“*It's always the simplest little things that make the biggest difference*”: What is known about the development of early oral language skills in multilingual learners and do practitioners feel able to support this in practice?

Sophie Jade Vatter

Doctorate of Applied Educational Psychology

School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Newcastle University

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Declaration

This thesis is being submitted for the award of the Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology. I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other purpose. I have acknowledged where material used is the work of others.

Acknowledgements

A special thank you to the Early Years staff who so generously agreed to give up their time to participate. This research would not have been possible without you. Thank you for being so open and honest with your experiences.

I am indebted to my parents, Ian and Nicky, and my sister Rachael for continuously supporting my ambitious pursuits and for always believing that I could succeed even when I doubted myself. I hope I continue to make you proud in all that I do. Thank you for your unwavering support, encouragement, and persistent proofreading throughout my (long) journey through formal education - I promise that I am done now.

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Overarching Abstract

This thesis explores early years (EY) staff's experiences in monolingual and multilingual classrooms, and their perceptions of 'what works' to facilitate early oral language (OL) development in these contexts. It also considers staff's general and personal efficacy beliefs pertaining to OL development with monolingual and multilingual learners and explores what supports staff self-efficacy beliefs. This document comprises four chapters: a systematic literature review (SLR), a critical discussion of the research methodology, an empirical project, and a reflexive synthesis.

Chapter 1: What is known about the effectiveness of oral language interventions for multilingual children in the Early Years? A Systematic Literature Review.

This chapter presents a SLR exploring the effectiveness of early childhood education and care (ECEC) based interventions to develop the OL skills of multilingual children. Six key papers were analysed. Findings were mixed, although some positive effects of OL interventions in relation to multilingual children's vocabulary, oral comprehensions, sentence repetition and grammar were found. Implications were discussed which formed the basis for the subsequent empirical project. This paper is written in the style of the nominated journal: British Journal of Developmental Psychology.

Chapter 2: A critical reflection of research methodology and ethical considerations.

In this chapter I outline the link between the SLR and the empirical research project. I critically consider my philosophical assumptions of the world and examine the implications these assumptions had on the design, method, analysis and validity of the empirical project. Ethical considerations are also explored.

Chapter 3: "It's all about narrowing the gap, isn't it?" What does practice tell us about how EY professionals can effectively support the early oral language development of multilingual learners?

The empirical project explores the perception of EY staff in relation to what supports the development of OL skills and how efficacious they feel to support these in monolingual and multilingual contexts. A two-phase explanatory sequential mixed

methods design was utilised and EY staff from across the United Kingdom were invited to take part. Firstly, two questionnaires were used to explore the general and personal efficacy beliefs of EY staff supporting the OL development of multilingual children. Secondly, semi-structured interviews with six participants, with varying degrees of self-reported experience working within multilingual settings were conducted. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and were analysed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis. Successful OL approaches are discussed and characteristics common to both monolingual and multilingual pedagogy are highlighted. Findings relating to staff's self-efficacy beliefs and what supports these are also discussed. Limitations and implications for practice and further research are considered. This paper is written in the style of the nominated journal: British Journal of Educational Psychology.

Chapter 4: Critical synthesis

The final chapter provides a critical synthesis of the thesis along with discussion of how the research has influenced my thinking and future practice. Implications for further research and wider practice are also explored.

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Chapter 1. What is known about the effectiveness of oral language interventions for multilingual children in the Early Years? A Systematic Literature Review.

Abstract

This systematic literature review (SLR) addresses the question, 'What is known about the effectiveness of oral language (OL) interventions for multilingual children in the early years? The review aimed to critically consider the weight of research evidence in relation to the research question and was guided by recommendations by Boland et al. (2017). Six papers met the inclusion criteria. Results were mixed, with wide ranging effect sizes, however, some positive effects of OL interventions in relation to multilingual children's vocabulary, oral comprehension, sentence repetition and grammar were found. A tentative conclusion can be made that specific interventions may be beneficial for improving multilingual children's OL skills within the domains of expressive and receptive language. Large effect sizes were found for two studies which utilised a collaborative home-school approach to intervention. The potential implications of this finding are discussed and the need for further research highlighted.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Defining and exploring key terms

A terminological tussle: Why multilingual and not 'EAL'?

It is suggested that the misuse of terminology in professional and public discourses can underpin negative attitudes perpetuating unhelpful ideologies and entrenching privilege through the power of labelling (Cunningham, 2019).

Cunningham (2019) presents a compelling argument that the labels applied to individuals who speak less-dominant languages have the power to perpetuate monolingual ideologies and deficit-model thinking with regard to multilingualism in education. A vast array of terminology which describes the experience of multilingual children is embedded within the monolingual habitus (Gogolin, 1997). Many of the

terms that are commonly used in the field of English language teaching position English as the dominant and ultimate goal. Cunningham (2019) argues that this positioning suggests a hierarchical relationship between those who speak the dominant language and those who do not. This positions multilingual individuals as lower status. To address this, the current research wished to utilise a term which did not centre around English but rather acknowledged the admirable effort of learning multiple languages.

In line with the definition used by Langeloo et al. (2019), the term 'multilingual children' is defined as those who predominantly speak a language at home that is different from the majority language of instruction and who often start to learn the majority language systematically when they enter early-childhood education.

Monolingualism

The term 'monolingualism' is used to refer to individuals who speak a single language. For the purpose of this research monolingual individuals refer to native English speakers who speak no other languages.

Early Years

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) set the standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to 5 (Department for DfE, 2021). Thus, Early Years (EY) is defined as being between the ages of 0 and 5.

Oral Language

OL is divided into active oral speech and passive oral speech (Wei & Zhang, 2013). The former refers to "speaking", the process of language outputting and releasing, whereas passive oral speech refers to "listening", the process of language inputting and taking-in (Wei & Zhang, 2013). Malec et al. (2017) define OL as consisting of three main components: language form (e.g., phonology, morphology, syntax), semantics, and pragmatics/communicative competence (Owens, 2015).

1.1.2 Background Literature

The importance of OL skills is well documented throughout literature, with studies reporting their significance to both academic and social success (Ashman &

Conway, 2017). The ‘Statutory Framework for the EYFS’ in England (DfE, 2021) and the English National Curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 (Department for DfE, 2013) both emphasise the importance of OL and literacy. These are considered key areas of learning as they are “an essential foundation of success in all subjects” (DfE, 2013, p. 10).

Children entering school with poor OL skills are at risk of educational and social underachievement (Clegg et al., 2005; Muter et al., 2004). OL provides a critical foundation for children’s readiness to successfully participate in school (Law et al., 2013; Roulstone et al., 2011). It is suggested that the development of OL skills in early childhood is central to the child’s capacity to succeed both in the classroom and on the playground (Ashman & Conway, 2017; Justice & Pence, 2004; Mashburn et al., 2008) due to the higher demands placed on pupils’ language knowledge as they progress through school (Kieffer, 2008; Ofsted, 1999). Thus, support for OL skills should begin in EY classrooms to address these skills before difficulties become established and impact on future learning (Burgoyne et al., 2011).

Fricke and Millard (2016) suggest that many of the intervention programmes currently available to schools have insufficient evidence of their effectiveness. Recent reviews highlight the need for more rigorous research to provide evidence of the beneficial effects of intervention approaches implemented in schools (Allen, 2011). It is argued that this information is essential to enable schools to make informed decisions about the investment of time and resources to develop OL skills and provide children with important foundations for literacy development and educational attainment (Fricke & Millard, 2016).

Contemporary changes to Western societies, like globalisation and immigration, have contributed to an increase in the numbers of multilingual children in early-childhood classrooms (Langeloo et al., 2019). Statistics suggest that around 18.1 per cent of the primary school population in England are multilingual, with some schools having as much as 98.8 per cent of their population learning English in addition to their home language(s) (DfE, 2013). This year alone the United Kingdom (UK) has welcomed children fleeing from both the Afghanistan crisis and the war in Ukraine into British classrooms.

It is suggested that a large proportion of multilingual children enter school with lower language skills than their monolingual peers, facing the dual challenge of learning English in order to access the curriculum (Fricke & Millard, 2016). Castro et al., (2011) argue that as multilingual children progress through school, the gap between them and their monolingual peers widen, and they tend to underperform in national assessments in primary school (Dixon et al., 2020). It is important to remain mindful of the fact that, despite the majority of the world's population being bi/multilingual, literature regarding language development has largely focused on monolingual samples (Rujas et al., 2021). Further, to date, the preponderance of research in relation to quality interactions in EY classrooms have been conducted on monolingual samples; hence it is unclear what constitutes 'high quality' for multilingual populations (Langeloo et al., 2019).

Schools serving high proportions of multilingual children are often located in high-poverty areas in which education inequalities for historically marginalised students prevail (Lampert et al., 2020). Furthermore, several studies indicate that multilingual children are exposed to unequal learning opportunities compared to their monolingual peers (Langeloo et al., 2019), with children from minority backgrounds experiencing fewer opportunities to engage in rich interactions that contribute to their development of cognitive and social competences (Ball, 2012; Heller et al., 2012; Mathers et al., 2014). It is also suggested that teachers are frequently unprepared to meet children's varying OL levels at a classroom level (Lewis, 1999).

Burgoyne et al. (2011) suggest that school experience alone is not enough to remediate the vocabulary differences between monolingual and multilingual children. Rather, there is a need for additional, targeted language support to address this disparity. Further, Burgoyne et al. (2011) emphasise the need for targeted language support to be incorporated into the EY curriculum in order to alleviate the gap in attainment at the earliest opportunity. Thus, the aim of this SLR is to review research literature to address the following question:

> "What is known about the effectiveness of oral language interventions for multilingual children in the Early Years?

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Systematic literature review process

This section outlines the SLR process. Ten key stages were followed, guided by recommendations by Boland et al. (2017). These stages are displayed in Table 1 below.

1. Planning the review
2. Performing scoping searches, identifying the review question, and writing a protocol.
3. Literature searching
4. Screening titles and abstracts
5. Obtaining papers
6. Selecting full text papers
7. Data extraction
8. Quality assessment
9. Analysis and synthesis
10. Writing up, editing, and disseminating

Table 1: Systematic Literature review process (Boland et al., 2017)

1.2.2 The search process

A systematic combination of searches was undertaken, using search terms identified in Table 2. Search terms were determined following a comprehensive consideration of terminology within the literature. While the current review utilises the term 'multilingual' to describe the population at the centre of this review, it is recognised that there is no universally accepted term to describe these learners. Thus, the decision was made to include a variety of terms within the searches to comprehensively examine the literature.

Early Years	**Multilingualism**	**Oral Language**	**Intervention**	**United Kingdom**
Early Years	Multilingual*	Oral Language	Intervention	United Kingdom
EY	Bilingual*	Vocabulary	Effect	UK

Early Years Foundation Stage	English Language Learner	Phonology	Outcome	Great Britain
EYFS	ELL	Phonics		GB
Early Childhood Education	English as an Additional Language	Grammar		England
ECE	EAL	Morphology		Scotland
Nursery	English as a Second Language	Speaking		Wales
Reception	ESL	Listening		
Preschool	English as a Foreign Language			
Kindergarten	EFL			
	L2-learner*			
	L2 learner*			
	Home Language*			

* The asterisk denotes a search symbol that broadens a search by finding words that start with the same letters. It can be used with distinctive word stems to retrieve variations of a term.

Table 2: Summary of Search Terms

1.2.3 Databases used

Electronic database searches were carried out between October 2021 and January 2022. Five databases were used during the search process. The minimum recommended is two (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008). These are detailed in Table 3. Grey literature searches were also carried out, although they yielded no further papers. Handsearching and backwards chaining occurred, resulting in the final six papers.

Scopus
ERIC
Child Development and Adolescent Studies
British Education Index (BEI)
ProQuest

Table 3: Summary of Databases used.

1.2.4 Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were set to refine the search to articles relevant to the literature review question. These are displayed in Table 4. It was decided that literature based outside of the UK would be excluded from this review. This is due to literature suggesting that British schools face an additional challenge supporting multilingual children's OL than other contexts due to the vast number of languages present in classrooms (Evangelou, 2016). This makes the use of translanguaging[1] strategies to support individual children's native language more difficult.

[1] Translanguaging is a term that refers to the flexible use of linguistic resources by multilingual individuals (García & Kano, 2014). In the classroom, both or all languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organise and mediate understanding, speaking, literacy and learning (Lewis et al., 2012).

Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
Children aged between 0 and 5 years	Children older than 5 years	This is in line with the guidance provided by the Early Years and Foundation Stage statutory framework (DfE, 2021).
Studies based in the United Kingdom	Research conducted in other countries	The majority of literature concerning support for multilingual children comes from the US where the focus is specifically on Spanish-speaking children learning English via translanguaging approaches (Farver et al., 2009; Kohnert & Medina, 2009). Findings, therefore, cannot be simply transferred to the British population and education system (Evangelou, 2016).
Papers published in English	Papers published in other languages	As review question is focused on literature based in the United Kingdom.
Papers published between 2008-2022	Papers published prior 2008	The importance of early years staff in the development of children's early oral language skills was emphasised following the publication of Every Child a Talker: Guidance for Early Language Lead Practitioners (Department for DCSF, 2008).
Studies including multilingual children	Studies including only monolingual children	In line with review question.
Intervention studies	Non-intervention studies	In line with review question.
Outcomes focused on oral language skills	Interventions with other outcome focuses	In line with review question.

Table 4: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

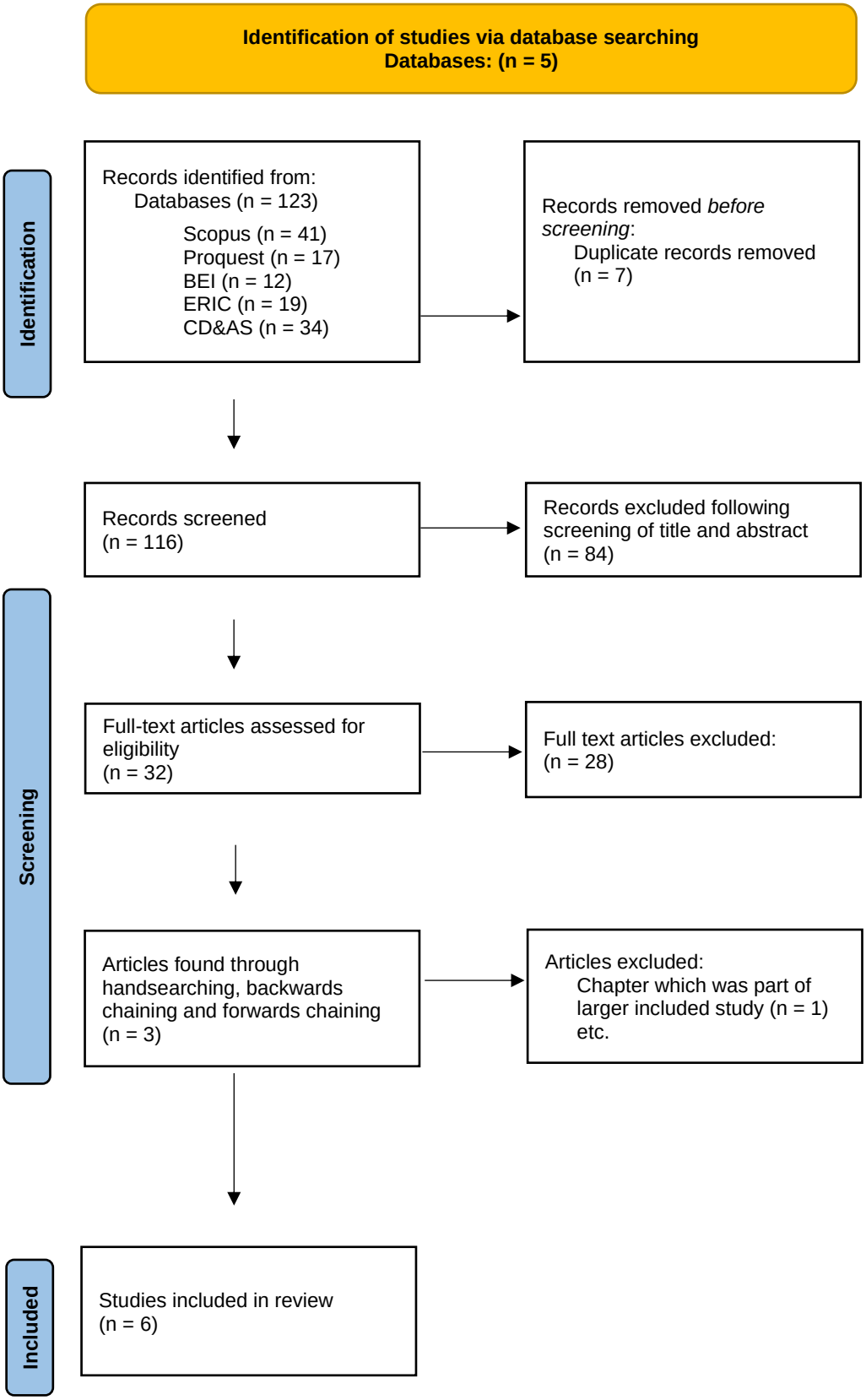


Figure 1: PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) Flow Diagram displaying the screening process.

Figure 1 displays the PRISMA flow diagram which visually depicts the screening process for this systematic review.

1.2.5 Research literature included in review

Six pieces of literature were found to meet the inclusion criteria (See Table 5). A summary of each piece of literature is detailed in Table 6. Characteristics of each intervention are displayed in Table 7.

Title	**Authors**	**Year**	**Journal**
The Sign 4 Little Talkers intervention to improve listening, understanding, speaking, and behaviour in hearing preschool children: Outcome and evaluation.	Davidson, R. Randhawa, G.	2020	*JMIR Paediatrics and Parenting*
Early language screening and intervention can be delivered successfully at scale: evidence from a cluster randomized controlled trial.	West, G. Snowling, M. J. Lervag, A. Buchanan-Worster, E. Duta, M. Hall, A. McLachlan, H. Hulme, C.	2021	*Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*
Supporting early oral language skills for English language learners in inner city preschool provision	Dockrell, J. E. Stuart, M. King, D.	2010	*British Journal of Educational Psychology*
Supporting language in schools: Evaluating an intervention for children with delayed language in the early school years	Lee, W. Pring, T.	2016	*Child Language Teaching and Therapy*
Sign-Supported English: is it effective at teaching vocabulary to young children with English as an Additional Language?	Marshall, C. R., Hobsbaum, A.	2015	*International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*

Effective intervention to support oral language skills in English as an additional language in the early years	Murphy, V, A. Karemaker, J. Sylva, K. Kanji, G. Jelley, F.	2019	*TEANGA, The Journal of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics.*

Table 5: Literature included in review.

1.3 Data Extraction

Reference	Sample	Purpose/Aims	Method	Intervention	Measures	Findings	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Davidson and Randhawa (2020).	8 Early Years (EY) settings in Luton 118 preschool children. Aged between 1 and 4 years. Just over one third of the children were identified as 'EAL'. (N=79 monolingual, N=40 multilingual).	To determine whether the *Sign 4 Little Talkers (S4LT)* program improves key developmental outcomes in hearing preschool children. Research Question (RQ): Does the S4LT intervention improve language, communication, and wellbeing in preschool children?	Experimental Within-Subjects Data was collected approximately 6 months apart.	Sign 4 Little Talkers Individual and group intervention. S4LT was developed to address gaps in the attainment of vocabulary and communication skills in preschool children. The intervention was to be incorporated into daily routines.	Children were tested in 4 EY outcomes – listening, speaking, understanding, and managing feelings and behaviour, using EY developmental bands. The number of key words understood and spoken were recorded pre and post intervention. The Leuven wellbeing scale was also employed to measure wellbeing.	EY Outcomes were significantly higher following the S4LT intervention. The mean progress for each domain was between 2.3 and 2.5 steps and therefore better than that reported in control data, particularly in relation to listening and attention, and speaking where an average of 1 step progress was made. The mean number of keywords spoken and understood were significantly higher following the S4LT intervention.	Words understood = 1.58 Words spoken = 1.47 Wellbeing = 1.53 Listening = 1.52 Understanding =1.50 Speaking = 1.62 Managing feelings and behaviour = 1.65

Reference	Sample	Purpose/Aims	Method	Intervention	Measures	Findings	Effect size (Cohen's d)
West et al. (2021)	1,173 Reception children (aged 4-5). 774 monolingual children and 399 multilingual children. Participants were recruited from 13 geographical areas in the UK.	To evaluate the effectiveness of the NELI programme in ameliorating language difficulties in the first year of school.	Cluster randomised controlled trial. Schools were randomly allocated, within a geographical area, to either a 20-week oral language intervention group or a business-as-usual control group. 20-week intervention programme.	Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme Individual and group intervention.	Expressive Vocabulary and recalling sentences subtests in the CELF Preschool II^{UK} and The Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT) were used. The LanguageScreen assessment comprised 4 subtests: Expressive and Receptive Vocabulary, Sentence Repetition and Listening Comprehension.	Intervention group showed a significantly greater increase in language score than control. Intervention group also showed a slightly greater improvement on the Early Word Reading test at post-test. Children with the weakest language skills showed the largest improvements from the intervention. Multilingual children benefited as much as monolingual peers.	Expressive vocab = 0.21 Receptive vocab = 0.26 Sentence repetition = 0.3 Effect of NELI for multilingual children (monolingual children) Expressive vocab = 0.28 (0.21) Receptive vocab = 0.08 (0.10) RAPT info = 0.20 (0.21) RAPT grammar = 0.31 (0.28).

Reference	Sample	Purpose/Aims	Method	Intervention	Measures	Findings	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Dockrell et al. (2010)	143 4-year-old children attending 3 inner city preschools in London. The majority of children had either Bengali or Sylheti as their home language; in addition Turkish, Amharic and Somali were home languages.	To report the development of a theoretically motivated oral language intervention designed to meet the needs of preschool children with poor language skills in typical preschool provision.	Between-subjects. The intervention was compared with a contrast intervention (*Story Reading),* and local good practice which acted as a control group. Intervention carried out over 2 terms.	*Talking Time* Group Intervention	Receptive and Expressive language abilities were assessed using two subtests of the British Ability Scale (BAS II). The GAPS Sentence Repetition subtest was used. Narrative skills were assessed using the Bus Story Test (Renfrew Language Scales, (Renfrew, 1997b).	*Talking Time* had a significant effect on vocabulary, oral comprehension, and sentence repetition. It did not have a significant effect on narrative skills. *Talking Time* differentially positively affected children's receptive language, expressive vocabulary, and sentence repetition competence.	Verbal comp = 0.56 Naming vocab = 0.67 Sentence repetition = 1.05 Bus story information = 0.59 Bus story sentence length = 0.56

Reference	Sample	Purpose/Aims	Method	Intervention	Measures	Findings	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Lee and Pring, (2016)	54 Reception children (18 monolingual children in intervention condition, 15 multilingual children in intervention condition, 21 children in control). 18 schools (10 ran intervention, 8 controls) in West Yorkshire and Lancashire.	Seek further evidence that children with language delays can benefit from attending language groups in school. The research hypothesis was that children attending the intervention groups would score significantly higher than controls.	Between groups. Wait list control group. Schools were randomly assigned to the intervention or acted as controls.	*TalkBoost* - a programme developed by the Communication Trust and ICAN with support from the Every Child a Chance trust.	Children's language was assessed using the Bus Story (Renfrew, 1997b) and the RAPT (Renfrew, 1997a). The assessments were carried out by Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) who were unaware which children were in the intervention arm, both at the pre and post-test.	Scores from the Bus Story found that the interaction of group by time was strongly significant showing that children in the intervention group made greater improvement than control children. There was a significant difference between multilingual children in the intervention group and monolingual controls. This result suggests that the intervention benefited multilingual children.	Effect of TalkBoost for multilingual children: RAPT information = 1.03 RAPT Grammar = 0.87 Bus Story = 0.62

Reference	Sample	Purpose/Aims	Method	Intervention	Measures	Findings	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015)	104 children aged 4-5 years from 2 schools in outer London. 66 were multilingual. (45% in control and 82% in intervention). Languages included Arabic, Bulgarian, Igbo, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Somali and Urdu.	To investigate whether Sign-Supported English (SSE), has a positive impact on multilingual reception children's vocabulary development over English-only input, measured over a 6-month period.	Between-groups. Intervention group and control group. Pupils in each school were tested at two time points 6 months apart.	*Sign Supported English (SSE)*	British Picture Vocabulary Scale 3 (BPVS; Dunn et al., 2009). Receptive Core Vocabulary Test, Expressive Core Vocabulary Test. Classroom-based observations (using a time-sampling observation method) of the teachers' and pupils' manual communication.	Significant effect of time for the Receptive Core Vocabulary Test, but no significant interaction between time and school. Significant effect of time for Expressive Core Vocabulary test but no main effect of school. The interaction between time and school was significant. All significant school differences and significant interactions between school and time disappeared when analyses re-ran for multilingual children.	Receptive Core Vocab = 0.24 Expressive Core Vocab = 0.52 BPVS = 0.14 Multilingual children: Receptive Core Vocab = -0.04 Expressive Core Vocab = 0.16 BPVS = 0.19

Reference	Sample	Purpose/Aims	Method	Intervention	Measures	Findings	Effect size (Cohen's d)
Murphy et al. (2019)	79 children aged 3-4 years. 47 children in the intervention group (including 17 multilingual children), and 32 children in the control group (including 6 multilingual children).	To discuss key findings relating to the development of English language and literacy in multilingual children in order to identify good practice for multilingual pupils as they begin school.	Quasi-experimental design. Four childcare centres received professional training and four comparison nurseries served as a wait list control group.	*Ready to Read:* A Professional Development (PD) Intervention	Children were tested on Naming Vocabulary and Verbal Comprehension (both of which are subtests of the British Ability Scales (BAS), (Elliott et al., 1996). Children's phonological awareness was also measured using a task developed by Bryant and Bradley (1985).	Intervention group made more gains on Naming Vocabulary and Rhyme than the comparison group. Difference between control and intervention for multilingual children was not significant. No significant main effects of interactions on the Verbal Comprehension or Rhyme measures. There was no effect of the intervention on Naming Vocabulary scores of multilingual children.	Effect of Ready to Read intervention: Naming vocab = 0.35 Verbal comp = -0.12 Rhyme = 0.21 Concepts about print = -0.03

Table 6: Summary of research literature included in review

Reference	Intervention	Description	Intervention Length	Targeted language outcomes
Davidson and Randhawa (2020).	*Sign 4 Little Talkers (S4LT)* Group/ Individual Intervention	The S4LT intervention consists of 5 books which depict 2 characters, Zak and Zoe. Zak and Zoe are also dolls that are used during story sessions to engage children. A DVD and poster are also available to Early Years (EY) settings to train practitioners to use S4LT stories and signing. Signs are adapted from British Sign Language (BSL) to increase vocabulary in hearing children. Staff in each EY setting were asked to identify 10 children who were below expected levels of development and therefore judged to be most in need of targeted help to catch up with their peers. These children received extra story sessions and their parents were invited to an S4LT session with their children to learn the stories and signs.	Data was collected after 2 terms. Started Autumn 2016 and ended Spring 2017. (Approximately 6 months).	Vocabulary and communication skills. EY Outcome Developmental Bandings • Listening • Understanding • Speaking • Managing feelings and behaviour

Reference	Intervention	Description	Intervention Length	Targeted language outcomes
West et al. (2021)	*Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme* Group and Individual intervention	NELI is an intervention programme for children with poor oral language skills comprising of small group and individual sessions aimed at improving children's vocabulary, developing their narrative skills, encouraging active listening, and building confidence in independent speaking. It was designed with reference to the Primary Framework for Literacy and Mathematics (DfES, 2006), the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and in consultation with teachers and speech and language therapists (SLTs). In the last 10 weeks, activities promoting phoneme awareness (blending and segmenting) and letter-sound knowledge are introduced to support early literacy instruction.	20-week programme 57 small group sessions each lasting 30 minutes. 37 individual sessions each lasting 15 minutes. Total intervention time: 28.5h group sessions 9.25h individual sessions	Vocabulary Narrative skills Active listening Independent speaking

Reference	Intervention	Description	Intervention Length	Targeted language outcomes
Dockrell et al. (2010)	*Talking Time* Group intervention	The intervention included these three dimensions: • Vocabulary was developed through play-acting around themes that targeted key vocabulary items, including nouns, verbs, and adjectives. • Second, the ability to understand and draw inferences was developed through an activity which provided structured discussions around books where the focus was the pictures in the books, what they illustrated, what might be predicted and how they linked to the children's own experiences. • Third, narrative development was supported by using pictures of common activities in the children's local environment and providing children with the opportunity to describe and discuss these events. Staff placed all children into small groups of four or five children with a range of language levels in each group.	Carried out over 2 terms. Vocabulary development and inference activities occurred in the first term (Autumn) while the narrative activities were introduced in the second term (Spring). 15-minute activities twice a week for 15 weeks. Total intervention time: 7.5h	Receptive and productive language abilities • Vocabulary • Understanding Narrative skills

Reference	Intervention	Description	Intervention Length	Targeted language outcomes
Lee and Pring (2016)	*TalkBoost* Group intervention	TalkBoost is an intervention intended to include multilingual children. It is designed to cover all areas of language appropriate to children between the ages of 4 and 7 years with language delay. The aim was to develop an intervention that could be delivered with minimal support from specialists, thus enabling impact on a wider number of children. An important element of the intervention was mandatory whole class activities, for which materials were provided and optional follow-up activities for parents/carers to carry out.	Children received the intervention in groups of 4. Sessions lasted 30 minutes and were delivered three times a week for a 10-week period. Total of 30 sessions. Total intervention time: 15h	Receptive and expressive language. Listening/attention and social interaction.

Reference	Intervention	Description	Intervention Length	Targeted language outcomes
Murphy et al. (2019)	*Ready to Read:* A Professional Development (PD) Intervention Policy-level intervention	This PD intervention was based on an effective child literacy training programme 'Supporting Parents on Kids Education in School' (SPOKES; Scott et al., 2010). For this study, the SPOKES programme was adapted for training with Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) to support children to use an active problem-solving approach to developing literacy and language. The intervention was delivered by three specialist senior trainers who provided support and supervision on a weekly basis. The participating EYPs (N=20) received weekly background readings and a take-away task to complete during the week at their setting.	Intervention was delivered over four 2-hour sessions across a four-week period.	Emergent language and literacy development. • Naming Vocabulary • Verbal Comprehension Phonological Awareness

Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015)	*Sign Supported English (SSE)* Whole school approach	SSE was used as a whole school approach and was not just targeted to multilingual children. Gestures used in SSE in the UK are the conventionalised signs of BSL, which are presented alongside spoken English, and they follow English word order rather than the word order of BSL.	6 months	Receptive and expressive vocabulary.

Table 7: Intervention Characteristics

1.4 Quality Assessment

Initially a quality assessment was made using the criteria provided by Downs and Black (1998; See Table 8). This tool was chosen due to its objectivity; however, it did not allow for an assessment to be made regarding the relevance of the study to the review question. Therefore, in addition to the Downs and Black (1998) tool the EPPI-Centre weight of evidence (WoE) tool was used to assess the quality of each study in relation to the research question. Quality of evidence was determined via four domains described by Gough (2007), as outlined in Table 9 below.

Reference	Score	Quality
Davidson & Randhawa (2020)	22/28	GOOD
West et al. (2021)	25/28	EXCELLENT
Dockrell et al. (2010)	22/28	GOOD
Lee and Pring (2016)	18/28	FAIR
Marshall & Hobsbaum (2015)	22/28	GOOD
Murphy et al. (2019)	20/28	GOOD

Table 8: Quality Assessment (Downs & Black, 1988)

WoE A	Assesses the generic quality of the independent study. *(The outcome of the Downs and Black (1998) quality assessment was utilised here).*
WoE B	Assesses the quality of the study research design and analysis in relation to the review question.
WoE C	Assesses the quality of the study in relation to the focus of the study and the specific review question.
WoE D	Combines the above assessments to provide overall comparable scores for each study included.

Table 9: Weight of evidence domains

Reference	Weight of Evidence A (Trustworthiness)	Weight of Evidence B (Appropriateness of Design)	Weight of Evidence C (Appropriateness of Focus	Weight of Evidence D (Overall)
Davidson and Randhawa (2020).	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
West et al. (2021)	HIGH	HIGH	LOW / MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Dockrell et al. (2010)	MEDIUM	VERY HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Lee and Pring (2016)	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015)	MEDIUM	LOW	MEDIUM / HIGH	LOW / MEDIUM
Murphy et al. (2019)	LOW / MEDIUM	LOW / MEDIUM	MEDIUM / HIGH	LOW / MEDIUM

Table 10: Screening process. Weight of Evidence (Gough, 2007)

Table 10 indicates that the majority of the studies that were evaluated were rated as providing a medium 'weight of evidence'. Dockrell and colleagues' (2010) paper was rated as having the highest weight of evidence due to the appropriateness of the research design to the current study's review question and target population. This is the only paper included in this review which targeted multilingual children explicitly. Those offering a lower weight of evidence (Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015; Murphy et al., 2019), were due to limitations of designs and outcomes being less applicable to the review question.

1.5 Data Analysis

Six pieces of literature form the basis of this review. Lee (2019) suggests that meta-analyses should be avoided if studies are too heterogeneous to be comparable, as

the metanalytical results may be meaningless and true effects may be obscured. Thus, given the differences across the studies in the current review, including diversity of protocols, variations in population and participant size, and inconsistency in the reporting of outcomes it was decided that a meta-analysis would not be performed. Instead, the decision was made to code the studies according to their outcome variables (Table 12).

To compare effect sizes[2], the guidelines provided by Thalheimer and Cook (2002) were followed (See Table 11).

Descriptive	**Effect Size (Cohen's *d*)**
Negligible effect	≥ -0.15and <0.15
Small effect	≥ 0.15 and <0.40
Medium effect	≥ 0.40 and <0.75
Large effect	≥ 0.75 and <1.10
Very large effect	≥ 1.10 and <1.45
Huge effect	≥ 1.45

Table 11: Guidelines for comparing effect sizes (Thalheimer & Cook, 2002)

[2] Effect sizes were calculated from the data provided using a tool to enable the calculation of Cohen's *d.* The Cohen's *d* statistic was selected as it enables comparisons between published studies (Thalheimer & Cook, 2002).

Outcome Variable	**Specifics (Measures)**	**Intervention**	**Significant gains made? Y=Yes, N=No**	**Effect size**
Expressive language skills	Expressive Vocabulary (CELF)	*NELI*	Y	0.28 (small)*
		SSE	N	0.16 (small)
	Naming vocabulary (BAS)	*Talking Time*	Y	0.67 (medium)*
		Ready to Read	N	0.35 (small)
	Verbal comprehension (BAS)	*Talking Time*	Y	0.56 (medium)*
		Ready to Read	N	-0.12 (negligible)
	Conveying information (RAPT information)	*NELI*	Y	0.20 (small)*
		TalkBoost	Y	1.03 (large)*
	Grammar (RAPT grammar)	*NELI*	Y	0.31 (small)*
		TalkBoost	Y	0.87 (large)*
	Speaking (Early Years Outcome (EYO)) (Key words spoken)	*S4LT*	Y	1.62 (huge)
		S4LT	Y	1.47 (huge)
	Sentence length (Bus story)	*Talking Time*	Y	0.56 (medium)*

Receptive language skills	Receptive Vocabulary	*NELI*	Y	-0.08 (negligible)*
		SSE	N	-0.04 (negligible)
	Receptive Vocabulary (BVPS)	*SSE*	N	0.19 (small)
	Listening (EYO)	*S4LT*	Y	1.52 (huge)
	Understanding (EYO)	*S4LT*	Y	1.50 (huge)
	(Key words understood)	*S4LT*	Y	1.58 (huge)
Oral Narrative Skills	Conveying information (Bus Story information)	*Talking Time*	N	0.59 (medium)*
	Grammar (Bus Story grammar)	*Talk Boost*	N	0.62 (medium)*
Episodic Working Memory	Sentence Repetition Test (GAPS)	*Talking Time*	Y	1.05 (large)*
Phonological Awareness	Rhyme	*Ready to Read*	N	0.21 (small)
Concepts about Print		*Ready to Read*	N	-0.03 (negligible)

*Results for multilingual population

Table 12: Findings and effect sizes for outcome variables.

Table 12 demonstrates mixed effect sizes in each of the outcome variable categories. Most significantly, measures of children's expressive language skills varied in effect sizes from negligible to large effects. The interventions that found significant results for improved OL outcomes in multilingual children (Dockrell et al., 2010; Lee & Pring, 2016) were rated as being of high and medium quality respectively. They reported medium-large (Dockrell et al., 2010) and large (Lee & Pring, 2016) effect sizes.

1.6 Synthesis of findings

1.6.1 General characteristics of included studies

The six studies that met inclusion criteria for this review were completed between 2010 and 2021. All six studies were carried out in England. Of the papers which reported the geographical context of their study, two were conducted in London, one was conducted in Luton, one was based in schools across West Yorkshire and Lancashire and one study included data from schools across 13 geographical areas in England[3]. The ages of pupils included in these studies varied from 1 to 5 years of age, with the majority of children studied between the ages of 3 and 5 years.

1.6.2 Sample

Five of the six studies did not make reference to the type of sampling strategy employed. In the one study that did explicitly state their sampling strategy, a randomised cluster sampling strategy was employed (West et al., 2021). It is assumed that the other studies included in this review used opportunity samples whereby participants were selected from populations convenient to the researchers (Draper & Swift, 2011). However, due to the lack of clarification provided by the studies on the selection process, this leaves open a question of bias.

[3] Bristol, Cornwall, Durham, Essex, Herts, London, Manchester, North Tyneside, Blackpool and Northwest, Northamptonshire, Surrey, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton.

The sample size of the studies varied from 54 to 1,173 children with a mean of 278.50 (SD 401.02)[4]. The subset of multilingual children within samples ranged from 29% to 100% (mean 48.04%, SD 26.15).

Only one of the six papers included solely multilingual children in their study. The other five included a mixture of multilingual and monolingual children. Five of the six studies included children aged between 3 and 5 years (Dockrell et al., 2010; Lee & Pring, 2016, Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015; Murphy et al., 2019; West et al., 2021). One study included a broader age range with children aged between 1-4years (Davidson & Randhawa, 2020).

1.6.3 Settings

Two of the six interventions were carried out in preschool settings (Davidson & Ranhawa, 2020; Dockrell et al., 2010). Three studies were set in EY school settings (Lee & Pring, 2016; Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015; West et al., 2016) and one study utilised a university childcare setting (Murphy et al., 2019).

1.6.4 Interventions

	***S4LT* (Davidson & Randhawa (2020)**	***NELI* (West et al., 2021)**	***Talking Time* (Dockrell et al., 2010)**	***Talk Boost* (Lee & Pring, 2016)**	***SSE* (Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015)**	***Ready to Read* (Murphy et al., 2019)**
Intervention length	6 months	20 weeks	2 terms	10 weeks	6 months	4 weeks
Number of sessions	Incorporated into daily routines	57 group sessions, 37 individual sessions	30	30	Incorporated into daily routines	4
Session length	N/A	Group 30 mins	15 mins	30 mins	N/A	2 hours

[4] The sample distribution significantly deviated from normal.

		Individual 15 mins				
Session frequency	Daily	3 group sessions and 2 individual sessions a week	Twice a week	3 times a week	Daily	Once a week
Group size	Whole class/ individual	3-6	4-5	4	Whole-class approach	Professional Development (PD) training
Total intervention time	N/A	28.5h group 9.25h individual	7.5h	15h	N/A	8h

Table 13: Intervention Structure

Table 13 displays the structure of each of the interventions. The six interventions outlined in this review varied in length from 15 minutes to 2 hours. Two of the interventions (S4LT, Davidson & Randhawa, 2020; and SSE, Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015) were incorporated into daily routines. Intervention programmes ran from between 4 weeks to 6 months and session frequency varied from once a week to daily intervention at whole class, small group, and individual levels. Two studies adopted an approach which involved intervention at both the home and school level. The two studies which utilised a collaborative home/school approach (Davidson & Randhawa, 2020; Lee & Pring, 2016) reported large effect sizes and were rated as displaying medium quality. None of the six studies provided any follow-up data.

Two of the six studies incorporated the use of sign language in their interventions. One found large significant effects on expressive and receptive language skills (S4LT; Davidson & Randhawa, 2020) while the other reported no significant effect on expressive or receptive language skills (SSE; Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015). While the two interventions appeared similar, both incorporating the intervention into daily routines at a whole class level, with data collected over a six-month period, Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015) themselves raised questions concerning the validity and replicability of their intervention.

Marshall and Hobsbaum's (2015) study included a school which had already adopted a sign-assisted English approach at a class level where teachers incorporated BSL signs into their daily interactions. However, none of the staff in the intervention group had attended BSL classes with a qualified teacher. Instead, they learnt their signs from another colleague who had taught herself via online videos. Further, staff in the intervention group reported that their limited knowledge of BSL impacted how they communicated with the children in their class. Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015) also reported that the staff in the comparison group used rich spontaneous co-speech gestures which were used almost twice as often as gestures used by teachers in the intervention group.

In contrast, Davidson and Randhawa (2020) provided a training session for each of the settings involved, where staff were able to familiarise themselves with the S4LT books, learn the signs and practice these with one another. Further, there was an opportunity for parents to attend a S4LT session with their children where they learnt the signs and stories. They were also given a pack including 2 stories and 2 dolls to use at home with their children. Davidson and Randhawa's (2020) study included data from eight EY settings whereas Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015) compared one intervention school and one school that acted as a control. Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015) themselves highlighted this relatively small population as a limitation of their study.

Of the six interventions used in the papers included in this review, two were interventions at the whole school/policy level, two were group interventions and two utilised a mixture of individual and group aspects. All interventions targeted aspects of OL development. All six interventions included measures of expressive language skills. Three studies measured aspects of children's receptive language skills (Davidson & Randhawa, 2020; Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015; West et al., 2021) and two studies considered oral narrative skills (Dockrell et al., 2010; Lee & Pring, 2016).

1.6.5 Design

The studies varied in terms of the designs and measures used to explore the effectiveness of their respective interventions. Three studies used a between-subjects design comparing their intervention group with children in other treatment conditions or control groups. Both Lee and Pring (2016) and Marshall and

Hobsbaum (2015) used a between-subjects design with an intervention and a control group. Dockrell and colleagues (2010) compared their intervention with an alternative intervention and a control group. One study utilised a quasi-experimental design comparing their intervention group with a wait list control group (Murphy et al., 2019). Another study employed a cluster randomised control trial (West et al., 2021). Davidson & Randhawa's (2020) study did not use a comparison control group and utilised a within-subjects design testing the same children at the beginning and end of a six-month period.

Five studies maximised the validity of their findings by utilising a blind assessment procedure (Dockrell et al., 2010; Lee & Pring, 2106; Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015; Murphy et al., 2019; West et al., 2021). Internal validity was increased by studies which randomly assigned participants to the intervention/control groups. This was carried out by three of the six studies in this review (Lee & Pring, 2016; Murphy et al., 2019; West et al., 2021).

1.6.6 Outcomes and effectiveness

Expressive language skills

Huge effect sizes were found following the S4LT (Davidson & Randhawa, 2020) as determined by pre- and post-test comparisons of Speaking EY Outcomes and number of key words spoken. Large effect sizes were found for the development of expressive language skills following the Talk Boost (Lee & Pring, 2016) intervention evaluated by measures of conveying information and grammar.

Medium effect sizes were found in relation to expressive language skills following the Talking Time intervention (Dockrell et al., 2010). These were found through significant improvement on naming vocabulary and verbal comprehension measures.

NELI (West et al., 2021) reported statistically significant gains in expressive language skills. However, the effect sizes were both small. Ready to Read (Murphy et al., 2019) did not report any significant improvement in expressive language skills following their PD intervention.

Receptive language skills

Davidson and Randhawa (2020) reported significant improvements in receptive language with huge effect sizes following their S4LT intervention. These were determined through pre and post-test comparisons of EY listening and understanding outcomes in addition to a measure of key words understood.

West et al. (2021) also reported a significant effect of NELI on a measure of receptive vocabulary, although this was found to have a negligible effect size. Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015) found no significant improvement on measures of receptive vocabulary following their SSE intervention.

Oral Narrative skills

A medium effect size was found following the Talking Time (Dockrell et al., 2010) intervention as measured by sentence length. However, no significant effect was found following Talking Time with regard to the conveying information narrative measure. Further, Talk Boost (Lee & Pring, 2016) also reported no significant effect for the development of OL skills as determined by a grammar measure.

Episodic working memory

Episodic working memory, as measured by the Sentence Repetition Test (GAPS) was significantly improved following the Talking Time intervention (Dockrell et al., 2010) and produced a large effect size.

Phonological Awareness and Concepts About Print

Finally, Murphy et al. (2019) explored outcomes of phonological awareness and concepts about print following their PD intervention (Ready to Read). No significant improvements were found for these outcomes.

1.7 Summary of findings

The available literature relating to the study question ‘What is known about the effectiveness of interventions supporting the oral language of multilingual children in the early years?’ demonstrates mixed findings. A number of conclusions are drawn below.

Three studies reported a significant difference specifically for multilingual children following their OL intervention. Lee and Pring (2016) reported a significant difference

between multilingual children in the intervention group and monolingual controls suggesting a benefit of the Talk Boost intervention within this population. Specifically, there were significant improvements to multilingual children's expressive language skills. Dockrell et al. (2010) found a significant effect on vocabulary, oral comprehension and sentence repetition following the Talking Time intervention. No significant effects were found on multilingual children's narrative language skills following either Talking Time or the Talk Boost interventions. West and colleagues (2021) found that multilingual children benefited from their intervention to the same extent as their monolingual peers, with significant improvements found in the development of both expressive and receptive language skills, however effect sizes were small.

Both Marshall and Hobsbaum (2015) and Murphy et al. (2019) reported no significant differences between multilingual children in the intervention group and controls. Further, Murphy et al. (2019) found that multilingual children did not perform as well on their post-intervention vocabulary measure as monolingual children. Davidson and Randhawa (2020) also reported findings that multilingual children made less progress than their monolingual peers and multilingual boys made less progress than multilingual girls. This is perhaps unsurprising given research reporting the language gap between multilingual and monolingual children but further highlights the need for interventions that can support multilingual children with their early OL development. Additionally, this may highlight a further at-risk group (multilingual boys).

Large effect sizes were found in both Davidson and Randhawa's (2020) and Lee and Pring's (2016) studies. Both of which utilised a two-pronged design in which the intervention was carried out both at home and within the EY setting. Research suggests that in order to close the achievement gap evident in schools more than a high-quality school intervention is required (Hindin & Paratore, 2007). Provision must also address differences in access to support outside of school (Hindin & Paratore, 2007). However, if home-school interventions are to be considered as a potential way to support multilingual children's OL development, parent's proficiency in English and literacy ability will need to be taken into account. This is especially the case for interventions that include the use of story books (for example S4LT; Davidson & Randhawa, 2020). This may highlight an opportunity for improved

partnership working between home and school in addition to extra training for parents in order to develop their skills so that they are more able to extend their children's skills within the home context.

Despite three of the included studies having titles and aims related specifically to the multilingual population (Dockrell et al., 2010; Marshall & Hobsbaum, 2015; Murphy et al., 2019), only one study included an entirely multilingual population (Dockrell et al., 2010). For the other two studies the percentage of multilingual participants ranged from 29% to 63% and were not matched between intervention and control groups. This indicates further research is required to address the review question. The overall longer-term efficacy of OL interventions for multilingual children also requires further investigation. None of the six studies included provided follow-up data.

Further, this review highlighted a significant lack of UK based studies focused on the development of early OL skills in multilingual children. Considering the particular difficulties that have been highlighted in the areas of vocabulary knowledge and comprehension for multilingual children in the UK and the growing number of multilingual children that are taught in British schools, this is an area that should be explored in more depth within this specific context.

1.8 Limitations of review

It is acknowledged that there are a number of limitations to this review. First, the inclusion criteria and search terms were devised independently by a sole researcher. Thesauri were used to identify all synonyms of the search criteria and a structure outlined by Boland, Cherry and Dickinson (2017) was followed to provide transparency in the research process. Nevertheless, multiple reviewers were not used and thus the review remains subject to bias due to the interpretations of a single researcher. Further, the attribution of the weight of evidence judgements are open to interpretation. Although the criteria used aimed to provide transparency, specifically the combination of two quality assessment tools, ultimately the judgements made remain subjective.

A further limitation concerns the variability of the studies included in the review. Although strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied in this systematic literature review in an attempt to increase homogeneity for comparison, the final six

studies differed considerably. Varying sized participant samples were selected and a range of measures were used to determine the effectiveness of intervention on aspects of OL. This made comparison of the quantitative findings difficult.

The studies included in the review were drawn from articles published within the study time frame (i.e. from 2008 to late 2021). Unpublished articles were excluded. Rosenthal (1979) suggests that studies reporting significant results are more likely to result in publication than those that do not. This is termed the ‘file drawer problem’ and therefore the present review may be biased based on only published articles (Petticrew, 2015).

1.9 Conclusions and recommendations for future practice

Due to the wide variation in effect sizes found in this review, and the challenges comparing studies which differ so vastly in their designs and measures, it is difficult to provide precise implications for practice. The findings of this review highlight a need for further research in this area. They also provide tentative evidence to suggest that early intervention can have a positive effect on some aspects of expressive and receptive language skills in both monolingual and multilingual populations. Further, large effect sizes have been found when interventions are employed more than once a week or incorporated consistently into daily routines. The largest effect sizes were found in two studies which utilised a joint approach to intervention, developing OL skills both at home and in the educational setting.

Qualitative studies were not included in this review as the aim of the review focused on investigating the effectiveness of OL interventions. Research into the views and experiences of EY staff working with multilingual children may give further insight into what works in practice for the development of OL skills in this population.

Chapter 2. A critical reflection of research methodology and ethical considerations.

Abstract

This chapter aims to reconcile the systematic literature review and the empirical paper, providing a rationale for the empirical research and an explanation regarding how the research emerged and evolved from the systematic literature review process. It explores my motivations behind why I chose this area of research and considers the methodological decisions I made throughout the research process. It addresses the ontological and epistemological perspectives that guided research decisions. It also problematises and rationalises the use of a mixed methods design to explore teacher efficacy, drawing upon both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The decision to use closed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in my research is also explored and justified. Finally, I outline my rationale to use a reflexive inductive thematic analysis to analyse my qualitative research data and the ethical considerations underpinning this decision.

2.1 Link between systematic literature review and bridging document

2.1.1 Language enrichment interventions

Children's oral language (OL) skills can be supported through language enrichment interventions in various forms (Quigley et al., 2022). This may involve working directly with the child to change their language behaviours (i.e. child focused approaches), or working to change the context in which the child's behaviour takes place (i.e. environment-focused approaches) (Pickstone et al., 2009). While child-focused approaches typically emphasise the active engagement of children in their own learning (Wallach, 2014), environment-focused approaches focus on changing the behaviours of parents, teachers and educational support staff and the resources available to the child (Pickstone et al., 2009). The latter acknowledges the importance of mediated interactions between children and more knowledgeable conversational partners as essential language development mechanisms (Quigley et al., 2022; Tomasello, 2005). It is suggested that for maximal impact on children's OL

development, the collaborative interaction between both child- and environment-focused approaches are required (Quigley et al., 2022). Moreover, it is suggested that early childhood educators are ideally placed agents for supporting OL development due to their regular contact, strong relationships, in-depth knowledge of their pupils and the potential to integrate language enrichment interventions into educational objectives (Glover et al., 2015; Squires et al., 2013).

2.1.2 Research-to-practice gap.

Evidence-based practices often fail to be successfully implemented in applied settings such as schools (Clayback et al., 2022). This is often referred to as the research-to-practice gap. Increasingly, research has focused on understanding implementation processes and identifying strategies that help transfer research findings into applied settings (Powell et al., 2012).

Evidence-based interventions only lead to benefits for children and young people (CYP) through the extent to which they are implemented as planned (Gresham, 1989, 2009). Implementation fidelity refers to the degree to which an intervention is implemented as intended (Elliott & Mihalic, 2004). Positive outcomes increase when effective interventions are implemented with higher fidelity (Hamre et al., 2010; Pas & Bradshaw, 2012). Increasingly, teaching staff are the primary implementers responsible for providing evidence-based interventions to students (Clayback et al., 2022; Forman et al., 2009). Yet, research suggests that educators face barriers such as lack of resources, competing priorities, and lack of support from school leadership which may impede their ability to effectively implement evidence-based practices (Forman et al., 2009; Han & Weiss, 2005; Kincaid et al., 2007). These implementation challenges can significantly reduce the likelihood of producing desired intervention outcomes, and result in the depletion of school resources without realising the expected intervention benefits (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Forman et al., 2013; Noell, 2014; Sanetti & Kratochwill, 2009).

Domitrovich et al. (2008) proposed a three-level conceptual framework outlining the factors that influence the implementation fidelity of school-based interventions. In this framework, the macro level includes Government and authority policies that impact individual schools. The micro level refers to factors relating to the school and

classroom setting, including school climate, funding, and leadership. The individual level includes factors relating to the member of staff implementing the intervention, including background, role, efficacy and beliefs about the intervention itself. Han and Weiss (2005) suggest that teaching staff, as implementers, ultimately decide whether and how well to deliver interventions. While this may be considered a reductionist view - failing to acknowledge the wider social and political context within which teachers must make such decisions - it highlights the potential for teachers to become malleable targets to improve intervention adoption, implementation and eventual outcomes (Owens et al., 2014).

2.2 Philosophical Assumptions

A research paradigm is a philosophical framework constituting four categories of interrelated views that underpin conceptions of knowledge and knowing. These categories are *ontology* – one's understanding of the nature of reality, *epistemology* – understanding of the nature of knowledge, *methodology* – one's approach to the construction of knowledge; and *axiology* – the influences of values (Haigh et al., 2019). A coherent set of views in relation to these four philosophical considerations constitutes a paradigm position (Haigh et al., 2019).

2.2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

The epistemology and ontology adopted by a researcher reflects their view of the world (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Grix, 2002). This in turn influences the methodology and research methods implemented within empirical research. Ontology refers to the study of being (Crotty, 1998). Ontological assumptions are concerned with the nature of existence and what constitutes reality (Crotty, 1998; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Epistemology refers to the nature and forms of knowledge, in other words *what is* (Cohen et al., 2007). Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated, in other words *what it means to know* (Scotland, 2012).

Ontological and epistemological deliberations are crucial considerations in research due to their implications for the possibilities and limits of the research methods, techniques and analyses that researchers can employ (Edwards et al., 2014).

2.2.2 Methodology and Axiology

A researcher's chosen methodology derives from their ontological and epistemological assumptions (Grix, 2002). While epistemology is concerned with the question of *what* knowledge is, methodology asks *how* knowledge can be acquired (Aliyu et al., 2015). Methodology refers to the ways in which knowledge can be discovered (Killam, 2013) and the variety of methods that can be used in research (Aliyu et al., 2015).

Axiology addresses questions related to what is valued and considered to be desirable or 'good' for humans and society (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016). A researcher's axiological stance refers to their beliefs, values and what they consider to be ethical (Killam, 2013). These beliefs are embedded within research paradigms and guide the researcher's decision making.

2.3 Critical Realism

Critical realism (CR) is a relatively new paradigm position. It originated as a scientific alternative to positivism and constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), and represents a combination of views that contrast with those more traditional positions (Bhaskar, 2013; Dannermark et al., 2002; Sayer, 2010). CR claims to merge and resolve "ontological realism, epistemological relativism, and judgemental rationality" (Bhaskar, 1998, p. xi).

CR is based on the assumptions that there is an (objective) world and therefore some truth does exist, but its reality is complex, numerous, and constructed (Edwards et al., 2014; Robson, 2011; Scott, 2014). It recognises the value to scientific explanations of the objective world whilst accepting subjective interpretations which influence the ways in which it is perceived and experienced (Edwards et al., 2014). This double recognition is relatively novel in social science research (Edwards et al., 2014), rejecting the previously accepted dichotomy between objectivist (positivist) and subjectivist (social constructionist) approaches.

2.3.1 Ontology/Epistemology

CR contains ontological assumptions across three domains: the empirical, the actual and the real (Fletcher, 2017; Haigh et al., 2019). The empirical domain refers to aspects of reality that exist and can be observed or experienced, the actual refers to aspects of reality that exist but may not be observed or experienced, and the real refers to the structures and mechanisms that cause or influence the events that are observed or experienced.

Within positivist research, causes are sought within the domain of the actual (Fryer, 2020). In contrast, the constructivist paradigm recognises that causes do not exist within the domain of the actual but denies that the domain of the real exists (Fryer, 2020). CR, however, draws on elements from both methodological strains in its account of ontology and epistemology (Fletcher, 2017). As Willig (2013, p.11) describes CR "combines the realist ambition to gain a better understanding of what is 'really' going on in the world, with the acknowledgement that the data the researcher gathers may not provide direct access to this reality".

2.3.2 Methodology

In comparison to the philosophical constraints of positivism and constructivism, CR supports a wide range of research methods (Sayer, 1992). The layered nature of reality accepted within CR means that multiple disciplines and methodological approaches may be required to understand the relationships across each level (Haigh et al., 2019). Therefore, it is suggested that critical realists are pragmatic in their approach to methodology and methods, choosing a research design that is fit for purpose (Sayer, 1992).

As both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are valued within CR research, Sayer (2010; 1992) maintains that the choice of research methods should be based on the focus of the study and what is hoped to be learned. It is argued that CR, through its encompassing ontology, bridges the dichotomy often associated with intensive (qualitative) and extensive (quantitative) approaches, allowing CR research to draw attention to new ways to approach research and produce knowledge that would not be arrived at using the traditional philosophical frameworks (Bergin et al., 2008; Bhaskar, 1998; Sayer, 1992). Moreover, CR suggests that both quantitative

and qualitative approaches are important to use in a single research project in order to fully explore and understand the structures and mechanisms of what can be observed and experienced (Haigh, 2019). Dannermark et al. (2002), refer to the combination of intensive and extensive research practices as *critical methodological pluralism*.

2.4 Mixed Methods

This research adopts a critical realist stance. Through this research I have attempted to explore OL teaching and teacher efficacy in multilingual classrooms through both quantitative and qualitative means. In accordance with the CR perspective, findings are not presented as absolute truth, but rather are a reflection of the researchers' own interpretation of the data. Within CR, the researcher does not present a concrete reality, rather they seek to interpret the data and construct meaning to generate further knowledge (Willig, 2013).

This research project utilised a two-phase explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell et al., 2011). Literature has referred to mixed method research as a third paradigm in research design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007), suggesting that the approach provides a pragmatic medium between quantitative and qualitative paradigms. It is proposed that research using a mixed methods approach allows for triangulation and completeness, providing a pragmatic approach to the exploration of complex research questions (Driscoll et al., 2007; McKim, 2017; Robson, 2011). Through the use of a mixed methods design, criticisms levelled at the separate individual approaches are buffered, and the validity and reliability of findings are increased (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Furthermore, the approach enables researchers to explore any contradictions between quantitative and qualitative findings resulting in a deeper, broader understanding of the phenomenon studied (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Within this research, the adoption of a mixed methods methodology enabled me to gather data that robustly addressed the research aims. Through the use of closed questionnaires, I collected quantitative data pertaining to the efficacy beliefs of Early Years (EY) staff in relation to their ability to facilitate OL skills and support multilingual children. This data was then used to examine associations between

components of staff efficacy and participant characteristics. The collection of this data also allowed me to identify participants for Phase two of the research study where qualitative research approaches enabled me to generate meaning and obtain thick descriptions of individual experiences (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Willig, 2013).

2.5 Method

2.5.1 Phase 1 - Questionnaires

The questionnaires aimed to ascertain participants' efficacy beliefs related to the teaching of OL skills and their ability to teach multilingual children in their classes. Adapted versions of the 12-item Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) were utilised to collect these (See Appendix 1-2). The wording and language were amended to ensure it was appropriate for a UK context and the content of some questions were adapted to relate them to OL or multilingual populations where relevant.

I chose to create online questionnaires using Google Forms to increase accessibility and ease of response as I am aware that staff working in childcare and education settings are under significant time pressures. It was also hoped that this would yield a higher response rate. The questionnaires were piloted with a group of 18 participants who had experience working with children and young people in a range of settings. This was to check that the revised wording of the questionnaires and the online platform were accessible.

Following minor revisions, the questionnaires were published and made available to staff working with children aged 0-5 years. Much of the literature exploring teacher efficacy focuses on teachers, and research exploring the beliefs of support staff is difficult to find (Higgins & Gulliford, 2014). Therefore, it was important to include all staff working within EY in the current study. The questionnaires explored a number of key areas outlined in Table 14 and displayed fully in Appendix 3.

A reflection of how the interpretation of the quantitative data aligned with a critical realist ontology is provided in Chapter 4.

Area	Information collected
Demographic Information	First language Other languages spoken Qualifications
Role within Early Years	Job title Number of years experience in current role Age group worked with
Multilingual experience	Experience working with a multilingual child? Number of multilingual children worked with in last year Self-rated experience working with multilingual children
Multilingual Training	Received training related to working with multilingual children? Perceptions of training
Efficacy Beliefs	Efficacy beliefs relating to the development of oral language Efficacy beliefs working with multilingual children

Table 14: Key areas explored in questionnaires.

2.5.2 Phase 2 – Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore EY staffs' views about 'what works' when developing early language skills in monolingual and multilingual populations and how able they feel to carry this out. Semi-structured interviews enable the collection of rich, in-depth information about participants' experiences and perspectives (Clarke & Braun, 2013). As with Phase 1, the decision was made to include all members of EY staff (rather than just teachers).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen rather than focus groups due to the potential for sensitive information to be shared. It was felt that in interviews participants may feel more able to be open, honest and vulnerable sharing their perspectives, particularly those with lower efficacy beliefs. In a focus group, participants' may have felt less able to share that they have lower confidence when working with multilingual children for example, and this could have affected the data that was collected.

Recruiting participants for this phase of the research was more challenging than expected, especially given the number of participants that indicated their interest

following Phase 1 (40.5%). It had been my intention to recruit an equal number of participants from the categories 'None', 'Low', 'Medium', and 'High' experience working with multilingual children. However, I needed to be flexible with these expectations as many of the participants from Phase 1 who had indicated that they would be willing to be interviewed either withdrew participation or did not respond when approached.

A funnelling technique was utilised to design the schedule for the semi-structured interview (see Appendix 4). Through this approach the questions progressively narrow from broad to more specific questions relating to the research questions and aims (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). This allows rich data to be gathered and encourages participants to feel more able to open up when discussing sensitive issues (Ogden & Cornwell, 2010; Terry & Hayfield, 2021).

2.6 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was utilised to analyse the qualitative data collected in my empirical study. TA acknowledges that individuals construct meaning linked to their experience and social context, while accepting that there is no single reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It aids to unpick the surface of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and is underpinned by critical realist principles (Clarke & Braun, 2013). After considering a range of different qualitative approaches to analysis, I deemed that Reflexive TA would be most suited to my research question, aims and philosophical stance.

Reflexive TA offers a flexible method for data analysis that can provide rich and detailed accounts of individuals' perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Central to Reflexive TA is the notion of reflexivity and the importance of the researcher's interpretation of the data (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). In contrast to methods that create objective distance between the researcher and the data due to concerns of bias, within reflexive TA analysis occurs *because of* rather than despite the researcher's subjectivity. Thus, it acknowledges the researcher's values, backgrounds, decisions, and interests (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). This was deemed a crucial feature when considering which method to use due to my prior role as an EY practitioner. Reflexive TA acknowledges the role of the researcher in the co-construction and interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Richards, 2020; Terry & Hayfield,

2021; Terry et al., 2017). In accordance with this co-construction, an inductive approach to analysis was used, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step process. This allowed for a bottom-up, data-driven approach to analysis in which themes emerged from the data rather than existing literature and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Tables showing the themes, sub-themes and related codes can be found in Appendix 5.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The interaction between researcher and participant should be an ethical exchange, rather than simply an extraction of information (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2017). Terry and Hayfield (2021) highlight the importance of high-quality data generation needing to be interwoven with strong ethical philosophy, where informed consent, confidentiality, power and minimising harm are considered and mitigated (British Psychological British Psychological Society, 2021). These procedural ethical issues (Creswell, 2009; Willig, 2013), in addition to those required by the University's Board of Ethics are addressed by Table 15. The research was given full ethical approval by the Newcastle University Ethics Committee and BPS ethical guidelines were followed.

Principle	Consideration
Informed Consent	*Informed consent was gained during both phases of the study. Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining what each phase of the study entailed (Appendix 6). Participants indicated their consent online via a checkbox item at the beginning of the questionnaires and verbal consent was gained at the beginning of the interviews. It is suggested that entirely informed consent is impossible to gain due to the participants having no prior knowledge of the direction of the discussion, interview questions, or expectation to disclose personal information (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). In an attempt to be as transparent as possible and navigate this critique, I provided participants with an outline of potential interview questions and topics. This aligns with the co-construction of*

	data in reflexive thematic analysis (Terry & Hayfield, 2021) and relational ethics which argue that we should conduct research with people as opposed to on them (McMullen, 2018).
Deception	*No deception took place, and the project's full intentions were fully stated on all paperwork (see Appendices 6-8).*
Right to Withdraw	*I reminded participants at the beginning of each phase of their right to withdraw and their right to decline to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with. This was also stated on all paperwork (see Appendices 6-8) (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001) propose that a researcher must remain attentive to the ongoing ethical dimensions intrinsic to the research process. In recognition of this, I regularly checked in with participants and remained vigilant to any verbal or non-verbal signals of discomfort or suggestions they wished to discontinue.*
Debriefing	*Participants were re-informed about the full aims of the research following both phases of data collection through a debriefing document (see Appendix 8). At the end of interviews participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions about the research, their data or subsequent publications that may arise.*
Confidentiality	*Questionnaire responses collected were unidentifiable unless participants chose to include their email for the purposes of contact for participation in Phase 2. These details were kept securely and seperately from questionnaire responses and deleted following recruitment completion. No identifiable information was collected from participants during Phase 2. Whilst participants could be identified by their voice on the audio recordings, these were stored securely and destroyed once anonymised transcription was completed.*
Power	*When planning my research, I was mindful of potential power dynamics. Participants were aware of my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and it was possible that this could contribute to a power imbalance and their perception of*

	me as researcher, thus shaping the data that was collected (Gunasekara, 2007). It was important to reduce perceptions of a power imbalance where possible as this can impact on the authenticity of responses if participants provide responses that they think the researcher wants to hear, introducing bias and affecting the validity of the data collected. In consideration of this, I was mindful to use accessible language and established rapport by engaging in informal discussion prior to the interview. It is my belief that this was further supported through transparency and the sharing of my prior role as an Early Years practitioner. This created the role of a partial insider researcher, the implications of which are explored further in Chapter 4. Literature warns of the ethical tensions that can arise if rapport leads the interview in a therapeutic direction, and the skill required to establish clear boundaries (Birch & Miller, 2002). Further, I remained conscious of the risk of rapport being that participants may disclose intimate experiences or personal feelings which they may, on reflection, have preferred to keep private (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). I endeavoured to create a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere within the interviews and took the stance of an active listener, being mindful not to misuse my perceived power to further my own agenda (Kvale, 2021). I let the discussion be led by participants and where necessary steered the interview in directions relevant to the research questions if the conversation direction was wandering.

Table 15: Procedural ethical considerations.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has provided me with an opportunity to begin to reconcile the SLR with the empirical project. I have critically explored how my philosophical stance has informed the decision-making that has shaped the empirical project's focus, methodology, design, data collection methods and analysis. I have also considered

the ethical implications of my decisions and how I have aimed to mitigate these in line with the university and BPS's ethical guidelines.

Chapter 3: “It’s all about narrowing the gap, isn’t it?” What does practice tell us about how Early Years professionals can effectively support the early oral language development of multilingual learners?

Abstract

Background: Literature suggests that multilingual children are frequently taught in classrooms with staff who feel ill-prepared and without the acquired skills related to multilingual pedagogy (Tran, 2014).

Aims: The current study aimed to explore Early Years (EY) staff’s efficacy beliefs regarding multilingual pedagogy. Further, it aimed to explore the experiences of staff to consider successful approaches to facilitate early oral language (OL) skills.

Sample: Staff working with children aged 0-5 years across the United Kingdom participated. 210 participants were included in the analysis for Phase 1. Six participants contributed to Phase 2.

Methods: A two-phase sequential mixed methods design was utilised. Two questionnaires were developed to assess staff’s efficacy beliefs supporting multilingual OL skills. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted and analysed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis.

Results: Factor analysis indicated that staff’s OL and multilingual language efficacy (MLE) beliefs were best represented by two factors: ‘Personal Efficacy’ and ‘General Efficacy’ which corresponded to previous findings. Interview data revealed consistencies between successful monolingual and multilingual pedagogical approaches. Multilingual children specifically benefit from safe methods of communication within an inclusive environment that encourage the development of their first language. Staff who espoused high MLE credited this to experiences of success, and assistance from team members and supporting agencies.

Conclusions: This study adds weight to the importance of understanding staff’s efficacy beliefs regarding multilingual populations. EY staff espoused lower self-

efficacy when considering their ability to meet the needs of multilingual children. The need to empower EY staff in this area is emphasised.

Key Words: Efficacy, oral language, multilingual, early years, education

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines key theories within existing literature regarding the importance of interactions for learning and the influence of teacher-efficacy on these interactions.

3.1.1 Teacher-child interactions

Vygotsky's (1978) social-cultural view of development posits that learning occurs during interaction and participation. Children learn via interactions with more experienced others, such as adults or more knowledgable peers (Kane et al., 2023). The social-interactionist approach to language learning applies this perspective, suggesting that verbal interactions with more experienced conversation partners are critical in supporting language development in EY (Bruner, 1966). Through these meaningful interactions, children have the opportunity to hear language modelled and practice using language in different contexts (Nicholas & Lightbown, 2008).

A growing body of research links children's acquisition of language to the language input a child receives from caregiving adults (Cabell et al., 2011; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Neugebauer et al., 2020). The literature demonstrates that children learn various OL skills, including expressive and receptive language skills, through interactions with caregiving adults, including EY staff (Zimmerman et al., 2009). In EY education settings, the teacher (a more knowledgeable other) mediates learning by scaffolding the child's learning of specific language within their zone of proximal development (Ellis, 2012; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978).

Despite the recognised importance of quality interactions within EY environments, research exploring how EY staffs contribute to multilingual children's language skills remains limited (Kane et al., 2023). To date, much of the literature on early language development in EY classrooms has focused on monolingual English-speaking populations, and inconsistently on children from low-income households (Hadley et al., 2022; Justice et al., 2018). This limitation is notable given that multilingualism is often paired with low socioeconomic status (Langeloo et al., 2019; Veenstra & Kuyper, 2004).

Recent research with dual language learners is promising however, noting that the quality of teachers' language predicted gains in receptive and expressive vocabulary

(Kane et al., 2023). Further, Leseman and Slot (2014) suggest that high-quality teacher-child interactions have the ability to reduce the gap in language development between monolingual and multilingual children.

Thus, the suggestion that teacher interactions may differ between multilingual and monolingual learners is concerning. Langeloo et al. (2020) suggest that multilingual children are exposed to interactions of lower quality, complexity and diversity compared with their monolingual peers. Langeloo et al. (2019) suggest that potential differences in teacher-child interactions between monolingual and multilingual children may be explained by teacher expectation. Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007) found that teachers tended to have more positive expectations of children from ethnic majorities rather than children from ethnic minorities. Further, it is suggested that teachers may engage in interactions of lower complexity with multilingual children from low socioeconomic backgrounds due to their perceived lower language skill levels (Keels & Raver, 2009; Ready & Wright, 2011). From a social-interactionist perspective, this may impact on the quality of language that children are exposed to. For example, research in classrooms with monolingual children from low-income backgrounds have found limited use of language practices associated with high quality language environments (Dickinson et al., 2008; Gest et al., 2006). Rather, the most common types of talk were giving directions and requesting one- or two-word responses from children (Gest et al., 2006; Wasik et al., 2006). Furthermore, research suggests that types of teacher talk typically associated with high quality language environments may not occur at an optimal level by teachers in EY environments, particularly those which are under-resourced and serving linguistically diverse communities (Buysse et al., 2010; Jacoby & Lesaux, 2014; Sonnenschein et al., 2013).

3.1.2 Teacher's efficacy beliefs

Teachers' beliefs serve as cognitive filters that screen their experiences and thus shape their thoughts and actions (Hoy et al., 2009). From a language ecology perspective, the classroom represents "a key site where policies become action" (Hult, 2014, p. 159), and teachers, through their pedagogical decisions based on their beliefs, are at the metaphorical heart of language policy implementation

(Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Menken & García, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Because teachers' beliefs are such a strong predictor of what occurs in the classroom, researchers in the field argue that insight into teachers' beliefs is necessary to understand and improve language teaching and students' learning (Borg, 2015). Further, research on intervention implementation fidelity suggests that teacher attitudes and beliefs, such as enthusiasm, self-efficacy and beliefs about evidence-based practices are critical to successful implementation (Forman et al., 2009; McGoey et al., 2014; Rohrbach et al., 1993).

At the most proximal level, teachers hold beliefs about themselves – who they are in relation to their curriculum, colleagues, and students; their perceived strengths and weaknesses; values; self-efficacy; and things about which they feel responsible (Summers et al., 2017). Teachers' beliefs form a subjective reality in the classroom; what they believe is experienced as real and true (Davis & Andrzejewski, 2009). Their beliefs guide their decision-making, behaviour, and interactions with students and, in turn, create an objective reality in the classroom, what students experience as real and true (Summers et al., 2017).

Several qualitative studies of teacher beliefs have demonstrated how teachers enact their beliefs during their individual interactions with students (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999; Bolshakova et al., 2011; Milner & Hoy, 2003; Zohar et al., 2001).Teachers frequently report drawing on their beliefs about students' ability and their personal capability to meet students' relational needs when determining how to respond to student interactions. These beliefs, in turn, predict differential outcomes.

In recent years, research has shown increasing interest in educators' dilemma of finding themselves in linguistically diverse classrooms, which are historically perceived monolingual spaces in many nations (Lundberg, 2019). Yet, given the important role of the teacher in promoting learners' multilingualism, research focused on teachers' knowledge and beliefs about multilingualism and multilingual pedagogical approaches is surprisingly scarce (Harrison & Lakin, 2018; Haukås, 2016). Moreover, Langeloo et al. (2019) suggest that teacher-child interactions are the most important factor that determines the quality of early-childhood education. It is crucial, therefore, to understand more about how to support EY staff to engage in

high-quality interactions with all children, but especially those from multilingual backgrounds.

3.1.3 Summary

There is emerging literature exploring the influence of teachers' knowledge and beliefs on the quality and complexity of their interactions with multilingual students. However, more research is needed focusing on the beliefs EY staff hold about multilingual children and what adaptions to practice (if any) are required to narrow the existing language gap between monolingual and multilingual learners. The current study aims to address this gap in literature through the research question: 'What does practice tell us about how early years professionals can effectively support the early oral language development of monolingual and multilingual learners?'. The purpose of this study is threefold, as outlined in Table 16.

1.	To explore the structure of early years staffs' efficacy beliefs when facilitating oral language skills for monolingual and multilingual learners.
2.	To explore the experiences of early years staff to consider what they believe supports the development of early oral language skills for monolingual and multilingual populations.
3.	To explore the beliefs of early years staff with a range of experience working with multilingual children to consider what supports multilingual self-efficacy beliefs in practice.

Table 16: Research Aims

3.2 Method

A two-phase explanatory sequential design (Creswell et al., 2011) was utilised using first quantitative then qualitative methods. First, two questionnaires were developed and piloted to ascertain EY staff's efficacy beliefs when furthering OL development and working with children from linguistic backgrounds other than English (Phase 1). Subsequently, semi-structured interviews with six EY staff with various experience working with multilingual children were conducted (Phase 2). Figure 2 below displays an outline of the research process.

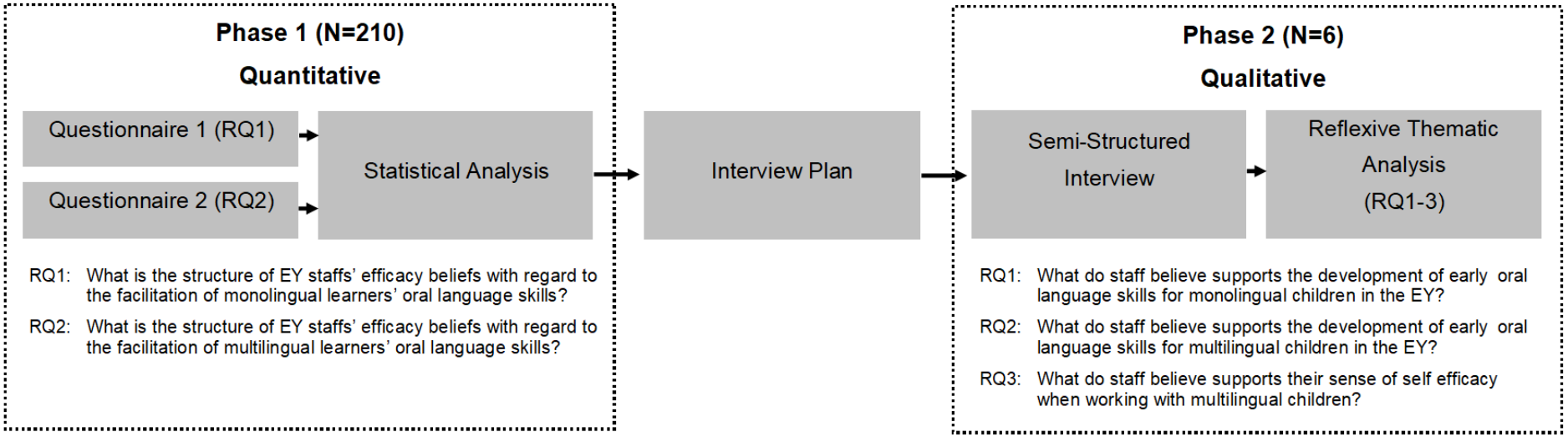


Figure 2: Outline of two-phase explanatory sequential design and Research Questions (RQs) within each Phase.

3.3 Phase 1

3.3.1 Method

Measures

The online questionnaires were created using the online platform Google Forms. An adapted version of Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES short form) was utilised to gain individual staff members' sense of efficacy. This measure was adapted for a UK context with items relating to the development of OL (oral language efficacy, OLE) and supporting multilingual children (multilingual language efficacy, MLE). For each questionnaire participants were asked to show the extent to which they agreed with 12 statements using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Several items were reverse scored to increase validity.

Procedure

A pilot trial of the questionnaires was conducted with a group of 18 participants who had previously worked with children in a range of settings. Minor revisions were made, as required. Following this, a snowball data collection technique was utilised, where the research poster was shared online along with a link to the questionnaires. This research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and full ethical approval was granted from Newcastle University Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (BPS, 2018, 2021). At each stage, participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the expectations of their contribution to the research and assurance that their participation was entirely voluntary and could be withdrawn at any point up to the point of analysis.

Participants

The aim was to include EY staff from across the UK in order to gather data from a wide range of settings with various experience of multilingual cohorts. In total, 222 participants completed the online questionnaires. 12 were currently working outside of the UK and were therefore excluded from analysis, leaving 210 participants. The demographic information of these participants can be found in Tables 17-18.

The majority of participants spoke English as their first language (n=196). Greek, Polish, French, German, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Sinhalese, Slovak and Swedish were also identified as participants' first languages. 155 participants spoke English alone, while 55 participants reported speaking a range of languages in addition to their first language.

Participants possessed a number of roles within EY education working with children aged 0-5 years. 124 participants (59%) had Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Participants' tenure in their current role ranged from less than a year, to over 20 years.

		Number of participants (%)
QTS	Yes	116 (55.2%)
	No	94 (44.8%)
Job Role	Teacher	89 (42.4%)
	Early Years Practitioner	61 (29.0%)
	Nursery Manager	16 (7.6%)
	Teaching Assistant	9 (4.3%)
	EYFS Lead	7 (3.3%)
	SENDCo	5 (2.4%)
	Childminder	3 (1.4%)
	Headteacher	3 (1.4%)
	HLTA	3 (1.4%)
	Deputy Manager	2 (1.0%)
	Room Leader	2 (1.0%)
	Specialist Teacher	2 (1.0%)
	Early Years Assistant	1 (0.5%)
	Early Years Outreach Worker	1 (0.5%)
	Family Worker	1 (0.5%)
	Inclusion Practitioner	1 (0.5%)
	Learning Support Assistant	1 (0.5%)
	Nursery Nurse	1 (0.5%)
	Quality Officer	1 (0.5%)
Years in Current Role	Less than 1 year	17 (8.1%)
	1-5 years	74 (35.2%)
	5-10 years	42 (20.0%)
	10-15 years	34 (16.2%)
	15-20 years	20 (9.5%)
	20+ years	23 (11.0%)

Table 17: Participant Role Demographics

		Number of participants (%)
Age Group *(Participants could select as many options as was applicable).*	0-1 years	28 (6.9%)
	1-2 years	32 (7.9%)
	2-3 years	81 (20.0%)
	3-4 years	140 (34.6%)
	4-5 years	124 (30.6%)
Have you worked with a child who is identified as EAL?	Yes	193 (91.9%)
	No	17 (8.1%)
How many EAL children have you worked with in the last year?	None	26 (12.4%)
	1-2 children	40 (19.0%)
	2-5 children	54 (25.7%)
	5-10 children	34 (16.2%)
	10-20 children	22 (10.5%)
	20-30 children	12 (5.7%)
	30+ children	22 (10.5%)
How would you categorise your experience working with EAL children?	High	68 (32.4%)
	Medium	86 (41.0%)
	Low	48 (22.9%)
	None	8 (3.8%)

Table 18: Participants' Cohort Demographics

3.3.2 Results

222 of each questionnaire were returned. Twelve were excluded from further analysis due to the participants working outside of the UK, thus not meeting the inclusion criteria for this study. This left the results from 210 participant questionnaires.

In order to examine the underlying structure of the beliefs expressed by EY staff in this study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out using the data from each of the two measures. For responses to the *EY Staff's Sense of Oral Language*

Efficacy (OLE) questionnaire preliminary tests indicated the data were suitable for EFA (Keyser-Meyer-Olkin, KMO = .837). The questionnaire showed strong internal consistency (α = .82). Factors were extracted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and a varimax rotation was applied to clarify the relationship among factors. Inspection of the scree plot confirmed that a two-factor solution be requested. This two-factor solution is presented in Table 19. These two factors accounted for 52.7% of the variance. The factors have been labelled *Personal Efficacy* and *General Efficacy*[5]*.* Although as can be seen in Table 20 there were some significant cross-loadings (Stevens (2002) suggests that loadings less than .3 may be discounted), this solution was retained for discussion.

Participants' total responses to the items in each of the two scales were converted to proportions of their maximum (since the scales were not the same length) and a one-way within subjects ANOVA was performed to explore differences between staff efficacy ratings within each factor. This analysis indicated a significant main effect of factor ($F = 87.65$, $p < .001$). Pairwise comparisons suggested that staff had a significantly more positive belief in their personal OLE compared with general OLE beliefs.

	Personal Efficacy	**General Efficacy**
I am able to adapt what I do based on ongoing assessment of children in my class.	.789	
There is a great deal I can do to model effective oral language approaches in my classroom.	.772	
I can use a variety of strategies to assess the oral language skills of children in my class.	.758	
I am able to effectively support children in my class with their oral language skills.	.740	

[5] Ashton and Webb (1982) identified two dimensions of teacher efficacy: general, the extent to which a teacher believes their students can learn material, and personal, the extent to which a teacher believes students can learn under his or her instruction.

There is a great deal I can do to help children to achieve their early years speaking/listening objectives.	.739	
There is a great deal I can do to create a language rich environment in my classroom.	.718	
There is a great deal I can do to implement alternative oral language approaches in my classroom.	.596	.408
I am able to use children's oral language mistakes as an opportunity to help them improve their oral language.	.539	
It is difficult to provide alternative explanations/examples for children who experience difficulties with their oral language.		.738
There is little that can be done to assist families to help their children develop their oral language.		.719
The amount a child can learn is primary related to family background.		.668
There is little that can be done to meet the needs of children who struggle with oral language skills.	.319	.454
Initial solution	Eigenvalue	Cum% variance
Factor 1	4.71	39.22
Factor 2	1.61	52.65

Table 19: Factor loadings of items in the staff's sense of oral language efficacy scale (loadings <.30 not shown).

For responses to the *EY's Staff's Sense of Multilingual Language Efficacy (MLE)* questionnaire preliminary tests again indicated suitability for EFA (KMO = .788) and good internal consistency (α = .78). Factors were again extracted using PCA and a varimax rotation was applied. Initial inspection of the scree plot suggested that a three-factor solution could be appropriate. However, for comparison a two-factor solution was requested. This was deemed appropriate as the two-factor solution still accounted for 49.36% of the variation. These measures were also labelled *Personal* and *General Efficacy* (See Table 20).

	Personal Efficacy	General Efficacy
I have the knowledge/abilities required to support EAL children's language learning.	.843	
My experience working with EAL children has given me the necessary skills to be effective helping children with EAL.	.800	
If a child with EAL is having difficulty in the EYFS curriculum, I am able to adjust my support to enable their understanding.	.775	
My teacher training program/Early Years qualifications have given me the necessary skills to be effective helping EAL children.	.660	
When the achievement of EAL children in my setting improves, it is because I found more effective teaching approaches.	.594	
I am limited to how I can support EAL children compared with English speaking children.	.529	.479
Even a skilled practitioner would not be able to make a vast difference to the language learning of EAL children.		.744
Early Years staff can do little to help EAL children's language development because of the other barriers to learning that EAL children experience.		.722
What happens in class has little influence on EAL children's language learning compared to the influence of their home environment.		.627
If parents did more to support the language learning of their EAL children, then I could do more.		.598
EAL children would benefit from grouping according to their language needs.		.521
If an EAL child masters a new concept quickly, it has little to do with the help given in class.		.473

Initial Solution	Eigenvalue	Cum% variance
Factor 1	3.98	33.2
Factor 2	1.94	49.36

Table 20: Factor loadings of items in the staff's sense of multilingual language efficacy scale (loadings <.30 not shown).

A one-way ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of 'factor' ($F = 24.72$, $p < .001$). Pairwise comparisons suggested that staff had a significantly more positive belief with regard to general MLE than in their own personal MLE. A summary of the relevant means and standard deviations for both efficacy scales are displayed in Table 21.

Measure	**Factor**	**Mean**	**SD**
Oral Language Efficacy (OLE)	Personal Efficacy	52.40	5.94
	General Efficacy	47.23	7.68
Multilingual Language Efficacy (MLE)	Personal Efficacy	44.40	8.49
	General Efficacy	47.53	7.09

Table 21: Means and standard deviations of individual staff's efficacy subscales.

Finally, a series of MANOVAs were performed in order to make comparisons across subgroups. Pairwise comparisons (with Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons) found a significant difference between QTS and personal OLE (See Table 22) with participants with QTS reporting significantly higher personal OLE than participants without QTS ($F = 5.94$, $p = .016$). There were no significant differences found for 'number of years in current role' and measures of personal or general efficacy for either measure.

Oral Language Efficacy (OLE) Components	**Factor**	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**

Personal Efficacy	QTS	53.29*	5.30	116
	No QTS	51.30*	6.51	94
General Efficacy	QTS	47.92	7.88	116
	No QTS	46.37	7.38	94

* sig difference at .05 level.

Table 22: General and Personal Oral Langauge Efficacy beliefs for participants with and without qualified teacher status (QTS).

Participants with training specific to multilingual populations had statistically significant differences in their personal MLE ($F = 34.60$, $p < .001$) and general MLE beliefs ($F = 6.80$, $p = .010$) (See Table 23). Participants with experience working in multilingual settings reported significantly higher personal MLE than those without experience ($F = 5.63$, $p = .019$) (See Table 24). A significant difference was also found between level of multilingual experience and personal MLE ($F = 30.50$, $p < .001$) with participants with higher levels of experience reporting higher personal MLE beliefs (See Table 25). Participants with a greater number of multilingual children in their classrooms displayed increased personal MLE than those with fewer multilingual children ($F = 7.50$, $p < .001$) (See Table 26).

Multilingual Language Efficacy (MLE) Components	**Factor**	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**
Personal Efficacy	'EAL' Training	44.91**	8.10	111
	No 'EAL' Training	43.77**	8.97	99
General Efficacy	'EAL' Training	48.48*	6.70	111
	No 'EAL' Training	46.36*	7.41	99

* sig difference at .05 level

** sig difference at <.001 level

Table 23: General and Personal Multilingual Language Efficacy beliefs for participants with and without multilingual training.

Multilingual Language Efficacy (MLE) Components	**Factor**	Mean	SD	N
Personal Efficacy	Multilingual Experience	44.81**	8.41	193
	No Multilingual Experience	39.76**	8.33	17
General Efficacy	Multilingual Experience	47.69	7.24	193
	No Multilingual Experience	45.76	4.89	17

** sig difference at <.001 level

Table 24: General and Personal Multilingual Language Efficacy beliefs for participants with and without multilingual experience.

Multilingual Language Efficacy (MLE) Components	**Self-Reported Multilingual Experience**	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**
Personal Efficacy	High	49.97**	6.03	68
	Medium	44.16**	6.76	86
	Low	38.83**	8.58	48
	None	33.00**	9.74	8
General Efficacy	High	48.85	7.09	68
	Medium	47.07	7.58	86
	Low	47.29	6.21	48
	None	42.75	4.27	8

** sig difference at <.001 level

Table 25: General and Personal Multilingual Language Efficacy beliefs for participants with regard to their self-reported multilingual experience.

Multilingual Language Efficacy (MLE) Components	Number of Multilingual Children in Class	Mean	SD	N
Personal Efficacy	0 children	38.3**	9.24	26
	1-2 children	41.00**	8.53	40
	2-5 children	45.15**	7.97	54
	5-10 children	44.53**	7.34	34
	10-20 children	47.27**	7.87	22
	20-30 children	47.83**	4.78	12
	30+ children	51.00**	5.72	22
General Efficacy	0 children	47.31	6.57	26
	1-2 children	47.65	6.44	40
	2-5 children	45.89	7.77	54
	5-10 children	49.29	6.73	34
	10-20 children	47.27	9.21	22
	20-30 children	46.17	5.62	12
	30+ children	49.91	7.09	22

** sig difference at <.001 level

Table 26: General and Personal Multilingual Language Efficacy beliefs for participants with regard to the number of multilingual children in their class.

3.3.3 Discussion

Phase 1 results are briefly discussed here before a more in-depth discussion of the study's findings as a whole are presented at the end of this chapter.

Self-efficacy is commonly understood as domain- and context-specific; individuals can have different levels of self-efficacy beliefs in different domains or particular situations (Bandura, 1977; Velthuis et al., 2014). The findings in this study indicate that while participants have faith generally in the ability of EY staff to support multilingual children (general MLE), they lack personal confidence in their own abilities in this area (personal MLE). While participants' general efficacy was comparable between measures of OLE and MLE, participants felt much more

positively about their personal abilities to support OL skills. It is possible that the categorising of multilingual children (or 'EAL children' as they are termed within EYFS and DfE practice guidelines) may adversely affect staffs' beliefs and behaviours through encouraging within-child deficit notions of children's difficulties (Ho, 2004; Mehan, 2014).

There was a significant biserial association between personal OLE beliefs and QTS amongst staff. This suggests that teacher training supported staff's beliefs in their own abilities to support early OL skills. This is consistent with research suggesting that teachers' efficacy beliefs are enhanced following training (Fortman & Pontius, 2000; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). Further, participants who had received training specific to working with multilingual children espoused higher personal MLE than those who had not. This is consistent with Tucker et al.'s (2005) research suggesting that training teaching staff to work with culturally diverse populations resulted in higher self-efficacy.

Finally, participants with more experience working with multilingual children espoused significantly higher personal MLE. This is consistent with Bandura's (1977) notion of mastery experience, which is defined as a situation in which individuals feel they have demonstrated mastery in completing a task. Also referred to as performance accomplishments, mastery experiences are considered to be the most powerful sources of teacher self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Mulholland & Wallace, 2001; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) since they are based on actual classroom teaching performances (Bautista, 2011).

3.3.4 Summary

Findings indicate that staff feel more personally efficacious supporting general OL skills in their classrooms than the language skills of multilingual children. With the increase in refugee children attending British schools, staff in historically monolingual schools are increasingly finding themselves with multilingual children in their classrooms. Therefore, understanding the perceived differences between the provision required to support multilingual and monolingual children and how to support staff to feel more efficacious in enacting this is crucial. This provides the basis for Phase 2 of this study.

3.4 Phase 2

3.4.1 Method

Measures

The semi-structured interview schedule was designed using a funnelling technique, starting with broad questions to explore the participants' descriptive experience and progressively narrowing to more specific questions pertaining to the research questions and aims (See Appendix 4; Terry & Hayfield, 2021). The interviews were designed to build on findings from both the systematic literature review and the quantitative data, exploring staffs' views of OL interventions, multilingual pedagogy, and the extent to which they believe they are able to meet the OL needs of multilingual children.

Procedure

The semi-structured interviews took place between July and October 2022. Interviews were conducted over the video-conferencing platform Zoom at a pre-arranged time considered convenient for participants. Participants who volunteered to take part in Phase 2 were provided with a written information sheet in addition to a verbal discussion where they gave their informed consent to the audio recording of interviews. The average duration of the discussions was 52 minutes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and consisted of approximately 40,500 words.

Participants

In Phase 1, 85 participants (40.5%) indicated that they would be willing to be approached for Phase 2. These participants were approached via email and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Purposeful sampling was utilised to identify participants with a range of experience working in multilingual EY settings. Two participants were selected from each of the self-reported experience categories (None, Low, Medium, High). Attempts were made to limit skews towards any one demographic. Two participants withdrew from the study during Phase 2. While attempts were made to replace these participants, due to boundaries on time, the decision was made to progress to analysis with six participants. Participant characteristics are detailed in Table 27.

3.4.2 Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using inductive Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) (See Chapter 2). Semantic and latent coding was utilised as a way of seeking meaning across the entirety of the data set rather than searching for pre-existing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). It was recognised that the researcher would play an active role in the interpretation of the data (Willig, 2013). Table 28 outlines the process followed (Campbell et al., 2021, p. 2014):

						Oral Language Efficacy (OLE)		Multilingual Language Efficacy (MLE)	
Participant	**Role**	**Years in Role**	**Age Group**	**Multilingual Experience**	**Multilingual Cohort 2021-22**	**Personal Efficacy**	**General Efficacy**	**Personal Efficacy**	**General Efficacy**
1	Teaching Assistant	1-5 years	4-5 years	None	None	59	48	28	44
2	Teacher	1-5 years	3-5 years	None	None	56	48	16	38
3	Teacher	1-5 years	4-5 years	Low	1-2 children	51	36	26	50
4	Teacher	5-10 years	3-4 years	High	30+ children	48	45	42	48
5	Teacher	10-15 years	4-5 years	High	10-20 children	59	57	54	60
6	Early Years Practitioner	10-15 years	2-4 years	Low	1-2 children	47	39	40	48

Table 27: Phase 2 Participant Information

Analytic Phase	Description	Actions
1. *Data familiarisation*	Immersing oneself in the data to understand depth and breadth of the content. Searching for patterns and meaning begins.	Transcribing audio data. Reading and re-reading data set. Note taking.
2. *Initial code generation*	Generating of initial codes to organise the data, with full and equal attention given to each data item.	Labelling and organising data items into meaningful groups.
3. *Generating (initial) themes*	Sorting of codes into initial themes. Identifying meaning of and relationships between initial codes.	Diagramming or mapping. Writing themes and their defining properties.
4. *Theme review*	Identifying coherent patterns at the level of the coded data. Reviewing entire data set as a whole.	Ensuring there is enough data to support a theme. Collapsing overlapping themes. Re-working and refining codes and themes.
5. *Theme defining and naming*	Identifying the story of each of the identified themes. Fitting the broader story of the data set to respond to the research questions.	Cycling between the data and the identified themes in order to organise the story.
6. *Report production*	Presenting of a concise and interesting account of the story told by the data, both within and across themes.	Writing a compelling argument that addresses the research questions. Writing beyond the simple description of the themes.

Adapted from (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Table 28: Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Campbell et al., 2021, p. 2014).

3.4.3 Results

Research aims 2 and 3 (see Table 29) were addressed using semi-structured interviews with six participants. Analysis was conducted across the whole data set.

The analysis of the interview transcriptions provided rich insight into EY staffs' experiences and beliefs. However, due to space constraints, only the results belonging to the themes most closely linked to the research questions will be presented here.

Aim 2: To explore the experiences of early years staff to consider what they believe supports the development of early oral language skills for monolingual and multilingual learners.	
Q1.	*What do staff believe supports the development of oral language skills for monolingual children in Early Years?*
Q2.	*What do staff believe supports the development of oral language skills for multilingual children in Early Years?*
Aim 3: To explore the beliefs of early years staff with a range of experience working with multilingual children to consider what supports multilingual self-efficacy beliefs in practice.	
Q3.	*What do staff believe supports their sense of self-efficacy when working with multilingual children*?

Table 29: Research Aims

Reflexive TA led to five themes being identified in relation to Question 1. These are outlined in Table 30.

Q1 Themes from Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Theme	Theme Name
1.	*"I just hate taking children out of provision to do things that you can do when you're in provision 'cos a lot of it is, you can build their language whilst you're playing and working alongside them".* – **Quality First Teaching**
2.	*"She takes them out and you're supposed to do a group a week, but we don't always get the chance to do that, again, staffing int it?"*

	– **Targeted intervention: what works and what needs to change?**
3.	*"When the parents are on board with you…you can accomplish anything can't you?"* – **Effective partnerships between home and school.**
4.	*"It's just an overall wellbeing and confidence and togetherness of the group. That they feel safe, in a safe environment to be able to talk."* – **A safe space for interaction**.
5.	*"It helps for all the children. They all look, they all respond. It's very, very useful for every child".* – **Use of non-verbal communication and gesture.**

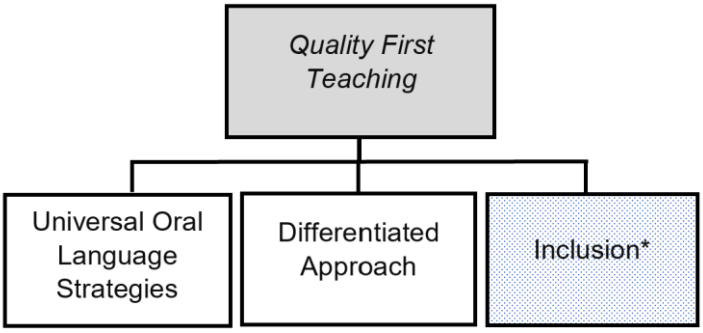
Table 30: Q1. What do staff believe supports the development of oral language skills for children in Early Years?

These five themes, with the addition of a further three themes were found in relation to Q2. Due to this overlap, this section will first outline the five themes common to both Q1 and Q2, with additional subthemes related to multilingual populations highlighted. Then, the three additional themes related to Q2 will be discussed.

Quality First Teaching

Sub-themes that were grouped as Quality First Teaching[6] were drawn from codes that referred to the use of universal OL strategies and the differentiation and personalisation of curriculum to meet the needs of individuals. An additional subtheme, Inclusion, was found in relation to working with multilingual children.

[6] High-quality teaching, more commonly referred to as Quality First Teaching (Dann, 2016; Macleod et al., 2015; Shain, 2016; Watt, 2016) is commonly cited in research into effective classroom practice.



*Subtheme emerged from reflexive TA of Q2.

Figure 3: Thematic Map for Quality First Teaching

Universal OL strategies

Participants spoke of the importance of staff modelling language within provision. Participants commented on the need to be present in provision and providing opportunities for children to talk.

P5: *"This is where I think that teachers get mixed up, they think a language-rich environment is sticking labels on and that is your language rich environment. Actually, your language-rich environment is what's coming out of your mouth! And how much you're talking to them, and how much you're expanding that. And how much you're modelling to them."*

Differentiated Approach

This sub-theme relates to comments indicating the importance of child-led topics to increase children's motivation for language learning.

P6: *"…He was really motivated to learn more about them and talk about superheroes and firefighters… he was more motivated to pick up language because he needed to use that in his play."*

Participants also referred to the importance of differentiating approaches, so they were suitable for individual children's needs.

> P4: "Y*ou just kind of know what level to pitch something at just to add that little bit… to build that language."*

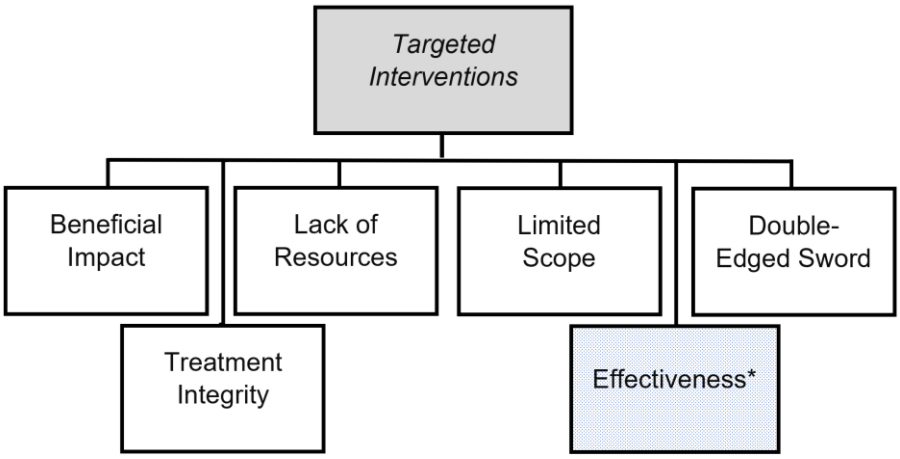
Inclusion*

In relation to multilingual children, participants spoke of the importance of making children feel welcome and included within the class. They also referred to the importance of "representation" and children feeling that their language and culture was valued.

> P1: *"We need to meet these kids needs and even if we can just say a friendly hello in their language, it's better than nothing."*

Targeted Interventions

This theme derived from data referring to the use of targeted interventions to support children with their OL skills. While participants did refer to the positive impact of interventions in some cases, many described these benefits as being offset by factors such as lack of resources and limited group sizes.



*Subtheme emerged from reflexive TA of RQ2.

Figure 4: Thematic Map for Targeted Interventions

Beneficial Impact

This sub-theme related to the positive impact participants experienced resulting from OL interventions.

P1: *"I remember doing the assessment in the end and then looking at the before and afters and thinking 'wow, this has hugely changed them'"*

Treatment Integrity

This sub-theme related to the tendency to deviate from the evidence-base when delivering targeted interventions. Participants spoke about managing to deliver small group sessions but the required whole-class sessions being neglected due to competing pressures to deliver curriculum.

P2: *"We've done NELI now for 2 years, we've never completed it, cos it's really, really time consuming,"*

Lack of Resources

Participants spoke of the barriers to implementing interventions as intended by the evidence-base. These barriers included time, staff capacity and lack of funding.

P1: *"To be honest I think we would have done it with another 5 if we'd had the time and then the resources and the staffing"*

Limited Scope

This sub-theme referred to the impact of interventions and the limited group sizes that benefited from them. Participants spoke of the imbalance between the time, money and resources spent on interventions for the relatively small number of children who benefited from them.

P2: *"But it just runs with four children which is a shame it's not larger"*

Double-Edged Sword

The concept of interventions as a 'double-edged sword' emerged in the data. This subtheme derived from data referring to weighing up the benefit of intervention against the potential negative impact of taking children away from provision and their peers.

P1: "*It was in the afternoons that the children had more time to do that free-flow playing and building those relationships so… interventions are great but they always pull them out of something else that then has an impact,"*

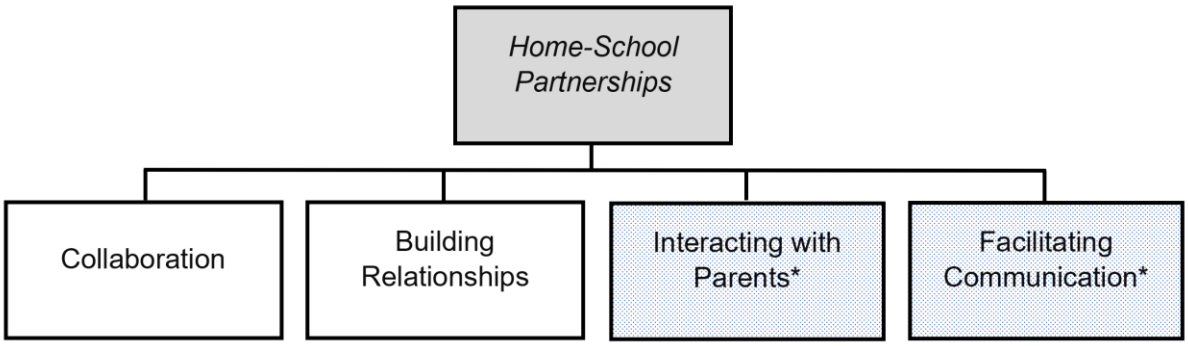
Effectiveness*

In relation to the use of targeted interventions with multilingual children an additional subtheme emerged in the data. This sub-theme was related to questioning the evidence-base and effectiveness of popular OL interventions for multilingual children.

P4: *"I'd be interested to know where they looked for the research to say this was effective… because it seems that something's gone array somewhere, they've not joined the dots up to see how effective it actually is, and for what particular kind of children it's effective for."*

Effective Home-School Partnerships

Sub-themes that were grouped as 'Home-School Partnerships' were drawn from codes that referred to collaboration and building relationships between staff and parents. Additional sub-themes emerged from the data in relation to multilingual families, namely the barriers experienced interacting with parents from multilingual families and ways to overcome these barriers to facilitate communication.



*Subtheme emerged from reflexive TA of Q2.

Figure 5: Thematic Map for Home-School Partnerships

Collaboration

Participants referred to the importance of working with parents to provide holistic support for children. Participants also spoke about giving parents the tools and opportunities to facilitate interactions at home to promote oracy.

P2: *"We find Tapestry is a useful tool as well cos how many times do you go 'what, what did you do today?' you know "nothing! … so that sort of helps, just with the oracy of the chatting at home too,"*

Building Relationships

This sub-theme related to the importance of spending time getting to know parents, understanding their needs and offering the support and reassurance they may require.

P5: *"It's being part of them, being part of their culture… understanding their needs"*

Interacting with Parents*

Participants referred to the difficulties navigating these interactions with multilingual parents due to barriers in understanding one another and differing cultural perspectives and expectations.

P4: *"It's difficult, because obviously if you want to tell them if their child's done something really good, or if the child's found something challenging, or they've done something that's not appropriate, it's really hard to get them to understand, what the issue is and then how to work together to resolve it."*

Facilitating Communication*

This sub-theme related to ways in which participants facilitated communication with multilingual parents. This included the use of multilingual staff and translators.

P4: *"That was so helpful because she was the go between. And I think it made them feel better, because if they were not sure of something…they could just ask her".*

Safe Space for Interactions

This theme was developed from sub-themes emphasising the importance of nurturing environments where children were given the time and space to develop their OL skills.

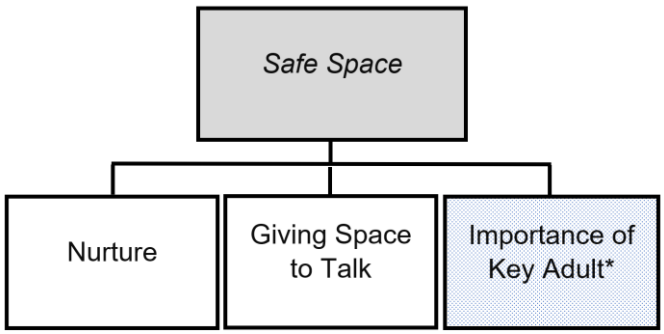


Figure 6: Thematic Map for Safe Space

Nurture

This sub-theme refers to the importance of small nurturing groups to foster children's confidence and ability to express themselves verbally.

P1: *"A lot of it is about confidence building… it's not perhaps that they don't have the ability to speak and communicate, but they just don't have that confidence to do it in front of the class"*

Giving Space to Talk

This sub-theme relates to the importance of giving space for children to talk. Participants commented on learning to allow space for children to express themselves rather than "jumping in" and trying to speak for them.

P1: *"…I never left those gaps for them to talk…and I've learnt to give, just that space for them to say something"*

Participants also highlighted the importance of this with multilingual children where children may be going through a "silent phase".

P4: *"And giving them time, because obviously, if they're learning English as an additional language they go through that silent phase."*

Importance of Key Adult*

In relation to working with multilingual children, the importance of a key adults was commented on by participants. One participant referred to this as "the number one priority".

P1: *"I think there'd have to be a lot of building relationships with those children much more than the other children to help them feel safe, and feel nurtured… having that key person, that they could feel safe with"*

Non-Verbal Communication

Sub-themes that were grouped as part of 'Non-Verbal Communication' included codes referring to the non-verbal communication strategies participants used with children to develop their communication skills. These strategies included the use of signing, gesture and body language.

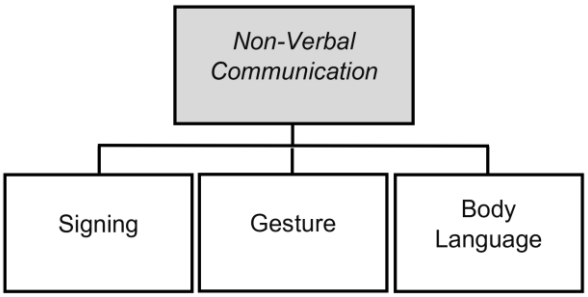


Figure 7: Thematic Map for Non-Verbal Communication

Signing

Participants referred to the beneficial use of both Makaton[7] and British Sign Language (BSL) to support children's speech.

> P6: *"They all look, they all respond. It's very, very useful, for every child."*

Gesture

This sub-theme related to the participants' use of gesture and action to support early OL skills.

> P1: *"And also there's the visual representation, there's the actions so hopefully all that would help… [so] they could hook onto the English language easier"*

[7] Makaton was devised in 1972 for adults and children who have communication and/or learning difficulties. It combines three principles; sign, symbol and speech in the aim of supporting everyday communication (Mistry & Barnes, 2013)

Body Language

This sub-theme referred to the use of facial expressions and body language when communicating with children in EY. Participants commented on the importance of this when reassuring children who struggled to understand them verbally.

P1: *"There's so many other ways we communicate as opposed to words isn't there, through gesture and tone, facial expressions, body language…"*

In relation to supporting multilingual children, non-verbal communication was part of a wider theme, 'Finding a Shared Communication Method' (see Table 31 below).

With regard to Q2 (What do staff believe supports the development of OL skills for multilingual children?), the five themes from Q1, with the addition of a further three themes were found.

Q2 Themes from Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Research Question	Theme	Theme Name
What supports monolingual and multilingual children's early oral language skills?	1.	*"I just hate taking children out of provision to do things that you can do when you're in provision 'cos a lot of it is, you can build their language whilst you're playing and working alongside them".* – **Quality First Teaching**
	2.	*"She takes them out and you're supposed to do a group a week, but we don't always get the chance to do that, again, staffing int it?"* – **Targeted intervention: what works and what needs to change?**
	3.	*"When the parents are on board with you…you can accomplish anything can't you?"*

		– **Effective partnerships between home and school.**
	4.	*"It's just an overall wellbeing and confidence and togetherness of the group. That they feel safe, in a safe environment to be able to talk."* – **A safe space for interaction**.
	5.	*"It helps for all the children. They all look, they all respond. It's very, very useful for every child".* – **Use of non-verbal communication and gesture.**
What additional support, specific to multilingual populations, furthers multilingual children's early oral language skills?	1.	***"**She's been able to reassure her in her mother tongue and just really tell her what is going on".* - **Finding a shared communication method.**
	2.	"*It's the language that they already know but you're just reinforcing that language but then giving them the English word to it as well*". **- Linking home and school languages within a linguistically inclusive environment.**
	3.	*I don't have a column that says 'my EAL planning'. My column would just say 'vocabulary for everybody', not particularly for EAL learners."* ***– The need for a multilingual-specific pedagogy?***

Table 31: Q2. What do staff believe supports the development of oral language skills for multilingual children in Early Years?

Shared Communication Method

This theme derived from data referring to the need to develop a shared communication method with children from linguistically diverse backgrounds. This included the use of non-verbal communication (as highlighted above) and the effectiveness of multilingual staff.

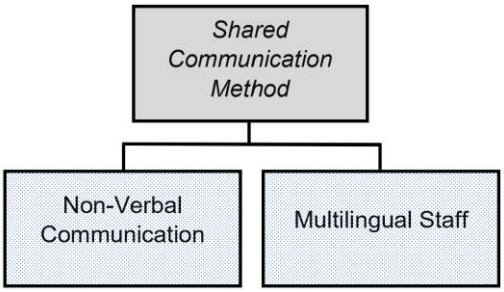


Figure 8: Thematic Map for Shared Communication Method

Multilingual Staff*

This sub-theme related to the benefit of having members of staff who speak the same language as multilingual children. Participants especially emphasised the support this provided during transition and reassuring children when they became upset.

P6: *"Our Chinese member of staff has been a God-send and that's something we wouldn't normally have… when the little girl has been upset, she's been able to reassure her in her mother tongue"*

Linking Languages within Inclusive Environment

Sub-themes grouped within this theme were developed from codes indicating that children benefited from an environment in which their home and school languages were included and incorporated.

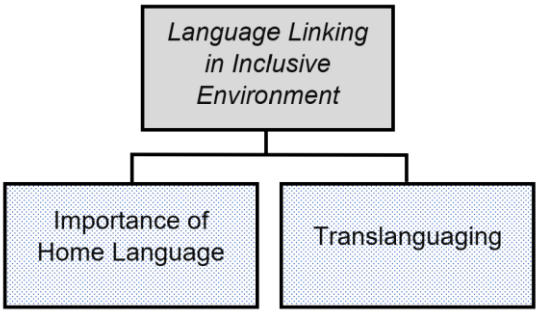


Figure 9: Thematic Map for Linking Languages within an Inclusive Environment

Importance of Home Language

This sub-theme highlights the importance of children continuing to develop their home language in addition to learning English at school. Participants alluded to this being integral to children's identity. Participants also commented on parents' desire for children to learn English in order to succeed within the English system.

> P4: *"Parents want them to speak English at school, and I'll say but it's important that the kids continue with their home language as well, because that's who they are."*

Translanguaging

This sub-theme was related to participants supporting children to make links between their home- and school-language.

> P5: *"I had a boy in my class who couldn't say toilet and he used to say in Arabic, "Alhamam! Alhamam!" so I went "toilet?" then he went "toilet" so next time a week later he came to me… "Miss! Toilet!" so it's gradually building it up…you're linking both languages together".*

Multilingual Specific Pedagogy

This theme encapsulated the dichotomy between participants feeling that a universal approach would be effective for multilingual children, utilising strategies that work for all children, and the feeling that participants were unable to meet the needs of multilingual children in their class to the same extent as monolingual children. The latter was only present in discussions from participants with low MLE.

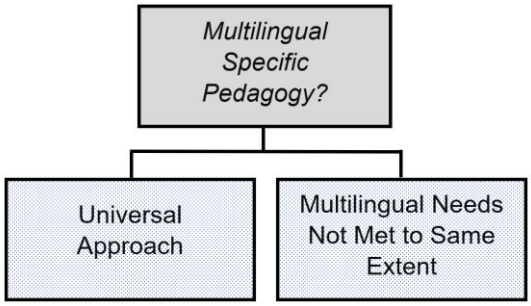


Figure 10: Thematic Map for Multilingual Specific Pedagogy

Universal Approach

This sub-theme derived from data suggesting that multilingual children did not require anything 'additional' with regards to supporting their OL skills, rather the strategies that work would support all children.

P5: *"I would not change my planning at all. I don't have a column that says 'my EAL planning'. My column would just say 'vocabulary for everybody', not particularly for EAL learners."*

Multilingual Needs Not Met to Same Extent

This sub-theme related to participants feeling that they were not equipped to meet the needs of multilingual children to the same extent as monolingual children. Comments in this subtheme were exclusively from participants with low or no experience working with multilingual children who also espoused low MLE. Staff expressed that they felt it was harder to meet the needs of multilingual children compared to their monolingual peers.

P3: "*I'd say I could meet their needs but not as well as like the other children."*

P6: *"Oh definitely not to the same extent. Absolutely not."*

Reflexive TA led to three themes being identified in relation to Q3. These are outlined in Table 32.

Q3 Themes from Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Theme	Theme Name
1.	*"When you get taught to teach you kind of get taught how to teach but you don't know how to do it until you do it."* – **Experiences of Success**
2.	*"I wish I had more time to just sit and shadow people".* ***- Learning from more Experienced Others***
3.	*"I think I would need to have a whole lot of training on it, because I would fear doing the wrong thing".* **– A Need for Tailored Training**

Table 32: Q3. What do staff believe supports their sense of self-efficacy when working with multilingual children?

Staff's sense of self-efficacy was supported by themes referring to experiences of success, learning from more experienced team members, and training tailored to meeting the needs of multilingual children.

Experiences of Success

This theme emerged from participants stating that they felt more confident in their abilities as a result of increased experience.

> P6: *"We're feeling quite positive about it, quite confident because we we've done the journey before… as time's gone on and we've had more isolated children with English as an additional language we have as a team become more confident."*

Learning from more Experienced Others

Participants commented on “pulling together as a team” to use the collective resources they possess to support multilingual children in their settings. Opportunities to learn from more experienced members of staff was also highlighted as important in developing their own skills. This can be linked to Bandura’s (1977) notion of vicarious efficacy.

> P1: *“How can we be ready for that, how can we as a school now taking in Ukrainian children, how can we learn from other schools, and how can we gather that experience and take from it?”.*

Training

This theme was developed from codes referring to the need for continued professional development and support from “specialist” services.

> P1: *“There’s so much I would need to learn about it… how, how do we support a child with English as an additional language, I genuinely don’t know what I would do or how I would approach that… if a child came into my class, I would be straight on to the headteacher “I need training, I need training”.”*

3.4.4 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study are presented in Figure 11 below. The OL skills of multilingual children are cultivated through developing shared communication methods within inclusive, multilingual classrooms. They are further supported (along with monolingual children) through Quality First Teaching in safe, accepting spaces which incorporate the use of non-verbal communication (including use of gesture and sign). This is consistent with findings from the SLR which highlighted the potential for sign language to be utilised effectively in EY classrooms to further OL skills. Finally, the importance of a school-wide culture promoting staff efficacy

beliefs[8] is displayed along with the importance of working in partnership with parents and outside agencies.

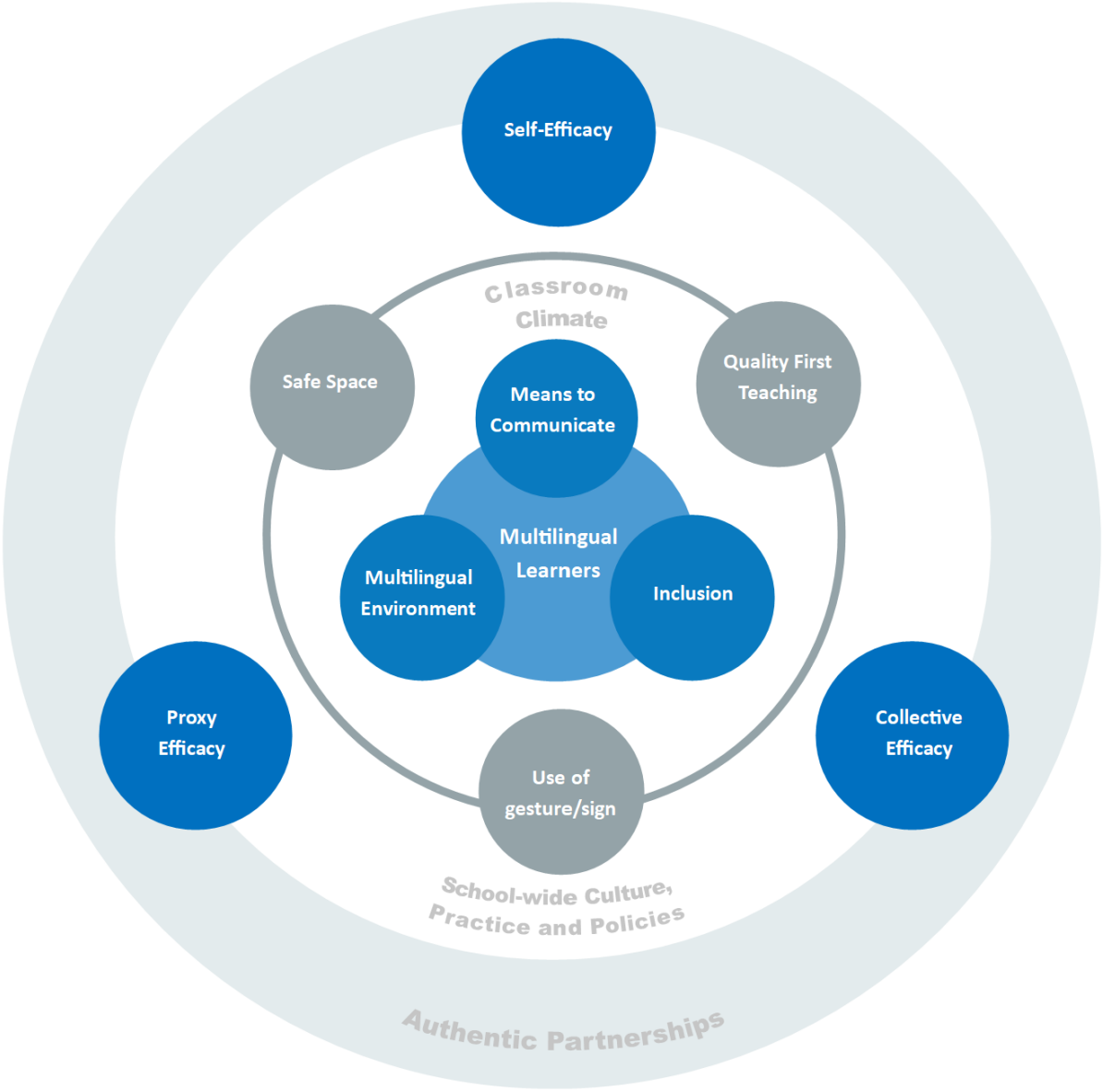


Figure 11: Factors that support the development of multilingual children's oral language skills in monolingual classrooms.

[8] During Phase 2 participant discussions touched on various aspects of efficacy, including collective and proxy efficacy beliefs. Due to the constraints of this thesis only subthemes related to self-efficacy beliefs were reported in line with the initial research aims.

3.4.5 Discussion

Literature suggests that multilingual children are predominantly taught in mainstream classrooms with staff who feel ill-prepared and without the acquired skills related to multilingual pedagogy (Tran, 2014). During Phase 1 103 participants (49%) stated that they had not received enough training to work with linguistically diverse students. Sood and Mistry (2011) note that school staff are aware of the differing needs of multilingual children but are unsure (due to limited resources) how to meet these needs effectively. This is consistent with the findings in the present study, where staff in predominantly monolingual settings espoused feelings of apprehension, unpreparedness, and 'fear of doing something wrong' when faced with the introduction of multilingual children in their settings.

Further, a lack of resources, funding and staff capacity were pertinent themes when considering whether OL interventions were effective *enough* for multilingual children to warrant their removal from classroom provision and their peers. This is consistent with literature that describes interventions as "merely a sticking plaster" (Copeland, 2019, p. 72) without the necessary foundation of high-quality teaching (Brooks, 2013). Findings from the systematic literature review (SLR) suggested that interventions were most effective when they were delivered consistently. Thus, it can be inferred that prior to the delivery of specific language interventions, EY staff should ensure that a strong foundation of high-quality OL teaching exists.

Based on this assertion, the findings from this study are discussed in relation to a tiered approach[9] to supporting early OL for multilingual children, with particular focus on wave one, universal strategies. The overarching research question for this empirical study posited ways in which EY professions can effectively support the early OL development of multilingual learners in order to 'narrow the gap' between these children and their monolingual peers. Thus, for brevity, discussion will focus on the multilingual-specific strategies highlighted throughout this study.

[9] Tiered approaches to support children's educational needs are well established (Dobinson & Dockrell, 2021). The approach is used within the UK education context to support effective provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND; DfE, 2015). Typically, where the previous tier of provision is not considered sufficient, the next tier of support is offered.

Wave One: Universal Strategies

The first tier of provision is offered universally and comprises high-quality, evidence-based, 'quality-first' teaching for all children in line with pedagogical approaches (Dobinson & Dockrell, 2021). Findings from this study suggest that a tiered approach to supporting multilingual children may be beneficial, with many participants citing universal language approaches as the first step in addressing developing OL skills regardless of linguistic background. This is in line with literature from The Centre for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE; Grant & Wong, 2003).

Research advocates that in order to access the curriculum and become secure and confident learners, multilingual children need to feel accepted for who they are regardless of race, religion or cultural background (DfES, 2006). The current study highlights the importance of safe inclusive environments for the development of early OL skills. Brooker (2020) describes 'safe spaces' for multilingual learners as environments where their learning experiences (from home, community and school contexts) are recognised and valued. Further, it is suggested that the key to providing safe spaces for multilingual learners is through the relationships between learners and their educators (Conteh & Brock, 2011; Cummins, 2001). This resonates with findings in the current study emphasising the importance of key adults.

Within the current study, the importance of providing inclusive multilingual environments, where the use of children's home languages is included and encouraged was highlighted. While some participants voiced concern that this would confuse children, others reiterated that a secure base in the home language would support the development of a new language (i.e., English). This is supported by literature, in which the weight of current research indicates that becoming proficient in more than one language is not only possible for young children but beneficial, with research suggesting that bilingual pre-schoolers display increased cognitive, linguistic and social-emotional advantages (Bialystok, 2008; Kuhl, 2009). Further, research proposes that young children can learn two languages as naturally as learning one (August & Shanahan, 2006; Castro et al., 2011; Genesee, 2010). Through the continuing development of children's home language, transferable skills are applied to new languages, strengthening multilingual children's understanding of language use (DCSF, 2007). Multilingual children mix, switch, translate and use

translanguaging strategies (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005) to communicate their meaning and perform their identities (Conteh & Brock, 2011). This is coherent with the current study in which participants voiced multilingual children should be encouraged to speak their home language because that's "*who they are*".

To support a translanguaging approach, participants in the current study particularly valued multilingual members of staff and their ability to switch between languages to provide both reassurance and language linking for multilingual children. Research has indicated that a more diverse workforce tends to have an increased understanding and awareness of the needs of diverse groups in comparison with homogeneous native groups (Coleman & Lumby, 2007). Moreover, monolingual staff working in schools with nondiverse cohorts, have been reported as being "afraid to have EAL children" in their class (Sood & Mistry, 2011, p. 212). This resonates with the current study in which staff working in predominantly monolingual settings voiced their apprehension and unpreparedness for supporting the needs of multilingual children in their settings. Further, those with limited multilingual experiences and low multilingual efficacy shared their belief that they could not support multilingual children to the same extent as monolingual children.

Wave Two: Targeted Intervention

As the effectiveness of OL interventions in practice were questioned (due to lack of resources), it is suggested that the incorporation of effective interventions at a whole class level be utilised. This has been found to be effective as shown by the findings in the SLR (E.g., Davidson & Randhawa, 2020). Consistent with the intervention proposed by Davidson and Randhawa (*Sign 4 Little Talkers,* 2020), the current study also supports the use of sign assisted speech to facilitate early OL skills. Cameron (2001, p. 36) states "if children do not understand the spoken language, they cannot learn it". With regard to language learning, Davies (2009) proposes that visuals provide contextual support that enables multilingual students to "make sense of new information and language…even when their knowledge of their target language is limited" (Davies, 2009, online). Participants in the current study suggested that the visual representation of Makaton signs supported multilingual children's understanding of English by alleviating some of the demands of oral speech. Walker

(1987) supports this notion suggesting that the use of sign language, and Makaton, provides children with an alternative to speech, thus reducing feelings of pressure. It is suggested that signing can provide a shared language for children who do not speak the majority language of instruction, allowing children to overcome the initial language barrier in order to communicate with staff and peers (Mistry & Barnes, 2013). Further it appears that Makaton can act as a low-risk method of communication that is accessible and easy to use successfully, increasing children's self-esteem and confidence (Mistry & Barnes, 2013).

Wave Three: Support from Outside Agencies

Finally, participants stressed the importance of seeking advice and support from outside agencies. During discussions, the notion of 'specialist' support was something that a number of participants alluded to requiring before feeling able to fully support a multilingual child. Participants espousing low MLE in this study more frequently commented on the importance of 'specialist' support for multilingual populations compared with participants espousing high MLE and multilingual experience. This is consistent with research indicating that category labels may influence the efficacy beliefs of teachers (Gibbs & Elliott, 2015; Klassen et al., 2011). Research conducted by Andrews (2009) stresses that it is the responsibility of *all* practitioners to support multilingual pedagogy and is not the remit of specialists alone. Thus, it is crucial that settings continue to challenge such a deficit model with regard to multilingual learners and increase staff's sense of self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs

In the current study, participants referred to prior experience (or lack thereof) as an influential contributor to self-efficacy beliefs. This is consistent with the previously noted assertion that mastery experiences serve as powerful sources of teacher self-efficacy (Bautista, 2011). However, it has been suggested that perception of an event (for example observing others modelling successful classroom practices) can be as significant as experiencing the event itself (Bandura, 1986). This is termed vicarious experience (Bautista, 2011). In the current study, participants with less multilingual experience voiced that they would benefit from shadowing opportunities

with more experienced members of staff. Further, it is suggested that this modelling can be effective in a variety of forms including actual modelling (observing other teachers within a classroom), symbolic modelling (watching effective classroom practices on television or other visual media), self-modelling (video recording their classroom practices and reflecting on their performances) and cognitive self-modelling (imagining themselves performing classroom practices successfully (Bandura, 1997)). This highlights a promising possibility for staff training opportunities in linguistically non-diverse settings, particularly in light of recent refugee arrivals.

As with Phase 1, training was deemed an important contributor to self-efficacy in Phase 2. The National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC, 2006) have questioned whether Initial Teacher Training (ITT) is specific enough to effectively support the language development of multilingual children (Sood & Mistry, 2011). During Phase 1 49% of participants stated that they did not feel they had received adequate training to meet the needs of multilingual children in their classrooms. In Phase 2, participants noted that multilingual pedagogy was provided as an afterthought to the rest of their ITT. Participants espousing low MLE particularly voiced their need for training in order to feel more knowledgeable and prepared to meet the needs of linguistically diverse cohorts. One participant however, (who espoused high MLE), noted the lack of multilingual training within UK ITT, but stressed that EY staff would feel more prepared if they were aware of the overlaps between multilingual and monolingual pedagogy. This further reiterates the importance of the findings in the current study in order to support EY staff to feel competent and confident in the linguistic needs of multilingual children and challenge the misconceptions surrounding their needs.

3.5 Strengths and Limitations

This study has contributed an original perspective to the literature by explicitly focusing on the views of EY staff working within the UK to consider what works to support OL development for the growing multilingual population. Additionally, it has explored how EY staff can be supported to develop their efficacy beliefs working in linguistically diverse classrooms.

The study's two-phased design provided an opportunity to gather data from a large number of participants whilst also offering an opportunity to explore the rich experiences of individuals. Data was collected from staff working in a number of different local authorities throughout the UK with participants working in a variety of roles with contrasting experience working in multilingual classrooms. With much of the literature focusing on teaching staff, this study provided a voice to all members of staff working within a range of EYFS settings.

As Phase 1 collected data through a self-report measure of efficacy beliefs, it is possible that some participants' responses could have been influenced by social desirability bias, even though the questionnaires were anonymous. Further, it is possible that staff with more experience and higher efficacy beliefs were more inclined to participate in this study resulting in a potential bias. This is possible as 73% of participants rated themselves as having 'High' and 'Medium' levels of experience working with multilingual children. To minimise bias in Phase 2, attempts were made to select participants from evenly distributed experience categories. However, due to the withdrawal of two participants categorised as having 'Medium' experience working with multilingual children, the population interviewed was more skewed towards those with 'Low' or 'No' experience working with multilingual children.

3.6 Implications for Practice and Further Research

As the impact of mass migration becomes more evident in British classrooms, research focusing on how best to support a growing multilingual population is of considerable value. Building staffs' sense of efficacy not only has positive implications for staff retention and wellbeing, but also students' levels of motivation, persistence and successful achievement (Bandura, 1995, 1997; Gibbs, 2003; Haworth, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). It is clear why teacher efficacy has been described as "a simple idea with significant implications" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783).

The findings from this study indicate that EY staff espouse a lower sense of self-efficacy when considering their personal ability to meet the needs of multilingual children. Interview data suggests that this is contributed to by lack of experience,

lack of training and fear of ‘doing something wrong’. However, findings from this study also indicate that there is no single strategy that supports multilingual children’s OL skills. Rather, multilingual children benefit from the amalgamation of a number of strategies which encourage them to make connections in their learning and broaden their understanding of the world (Mistry & Sood, 2020). There is particular emphasis on the importance of quality teaching regardless of the child’s language background. This aligns with previous literature highlighting the importance of practice constructed from a secure theoretical foundation of how children learn, develop and grow, regardless of whether they are multilingual or not (Mistry & Sood, 2020).

There are important implications for these findings when considering staff sense of efficacy. As discussed, the ‘othering’ of multilingual children can lead staff to feel that they are not adequately qualified to meet the ‘specialist’ needs of these children. However, this research has found that multilingual children’s OL skills are benefited from many of the same strategies used in EYFS classrooms to support the OL skills of monolingual children. Thus, EY staff already have many of the skills required to support multilingual children’s OL skills. As one participant stated, “*…They do have the training, secretly they do know because it would be how you interacted with any other child.”* This knowledge should empower EY staff from predominantly monolingual settings to feel more capable when faced with children from linguistically diverse backgrounds. With regards to more specific multilingual pedagogy, evidence suggests that vicarious experiences can support staff self-efficacy beliefs. Thus, training in this area should draw on the experiences of more knowledgable staff members or focus on best practice from other school settings.

Another pertinent finding is the importance of home-school partnerships. Educational Psychologists (EPs) are uniquely placed to support this role due to their knowledge of the education system, interpersonal skills and holistic approach (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009). Through application of their knowledge of different systems and how these impact on and interact with one another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), EPs recognise and appreciate the distinct expertise that individuals can bring to a situation (Wagner, 2017) and can facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration between schools using their skills in consultation.

This research focuses solely on EY, but future research should explore MLE beliefs and what supports OL skills with older children in classes where the curriculum demand is more intensive. Increasing pressures, competing priorities and tight resources management has led to a shift away from small-scale individual teacher change towards large-scale, whole school reform (Muijs, 2004; Lepkowska, 2008). With this in mind successful multilingual education practice may benefit from further research into developing staffs' sense of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1995; Haworth et al., 2015), in addition to whole-school inclusive multilingual pedagogy.

3.7 Conclusions

This study addresses a gap in the extant literature by exploring the beliefs and experiences of EY staff working with multilingual children to improve OL skills. It was found that monolingual and multilingual children's OL skills are developed through quality first teaching in safe environments which encourage non-verbal communication and value strong partnerships between home and school. Further, multilingual children require safe methods of communication within an inclusive environment that encourages the continued development of their first language. EY staff with low multilingual experience and efficacy espoused feelings of apprehension and unpreparedness when faced with the thought of multilingual children joining their setting. This was attributed to a lack of training, knowledge, and experience. Staff who espoused high MLE credited this to experiences of mastery, a supportive network and assistance from outside agencies.

Chapter 4: Reflective Synthesis

Abstract

This chapter aims to provide a critical synthesis of the thesis. I begin by discussing the position taken as researcher and the implications this had for methodological considerations and the knowledge produced. I then consider the personal and professional implications of the research and how this has influenced my thinking and practice as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). Research skills acquired through this process are also discussed. Finally, I explore the implications of the empirical knowledge and discuss how I plan to disseminate this research to a variety of audiences.

4.1 Reflexivity and Transparency in Research

Personal and epistemological reflexivity in research involves examining how a researcher's prior knowledge, experiences and values may have influenced the methods and interpretations made (Willig, 2013). Through reflexivity the researcher makes clear to the reader the ways in which guiding methodological decisions influenced the research methods, data analysis and knowledge produced. To support clarity in qualitative research, a transparency model is suggested whereby researchers consider three central reflexive questions for each stage of their research. These include 'what I did', 'how I did it', and 'why I did it' (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017, p. 130). Throughout each of the chapters in this thesis I have endeavoured to keep this framework in mind. In this chapter, I wish to further reflect on the position I adopted within the research and provide warrant to methodological decisions I made considering this.

4.1.1 Delving 'Behind' the Data: The Influence of a Critical Realist Ontology.

Critical realism's (CR's) stratified ontology provided a basis for this mixed methods research. As outlined in Chapter 2, ontologically CR acknowledges the existence of a stratified depth reality (Fletcher, 2017). This suggests that reality is experienced across three domains: the empirical, the actual and the real.

Through a stratified ontology, scientific knowledge is considered a process of discovering what lies underneath experienced events (Qu, 2022). This allows researchers to explore beyond what has been perceived at an experiential level (the empirical domain), in search of a deeper understanding of the causal mechanisms that exist within the real domain. This distinguishes CR from other research philosophies which adhere to a flat ontology such as positivism (Qu, 2022). A CR ontology allowed me to consider what was happening 'behind' the data found in the quantitative study (Phase 1) during the qualitative exploration in Phase 2.

In prior experiences of conducting quantitative research, I have assumed a positivist position with little criticality. This position proclaims that the researcher and researched are independent entities and advocates for the use of neutral and objective technical procedures to eliminate the potential dangers of bias (Smith et al., 2012). CR however, asserts that the knower and the known are interdependent and welded together in such a way that the knowledge produced is a creation of the interaction between the two (Smith et al., 2012). Further, it has been argued that even statistical analyses, which have long been upheld by many as the most objective tool at the researcher's disposal, are socially constructed within the context of value positions to accomplish specific goals (MacKenzie, 1981). Thus, within this research I approached the quantitative data from the perspective of realist ontology where the data is a form of evidence of events within the empirical domain (Hastings, 2021). The purpose of analysis was not to 'prove' causality, but to explore more complex and nuanced descriptive patterns within the data, that reflect the underlying reality of structures and mechanisms at play (Hastings, 2021).

4.1.2 On the Inside Looking In: My role as a Partial Insider Researcher

Insider research has been defined as the study of one's own social group (Naples, 2003). Chavez (2008, p. 475) defines insider positionally as "the aspects of an insider researcher's self or identity which is aligned or shared with participants". Insider researchers can be considered to be *total insiders,* who share multiple identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, class) or profound experiences (e.g. war) with the population they are studying, or *partial insiders*, who share a single identity with a degree of distance or detachment from the community (Chavez, 2008).

While the outsider perspective has been considered the optimal position in positivist literature, praised for its objective and accurate account of the field, Chavez (2008, p. 476) suggests that neither the insider nor the outsider has “a monopoly on advantage or objectivity”. Thus it is argued that the outsider-insider distinction is a false dichotomy as both outsider and insider researchers contend with similar methodological considerations surrounding positionality, the researcher’s identity and the knowledge they possess (Banks, 1998; Merton, 1972; Naples, 1996).

Within the present study I considered myself a partial insider researcher. Prior to the doctorate I worked as an Early Years Practitioner (EYP), and as a result I shared similar values and experiences to the participants studied. As I am no longer an EYP and have held a role as a TEP for the past three years, I do not consider myself to be a total insider researcher whereby I am playing both the roles of the researcher and researched simultaneously. Nevertheless, I held prior knowledge and understandings of the group I wished to study. Critics would suggest that this causes inherent bias within the findings of this study (Greene, 2014; Merriam et al., 2001) as researcher bias challenges the positivist stance that research be objective (Workman, 2007). However, Aguilar (1981, p.26) suggests that researchers should not fear bias, for this “may be a source of insight as well as error”. This position is more aligned with a CR perspective, which acknowledges the role of the researcher in the co-construction and interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Richards, 2020; Terry & Hayfield, 2021; Terry et al., 2017).

It is suggested that unlike the outsider researcher, who may be less familiar with the researched social group, interactions between participants and the insider researcher are more natural (Aguilar, 1981). Bell (2005) suggests that the participants of insider researchers welcome the opportunity to discuss their experiences with someone who understands. It was important to me that the participants in this study felt comfortable and able to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences with me. I considered my partial insider status to be a huge aid to this endeavour and felt that it allowed me to empathise and relate to the rich stories my participants were sharing. Critics of insider research, however, argue that this awareness limits the perception of the insider researcher, as too much is familiar, leading to a loss of objectivity and increased risk of assumption (Aguilar, 1981; DeLyser, 2001). During interviews I was aware of participant statements that

assumed prior knowledge on my part, such as "*as you'll know*", or "*I'm sure you're aware…*". When this occurred, I endeavoured to ask clarifying questions to establish whether I was making accurate inferences from the information shared, rather than relying on assumptions based on my own experiences or feelings in similar scenarios.

While this is an example of one of the ways I kept my status as a partial insider researcher in mind and made attempts to mitigate associated aspects of bias, I was comfortable in the acceptance that I could not be an entirely objective bystander within this research. This is consistent with the CR position adopted by this research.

4.2 Acquired Research Skills

This section reflects on the skills I have acquired throughout the process of writing this thesis and the influence of these on my thinking and practice.

4.2.1 Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

Throughout the SLR process I gained a number of useful research skills. These included skills in organisation, literature searching, critical appraisal and the ability to synthesise findings from multiple sources. I have also developed confidence in my own subjective judgements as a sole researcher.

These are skills that I have been able to apply in practice working as a TEP in an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) within a Local Authority. More specifically, these have been crucial as my caseload demands have increased and my organisational and diary management skills have had to accommodate this.

4.2.2 Empirical Project

Throughout the course of the doctorate, I have often reflected on my tendency to be drawn towards systematic and linear processes such as the SLR. Not only was undertaking research utilising a mixed method approach a new endeavour, but this was also my first experience undertaking solo qualitative research. Sitting with the uncertainty that an iterative research project evokes has been challenging but I

believe that it has helped me to further develop skills in adaptability and flexibility that will be crucial in my future role as an EP. This has also served me well when undertaking intervention work or research projects within the EPS. I have specifically applied this in practice during person-centred therapeutic work in which the intervention outcomes are reliant on what emerges throughout the process. At one point I would have found this uncertainty difficult to manage but I am now more comfortable and confident trusting in an iterative process which has allowed me to be more present in consultations with young people and other service users.

Throughout the research process I kept a journal which provided space for reflection. This was especially helpful when reflecting on the decisions I have made throughout the process and considering the ways in which I have influenced the research and how the research has influenced me. Further, I found it helpful to return to my research journal at times when I felt I may be straying from the original focus and rationale of the study. This was particularly the case during the data analysis stage where I had to consider what data was the most valuable in answering the research question. Terry and Hayfield (2021) note that a common challenge amongst analysis novices is the tendency to hold onto untenable initial themes. It was certainly difficult to let go of developed themes, especially those which I felt provided an intriguing insight into an alternative aspect of multilingual children's experiences (for example identity). However, it was important to remain mindful of the initial research questions and allow these to boundary the analysis, abandoning themes that did not tell a compelling story about the data set in order to answer these questions. While it was difficult not to feel that time was wasted analysing and writing up themes that were ultimately discarded, Terry and Hayfield (2021) strongly argue that no effort expanded on engaging with the data set is ever wasted, and I took solace in this.

4.3 Dissemination

As alluded to throughout this thesis, the personal motivation behind this study stemmed from my own experience as an EYP in a diverse multilingual setting in Bradford. This was my first experience in full-time employment and the cultural and linguistic makeup of the school could not have been further from my own sheltered schooling experience in rural Cumbria. In my early experience in the role, I was

struck by the additional obstacles to the curriculum faced by the multilingual children in my class, and I felt uninformed, inexperienced, and unequipped to support this inequality. It was hoped that through completing this research, further insight could be gained into the ways that staff can support oral language (OL) outcomes for multilingual children and how staff's sense of self-efficacy can be supported in turn.

Thus, it is my intention to disseminate these findings to two key audiences: EPs and other professionals working with children and young people in an advisory capacity, and Early Years (EY) professionals working day-to-day with young children to support their OL development. For the former, it is my intention to submit Chapter 1 and 3 to publishers. I also intend to share the findings at an upcoming EPS study day. This is an important aspect of my future role as a research-practitioner within educational psychology. It is imperative that EPs keep up to date with research and that their practice be underpinned by research and practice-based evidence (Fox, 2011; Jones & Mehr, 2007).

Through the course of this research, I have spoken with EY staff who shared uncertainty and lack of confidence in their ability to support linguistically diverse children. 49% of the participants in Phase 1 reported that they did not believe they had adequate training to support multilingual children's OL skills. Therefore, I believe it is imperative that these findings are not only shared with professionals working in an advisory capacity but also shared through an accessible, abbreviated report to EY staff. I hope that staff find the outcomes of this research as illuminating as I have, and that they take reassurance from the conclusion that many of the quality practices they already employ for monolingual children have a place in supporting the OL of multilingual populations also. Further, I hope this helps to reduce the 'othering' of multilingual children and support their inclusion within EY classrooms.

4.4 Final Thought

This chapter has outlined the implications of undertaking this research on my future practice. The process has been challenging and enjoyable in equal measure and has helped to shape me as a researcher and an EP. Notably, I aim to publish the SLR and empirical research to disseminate the findings to a wider audience. It is hoped that this will contribute to a greater understanding of how multilingual children can be

supported within monolingual environments, and how staff efficacy beliefs in this area can be reinforced.

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Appendix 1. Author-Modified Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) towards Oral Langauge Teaching.

Below are 12 questions.

These questions relate to the work you do with the children in your setting, whether they are multilingual or monolingual. Please answer these on a scale from 1-5 where 1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree. There are no correct or incorrect answers. All responses will remain anonymous.

1. I am able to effectively support children in my class with their oral language skills.
2. I can use a variety of strategies to assess the oral language skills of children in my class.
3. There is little that can be done to meet the needs of children who struggle with oral language skills.
4. There is a great deal I can do to help children to achieve their early years speaking/listening objectives.
5. I am able to adapt what I do based on ongoing assessment of children in my class.
6. There is a great deal I can do to create a language rich environment in my classroom.
7. There is a great deal I can do to model effective oral language approaches in my classroom.
8. The amount a child can learn is primary related to family background.
9. I am able to use children's oral language mistakes as an opportunity to help them improve their oral language.
10. It is difficult to provide alternative explanations/examples for children who experience difficulties with their oral language.
11. There is little that can be done to assist families to help their children develop their oral language.
12. There is a great deal I can do to implement alternative oral language approaches in my classroom.

Appendix 2. Author-Modified Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001) towards Multilingual Language Teaching.

Below are 12 questions.

The following 12 questions are based on your thoughts/personal experiences working with EAL children. If you have no experience working with children with EAL please answer these questions based on your current beliefs, as if an EAL child was to join your setting. There are no correct or incorrect answers. All responses are anonymous.

1. What happens in class has little influence on EAL children's language learning compared to the influence of their home environment.
2. If a child with EAL is having difficulty in the EYFS curriculum, I am able to adjust my support to enable their understanding.
3. I have the knowledge/abilities required to support EAL children's language learning.
4. When the achievement of EAL children in my setting improves, it is because I found more effective teaching approaches.
5. If an EAL child masters a new concept quickly, it has little to do with the help given in class.
6. My teacher training program/Early Years qualifications have given me the necessary skills to be effective helping EAL children.
7. I am limited to how I can support EAL children compared with English speaking children.
8. If parents did more to support the language learning of their EAL children, then I could do more.
9. Even a skilled practitioner would not be able to make a vast difference to the language learning of EAL children.
10. EAL children would benefit from grouping according to their language needs.
11. My experience working with EAL children has given me the necessary skills to be effective helping children with EAL.

12. Early Years staff can do little to help EAL children's language development because of the other barriers to learning that EAL children experience.

Appendix 3. Author-Developed Questionnaire.

This is the first part of a two-part research project exploring Early Years staff's experiences of working with monolingual (English) and multilingual (EAL) children to improve their oral language skills.

Definitions

Oral Language

Oral language can be divided into active oral speech and passive oral speech. Active oral speech refers to "**speaking**", whereas passive oral speech refers to "**listening**".

Monolingual

The term 'monolingualism' is used to refer to individuals who speak a single language. For the purpose of this research, monolingual individuals refer to native **English speakers who speak no other languages.**

Multilingual/English as an Additional Language (EAL)

English as an additional language (EAL) refers to **learners whose first language is not English**. A pupil's first language is defined as any language other than English that a child was exposed to during early development and continues to be exposed to in the home or community. These definitions therefore cover the following:

- Pupils arriving from other countries and whose first language is not English.
- Pupils who have lived in the UK for a long time and may appear to be fluent, but who also speak another language at home.
- Pupils who have been born in the UK, but for whom the home language is not English.

Demographic Information

First language(s): *

Short-answer text

Do you speak any other languages? *

- Yes
- No

If yes, what other languages do you speak? *

Long-answer text

What is the name of the school/setting you currently work in? Please also provide a postcode. *

*(This information is to be used solely to gather nationally available demographic data regarding local authority, percentage of EAL/Free School Meals etc. and **will not be included** in any data or research write up).*

Long-answer text

Do you have QTS? (Qualified Teacher Status)

- Yes
- No

What is your role within Early Years? *

- ○ Teacher
- ○ Early Years Practitioner
- ○ Learning Support Assistant
- ○ Teaching Assistant
- ○ Other...

How long have you worked in your current role? *

- ○ Less than 1 year
- ○ 1-5 years
- ○ 5-10 years
- ○ 10-15 years
- ○ 15-20 years
- ○ 20+ years

What age group do you work with? (Tick all that apply) *

- ☐ 0-1 years
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 2-3 years
- ☐ 3-4 years
- ☐ 4-5 years

EAL Experience

Have you ever worked with a child who was identified as speaking English as an Additional Language? (EAL) *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

If yes, approximately how many EAL children have you worked with in the last year? *

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1-2 children
- ◯ 2-5 children
- ◯ 5-10 children
- ◯ 10-20 children
- ◯ 20-30 children
- ◯ 30+

Is this typical for your setting? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Higher than usual
- ◯ Lower than usual

Would you categorise yourself as having high, medium, low or no experience working with children who speak EAL? *

- ◯ High
- ◯ Medium
- ◯ Low
- ◯ None

Have you ever received training related to working with children who speak EAL? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Do you think that you have received the training/support you need to be able to work with EAL children in your class? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Part B

This is the first of a two-part research project exploring Early Years staff's experiences of working with monolingual and multilingual children to improve their oral language skills.

The second part of the research project may involve being invited to take part in a semi-structured interview where you will be asked further questions about your thoughts and experiences working in Early Years. This will take place over Zoom and will last between 45-60 minutes, although you will be able to talk as much as you would like to. There is no obligation to take part in the second part of this study.

Would you be willing to partake in the second part of this research study (semi structured interview)? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

If yes, please provide your email address below:

Short-answer text

Thank you very much for your time and taking part in this questionnaire!

If you have any further questions or would like an information sheet outlining the second part of this research (semi-structured interview), please do not hesitate to email me at S.J.Vatter2@newcastle.ac.uk. You can also contact my research supervisor at Katie.Gibson2@newcastle.ac.uk.

Appendix 4. Schedule for Semi-Structured Interview

Area	Questions
Background Information	**Question**: What is your role in school? **Question***:* How long have you worked in this role? **Question**: How long have you worked in your current setting?
Children's Language Abilities	**Question**: What are children's oral language abilities like when they come to your setting? *Prompt: Is this an area that children require a lot of support in?* **Question**: Do you currently use any oral language interventions in your setting? *Prompt: For example, NELI, Talking Time...*
Oral Language Efficacy	**Question**: How do you feel about your ability to support children's oral language in your setting? *Prompt: Do you find it easy or difficult? Is this an area you feel confident in? What would help you to feel more confident in this area?* **Question**: If you were to think about a time you felt you supported a child's oral language skills well, what happened? *Prompts: What helped you to do this?* **Question**: Has there been a time when supporting a child's oral language has been especially difficult for you?

	Prompt: If so, how did you overcome this?
Multilingual Efficacy	**Question:** What do you think supports multilingual children to develop their oral language skills? *Prompt: Is this the same / different to monolingual children?* **Question**: Do you adapt the way you work with multilingual children in your classroom? *Prompt: If so, how? What helps you to be able to do this?* **Question**: Do you feel that your oral interactions differ between multilingual and monolingual children? *Prompts: If so, how?* **Question:** Do you feel able to meet the oral language needs of multilingual children to the same extent as monolingual children? *Prompt: If so, why? If not, what is different in the case of multilingual children?* **Question:** Are there any barriers you face teaching oral language skills to multilingual children? *Prompt: What are they? What would help? How does this make you feel?*
Additional Thoughts	**Question***:* Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 5. Themes, subthemes and codes.

Q1. What do staff believe supports the development of oral language skills for children in Early Years?				
Codes			Subtheme	Theme
• Continuous provision • Extending play • Encouraging curiosity • Building vocabulary • Storytelling • Multisensory learning • Routine / consistency	• Interacting with children • Quality talk • Repetition • Instructions • Quality staff • High expectations	• Modelling • Language rich environment • Building sentence • Visual prompts • Flexible staff • Opportunities to talk	Universal oral language strategies	*"But I just hate taking children out of provision to do things that you can do when you're in provision 'cause a lot of it is, you can build their language whilst you're playing and working alongside them"* – **Quality First Teaching in the Early Years.**
• Motivation • Ongoing formative assessment • Meeting the needs of individuals • Slowing things down	• Scaffolding learning to interests • Streaming • Responding to each cohort's needs • Getting to know children individually	• Learning routed in familiar experiences • Differentiated provision • Simplified language • Making children feel welcome	Differentiation	
• Training / upskilling staff • Dissemination of skills	• Small groups • Targeted support	• Importance of early intervention	Beneficial Impact	*"She takes them out and then you're supposed to do a group a week but we*

• Intervention was not ran as intended	• Intervention difficult to implement	• Ad-hoc delivery	Treatment Integrity	*don't always get the chance to do that, again, staffing int it?"* - **Targeted intervention: what works and what needs to change?**
• Staff capacity	• Time	• Funding	Lack of resources	
• Small group sizes			Limited Scope	
• Taking children out of class	• Importance of provision		Double-Edged Sword	
• Involving parents / home input • Working together	• Holistic child support	• Providing parent opportunities	Collaboration	*"When the parents are on board with you…you can accomplish anything can't you?"*- **Effective partnerships between home and school.**
• Getting parents on board	• Offering support / reassuring parents		Building relationships	
• Nurture			Nurture	*"It's just an overall wellbeing and confidence and togetherness of the group. That they feel safe, in a safe environment to be able to talk."* – **A safe space for interaction**.
• Giving space			Giving Space to Talk	
• Makaton	• Signing		Sign language	

• Facial expressions • Actions	• Body language	Body language Gesture	*“It helps for all the children. They all look, they all respond. It’s very, very useful for every child”* – **Use of non-verbal communication and gesture to facilitate interaction.**

Q2. What do staff believe supports the development of oral language skills for multilingual children in Early Years?				
Codes			Subtheme	Theme
• Continuous provision • Language rich environment • Building vocabulary • Storytelling • Quality staff • High expectations	• Interacting with children • Quality talk • Repetition • Visual prompts • Flexible staff • Opportunities to talk	• Modelling • Extending play • Encouraging curiosity • Building sentences • Multisensory learning • Routine / consistency • Giving experiences	Universal oral language strategies	*"But I just hate taking children out of provision to do things that you can do when you're in provision 'cause a lot of it is, you can build their language whilst you're playing and working alongside them"* – **Quality First Teaching in the Early Years.**
• Motivation • Ongoing formative assessment • Meeting the needs of individuals • Slowing things down	• Scaffolding learning to interests • Streaming • Responding to each cohort's needs • Getting to know children individually	• Learning routed in familiar experiences • Differentiated provision • Simplified language	Differentiation	
• Making children feel welcome*	• Providing inclusive environment*	• Representation*	Inclusion*	
• Training / upskilling staff	• Dissemination of skills	• Small groups • Targeted support	Beneficial Impact	*"She takes them out and then you're supposed to*

• Importance of early intervention				*do a group a week but we don't always get the chance to do that, again, staffing int it?"* - **Targeted intervention: what works and what needs to change?**
• Intervention was not ran as intended	• Intervention difficult to implement	• Ad-hoc delivery • Attendance*	Treatment Integrity	
• Staff capacity	• Time	• Funding	Lack of Resources	
• Small group sizes			Limited Scope	
• Questioning evidence base*	• Suitability for our children*		Effectiveness*	
• Talking children out of class	• Importance of provision		Double-Edged Sword	
• Involving parents / home input	• Holistic child support • Working together	• Providing parent opportunities	Collaboration	*"When the parents are on board with you…you can accomplish anything can't you?"*- **Effective partnerships between home and school.**
• Spending time* • Offering support / reassuring parents	• Getting parents on board	• Including parents*	Building relationships	
• Managing expectations* • Parent language skills* • Same as monolingual parents*	• Parent understanding* • Multilingual barriers*	• Cultural perspectives*	Interacting with parents*	

• Repeating yourself*	• Translators*	• Understanding parents needs*	Facilitating Communication*	
• Nurture			Nurture	*"It's just an overall wellbeing and confidence and togetherness of the group. That they feel safe, in a safe environment to be able to talk."* – **A safe space for interaction**.
• Space to talk			Space to Talk	
• Importance of key adult*			Importance of Key Adult*	
• Makaton • Facial expressions	• Signing • Body language	• Actions	Non-verbal communication	***"**She's been able to reassure her in her mother tongue and just really tell her what is going on"* - **Finding a shared communication method***
• Translating*	• Reassuring children*		Multilingual Staff*	
• Multilingual environment*	• Linking Languages*		Translanguaging*	"*It's the language that they already know but you're just reinforcing that language but then giving*
• Developing first language*	• Identity*		Importance of Home Language*	

		them the English word to it as well" **- Linking home and school languages within a linguistically inclusive environment***
• Universal Approach	Universal Approach	*I don't have a column that says 'my EAL planning'. My column would just say 'vocabulary for everybody', not particularly for EAL learners."* ***– The need for a multilingual-specific pedagogy*****?**
• Multilingual children's needs not met to same extent	Multilingual Needs Not Met to Same Extent	

Q3. What do staff believe supports their sense of self-efficacy when working with multilingual children?			
Codes			Theme
• Personal experience	• Lack of Experience		*"When you get taught to teach you kind of get taught how to teach but you don't know how to do it until you do it."* – **Experiences of Success**
• Shadowing other practitioners • Supportive Team	• Sharing experiences with team • Support from Parents	• Working together	*"I wish I had more time to just sit and shadow people"* ***-Learning from more Experienced Others***
• Lack of knowledge • Training has the answers	• Lack of confidence • Support from outside / "specialist" agencies	• Lack of training	*"I think I would need to have a whole lot of training on it, because I would fear doing the wrong thing you know".* **– A Need for Tailored Training**

Appendix 6. Participant Information Sheets

Newcastle University
School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Participant Information Sheet: Part A

You are invited to take part in a research study entitled:

Language learning in the Early Years: What supports staff to feel efficacious in developing the oral language skills of monolingual and multilingual children?

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of early years staff working in monolingual and multilingual settings to develop children's oral language skills.

Thank you for your interest in taking part.

This information sheet is intended to give you a summary of the aims of the study and details regarding you participation. Please read this document carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

- This study is being conducted by Sophie Vatter of the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University.
- This project is supervised by Dr Katie Gibson, Professional Tutor at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University.
- This study aims to explore the experiences of early years staff working with monolingual and multilingual children to develop their oral language skills.
- The study consists of a questionnaire in which you will be asked about your current job role and any experiences you have had teaching children who are identified as speaking English as an Additional Language (EAL).
- The questionnaire should take approximately 15-25 minutes to complete. At the end of the questionnaire, you will be invited to indicate whether you would be willing to participate further in the research (in the form of a semi-

structured interview). There is no obligation to participate in the semi-structured interview on completion of the questionnaire.

- You are free to decide whether or not to participate. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without any negative consequences.
- Responses to this questionnaire will be coded anonymously and any names/contact details will only be kept so that you can withdraw your data from the study at any time up until the data collection is complete. You will not be identified in any report of publication resulting from this research.
- Your data will be managed under UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Only the minimum personally identifiable information will be used.
- You can find out more about how Newcastle University uses you information at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection/PrivacyNotice and/or by contacting Newcastle University's Data Protection Officer (Maureen Wilkinson, rec-man@ncl.ac.uk).
- This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences Ethics Committee at Newcastle University (Date of approval: 23/06/22).
- If you have any questions, requests, or concerns regarding this research, please contact me via email at S.J.Vatter2@newcastle.ac.uk. My supervisor can also be contacted at Katie.Gibson2@newcastle.ac.uk.

Many thanks again for your interest in taking part in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Vatter, Trainee Educational Psychologist and Doctoral Student

Newcastle University

School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Participant Information Sheet: Part B

You are invited to take part in a research study entitled:

Language learning in the Early Years: What supports staff to feel efficacious in developing the oral language skills of monolingual and multilingual children.

Thank you for your participation in Part A and your interest in taking part in Part B.

This information sheet is intended to give you a summary of the aims of the study and details regarding you participation. Please read this document carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

Study Information

- This study is being conducted by Sophie Vatter of the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University.
- This project is supervised by Dr Katie Gibson, Professional Tutor at the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University.
- The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of early years staff working in monolingual and multilingual settings to develop children's oral language skills.
- As part of this study, you will be asked to attend an interview over Zoom with the researcher, Sophie Vatter, to discuss your experiences working with multilingual children within an Early Years Education setting. This interview may last approximately 30-60 minutes, though you will be able to talk as much or as little as you are willing to.
- You are free to decide whether or not to participate. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time for any reason without any

negative consequences. You may also decline to answer any questions discussed in the interview.

- Once the research is completed, you will have the option to receive a summary of its findings via email or post.

Data Management and Protection

- To ensure accurate analysis, the interview will be audio-recorded. This recording will be kept in a secure, password-protected folder and tagged with an anonymous ID number. Identifying information, e.g., your name and contact details, will be kept separately. These recordings will be deleted after the research is complete. Your contact details will only be kept so that you can withdraw your data from the study at any time up until the data collection is complete, and for sending out the research summary at the end. You will not be identified in any report or publication resulting from this research.
- Your data will be managed under UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Only the minimum personally identifiable information will be used.
- You can find out more about how Newcastle University uses you information at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/data.protection/PrivacyNotice and/or by contacting Newcastle University's Data Protection Officer (Maureen Wilkinson, rec-man@ncl.ac.uk).
- This study has been reviewed and approved by the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences Ethics Committee at Newcastle University (Date of approval: 23/06/22).

- If you have any questions, requests, or concerns regarding this research, please contact me via email at S.J.Vatter2@newcastle.ac.uk.
- My supervisor can also be contacted at Katie.Gibson2@newcastle.ac.uk.

Many thanks again for your interest in taking part in this research.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Vatter

Trainee Educational Psychologist and Doctoral Student

Appendix 7. Participant Consent Forms

Newcastle University
School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Declaration of Informed Consent

- I agree to participate in this study, the purpose of which is to explore the experiences of early years staff working in monolingual and multilingual settings to develop children's oral language skills.
- I declare that I have understood the nature and purpose of the research.
- I have read the participant information sheet and understand the information provided.
- I have been informed that I may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study without penalty of any kind.
- I have been informed that all my responses will be kept confidential and secure, and that I will not be identified in any report or other publication resulting from this research.
- I have been informed that the research will answer any questions regarding the study and its procedures. The researcher's email is S.J.Vatter2@newcastle.ac.uk and they can be contacted at any time. The research supervisor can be contacted at Katie.Gibson2@newcastle.ac.uk.

Any concerns about this study should be addressed to the School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences Ethics Committee, Newcastle University via email to ecls.researchteam@newcastle.ac.uk.

Appendix 8. Participant Debrief Form

Newcastle University
School of Education, Communication & Language Sciences

Participant Debrief Sheet

Staff efficacy beliefs in multilingual classrooms: What supports quality adult-child interactions in multilingual Early Years Education Settings?

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your participation is valued highly.

The intention of the research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of early years staff along with the approaches used with monolingual and multilingual children in the early years. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to existing research outlining the positive correlations between quality adult-child school-based interactions and positive student outcomes. We hope that you found the process interesting and have not been upset by any of the topics discussed.

If you would like further information or support regarding the topics discussed during this research, you can contact the researcher at S.J.Vatter2@ncl.ac.uk or their supervisor Katie.Gibson2@newcastle.ac.uk.

As a reminder, your data will be kept secure and confidential. You may withdraw your data from this study at any time before the research is complete. If you would like to do this, please email the researcher. If you would like to speak to the researcher again, you can contact them on the above email address along with their supervisor.

Thanks again for your participation and your time.

Yours sincerely

Sophie Vatter, Trainee Educational Psychologist and Doctoral Student