teachers and parents. Last but not least the chapter has highlighted the nature of the parents' relationship with the school and the support rendered by bilingual assistants. The next chapter provides an overview of the whole study and sums it all up by highlighting the conclusions drawn from the study, the implications for different stakeholders as well as the recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions, implications and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter concludes the study by highlighting what has been gained from the study and the contribution it makes towards the understanding of young children's EAL learning. The chapter starts by presenting a summary of the study followed by a focus on the main contributions of the study which includes addressing the gap in research with young children. It then takes a retrospective look at the study and evaluates it on the basis of the research methods used and their limitations to the study as well as the implications and the conclusions drawn from the findings. The chapter also reveals how the research questions which were the driving force behind the study have been answered. Finally, recommendations for improving the teaching/learning of EAL to young children are given as well as suggestions for future research.

6.2 Summary of main findings

Several studies such as Walqui (2000) and Peterson and Ladky (2007) have focused on some factors that affect second language teaching / learning such as parental involvement. However, the main difference between these and many others and the present study is the fact that this study's focus was on participants' perceptions of the factors that affect young children's EAL learning and involved very young children. Also, while this study used focus groups with young children most previous focus group interviews have been carried out with older children and adults.

The findings show that children's EAL learning, which is highly regarded by the majority of the participants for the benefits they believe it brings them (education, good jobs etc), is affected by numerous factors such as home background, parental support, culture and motivation to speak the language.

The study also highlighted the problems faced by children in learning EAL such as forgetting the correct words to use and being laughed at and ridiculed by others when they make mistakes. It also showed that fact that the parents at the school were willing but unable to support their children's EAL effectively due to reasons such as work commitments, child rearing and religious activities. However this was misinterpreted by teachers who labeled them as uninterested, and unwilling to participate in their children's learning. These results echo those found by Peterson and Ladky (2007) in

their study on parental involvement. In both cases the situation was made worse by the fact that the teachers were unaware of the difficulties that the parents were facing or their cultural beliefs on authority and the work of teachers. On the other hand, the parents were not aware of the teachers' misconceptions of their reasons for not adequately supporting their children.

The study also revealed the diversity and importance of the role played by bilingual assistants in supporting young children's EAL learning. It was evident from the study that bilingual assistants had a multiplicity of roles including supporting and assessing children in their learning, interpreting for teachers and parents and diffusing potential conflicts between parents and teachers. What makes their role especially important is their ability to negotiate meaning with bilingual learners, establishing links between home and school based learning contexts.

6.3 What has been gained from the study / The contribution of the study

This section draws attention to what has been gained from this study which set out to investigate the perspectives of teachers about factors that impact on young children's EAL learning.

The study findings have confirmed other researchers' claim that there is a multiplicity of factors that affect young children's EAL learning. Some of these factors are Language factors (e.g. similarities between L1 and L2), Leaner related factors (home background, culture, age and individual differences) and Learning process related factors (teaching methods, classroom interaction, learning styles and motivation) (Walqui 2000).

The study also fills a gap on the involvement of young people in research to allow their voices to be heard. The study has shown that it is worth involving young children in research particularly in matters that concern them because their input is valuable and necessary in designing programs that suit them. They can contribute their own ideas about learning, for example during the focus group interviews most children indicated their preference for play based activities, what they enjoy doing, how they like to do it and with whom. This supports Cooper's (1993) view that children are an important source of information about the type and quality of the services they get.

Another important aspect gained from this study is the fact that Focus group interviews, which have previously been used mainly with older children and adults can be used quite effectively with younger children who have been shown by this study to contribute meaningfully to research about them. It implies therefore that researchers should not be afraid to use methods that have not been used with children before as long as they meet the requirements of the study as well as the ethical requirements needed to work with children

The study has also shed light on different ways in which children learn a second language. The information obtained from the study findings, literature reviewed and observations revealed that children learn second languages through exposure to the language, adult support (e.g. scaffolding of activities and ways of doing things), peer interaction and copying or imitating others. Social interaction with adults and peers, which was advocated by Vygotsky (in Cameron 2001) and Wood (1998), can enable them to form their own ideas.

The study has also shown that the generally held belief that children learn second languages better than adults (CPH) may not be true after all because of current views on the subject (Marinova Todd 2003) and the findings from this study which show that it is not only age that affects young children's EAL learning but other factors such as the socio - cultural and environmental factors (home background, culture etc.) as well as availability of resources and support in using the resources as discussed earlier.

The study findings help educational professionals and other people who work with children to enhance their understanding not only of the factors that affect children's learning but also of how children actually learn second languages (what activities they enjoy, their learning styles inter alia). All these should be taken into consideration when designing learning programmes for children which are appropriate and promote their EAL learning.

This study has shown that children are capable of identifying factors that affect their learning of EAL. It implies therefore that they may be able to identify other aspects that affect their learning so their voices should be heard by continuing to involve them in

research. As illustrated in this study Focus group interviews can be effectively used with younger children.

6.4 Research Methods

My initial belief that useful information would be generated by using a qualitative research approach which combines the use of several data collection methods was quite valid. The study yielded different types of vital information on factors that affect children's EAL learning such as the impact of emotional factors such as anxiety and embarrassment. The focus group method used to collect data from the children was suitable for this exploratory study because it enabled the researcher to collect data from them in a non threatening environment and in the presence of other young people with whom they like to interact and share ideas.

The interviews yielded some rich and elaborate information from the participants as well as revealing the rich and intricate relationships of ideas and links that children formed in the focus group interviews. There is no doubt that such an amount and depth of information would not have been possible to generate through observation alone. It was through the in-depth responses to focus groups / interview questions that important aspects of language learning, were brought to light such as the ways in which children learn second languages, the keenly felt need among the parents to preserve their identity through their native language as well as their desire and concern in helping their children but lacking the knowledge and or ability to do so effectively. Such methods of data collection enabled participants to express themselves verbally illuminating their views, beliefs and feelings, passion or dislikes of EAL learning. It was the nature of the data collection methods used that such quality of input was generated.

In line with McMillan and Wergin's (2006:96) assertion that triangulation helps to enhance credibility, the use of method and participant triangulation in this study not only helped to corroborate and refine the findings but also helped to enhance the study's validity and reliability. However, the study had limitations which need to be highlighted. One main limitation was that the questionnaire was ill constructed thereby hindering useful quantitative data from being obtained from it. Also the study's validity would have been further enhanced if there had been triangulation within the groups as well as across, for example triangulation of data collection methods for each group of

participants. Alternative ways that could have been used to extract data from parents and teachers include surveys, focus groups and use of audio or video recording equipment. Other alternatives to interviews that could have been used with young children (to illustrate their experiences and perspectives of EAL learning) include collages, paintings, drawings or model making from such things as construction toys or found materials as well as any other modes of expression that do not rely on verbal or written output.

Due to the small numbers of participants used in this study and because of its qualitative nature it is not possible to generalize the results of the study. This is another limitation of this research. However, in future a similar study could be conducted on a larger scale, involving a larger sample and possibly covering a reasonable number of schools with similar problems to enable generalizations to be made. It might also have helped to have had the time to follow up interviews with the various participants after some time to see if their views remained the same or if they had changed over time.

The use of manual methods in data analysis helped me to come to terms with and understand the data well so as to cross check and validate it. However, use of computer software such as Nvivo, had time permitted, would have complemented the manual method well because it would have significantly simplified the data analysis process had a larger sample been used.

6.5 Research Questions
This section evaluates the extent to which the research findings have provided answers to the research questions. The questions were mostly answered in a satisfactory manner as shown below. The overarching question which sought to investigate the perceptions of teachers, parents and children on factors that affect children's EAL learning was answered through the following four research questions.

6.5.1 *What are the teachers' and TAs' perceptions of children's EAL learning?*
In answer to the above question most of the teachers considered a conducive home environment, parental support, availability of resources such as books, and individual factors such as intelligence, an outgoing personality, age and motivation to learn English as having a huge impact on children's EAL learning (See point 5.2.2 for details)

The teachers also believed that EAL learning was affected by culture although two of them argued that children could still effectively learn EAL without understanding the English culture. The majority of the teachers concurred with research (Brown 1994, Jiang 2000 and Samovar et al 1981) that culture and language are inseparable and that for children to master the target language they need to learn the culture in which the new language is embedded. As pointed out by some of the teachers, equipping children with cultural knowledge about the target language enhances their understanding of the English speaking people and how or why they do certain things which in turn may help to improve their L2 learning. This implies therefore that teachers and those who work with younger children need to help children understand the culture of the language they are learning for them to effectively master the language.

Although the TAs were not formally interviewed it was evident from their work with the children that they valued their shared L1 languages with the children and used them to unlock children's understanding of the English language. Teachers and bilingual assistants believed that children learn through practice and need the support of adults and their peers. While the TAs may think the world about teachers from whom they learn a lot, the teachers and the children concur with Ofsted (1995) on the invaluable role played by bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning. Blackledge (1994: 115) commends their ability to use their shared language to penetrate the children's culture and help even the most timid of learners to 'open up their linguistic and cultural world.'

This study has also shown that teachers and TAs believe that children should be given a voice and have a say in matters relating to their learning. They also perceive parents as co-teachers of their children who should work in collaboration with the school to support their children's learning at school as well as at home. Teachers argued that parents should take a more active part in supporting their children through such activities as providing them with a conducive home environment with numerous literacy resources, supporting them in homework, reading with them and supporting them in their learning of both L1 and L2. However, they disagrred among themselves on the importance of reading to their children in L1.The teachers themselves however had limited and uninformed understanding of the importance of reading in L1.

6.5.2 *What do the children themselves say about the learning of EAL?*

It was evident from most of the children's responses that they value English for what it can offer them (good education, good jobs, opportunity to go and work in other countries of their choice, facilitating communication with English speakers and people from different cultures and enhancing global integration). Therefore the children like most of their parents, who may have influenced their attitudes towards EAL, had very high hopes of what they could achieve from learning English that they viewed English as the gateway to success and a promising future. However, despite liking English, most of the children admitted that they found some aspects of it quite difficult and boring. The main problem they had, which repeatedly came up during the focus group interviews, was the fact that English words are difficult and that their vocabulary is limited therefore it hinders self- expression. They also posited that they get frustrated when they can't think of the right words to express themselves and when others laugh at them when they make mistakes. The children felt that they could learn EAL better and faster if they had other people to speak the language to at home. Like their parents they did not seem to understand the importance of their home language and its effect on their EAL learning. They also expressed the view that their English would improve if their learning involved practical activities, working with others in pairs or groups and getting the time to practise what they have learnt. These perceptions hopefully give teachers, parents and others working with children an insight into how children learn so as to support them effectively.

6.5.3 *What do the parents say about factors that affect children's EAL learning?*

In response to the above question the majority of parents expressed the view that they wanted their children to learn English but they were concerned that English might end up dominating their native languages. They were also very passionate about their culture and feared that English might 'destroy' or 'wipe away' their culture as their children became more anglicized and more alienated from their own language and culture. Gordon (2007:23) describes how children adapting to English life may "…begin to drift away from their parents and grandparents…" and how they can "lose touch with their home culture (and) become strangers in their own families". A good example of this is the miscommunications between a father and his daughter in Kim's (2011) study.

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Most of the parents were torn between preserving their own language, culture and identity and promoting their children's learning of English. On the other hand some parents were so desperate for their children to have a good future that they thought speaking only English at home would ensure their children's future success.

To try and prevent this from happening, most parents admitted that they instill their own cultural values in their children by providing cultural education at home and in their places of worship. This is an acknowledgement of the role played by culture in children's learning. The parents' own cultural belief that it was respectful to stay out of teachers' way also caused them to miss out on opportunities to seek help from the teachers which could have helped them support their children more effectively.

During the interviews most parents expressed the view that they were eager to support their children's learning at home but did not know how to do it as the methods of both teaching and learning have evolved over the years and differ significantly from those they used at school in their time. Also some of the parents had very little or no formal education but they wanted their children to have a good education. This admission therefore, appeared to be a cry for help which could be addressed through appropriate training of parents to enable them to support their children effectively. The parents also expressed their views about the indispensable nature of English. As pointed out by one of the youngest and most fluent parents *"Whether we like it or not English is here to stay and will continue to determine where our children will stand on the socio–economic ladder."* Most of the parent lamented their lack of English which make them unable to support their children's learning and fearful to go into their children's schools where they might be expected to speak English. Other parents argued that they do not go into their children's school because because of their cultural belief that parents should stay away from schools and allow teachers to do their work without any disturbance. This calls for more collaboration between parents and teachers so that such misunderstandings can be cleared and positive attempts made to develop children's EAL learning.

6.5.4 *How do the TAs support the children's EAL learning*?
 All participants unanimously agreed TAs and bilingual assistants in particular

play a vital role in supporting children's learning. Most of the teachers acknowledged that the support they get from bilingual assistants is invaluable and diverse. The study findings revealed that bilingual assistants perform ancillary, pastoral and educational roles such as helping with displays, comforting and counseling children, storytelling, reading activities, informal discussions and interpreting for them and their parents. They help children acquire and develop language through modeling, demonstrating and using L1 to relate it to L2 and to develop expressive/receptive language (Blackledge 1994) Most of the children agreed that bilingual assistants *"help us a lot as they speak our language and know our culture."* They went on to say that they *"explain difficult things in our own language so we understand"* and *"they go over things with us and also help us in small groups or one by one".* Children also viewed bilingual assistants as the most suitable people to successfully interpret things for their teachers and parents because they know them well enough from working with them and their teachers

6.6 Implications for children, teachers and parents
The results of this study have several important implications for children, practitioners and parents.

6.6.1 Implications for children

One of the main implications of this study for children is that since they have some good ideas about their own learning and the problems they face in learning English they should strive to participate in discussions and research about issues concerning them to allow their voices to be heard. This can be done on a small or larger scale. For example they can engage in discussions about what toys/story books are needed for their class, what games they like to play and perhaps even aspects of topics they want to learn about. This will result in greater empowerment which in turn may increase autonomy in their learning.

Children should be willing to explore various ways of learning to enhance their repertoire of learning styles. This entails using the various resources and learning strategies available to them and thinking about how they learn and how they can promote their own learning, with adult support. They should exploit their inquisitive nature and ask questions or try out things and find different ways of doing things without fear of being reprimanded.

Since adult support appears to be a vital factor in EAL learning children should ask for support when they need it and should not be afraid to use their home language to express themselves.

6.6.2 Implications for parents

The findings from the parental interviews showed that many parents are not aware of the new methods of teaching/learning used in many classrooms today. Unless they are familiar with how to use some of the methods they are not in a good position to support their children appropriately or adequately. In addition to teachers reaching out to parents, parents should also reach out to teachers and to the school to find out how best to support their children. Parents, like teachers should expect to have a voice in their children's school. This entails both asking for support and attending programs organised by the school such as 'Keeping up with children' which are aimed at equipping parents and other members of the community with literacy ad numeracy skills for their own benefit as well as to enable them to assist their children with homework should be set up.

Parents should utilise the open door policy which a number of schools operate with handy interpreters to enable them to freely come into the school and seek help on things they need help on including support with homework. This can help equip them with knowledge about how things are done at the school and how to support their children which may in turn encourage them to approach teachers for support. Such informal kinds of communication can also serve to mitigate the perceptions held by the teachers that parents are unwilling to support their children.

Just as they are passionate about their culture parents should also be passionate about their home language and should realise that it helps to form the basis of EAL language therefore it should be promoted and used and not become something to be ashamed of.

6.6.3 Implications for teachers

Teachers and their support assistants should seek Staff development opportunities and support to enable them to support the parents and children appropriately in matters relating to EAL learning.

In consultation with the school administrators teachers need to help parents to develop their awareness and understanding of their role as co-teachers as well as to provide them with strategies on how to support their children.

Teachers should use a variety of teaching methods which cater for different learning styles and which take into account how young children learn. This helps to avoid boredom from doing things in the same way which, according to research can give rise to affective states such as boredom, anxiety and mental blocks that will hamper language learning (Krashen 1985; Gardner 2004; Dörney 2003; Rossiter 2003; Oxford 1996).

Teachers should bear in mind principles of children's learning such as the use of child friendly instruction which requires use of all senses and play-based, interactive activities which take into consideration how young children learn through interaction, experience, experimentation etc as these are likely to facilitate and perhaps quicken second language acquisition. Also considering individual differences helps as people are different. This concurs with August and Hakuta (1997) view that EAL is best taught using different approaches to meet the learners' diverse needs and experiences as well as the diverse conditions of different settings.

Teachers should also try to reach out to parents and understand the problems that they, as parents have. Hopefully this can promote positive relationships between teachers and parents and reduce misunderstandings and name calling that can develop as shown in this and Peterson and Ladky's study where teachers unfairly labelled parents as uncooperative and unwilling to support their children's learning.

6.6.4 Recommendations and suggestions for further research
In view of the findings and implications of this study the following recommendations /suggestions for improvement and further research are made.

- Teachers, parents and bilingual assistants should be regularly trained to update them on new methods of teaching or better ways of supporting children in their EAL learning.

- Professional development of educational practitioners should include learning about different cultures to enable them to understand some of the cultural factors that impact on children's learning.

- Researchers and practitioners need to come up with new and effective strategies of increasing parental awareness of their roles as co-teachers and supporters of their children's learning.

- This research has shown that it helps to do research with young children because their views are important. Therefore more research should be done on and with young children to validate or invalidate the findings of this study as well as to give young people a voice.

- Further in-depth research could be done on a larger scale involving a larger sample and possibly covering a reasonable number of schools with similar problems to enable generalizations to be made.

- Further research could also be done on each of such aspects as parental support, home background and the effects of culture on EAL.

- More research needs to be done to understand the problems that parents face in supporting their children in homework and to find strategies to help them.

- In order to help parents support their children effectively researchers and teachers could work together to undertake a project where they work with families and their friends to create a DVD or film that shows how to use various literacy resources in and outside the home to foster, develop and nurture their children's linguistic knowledge and skills. A similar initiative undertaken by Fazel et al (2007) was very successful.

- The role of bilingual assistants seems to be under researched. It would help to do more research into their roles and responsibilities and the training they may need to perform the roles effectively.

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Appendix 1

Focus group interview schedule for pupils

1. Can you tell me something about the language(s) you speak at home?
    a) What language do you use when you speak to your parents and other adults at home? (If different: Can you explain the difference?)
    b) What language do you use when you speak to your brothers and sisters? (If different from grown ups: Can you explain the differences?)
    c) What language do you use when you speak to your friends? (Please explain)

2. Do your parents encourage and help you to learn English at home? (If yes, how do they help you? What sort of activities do you do at home to help you learn English? Please explain giving examples of any resources you have and how they help you. What do your parents think and say about EAL teaching/learning?)

3. Do you think it is necessary for you to learn English? Give a reason for your answer.

4. Do you enjoy learning English? (If yes, what is it you like about learning English? If not what is it you do not like about learning English?)

5. What do you think about English speaking people? (What do you think about their culture? Is it similar to yours? Do you think learning about the English culture affects your learning of English? If so how does it affect it?)

6. What activities do you like doing at school? (Why do you like these activities? Which activities do you not like? Why do you not like them?)

7. Do you have any problems in learning English? (If so what are they? Do you like your English teacher? Why do you like/dislike him/her?)

8. Can you tell me something about the ways you like to learn? (Do you like to see things, hear somebody talk about them or feel and touch them? What helps you to remember what you have learnt? What makes you want to learn English?)

9. How do you think the learning of English could be made better and more interesting for you?

10. Do other people help you to learn English? (If so who are they? What sort of help do they give you?)

11. What sort of things do you think affect your learning of English at home or at school?

12. Is there any other information about the teaching/learning of English that you would like to share?

NB: Please note that 1 (a)-(c) and everything in brackets are possible probes

Appendix 2

Interview guide for teachers

1. Which do you consider to be the most important factors that affect children's learning of EAL? (How do they affect it?)

2. How important are bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning? (Given a choice would you prefer to have a bilingual assistant or not? What would you find difficult to do without the help of bilingual assistants? Apart from Bilingual assistants who else supports children's learning of EAL?)

3. What challenges do you face when teaching new EAL immigrants to speak, read and write English? (Do you think parents are doing enough to support their children's EAL learning? If not what more could they do to support you to overcome these challenges?)

4. Does culture affect children's learning of EAL? (How can you use cultural information to support pupils' EAL learning?)

5. What are the major problems faced by EAL learners in learning English? (How can these be overcome? What are the children's views on their learning EAL?

6. Is there something you would really like to do to improve the learning of EAL in your class? (If so what support do you need to enable you to do it)

Appendix 3

Interview guide for the Deputy Head teacher

1. Which do you consider to be the most important factors that affect children's learning of EAL? (How do they affect it?)

2. How important are bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning? (Given a choice would you prefer to have a bilingual assistant or not? What would you find difficult to do without the help of bilingual assistants? Apart from Bilingual assistants who else supports children's learning of EAL?)

3. What challenges do you face when teaching new EAL immigrants to speak, read and write English? (Do you think parents are doing enough to support their children's EAL learning? If not what more could they do to support you to overcome these challenges?)

4. Does culture affect children's learning of EAL? (How can you use cultural information to support pupils' EAL learning?)

5. What are the major problems faced by EAL learners in learning English? (How can these be overcome? What are the children's views on their learning EAL?)

6. Is there something you would really like to do to improve the learning of EAL in your school (If so what support do you need to enable you to do

Appendix 4

Interview guide for parents

1. What is your attitude towards your child's learning of EAL? (Do you think it is important for children to learn a second language when they are still young? What is your attitude towards the English speaking people?) Give reasons for your answer.

2. What language does your child use when he/she speak to you or other adults at home?

3. What language does your child use when speaking to their brothers, sisters or friends?

4. What factors do you think affect children's learning of English as a second language?

5. Do you think the resources and support a child gets at home affects their learning of
   EAL? Give a reason for your answer.

6. Do you think culture affects your child's learning of English? (If so how do you think it affects it?) Give a reason for your answer.

7. What measures have you taken at home to promote your child's/children's learning of English? (If no measures have been taken what could you do to support your child's leaning of EAL?)

8. Does your child enjoy learning English? (How do you know?)

9. What problems, if any do you face in helping your child to learn English at home?

10. Are you happy with the progress that your child has made in learning English at school? What do you think has contributed to the progress or lack of progress?

11. What help, if any do you need from the school to enable you to help your child learn English better?

12. What do you suggest could be done to improve the learning of English among young learners?

Appendix 5

Photographs from observations of bilingual assistants working with children.

Photograph 1 based on extract 1 – Reception science activity on 'smell'

Photograph 2 based on extract 1 – Reception science activity on 'smell'.
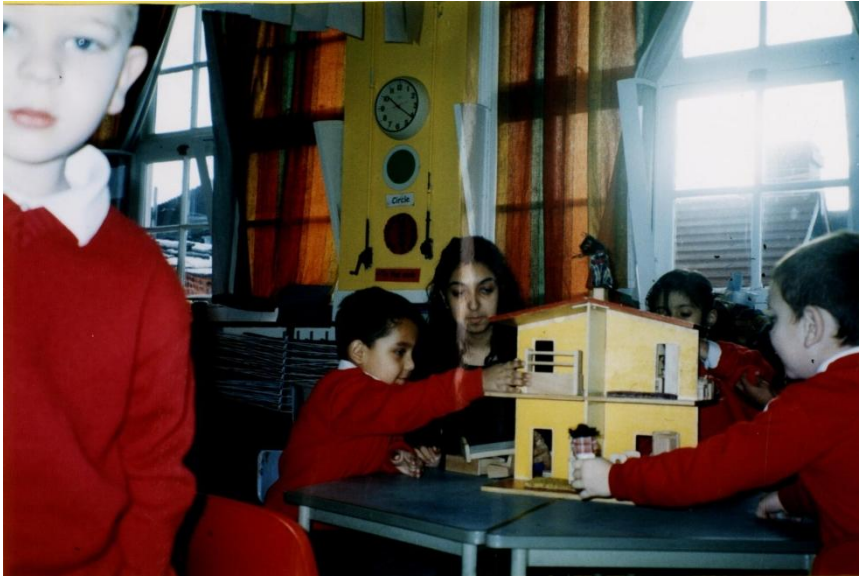
Photograph 3 based on extract 2 – Reception activity on furnishing a house

Photograph 4 based on Bilingual assistant supporting a child on a one-one basis

Appendix 6

Transcription conventions

These transcription conventions apply to all the extracts. Conventional punctuation has been used. For example, commas have been used to indicate pauses, full stops to mark the end of sentences and question marks to indicate questions.

G: Grace

T: Teacher

P: Parent

Plain font: Grace's questions/comments

Italics: Participants' speech

Bold font: Significant, stressed words / phrases

Bold and underlined font: Words or statements made by several people.

< Bold >: Punjabi/Urdu

CAPITAL LETTERS: Repeated words

( ) Translation into English

[   ] Commentary on what is happening

… incomplete speech /remark

Appendix 7

Sample Transcript of teacher interviews with one teacher (T1)

T1 is a 35 year old teacher who has 10 years teaching experience five of which have been spent teaching EAL children at the school under study.

Grace (G): Do you think it is important for young children to learn English?

T1*:*   *Yes. Very important. In fact it is vital...*

G: Why is it important?

T1:   *English is the official language of instruction in most schools in England and it enables people with different languages, culture and nationalities to communicate in one language.*

G: Which do you consider to be the most important factors that affect children's learning of EAL?

T1   *Home and school background, adult support, a variety of resources such as books, computers, TVs, toys and games. Good teaching as well, using various methods and showing children how things are done.*

 G   How do these factors affect children's EAL learning?

T1:   *Children learn many aspects of EAL from the discussion they have with their parents and from being shown how to do things correctly. They can also learn from TV'S, books, special toys and computers how to say or do certain things. They also learn through practice in speaking English at home and at school.*

G: How important are bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning?

T1:   *Very important because they can translate for children, teachers and parents and because they share the children's language they help to bridge the link between home and school. They help them to feel valued and not isolated.*

G: Given a choice would you prefer to have a bilingual assistant or not?

T1:   *Yes. Bilingual assistants are an asset. I would be happy to have one who will help by supporting children in small groups and working with them on various activities such as painting, cooking or making models.*

G: Apart from Bilingual assistants who else supports children's learning of EAL?)

T1   *Teachers, parents, friends, relatives, neighbours and anyone else who can help.*

G: What would you find difficult to do without the help of bilingual assistants?

T1:   *It would be difficult to interpret for the children but there are other means*

that can be used to get them to understand what is being taught for example
using visual aids, actions, pictures or videos. It is
also possible to get peers to interpret for each other or to use another bilingual
adult in the school if possible.

G: What challenges do you face when teaching new EAL immigrants to speak, read
      and write English?

T1:   *Lack of confidence, language barriers, negative attitudes towards English and*
      sometimes towards the English people.

G: Do you think parents are doing enough to support their children's EAL
      learning?

T1*:*   *A few parents are but not the majority. Lack of understanding of English, not*
      practicing English at home, nonresponse to questions in school, inadequate
      and inconsistent parental support, homework not done at all
      or not done on time and sometimes done by other people - parents, siblings,
      other relatives or friends. Parents should talk to their children and work with
      them more because what they consistently say to their children becomes
      ingrained in their minds.

G: Does culture affect children's learning of EAL? (How can you use cultural
      information to support pupils' EAL learning?)

T1:   *Yes. As one learns about people's language s/he learns about their culture as*
      well because you can't separate them. Learning a language entails learning
      the related culture, how it resembles or differs from theirs and the words used
      to describe them. This enhances not only their knowledge but their vocabulary
      as well.

G: What are the major problems faced by EAL learners in learning English? (How
      can these be overcome? What are the children's views on their learning EAL?)

T1*:*   *They find English difficult and some hate it. They can't find words to describe*
      things because their vocabulary is limited.

G: Is there something you would really like to do to improve the learning of
      EAL in your class?

T1:   *To create more literacy resources such as bilingual reading books, story sacks*
      and practical resources to engage with in practical activities such as scientific
      investigation and role play .

G: What support do you need to enable you to do that?

T1:   *Not much really, just the ordinary staff –paper, pictures, card, a variety of toys and other objects.*

G: Do you think it is important for young children to learn English?

DH: *Yes it is indispensable, a **must** for everyone living in the UK. They have to learn it otherwise they won't be able to do simple things like communicating with others, reading, writing, ordering food, using computers, ipads and more.*

G: Which do you consider to be the most important factors that affect children's learning of EAL? (How do they affect it?)

DH: *Good teaching, a good home background, and support from parents. Also appropriate resources at home and school. Individual characteristics as well such as personality and interest in the language.*

G: How important are bilingual assistants in children's EAL learning?

DH: *Very vital. It would be difficult to run the school without them. We need them to support teachers, pupils and parents. Their bilingual skills are invaluable in our setting.*

G: Given a choice would you prefer to have a bilingual assistant or not?

DH: *I would prefer having them because they are indispensible.*

G: What would you find difficult to do without the help of bilingual assistants?

DH: *It would adversely affect communication with the parents and children who do not speak English.*

G: Apart from Bilingual assistants who else supports children's learning of EAL?)

DH: *Monolingual assistants, teachers, peers, parents, siblings, friends and other relatives.*

G: What challenges do you face when teaching new EAL immigrants to speak, read and write English?

DH: *Getting them to understand simple instructions because of their limited English. They have a very limited vocabulary and at the beginning they are shy and reluctan to speak English.*

G: Do you think parents are doing enough to support their children's EAL learning? If not what more could they do to support you to overcome these challenges?

DH: *Clearly not enough although some parents do more than other parents. Some go out of their way to help their children e.g. arranging extra tutorials and buying books and other learning materials for them. However, generally parents could do more to help their children. Parents seem to help more in social aspects such as accompanying children on school trips and*

fundraising events but do not seem to play as active a part in helping their children with schoolwork.

G: Does culture affect children's learning of EAL?

DH: Culture does affect children in that some children take long to adjust to the school culture because it is so different from their own culture. The language is different as well so it takes long to understand and use it.

G: How can you use cultural information to support pupils' EAL learning?

DH: Learning about and celebrating different cultural festivals. Children can then talk, read write, draw about these experiences and even make models of related artefacts.

G: What are the major problems faced by EAL learners in learning English?

DH: Trying to learn an 'alien' language which in most cases is not spoken in their homes and lack of parental support because of that. Limited vocabulary to express themselves.

G: How can these problems be overcome?

DH: *Through bilingual support, use of concrete resources that children can see, handle and explore.*

G: What do you think are the children's views on their learning EAL?

DH: *The children have mixed views about learning EAL. Some love it and others hate it because they find it difficult but they all know they have to learn English because it will improve their quality of life.*

G: Is there something you would really like to do to improve the learning of EAL in your school (If so what support do you need to enable you to do it?)

DH: To buy as many resources as I can to support the teaching and learning of EAL. I need the support of all the teachers and children to raise the funds through fundraising projects. When the resources are available I will also need them to use them and feed back on their usefulness.

Sample Focus group interview transcript for children

G: Do you think it is important for young children to learn English?

Lamina, Hajji, Jibril , Ulla (Together) *Yes.*

Sannah   *Yes.*

Amir   Oh *Yes.*

G: Why do you think it is important to learn English?

Hajji   *Because it is fun.*

Jibril   *Because English is everywhere.*

Lamina   *So I can talk to my English friends and teachers*

Ulla   *It makes you feel proud and important when you know how to speak*
              English

Sannah   *My parents say without English you have no job, no life.*

Amir   *My dad says it's the way to a good life.*

G: What language do you use when you speak to your parents and other adults
              at home?

Hajji   *Punjabi.*

Jibril   *Somali or Dutch.*

Sannah   *I speak English to my Dad and Punjabi to my mum and nani (grandmother).*

Amir   *Same as me.*

Lamina   *Punjabi.*

Ulla   *Urdu.*

G: What language do you use when you speak to your brothers and sisters? (If
              different from grown ups: Can you explain the differences?)

Amir   *Punjabi.*

Hajji   *English.*

Jibril   *Somali.*

Ulla   *Urdu.*

Lamina   *Punjabi.*

Sannah   *English.*

G: What language do you use when you speak to your friends? (Please explain)

Hajji   *English and Punjabi.*

Jibril   *Somali.*

Lamina   *Punjabi and English.*

Ulla   *English and Urdu.*

Sannah   *English.*

Amir   *English.*

G: Do your parents encourage and help you to learn English at home?

Hajji   *They don't help me do it coz they not know English.*
Sannah   My mum can't help me. She has no English. My dad helps me a little bit.

Amir   Sometimes.

Jibril   *They buy me books to read but some of them are too hard.*
Lamina   *My uncle helps me but says I very slow.*

Ulla   *They try but it's hard.*

G: What sort of activities do they do with you at home to help you learn
            English? Please explain giving examples of any resources you have and
            how they help you.

Lamina   *I play games with my brother.*

Ulla   *They let me play what I want.*

Hajji   *Going to the library.*

Jibril   *I read to my parents but they can't read to me.*

Amir   *They don't help me because they are busy.*

G: What do your parents think about EAL teaching/learning?

Sannah   *I'm not sure.*

Ulla   *They don't like English but I like it.*

Hajji   *They want me learn English.*

Jibril   *They think it's great.*

Lamina   *They want me to learn English and Punjabi.*

Amir   *They want me to learn the two languages – English and Punjabi.*

G: Do you enjoy learning English? (If yes, what is it you like about learning
            English? If not what is it you do not like about learning English?).

Hajji   *I enjoy it little bit because it is hard.*

Jibril   *I like listening to stories but I not like writing.*

Lamina   *I enjoy working with others because it is fun.*

Ulla   *It makes you feel important.*

Sannah   *A little bit becoz is hard sometimes. I like the stories.*

Amir   *I like painting.*

G: What do you think about English speaking people?

Hajji   *I like some of the kind ones. Others are not my friends.*

Jibril   *Some of them are very friendly.*

Lamina   *Some are very rude.*

Ulla   *They are very helpful.*

Sannah   *I don't know.*

Amir   *I like them.*

G: (What do you think about their culture or ways of life)? Is it similar to yours?

Hajji   *I dont understand their culture. It's different.*

Jibril   *Some things are different.*

Lamina   *Yes the way they dress is different.*

Ulla   *The food is different as well.*

Sannah   *They seem to do whatever they want.*

Amir   *My mum says some of them are very rude and answer back to their parents.*

G: What activities do you like doing at school? (Why do you like these activities?)

Hajji   *I love Art, It's fun.*

Jibril   *I like football. I like ICT and Singing. They are working in partners or groups.*

Hajji   *I love reading and playing teachers.*

Jibril   *Yes it's **fun** when we play teachers and children doing what we have done in class. It's really **fun.***

Lamina   *I like drawing and colouring. It's fun.*

Ulla   *Doing experiments is better, you find out about things.*

Sannah   *I like listening to stories.*

G: Which activities do you not like? (Why do you not like them?)

Hajji   *I don't like writing- it's too hard.*

Jibril   *I don't like writing. It's hard and boring.*

Lamina   *I don't like answering questions. It's hard.*

Ulla   *I like singing and dancing.*

Sannah   *I like puzzles and dominoes.*

Amir   *I like puzzles as well but not the hard ones.*

G: Do you have any problems in learning English? (If so what are they?

Hajji   *I know what I want to say but I can't say it. When I am laughed at with mistake I make many mistake.*

Jibril   *I don't understand it sometimes.*

Lamina   *Some of the words are very difficult to remember.*

Ulla   *I know in my head what I want to say but I can't say the words.*

Sannah   *To remember the words I have learnt.*

Amir   *I know what I want to say but I can't think of the right words to use*

.

G: Can you tell me something about the ways you like to learn?
     I like to work with my partner. I like to see things and touch them and play with them.

Hajji   *I don't like talking to the whole class. They laugh if I make mistakes.*

Jibril   *Me too. I like small groups.*

Lamina   *When they laugh I feel so embarrassed and then get angry with myself.*

Ulla   *They laughed at me and I cried.*

G: What helps you to remember what you have learnt? What makes you want to learn English?)

Amir   *Acting stories help me remember.*

Hajji   *Doing different activities.*

Jibril   *Doing things over and over.*

Lamina   *I like where we **make** or **do** different things*

Ulla   *If I see things and touch them I will remember them.*

Sannah   *I like to talk about things*

Amir   *I like to play with things then I know more.*

G: How do you think the learning of English could be made better and more

             Interesting for you?

Ulla   *More playing.*

Lamina   *Through stories- reading and acting stories.*

Amina   *With buddies and working partners.*

Amir   *It's fun to work with someone.*

G: Do other people help you to learn English? If so who are they? What sort of

             help to they give you)

Amir   *Parents*

Hajji   *My friends help me to practice what we have learnt in class.*

Jibril   *Friends and teachers.*

Lamina   W*orking partners.*

Ulla   *Adults and other children.*

Sannah   *My teachers and their support assistants.*

G: What sort of things do you think affect your learning of English at home?

Hajji   *Speaking English at home.*

Jibril   *I am not allowed to speak English at home.*

Lamina   *Help from parents and other adults.*

Ulla   *Having books and toys or TV and a computer helps.*

Sannah   *Not getting lots of practice speaking English.*

Amir   *No one to help me with homework.*

G: Is there anything else you want to share about the teaching/learning of

             English?

Lamina   *No.*

Ulla   *Nothing.*

Hajji   *I like English but it is difficult.*

Jibril   *I wish my family speak English at home,*

Sannah   *I wish I had more toys and books.*

Amir   *I need other people to help m*e at home.

Appendix 10

Sample interview transcript of interview with one parent (P1)

G: Do you think it is important for children to learn a second language when they are still young?

P1: *It is important but they should not be put under pressure to learn it because they are still young. Time is on their side.*

G: What is your attitude towards the English speaking people?

P1: *Alright but I don't like some of the things they do like some of their tight or short clothes they wear because they expose their bodies and I don't want my children to copy that. I also don't like the way some young people speak to or treat adults. It's different cultures, you see. Two different cultures.*

G: What language does your child use when he/she speaks to you or other adults at home?

P1: *Punjab because I'm not a good English speaker. My husband he speak little English as well. We both not good but Sannah (referring to their child) she better, very better now.*

G: What language does your child use when speaking to their brothers, sisters or friends?

P1: *She speak English with brother, not sister but small brother no English- too little speak English.*

G: Can you tell me about the factors you think affect children's learning of English as a second language?

P1: *Teachers and other adults to help learn English. A good home background also helps. And all the materials they have at school.*

G: Do you think the resources and support a child gets at home affects their learning of EAL? Give a reason for your answer.

P1: *Yes because if they have something at home that helps them to practice what they have learnt at school then the better because they will remember it.*

G: Do you think culture affects your child's learning of English?

P1: *Yes. Mmmm, Yes definitely.*

G: How do you think culture affects Learning of English as a second language?

P1: If *children understand the way English people do things and why then this help to learn the language.*

G: What measures have you taken at home to promote your child's

learning of English?

P1: *As a good parent I have bought books and toys for my children and sometimes take them on holiday to see and experience different things.*

G: Does your child enjoy learning English? (How do you know?)

P1: *Enjoy ? Yes she enjoy it but she sometime tell me is hard and bored. I ask her and she tell me.*

G: What problems, if any do you face in helping your child to learn English at home?

P1: *I don't know how to help. My child know English better than me. When I try to help my child says no that's no way do it so me I'm lost.*

G: *Why don't you ask the teachers to help?*

P1: *Oh No! Teachers are always busy and we don't want to disturb them.*

G: Are you happy with the progress that your child has made in learning English at school and why?

P1: *I'm happy because teachers help her. Me I'm happy because other teachers speak my language so help my daughter.*

G: What help, if any do you need from the school to enable you to help your child learn English better?

P1: *Ideas on what to do to support our children more and well. English lessons for parents and other adults help as well.*

G: What do you suggest could be done to improve the learning of English among young learners?

P1: *Longer school hours to give children more time to learn or to have 'After school clubs' or 'extra lesson' to help those who need it.*