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HOW ROLE-PLAY AFFECTS PRE-SCHOOLERS' SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Communicative strategies in a P5 class in a school in Osona

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"Play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed
form and is itself a major source of development"
(Vygotsky, 1978, p.102)

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Abstract

Nowadays a huge number of schools are introducing English as L2. Moreover, the relationship between play and children's learning has been the focus of much recent research. So, this project's aim is to observe how role-play influence children's acquisition of a second language, and which strategies do they use to communicate. The study involves data collected from observing a specialist in English, as well as the ones I did interceding in this immersion. Moreover, recorded audios have been done and an interview to the English teachers has also been discussed and examined in order to corroborate this interpretative research. The results obtained clearly highlighted the relationship between role-play and children's development of a second language, and how by providing an enriching environment we can significantly improve pupils' communication competences and abilities.

Key words: role-play, ESL, communication strategies, language development, Early Childhood Education

Resum

Avui en dia, una gran varietat d'escoles estan introduint l'anglès com a una segona llengua. No obstant això, existeixen molts desafiaments, com ara el fet que els mestres necessiten introduir la llengua estrangera de tal manera que no afecti la primera. A més a més, la relació entre joc i l'aprenentatge dels infants ha set un focus d'investigació per a moltes recerques recents. Per tant, l'objectiu d'aquest treball és observar com el joc simbòlic influeix en l'adquisició d'una segona llengua en els infants, i com aquests, són capaços de buscar estratègies per comunicar-se. L'estudi inclou dades recollides a partir de l'observació d'una especialista en anglès, així com les extretes intercedint en aquesta immersió. A més, els àudios gravats, i la discussió i examinació de l'entrevista a l'especialista d'anglès han ajudat a corroborar aquesta investigació interpretativa. Els resultats obtinguts destaquen clarament la relació entre el joc simbòlic i el desenvolupament d'una segona llengua en els infants, i com oferint un entorn ric, podem millorar significativament les competències i habilitats comunicatives dels nens i les nenes.

Paraules clau: joc simbòlic, anglès com a segona llengua, estratègies comunicatives, desenvolupament del llenguatge, educació infantil

1. Introduction

How role-play affects pre-schoolers' second language acquisition is the title of my first dissertation in my Double Degree in Preschool and Primary Education minor in English.

The main purpose of this study is to examine and investigate the impact that role-play has in children's second language acquisition in terms of communication and expression. In other words, to observe children's self-management in expressing themselves in another language. This knowledge will lead me further insight on the strong and weak factors which contribute to children's L2 development and how they express themselves, as well as examining the progress obtained in terms of communication strategies.

This way, through a deep observation and some other techniques which will be explained later, it has been possible the gathering of information in a P5 class, specifying my research on 4 children. The analysis of the data obtained, and the ideas extracted from different authors will lead to further conclusions and results.

2. Justification

We all know that play is essential in children's lives. In fact, it is the best way to learn because it gives them the chance to interact with the context and with others, and to actively participate while having fun. Specifically, through role-play, children can express, imitate and exteriorize their internal world.

On the other hand, we live in a global community in which English has become the international language for people's communication. What's more, Catalan schools have perceived its impact recently; that's why, the majority of them have already implemented the acquisition of English as a second language in their schools.

Valuing the importance of that, I have considered that executing a project that enables meaningful connections between both themes, would fulfil significant results. The elaboration of this Final Degree Project will help, for sure, other trainee teachers in Catalonia and will make them realize about the importance of acquiring a L2 in important settings and how role-play contributes in its acquisition.

As the Research Question "*How does role-play affect pre-schoolers' second language acquisition?*" can convey a huge amount of issues, I just defined the main issue which will be investigated, children's communicative strategies.

2.1. Objectives

The objectives determined in this Final Degree Project are the ones below:
- Carry out class observations in a 5-year-old class in order to analyse the approach and methodologies used to teach English as a second language.
- Examine how children communicate and express themselves in a L2.
- Observe if role-play has an impact in children's acquisition of a foreign language.

2.2. Structure of the dissertation

This Project is divided into 4 different sections, the introduction, the theoretical framework, the practical application and the conclusions.

The introduction presents the research title, as well as the reasons of this investigation. Then, the objectives are mentioned and the parts in which the project is structured.

The theoretical framework will be detailed below, it is based on different authors' ideas that will later sustain the practical application. In this, the methodology and techniques used to carry out the case-study will be specified. Moreover, the school context and the analysis of the data obtained through the observation, which will be expanded in the Appendices, will also be defined.

Finally, conclusions will be exposed, answering the Final Degree Project research question and the initial objectives. What is more, the bibliography used will be also collected at the end.

3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical method will be based on three main sections. The first one will consist in explaining how is English as a second language important to acquire and which factors and periods contribute in its development. The second part interprets play, particularly the role-play. Last but not least, both parts will join together and the strategies and methodologies that pupils use to communicate in a second language will be mentioned.

3.1.   English as a second language in Early Childhood Education

"Globalization is turning our world into a village where people from different countries are getting closer and closer every day" (Davies & Taronna, 2012, p.117-118). That is the reason why it is so important to learn a global language, such is English. So, schools nowadays have an important role in balancing L1 and an additional language at an early age. Moreover, for Clarke and OAM (2009), learning a language is also essential for helping children in building an identity, as well as developing themselves socially.

In this section, an overview of the agents which can influence in the introduction of a foreign language in Early Years are presented, as well as the discussion of their reasons.

A huge number of researchers claim that the age of exposure to a different language is closely related to the success in acquiring it (Bialystok & Miller, 1999; Birdsong, 2005). Moreover, cognitive, social and cultural factors also play an important role in child SLA (Jia & Aaronson, 2003). Some other researchers have also investigated about the essential factor of the language transfer and about the importance of communication and feedback for the development of a second language. So, it has been seen that there are so many factors we should take into account in order to establish clear conclusions of child's second language acquisition, but Philp, Oliver, and Mackey (2008) highlight the social context of L2 learning as essential. Having in mind that each context has its own range of relationships, the role they play in each of them can also vary. We are surrounded by a huge amount of settings that make us adapt in every situation, and the interactions developed in all of them influence children's language acquisition. Hartup (1989) states that adult-child relationships are not the same as child-child relationships. He describes the first ones as vertical relationships in which pupils can feel they are secure and protected, and the second ones as horizontal relationships based on situations in which boys and girls can develop their abilities with peers more or less near to each other. Although they are quite different, they both present contexts in which L2 can be developed.

In any case, some researchers have also examined certain factors that can intervene in children's second language acquisition, as well as some principles that have an impact in its development. These are mentioned below.

3.1.1. Factors

Krashen, Long and Scarella (1979) mention that the older the learner acquires a second language, the faster he/she gains higher levels of efficiency and proficiency in the short term. However, these authors have also claimed that in the long terms, the ones who outperformed were those who started acquiring the second language at an earlier age.

Singleton and Ryan states a citation that is massively said in terms of age and L2 learning: "The younger the better" (2004, p.61). And even some people could just compare the learning of English as a Second Language to the learning of ballet or piano. Many people would state that it is clearly seen the children who have started doing ballet since they were little to those who have started older. Singleton and Ryan (2004) state 5 propositions related with the idea previously discussed:

1) Children who start to receive L2 input in their infancy will be more competent and skillful than older learners.
2) Learners whose second language exposure starts in their adolescence will be more capable and competent than younger learners.
3) Children who start to receive L2 input in their infancy will be more competent and skillful than older learners only in a way.
4) Teenagers or adults who are learning a second language are at first more competent; but in the end, the ones who start the acquisition of a L2 earlier will be the ones who will have a successful and meaningful process.
5) After a particular maturation period, the acquisition of a second language varies in terms of quality.

Furthermore, there are also different approaches to age effects in second language learning.
- Maturational approaches believe that language learning is closely related to biological changes. Long (1990, 2005) assumes that there exists a biological opening for chance in attaining natural and native levels of proficiency and competence in a L2. After this critical period, the opportunity for learning rapidly declines. In other words, the Critical Period Hypothesis sustains the idea that there exist inherent and particular knowledge that really contributes in the successful early acquisition of a second language. As a

result, maturation can be closely related with the loss of introduction and admission of this valuable knowledge (Dimroth, 2008).

- Usage based approach claims that "linguistic rules are meaningful constructions which have emerged though language use and are grammaticalized, or abstract, to varying degrees" (Tomasello, 2003 cited in Philp, Oliver and Mackey, 2008, p.57). The reason why not everyone can reach the same domain and pronunciation as a native speaker is because there occurs interference between patterns and relations between the two language systems, which hinder the memory of new outlines (Dimroth, 2008).

- In the learner varieties approach, Klein (2009) defines 3 faculties that are closely related to the acquisition of any language. The first one is named "Construction Faculty" and it says that we tend to pair sounds with the meaning of words. The "Communication Faculty" is based on the integration of information during the communication. Last but not least, the "Copying Faculty" supports the idea that the output we produce is a copy of the input we receive.

Motivation is also an essential factor in children's learning, in fact, as Lobo states: "when motivating children, we are paving the way for their education" (2004, p.11 in Davies and Taronna, 2012, p.6). Both teachers and materials used are significant in encouraging pupil's motivation. In terms of materials, it's relevant to provide a wide variety of attractive, challenging and encouraging materials to make children develop their own creativity and strengthen their development. Besides, she specifies 32 characteristics that every teacher should have in order to motivate their students, the most important ones are: to like your job, the desire to help pupils to grow personally, sense of humour, to care about the different abilities and capacities of each child, open-minded, and to have a good English level.

What is more, Tabors (2006) highlights that the quantity and prior exposure of a second language also contribute in the acquisition of it. The amount of time which the child is in contact with English is relevant, as well as the setting in which he or she is involved.

The author also believes that the personality of each one has an important role in how you acquire another language. For instance, a shy and quiet child will not have the same learning style as an outgoing child. So, the procedure of acquiring an L2 implies detecting a stability between children's social requirements and their learning of the new language (Tabors, 2006), and not all children must be on one of these two extremes of personality.

All in all, each child is a world and all the four factors mentioned -age, motivation, exposure and personality- may be combined differently for all of them. Besides, Konishi, Kanero,

Freeman, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek (2014) remark six principles that have an implication for the learning of a second language. These are:

1. Children learn what they hear most: the amount of input that children receive from that language matters.

2. Children learn words for things and events that interest them. Having in mind that interesting and appealing not necessary have to be and mean the same.

3. Interactive and responsive rather than passive contexts promote language learning: interactions and exchanges are necessary to learn. In fact, "infants and young children learn language in contexts in which their vocalizations, gesture, and facial expressions evoke responses from the people around them" (p. 408).

4. Children learn words best in meaningful contexts: educators should provide stimulating environments and contexts for fulfilling children's curiosity.

5. Children need to hear diverse examples of words and language structures: children require a rich and diverse input in order to achieve a wide range of language sources.

6. Vocabulary and grammatical development are reciprocal processes.

Apart from all the aspects that can have more or less impact in the acquisition of English as a second language, we can also find that this acquisition is closely related with the period in which the child is and how can the language be developed in each one.

3.1.2. Periods

Young learners have the ability to distinguish languages at a very early age (Nicholas and Lightbown, 2008). When learning a second language, as children have acquired their first one, they are already familiar with the key aspects of the Language. Features such as accent and interactional patterns emerge after age 7 (Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003). Another aspect which you can see that pupils are starting to distinguish the first and second language would be the range of things that the child is able to talk about in their L2, as youthful learners must attain the specific features of the L2 in order to express these ideas (Lightbown and Nicholas, 2008).

Between age 2 and 7 there exists a period of four or five years approximately in which there is an obvious sign of L2 acquisition which normally ends up gaining a native-like expertise (Lightbown & Nicholas, 2008). Then, a period of five or six years if followed, in which all this attainment of proficiency decreases until the age of 13. As mentioned, children between 2 and 7 years old tend to acquire the language rapidly to an enormous extent, almost without the need of instruction or intention.

Nevertheless, there exist 4 periods or stages in terms of children's acquisition of a Second Language (Bruton, 2009).

1) **Home Language Use**: children use their home language or the language they know to communicate with others. Another option would be to stop talking.

2) **Observational and Listening Period**: it can be also called silent or nonverbal period. Children in this stage tend to spend all their time quietly and just listening and observing the rest of the peers because they might feel unsure of themselves in this foreign context (Clarke and OAM, 2009). Some children can feel they will not produce the correct language and some others is mainly for shyness. So, in this stage pupils tend to use gestures, sounds and facial expressions to transmit information rather than using verbal communication (Bruton, 2009). Tabors (2006) adds that children who use nonverbal behaviors is because they want attention, request something, protest or joking.

   During this period which can last months, apart from communicating non-verbally, pupils start to collect and accumulate the information spoken around them (Tabors, 2006). They also start to be sensitive and experiment with sounds.

3) **Telegraphic and Formulaic Speech**: in this stage, children start to try the second language to communicate themselves. They tend to use two communicative strategies, they can use the telegraphic speech, by using a few content words without using practical words or even specific grammatical features of the language (Bruton, 2009) such as "Daddy water"; and/or formulas, which are portions of the language that pupils use without perceiving and realizing about their role and function (Bruton, 2009).

4) **Fluid Language Use** (or Productive Use): this period starts when the child is able to understand and apply the rules of the language. In other words, when the child starts to control the language and begins to produce sentences according to the vocabulary learned.

What is more, Clarke and OAM (2009) make another distinction in terms of oral English language development between 3 and 6 years of age.

1) **New to English**: in this first stage, the child has had a little or even no contact and exposure of English. Through the weeks, the child is going to start understanding random keywords if they go with gestures or differentiated and adequate objects. Here, we find the silent and the non-verbal period.

2) **Becoming familiar with English:** pupils start to understand the language and start to use some familiar English to interact with others. They produce limited English, but

they start to be more confident with themselves. Some output could be sentences such as: "Hello", "Good morning" and "Come here".

3) **Becoming a confident user of English**: in this stage, children understand a wider range of things in English as well as start to be more fluent in spoken language. So, children start to gain confidence in using the L2 in many situations (Clarke and OAM, 2009).

4) **Demonstrated competency as a speaker of English:** pupils can interact with others in very different learning contexts as they have acquired a greater confidence and a complex competence in terms of English speech.

Having established the stages in which each child can be in terms of L2 acquisition, it will also be necessary to outline the role that plays mother tongue in this learning.

3.1.3. Importance of the mother tongue

Another section that has to be highlighted is the importance of the mother tongue of each pupil because it is an element of a "child's personal, social and cultural identity" (Yadav, 2014, p.573).

We live in a society in which there exist different social backgrounds, each of them, indispensable for the development of each child. Furthermore, due to this diversity, the language of instruction in the school may not be the same as the home language of all children. What is more, there sometimes exist a huge difference in terms of distance between learners' L1 and foreign language. For instance, English is closer to Dutch rather than Catalan or Spanish (Davies and Taronna, 2012).

Regardless of what it means, our research focus is on the impact that L1 has in children acquiring a second language. Whether using the L1 in classrooms or not has been a debated issue for many years. It has been stated that it depends on the pupils' expertise level, the setting in which they have grown up and the learning intention (Davies and Taronna, 2012). Some researchers have stated that learning another language should not affect the L1 if this is the one used through the basic teaching instructions in the school (Yadav, 2014).

In any case, the process of learning a second language is fragile (Dimroth, 2008), as well as the child's L1. Dimroth (2008) mentions that distinctions between the L1 and L2 might be determined by the background rather than on abstract cognitive systems. Therefore, depending on the context, some languages can be lost and some other replaced. That means

that bounds stablished between L1 and L2 are not determined in a firm way. For instance, and to clarify the previous idea, if boys and girls are compelled to replace or even transmit from the L1 to the L2 too soon, their mother tongue might be affected. What is more, their self-esteem and enthusiasm in learning a new language will also be altered and may develop the lack of interest and school failure (Yadav, 2014).

Davies and Taronna (2012) study showed that students tend to become more over-dependent if they don't have the necessity to make any effort in trying to understand the meaning while being in the context of L2. If English is used in real life contexts and interactions, it will be considered as part of your own individuality, because the pupil will try to convey the meaning by using different strategies. We mentioned that children are like sponges, but they don't absorb anything if they are not soaked in water, in that case with English.

These two authors (2012) also highlight that motivation is the key factor in second language acquisition. Children need to have a positive attitude towards English if we want them to be successful learners (Gardner, 1985, p.6 cited in Dörnyei, 1998, p. 122).

All in all, authors such as Mayberry and Lock state:

"Early language experience helps create the ability to learn language through- out life, independent of sensory-motor modality. Conversely, a lack of language experience in early life seriously compromises development of the ability to learn any language throughout life" (2003, p.382).

3.2. Play

This second main section, as mentioned before, will introduce play and in concrete, role-play.

"Play, as well as learning, are natural components of children's everyday" (Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008, p.623). Nevertheless, children playing is common considered as a waste of time. In fact, schools tend to pressure them to memorize concepts as if they were parrots repeating words, and they are preventing them from having active opportunities to learn (Singer, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek, 2006). In childhood education context, play and learning tend to be understood as disconnected in time and space (Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008).

Play emerges as an essential part of everyone's learning process. Consequently, schools should provide the optimum conditions for the maximum development of all the children, even

with the acquisition of a second language. Moreover, as Asa Don Brown citation says: "Children are sponges, soaking up every verbal and nonverbal interaction" and they are able to catch up information quicker and easier than adults (Brown and Larson-Hall, 2012), we should ensure effective conditions for their full learning. Factors such as auditory attention and flexibility, and phonological processing abilities are involved and linked in the L2 development (Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013).

Even if play is a concept which a lot of researchers have found difficult to define, authors such as Levin (1996 in Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008, p.627) justify that it provides chances to be in the power of what is going on and what they already know. Glover (1999 in Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008, p.627) mentions that when children play with the other peers, they develop and strengthen cooperation, self-control and socialization. What is more, Piaget had the perspective that playing is based on working with life events that children have. What we really know is that we gain knowledge and information through our 5 different senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste (Moyles, 2010).

As reported by Vygotsky, play enables pupils to "work out the rules for social interaction and allows children to be at their best" (Singer, Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek, 2006, p.7). He believes that "real" play is composed by 3 items (Bodrova, 2008):
- Pupils invent an imaginary situation or event,
- act according to specific roles, and
- controlled and delimited by some rules.

In line with that, he mentions that play is a source of development which helps to create new expanding fulfilment, as well as promoting greater intellectual activity. When a child plays, he or she performs according to the situation which is presented. While playing, their internal self-regulation is also undertaken, as they have to adapt themselves to each role and the rules that take part. The author also remarks the importance and the impact that play has in oral language development, it provides incomparable occasions and moments for the oral speech.

More specifically, it also appeared the Montessori pedagogy which believes that "children learn by being active" (Samuelsson and Carlsson, 2008, p.628) in authentic environments. Moreover, this idea is also supported by Reggio Emilia pedagogy, which says that children learn when they are in interaction with the world that surrounds them, as they are full of skills and capacities.

Researchers such as Keck et al. (2006) also showed that children need to be active and interact with each other to comprehend and gain a new and foreign language. In other words,

social communication is essential for language development; in fact, it is more important than "the structuring of instruction" (Piker & Rex, 2008). Clarke (2009), in fact, highlights the huge amount of opportunities provided to acquire a new language during free or adult-directed play. While playing and through objects and actions, children experiment with the language. What is true is that when an adult and professional has the opportunity to interact and guide the play, they also let the children develop and balance their oral language. In other words, it is easy to scaffold children's interactions and conversations.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) also highlights that children learn from investigating new things and experiences and representing them. Pupils are full of curiosity which leads them to explore and understand what surrounds them by the experiences they have actively explored. They also learn from talking to themselves and to others, as it is a way to define their ideas and impressions, develop creative roles and exercise their abilities. By providing them new challenges, we create opportunities to work out the possibilities that the situation offers them. Other essential aspects that clearly promote children's learning are showing how to do things, practicing, repeating and applying skills. Last but not least, when a child is having fun while doing something is the best context for learning; and by playing, children can "find out about things, try out and practice ideas and skills, take risks, explore their feelings, learn from mistakes, be in control and think imaginatively" (p.9).

According to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009); by playing, children develop aspects such as: discovering an interest, being prepared and ready to experiment and investigate, being aware of how and where to look for help, being able to find solutions to different problems or challenges, being implicated, making decisions and knowing how to achieve and accomplish them, valuing the importance of cooperation, self-managing, and understanding others' perspectives, ideas and feelings.

Anderson-McNamee and Bailey (2010) mention that through play, children's knowledge increase as they have to face different problems. There exist many types of play: the symbolic play, the dramatic play, the creative play, the loco motor play, the exploratory play, the role-play, and so on. And each of them promotes a huge amount of different learning, from problem-solving abilities, relationships between objects, imitation, creativity and so on, to language skills. "Play is the first opportunity for your child to discover the world in which he lives" (p. 3). Pupils learn how to manage the skills developed, they acquire self-confidence and learn how to express themselves. Playing with other children also promotes the sense of

being part of a group, followed by skills such as negotiation, problem solving, sharing and working with the rest of the peers.

As we said before, play is closely related to "growth in memory, self-regulation, language, and symbol recognition" (Sussman, 2012, p. 10). In concrete, role-play promotes social interactions and peer relationships, as children need to negotiate as well as solve conflicts or problems emerged. That is the reason why this study aims to examine the relation of role-play and the acquisition of English as L2 in pre-schoolers.

3.2.1. Role-play

"Role-play can heighten interest and excitement in learning" (Tyers, 2002, p.164). Vygotsky affirmed that by playing, children trigger the growth of potential development zones. What's more, he also believed that while we create imaginary situations, children automatically develop abstract ways of thinking. In other words, creativity and imagination are strengthened with the act of play.

Through role-play, pupils have the possibility to imitate someone or specific situations, making them assume other points of view (Molina & de Velasco Gálvez, 2011). These contexts allow children the creation of a reversible thinking in which they coordinate theirs and other ideas. Furthermore, these researchers argue that role-play also fosters language development and linguistic competences. This is due to the fact that children try to imitate adults' words in terms of expressions or vocabulary. Apart from being a good thinking exercise, it's also a social activity in which factors such as the need of communication and making oneself understandable are essential. Tejerina (1994 cited in Molina and de Velasco Gálvez, 2011) believes that through role-play, children need to adapt themselves to different characters, to a concrete theme or situation, and to specific cooperation rules. So, a lot of aspects might be taken into account when playing, and affectivity is not least. While playing, the child expresses all his or her emotions, conflicts, fear… It's like entering in the adults' world, where you start to understand life (Molina & de Velasco Gálvez, 2011). In other words, role-play allows pupils to adapt themselves to situations from the real world (Sussman, 2012) and to learn about themselves, the rest of the peers and about what surrounds them (Benson, 2004 cited in Sussman, 2012).

In fact, Burton and Edwards (2009) proved that when children share games and toys, they foster their relationships and interactions (Dorathy and Mahalakshmi, 2011). And these relations built between children in the classroom help to develop their language and enrich

their vocabulary, which make possible the autonomy of them and the development of self-regulation and self-esteem (Sussman, 2012). If children are active, they automatically develop their verbal language.

In role-play in particular, when a child needs to adapt himself or herself into another role, he or she learns how to put his or herself to another place and how to act according to that role and point of view (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009). Consequently, they might be more aware of their own understandings and mind, as well as trying to find different strategies according to the situation or role. In other words, role-play gives the chance to use the language in diverse circumstances and adopting different roles (Dorathy and Mahalakshmi, 2011).

Therefore, another aspect that needs to be remarked is the distribution of the space and use of materials. On the one hand, having an established space for role-play doesn't mean it has to be fixed (Molina & de Velasco Gálvez, 2011). In fact, teachers can change it if necessary, depending on children's needs and the objectives we want to work. On the other hand, as Molina and de Velasco Gálvez (2011) state, the materials themselves have to be varied, authentic and as real as possible. All them placed in an aesthetic way, as children have to feel attracted and invited to play and explore.

To sum up, Cook (2016) reflects on the idea that L2 learning takes part when you provide meaningful and significant contexts in class. He compares that view with the fact that a child learns to talk just by talking to them.

3.3. Strategies and methodologies for a second language acquisition

This third and last main section will be distributed in 3 different points of interest. First, it is going to specify the general strategies that children use to communicate themselves in a L2. Secondly, the teachers' role; and finally, how children interact and develop their language while role-playing.

3.3.1. Pre-schoolers' language strategies

As Lightbown and Nicholas (2008) state, pupils learning English as a second language can show particular characteristics of their first language, in this case, Catalan. They sometimes use the dominant word order of their L1 to produce something in their L2. There also exist silent periods in which children don't produce anything at all, they just listen and try to

comprehend what is been saying. Later, children tend to start to produce words in the L2 or even interact with others. This progression is most of the times due to the engagement and interaction provided by the teachers. Children need external input to carry on in their language development.

Code switching and code mixing are strategies used mostly by bilinguals. It tends to occur when pupils certainly don't know if the rest will understand him/her.

In consonance with Bruton (2009) and Tabors (2006), we can distinguish between cognitive and social strategies. For cognitive strategies, we have when children suppose that what someone is saying is relevant and closely related with the situation, children guess and create hypothesis of what is being said or done, so they try to make associations between the instantaneous context and the language adopted (Tabors, 2006); when they learn and use some words or expressions you can understand (e.g. "I want a banana, please"); when they use general words and terms before specifying and concrete them; and last but not least, when they work on the big things and leave the small part of the language such as articles or even verbs (e.g. "Yes food" for "I'm hungry and I want food"). For social strategies, children sometimes tend to act as if they knew what is going on, even if they don't understand anything; with some words, they can also pretend that they can speak the language; and they count on friends for help (Bruton, 2009).

Peers also have an important influence in terms of language learning. Peers tend to be learning models, so an easy way to produce output in a second language is by imitation. They also sometimes correct each other, and they even produce different language combinations, both rhythmic and phonological (Levy, 1984).

3.3.2. Teachers' role

Teachers' role is also an essential factor to take into account in children's second language acquisition; they must provide children security and help when necessary (Molina & de Velasco Gálvez, 2011). Aucouturier (2004 cited in Molina and de Velasco Gálvez, 2011) highlights 7 aspects we should have in mind:

- Be conscious: adults must be aware of their own emotional situation in order to know their limits.

- Be a law symbol: the adult is the person who establishes the norms. Adults should be cosy and understanding as well as showing firmness.

- Show physical and affective security: through the help needed.

- Be empathic: to be able to listen and wait, and to understand others.

- Availability: it's a way of being. We should allow children to express themselves freely.

- Establish an asymmetrical relationship: adults must guide children's processes without involving themselves too much.

Van Avermaet, Colpin, van Gorp, Bogaert, and Van den Branden (2006) distinguish different features that a teacher must take into account when providing a task-based activity with the children. First and foremost, they propose that teachers should reach children's interest at the beginning of the session, as well as encouraging all of them, even if it appears an obstacle or difficulty appear. As Flores and Corcoll (2011) mention, teachers should be able to adapt and welcome children's interests. The teacher should also use scaffolding, by providing the support and guidance needed in order to encourage meaningful interactions with all of them. Van den Branden (2006) also remarks the importance of not controlling too much what children have to do to resolve a task.

Krashen believes that the language doesn't have to be taught directly, but it will develop and appear over time (Tyers, 2002). The author supports his Affective Filter Hypothesis which highlights that Comprehensible Input (CI) should be provided to children in order to create meaningful learning. In other words, the acquisition of a second language will only take place if we produce understandable input, "input that is not too simple or too complex" (Perera, 2001, p. 336). Furthermore, Long (1983) supports the Interaction hypothesis, based on the importance of the interactional modifications that pupils use in order to communicate for a greater development in a second language. Swain (1985; 1995 cited in Perera, 2001, p. 338) also remarks that children must have the possibility to produce some output and use the language.

Flores and Corcoll (2011) add that appropriate and meaningful repetitions are helpful for children to acquire and produce a language. Moreover, teachers should give them the necessary input in each experience to enrich their vocabulary. The visual support is a powerful aspect to have in mind, as well as creating meaningful learning context in which children can develop their learning globally. Another two strategies that the teacher could use are rephrasing and recasting. In other words, correcting a child's mistake while speaking in English or translating in the L2 what the child has said in his or her L1. When a child is trying to communicate with a second language, it is completely normal to use his or her L1, or even code switching. It is part of the process of acquisition of an L2 and it means that they are progressing their interlanguage (Flores and Corcoll, 2011). Instead, using too much our L1 will lead restrictions in the amount of opportunities pupils have to communicate in a L2. So, the second language input and output will be restricted (Perera, 2001).

All in all, Dorathy and Mahalakshmi (2011) clearly indicate 3 roles. First, teachers should be facilitators of the new language by "monitoring the class and offering assistance as and when necessary" (p.5). Secondly, they must be spectators, and they should watch how children play in the role-play area, and if necessary, add comments and or advises. Finally, they should be participants as well and get involved in the game. Children will learn from you. Moyles (2010) remarks the involvement of the educator. We, as teachers, should join them by reinforcing the learning areas we want them to develop, shaping the game, helping them and giving structures, as well as proposing possible challenges.

3.3.3. Children's interactions and ways of communication through role-play

Children's language development is one of the main objectives of pre-school. Through role-play, children have the possibility to promote the oral language and interactions between peers. What is more, as in preschool there is a huge growth and development of language and cognitive skills, children tend to develop a more complex play through cooperation with peers (McLean et al., 1996 cited in Oddo and Castleberry, 2013).

When children play in life-like situations, they can learn certain linguistic structures (New Brunswick Department of Education, 1996). In fact, many researchers have highlighted the positive impact of role-play in terms of the oral proficiency in children's L2 (Garbati and Mady, 2015). Certainly, by providing a huge range of experiences to children while playing, they will learn and acquire new concepts and words in a verbal way that will satisfy them (Levy, 1984). What is more, all the language produced in these settings will be clearly developed. As pupils gain a greatest ability to maintain an interaction, play becomes less significant, and they can progresseively start to expand their own competence to verbally interact (Levy, 1984).

While playing, children tend to use the language as a facilitator for communicating with others, as well as using it as support for play. So, in role-play, as any other type of play, children learn the L2 easily if they interact with other peers rather than by formal instruction (Ervin-Tripp, 1991). All in all, peers have a great influence in the acquisition of English. One way would be through imitation of moves, strategies or vocabulary used by other children. Another tactic that would increase the learning of a second language would be to relate the activity done with the object used, simply by talking about it in an explicit way. It is a good way for children to link the vocabulary with their meaning. Correction is also used by children during the role-play, and in fact, it is crucial to rectify their productions and performances.

Levy (1984) suggests that play stimulates changes in language, makes us acquire new words and concepts, stimulates language use, increases meta-linguistic consciousness and fosters verbal thinking. In terms of language features learned, Ervin-Tripp (1991) states that children tend to change their pitch while playing, as well as repeating and exercising rhymes and sounds. Garvey (1977 cited in Levy, 1984, p.58) agrees with that idea that preschoolers learning English as a second language play with sounds and spontaneous rhyming. This speech make children gain language skilfulness (Levy, 1984). So, depending on the area and type of game they are playing, they will use higher or lower speech. This differentiation in terms of sounds appear in very early stages.

Vocabulary is also enriched in all situation displayed in the role-play zone, as children produce a huge amount of rich experiences with varied expressions and vocabulary. Most of this need to learn specified vocabulary is due to the fact that pupils want to play and act the particular role and character correctly. Moreover, if a child knows a word and uses it while playing, another child can benefit from that. Peers have a huge amount of experiences that can clearly offer resources and strategies to enrich others (Levy, 1984).

All in all, "the pitch, intonation, vocabulary, syntactic, and discourse marker variations come from the need to represent social categories in the child's version of the social system" (Levy, 1984, p.93).

Through gestures; head movements; facial expressions; eye-contact and gaze; kinesics (body language); proxemics (social distance); haptics (touch) and backchannelling, silences and breathing; children acquire easily a second language (Tyers, 2002). Children showing some of these non-verbal cues before producing output, could later convey us to think that the second language is starting to be strongly acquired.

4. Methodology

The methodology I used was based on examining the process and evolution of pupil's second language acquisition 3 different times per week for 8 weeks. As P5 is the only stage which does some English sessions in all Preschool, I focused my research on both P5 classes, having 49 children in total. For acquiring accurate results, I chose 4 children to focus on with my observation. It will be specified below.

The first observation I carried out was by following the weekly session of English with Cindy. The sessions were on Monday afternoon for one class and on Tuesday afternoon for the other one, and they were always in several role-play spaces. Her sessions were based on practicing vocabulary and stablished full sentences (e.g. What is the matter?) in real life situations. The sequence of the session was always the same, except some days in which it could vary: sing the "Hello" and the "Weather" songs, introduce the game, do an example, let the children practice the activity proposed, and sing the "Goodbye" song. Each day, they would have the opportunity to work on different role-play spaces around the corridor or sometimes even mixing two of them. During the 8 weeks I have been in the school, I have seen how Cindy works the supermarket, the doctor, the restaurant and the fancy dresses spaces. In these cases, Cindy was the one who was mainly carrying out the activity. However, sometimes she needed my help and ask me to execute the session or part of it alone. The second opportunity I had to observe them was every Wednesday afternoon, when all the group class had the freedom to go and play in the role-play area. Naturally, I interacted more with the children I was examining. The third and last was one morning with only the 4 kids I was considering for my observation. These were great occasions to communicate and interact with the children in a natural way, by role-playing.

What is important to mention is that I carried out all my stay in English. I considered I had to follow the methodology used by the English teacher, as she pretends to be an English speaker. Apart from that, I reckon that transforming myself into an English educator would provide me more opportunities to observe how children try to communicate and express themselves in another language. These are the reasons why I entered in the school as an English speaker since the first day, so children knew they could only interact with me in English.

4.1. Paradigm and method

Through my research question: "How does role-play affect pre-schoolers' second language acquisition?", I will develop the interpretative paradigm, as I will analyse the objectives proposed without implementing anything because the school is already working English through role-play.

Wilson (1971), Blumer (1973) and Mayring (1990) stated that the main purpose of the interpretative paradigm is that humans are the protagonists of their own reality, without the necessity of being imposed external constructions, such as social and cultural norms or rules. In other words, what a person does or how he or she reacts is due to an interpretative process, as each one attributes to situations or activities a specific meaning. We could say that this paradigm is based on subjective, dynamic and contextual interpretations of humans.

Yin, Merriam and Stake are three authors, founders of the case study research. On one hand, Yin (2002) defines case as "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context" (p. 13). For him, a case study empirically analyses a case or cases by questioning the phenomenon of interest with "how" or "why". On the other hand, Stake (1995) shares Louis Smith's (1978) method's interpretation: a case should be viewed as "a bounded system" and explore it "as an object rather than a process" (p. 2). He describes case as "a specific, a complex, functioning thing," more specifically "an integrated system" which "has a boundary and working parts" and purposive (in social sciences and human services) (p. 2).

So, having all those definitions in mind, I will use a case study to answer my research question, as it uses interpretative and logical investigations based on experience and knowledge (Pegram, 2000). A case study analyses a situation in context; and in my case, the school location, the team, children and teachers, environment and materials are the clue of my dissertation.

4.2. Techniques

I have used different techniques and tools which have helped me to prove and support my research, such as document review, observation and interviews.

First and foremost, it has been necessary to review existing documents of the school to know more about its philosophy, objectives, context, history and so on. Moreover, official documents

such as the PEC, the linguistic project, or the webpage have helped me to understand how the school works.

Then, the observation tool has been essential and really useful for data collection. I have had the possibility to watch children's processes in the 3 different situations mentioned before, their behaviours and attitudes, and how they interact between them and with the teacher. The observation is a good way to collect information when something is occurring, without the need to rely on people's willingness or ability to provide information. The information observed has been written down as a diary for further reflection (see Appendix 2). In here, you can find transcriptions of children's vocabulary productions, as well as their behaviours or attitude. Furthermore, an intervention table has also been created in order to be more specific while observing and analysing the children (see Appendix 2). The observational tables carried out took into account aspects such as the stage in which children are in terms of speaking, listening and understanding English, as well as more detailed phases from each of these features.

Besides, in Appendix 1 (USB format) there are also some audios which have helped me to go deep in further reflection. These audios enable a clear idea of children's interaction, fluency and vocabulary produced.

Last but not least, I will get more in-depth information about my research theme through an interview to the English teachers to corroborate the analysis (see Appendix 3).

4.3. Selection criteria

Before starting with the analysis of the data obtained, it is necessary to define the criteria carried out during the practical application.

Cindy, the English teacher, considered that I needed to focus my observation on specific children. If not, I would gain a general idea of the process of the whole class, but I would not have a clear idea of the total evolution. So, with her help, we chose 4 children following these parameters:

- Variety of English input they gain outside the school (After-school English sessions, English babysitter or nothing).
- Children that already have a notion of what is English and that can communicate or at least, they try. This way, I could see a progress for 3 months.
- Two children from each class.

- None of them are English native speakers. Otherwise, I could not observe the evolution of the language.

So, according to all these criteria, we selected the children below:

Child 1: M (purple class) – No English outside the school.

Child 2: C (purple class) – English babysitter since she was born.

Child 3: E (blue class) – No English outside the school.

Child 4: M (blue class) – After-school English classes.

5. Case study

5.1. Description of the school context

The school in which I carried out my intervention is defined as inclusive, secular and respectful with plurality; and it enhances values and identity traits such as:

- CATALAN: as it uses Catalan as the vehicular and learning language.
- COMPREHENSIVE: because it enhances self-esteem, responsibility, autonomy, tolerance, cooperation and respect.
- It is also considered a DEMOCRATIC AND PARTICIPATIVE school, with rules based on democratic principles.
- PLURALIST: by stimulating solidarity, respect for others and the attitude of dialogue. Moreover, it is also based on a non-sexist education.
- It's a school that works in terms of EQUALITY, by not making differences due to sex, religious or political beliefs, etc. and by respecting the ideological options of the teachers, families and students.
- And last but not least, it's also INTEGRATING, as it attends diversity in all its fields and ensuring social cohesion.

What's more, they also work on educational excellence, recognizing and facilitating the commitment of families in the educative process.

To offer quality education, they consider a number of basic aspects such as permanent teacher training in order to be up to date on pedagogical questions; constant collaboration with all the sectors that make up the educational community (parents, AMPA, City Hall, cultural associations …); and coordination with the Institute of the same village.

There is a team of 29 teachers, a TEI (Specialist in Preschool whose main functions are elaborating and carrying out activities to promote physical and mental development, as well as social behaviours of children), a guard, a caretaker, an administrative, 388 children and their respective families. What's more, there are also the educators, the kitchen and the cleaning team.

It is important to state that the infant school works by workshops. Each class has created a big space that promotes the infants the discovering and experimentation. The school has distributed each class, with a different colour, to a specific workshop; each of them following some main objectives:

- Making visible and accessible all the materials of each workshop.
- Favouring simultaneous proposals and actions to work with small groups.

- Promoting time flexibility and freedom.
- Increasing the frequency and quality of the communication with families through the "book of life" and the "individual dossiers" to follow the path of each child and the group.

The corridor is another learning area they have created. For taking advantage of this space, apart from hanging their jackets and bag, they have also transformed it as the role-play area.

The other spaces, the ones attributed to workshops, are the following ones:
1) Environment workshop located in the south playground: In this workshop, through magnifying glasses, pliers, cans, binoculars and so on, the children are in contact with the elements of our closest natural environment.
2) Big material workshop: there, children have the possibility to reproduce and represent both reality and fantasy thorough a huge amount of materials.
3) Chunks workshop (yellow class): in this class, infants can experiment, manipulate and observe materials such as: volcano stones, rice, corn, chickpeas, walnuts and some plastic pieces.
4) Small material workshop (green class): this workshop's objective consists in developing simultaneous activities. Some children can create gears, dismantle small electrical appliance, they can also play with the light and colour with the overhead projector; and they can even build structures with wood, magnets, screws, etc.
5) Natural material workshop (blue class): here, children have the opportunity to work with different natural elements. They can create wood or trunk constructions, as well as experimenting with seeds, dried fruit, little stones and sticks.
6) Water workshop (purple class): children can satisfy their innate curiosity for water. They can start observing its characteristics and behaviour.
7) Light and shadows workshop (orange class): this workshop enables children the discovering of light and shadow effects with their body and materials.
8) Painting workshop (red class): it's a space for creating and communicating through materials related with the expressive language.

5.2. Analysis of the data and discussion

Through the techniques mentioned before and during three times per week and for 8 weeks, I had the opportunity to analyse different aspects in role-play in these four P5 chosen children. The intervention tables, the diary written through the observation, the English teacher's interview and the audios recorded have helped me to extract meaningful conclusions.

In general, P5 pupils tended to communicate in their L1, especially when interacting with the rest of the peers. However, lots of them tried to interact in their L2 by imitating the English teacher or me, or by pronouncing words they already knew.

Nevertheless, I would like to highlight specific aspects I could interpret during the 8 weeks of observation and intervention in those particular children.

According to Clarke and OAM (2009) those children were between stage 2 (Becoming familiar with English) and 3 (Becoming confident user of English) in terms of English oral language productions. For instance, they all produce understandable language and some of them even pronounce them in an English accent. What is more, they start to know a huge amount of English words and they understand more than can express. This aspect will be specified in the "understanding" section. Besides, child 1, 2 and 4 also begin to follow simple conversations in English; and child 2 and 4 start to respond to directions or explanations without the need to use non-verbal prompts. What is more, child 2 presents stage four signs as she her confidence while talking in English increases and she is able to extend what she says with help. However, these 4 children also show stage 2 features such as the use of non-verbal gestures to communicate and express themselves; and the use of repetition, rhymes or echoes. In the Appendix 2 we can see a different intervention table for each child in which their stage is identified. It encompasses speaking, listening and understanding a second language features with several parameters in order to accurate the results obtained. All 4 children were familiar with English and some of them started to become more confident with it.

Furthermore, the intervention tables attached in Appendix 2 show the results observed during the sessions; but below, you will see how they evolved in a general way according to several aspects: vocabulary, strategies used, interaction, relationship and understanding.

Vocabulary
These tables show the vocabulary development of each child throughout the weeks and focusing on 3 aspects. First and foremost, if the child, while producing the English word, understands it. Secondly, if he or she continues repeating it and last but not least, if the infant has acquired it and begins to use it. It is important to clarify that in these tables there are only registered the words children are able to say just in English or approximations. There can be words repeated from the teacher or peers, or that they have produced by themselves. In other words, there are no Catalan nor Spanish words written down, but we can find words in which

their pronunciation is closed to English or words in which you see they have a clear idea of what they want to say.

In Appendix 2, a diary with all the output produced by each child will be found. So, apart from Catalan, Spanish, English, a mixture or invented vocabulary, you will also find the context in which it has been generated.

CHILD 1

L2 Vocabulary	UNDERSTANDS	REPEATS	USES
Week 1			
Tomato	X		X
Week 2			
Six	X		X
Bye	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Red	X		X
Four pills	X		
Week 3			
Yes	X	X	X
Princess	X	X	X
A dress	X		X
Spiderman	X		
Elsa	X		X
No	X	X	X
Arm	X		
Three babies	X		
Two and two	X		
A lemon	X		
Bye bye	X	X	X
Hello	X	X	X
Two littles	X		
Banana, three	X		
"Crussants"	X		
One, two, three... ten	X	X	X

Week 4			
Look Charlotte	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
Bye bye	X	X	X
Dress	X		X
Red, blue, green and yellow	X		X
This	X		
Mummy, mummy	X		
Body	X		
Baby, baby, baby	X	X	X
Me Paula	X		
Block it, block it			
Finish	X	X	X
Charlotte	X	X	X
Week 5			
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
One, one, one	X		X
One, two, three... twelve	X		X
Superman			
Class	X		
No shouting boys!	X	X	X
Princess	X		
Pink, black, yellow, blue	X	X	X
blue	X		X
Elsa			
Let it go	X		X
Baby, baby			
T-shirt, dress, pyjama	X	X	X
Sunny	X		
Tomato	X		X
Charlotte	X		X
Bye bye	X	X	X
Hanger	X	X	X
Three babies			X
Quickly	X		
Let's go	X		
	X	X	X
Week 6			
/skigi/ (hanger)	X		X
Baby Charlotte	X		X
Water	X		X
Week 7			
Robot	X		
Star	X		
Numbers	X	X	X
Parts of the body	X	X	X
Purple	X	X	X
Oh my god!		X	X
E is not here	X		X

Bye bye	X	X	X
Charlotte	X	X	X
Is a baby M	X		
Butterfly, butterfly	X		
Hang it	X		X
Is a …		X	X
Week 8			
Ah, speak in English	X		X
Chocolate	X		X
Yes	X	X	X
Here	X	X	X
Carrots	X		X
One moment	X	X	X
Two sandwich	X		X
Happy birthday	X		X
No	X	X	X
Perfect	X		X
Is a …		X	X
No look	X	X	X
Bye bye	X	X	X
Baby girl	X	X	X
"Missage" (message)	X		
Is a pink dress	X	X	X
E not happy	X	X	X
One, two… eight	X	X	X
Skirt, shoes	X		X
Not big	X		
Charlotte	X	X	X
Look	X	X	X
Doctor	X	X	X
Ballerina	X	X	X
Father	X		X
Five minutes please	X	X	X
Hanger (hungry)			
Star	X		X
Not	X		X

CHILD 2

L2 Vocabulary	UNDERSTANDS	REPEATS	USES
Week 1			
Patient	X		
Horse	X		X
I'm swimming, yeah	X		X
Here	X	X	X
Week 2			
What's the "mitter"?	X	X	X
Hello	X	X	X
Sit	X		X
You patient	X	X	X
Four	X	X	X
Lay down	X	X	
Here	X	X	X

Week 3			
Stand up	X	X	
Shoulders	X		X
Princess	X	X	X
Bee	X		X
Supermarket	X	X	X
No, an apple	X		X
Tomato	X		
Hello	X	X	X
Week 4			
Hello	X	X	X
This, this	X	X	X
Restaurant	X	X	X
There	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
Me	X	X	X
The mum / Jo mum	X	X	X
Yes, a dress	X	X	X
Brother! Ai no, sister, sister	X	X	X
One	X	X	X
A girl	X	X	X
Class?	X	X	X
Week 5			
Water	X		X
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Pink princess	X	X	X
Restaurant no	X	X	X
My mum	X	X	X
Sister	X	X	X
Me, me, me	X	X	X
And my baby…	X		
This is joia	X	X	
In the class?	X	X	X
Well done	X		
Let's go	X		X
Clothes vocabulary	X	X	X
Week 6			
That	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Not Marc	X		X
To the toilet?	X	X	X
No, 3 minutes no	X	X	X
Twinkle, twinkle, little star…	X	X	X
Rock'n'roll	X		
Me	X	X	X
Week 7			
Monster	X	X	
Hello	X	X	X
E is the doctor	X	X	X
Is mine	X	X	X

L2 Vocabulary	UNDERSTANDS	REPEATS	USES
Who's that?	X		
Wait, wait	X		X
Twinkle, twinkle, little star..	X	X	X
Charlotte, another one	X	X	X
Hanger	X	X	X
E is not in the school	X		X
Is a butterfly	X		X
Yes	X	X	X
The supermarket	X	X	X
My shoes	X	X	X
Numbers	X	X	X
Big or small?	X	X	X
Pears	X		X
One moment	X	X	X
Name, name	X	X	X
Week 8			
Hello	X	X	X
Tomato	X	X	X
Sunny, no raining	X	X	X
Okay, two tomatoes	X		X
Carrot big or small?	X		X
Two o three?	X		X
Card or cash?	X		X
No	X	X	X
Bye, bye	X	X	X
Yes, this yes	X	X	X
No, perfect no	X		X
Yes	X	X	X
Yes, fever	X		X
Numbers	X	X	X
No running	X	X	X
Ballerina	X	X	X
A girl	X	X	X
E a group no			
Look	X	X	X
Twenty	X		
The doctor	X	X	X
You are the doctor	X	X	X

CHILD 3

L2 Vocabulary	UNDERSTANDS	REPEATS	USES
Week 1			
One, two, three…	X	X	X
Hello	X	X	X
Restaurant	X	X	X
What's that	X	X	X
Week 2			
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Hello	X	X	X
Bye, bye	X	X	X

You bum bum no			X
Week 3			
Hat	X	X	
Buy?			
This and this	X	X	X
One	X	X	X
Week 4			
Pyjama	X	X	X
Eh? One	X	X	X
Baby no	X	X	X
Hello, hello	X	X	X
Me mama Marta	X	X	X
Week 5			
Hi	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Hello	X	X	X
This one	X	X	X
Baby, baby	X	X	X
The photo! Goodbye	X		X
Coffee	X		X
And me, and me	X	X	X
Let's go	X	X	X
Week 6			
The baby	X	X	X
/haigui/ (here)	X		X
One, two, three, four, five…	X	X	X
Week 7			
Mouth	X	X	X
Alient	X	X	X
Monster	X	X	X
Three	X	X	X
Blue	X	X	X
Little	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Doctor	X	X	X
Week 8			
Can I have…?	X	X	
Apple red	X	X	X
One	X	X	X
A banana	X	X	X
Strawberry	X	X	
One pear or two pears?	X	X	
Dress	X	X	X
"Jo" yes		X	
Photo, photo, photo	X	X	X
Babies	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
Bye, bye	X	X	X
2 minutes?	X	X	
One moment	X	X	X

CHILD 4

L2 Vocabulary	UNDERSTANDS	REPEATS	USES
Week 1			
Bye, bye	X	X	X
See you	X	X	X
Week 2			
Green, blue, orange	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
Water	X	X	X
And this	X	X	X
To the doctor	X	X	X
Week 3			
Cloudy	X	X	X
Cold	X	X	X
No running	X	X	X
This	X	X	X
Cereals	X	X	X
This no	X	X	X
Croissants	X	X	X
Week 4			
Yes	X	X	X
A T-shirt	X	X	X
Five	X	X	X
Week 5			
It's cloudy	X	X	X
Charlotte! This!	X	X	X
Princess	X	X	X
Pink	X	X	X
Rabbit	X	X	X
And hello	X	X	X
Or touch your foot	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Tidy up	X	X	
Quickly	X	X	
And me, and me?	X	X	X
Week 6			
Yes, and pum	X	X	X
Yes, yes	X	X	X
Baby	X	X	X
Water	X	X	X
Charlotte	X	X	X
No	X	X	X
Week 7			
No	X	X	X
Monster	X		X
Two heads	X		X
Dinosaur	X		X
Blue	X	X	X
B	X		X
Two, three, four, five…	X	X	X
Eyes	X		X

No, A is the mother, I'm the sister	X		X
Girl and boy	X	X	X
Yes	X	X	X
Charlotte	X	X	X
Hello butterfly	X		X
Girl	X	X	X
Tomato	X	X	X
Three	X	X	X
This big one	X		X
Yes, pizza	X		X
This	X	X	X
Big, two little	X	X	X
Oranges, pears	X	X	X
Numbers	X	X	X
Cash	X	X	X
Like this	X		
	X		
Week 8			
All of us	X		X
Hello	X	X	X
What…	X		X
Orange	X	X	X
One, two, three, four…?	X	X	X
Pear	X	X	X
Tomato	X	X	X
Big…little?	X	X	X
Charlotte, finish	X	X	X
Three euros	X	X	X
Can I … pizza?	X	X	X
Please, three muffins	X		X
This	X	X	X
Small	X	X	X
Potatoes	X	X	X
This, this or this?	X	X	X

According to these data, we can regard that there has been an increasing use of English vocabulary. In a general overview, it is seen that all children have done an improvement process in terms of the English output produced. Obviously, there are some differences between them. As those previous tables show, child 1 had produced a huge amount of words from the third week until the last one. We can also observe that during the first week, she was observing and listening, and she just produced one word in English, the rest were in Catalan or Spanish. Besides, child 2 and 4 clearly made big progress throughout the weeks, as we can see the English output they were able to produce at the end compared from the one produced during the first weeks. Finally, child 3 produced less vocabulary, but she has still increased the amount of it.

From the 4 children observed, we can notice that some of them used more complex vocabulary than others, and that some words are the same for everyone. "Yes", "no", "hello", "bye bye", "class", "baby", "restaurant" are some examples of general words and terms that all 4 used mostly during the 8 weeks. Apart from those, some children also used or at least, tried to use some more concrete and challenging words or sentences such as "cash" (child 2 and 4), "muffins" (child 4), "hang it" (child 1), "Oh my god" (child 1) or "What is the matter?" (child 2).

In the speaking tables (Appendix 2) we can examine that all these 4 children are able to produce two-and-three-word utterances in English. What is more, from week 7, child 1 also started to use a kind of structure in all the sentences she produced, as she introduced "is a …" in affirmative sentences or questions. Furthermore, child 2 even created full structures and whole sentences (e.g. "E is not in the school"). However, it is seen that some small parts of the language such as articles, adjectives, pronouns or verbs are not used for none of them.

After 8 weeks, they used more English to communicate than at the beginning of the sessions, when they also used Catalan or Spanish. Bruton (2009) defined 4 periods or stages, as previously stated in point 3.1.2. In the cases experimented and observed, there are clear evidences that the majority of them are in the telegraphic and formulaic speech period, in which they start to use words from the L2. However, they also look to interaction in their L1, as well as use for gestures and facial expressions in order not to have the need to communicate verbally (see speaking tables in Appendix 2). These last aspects will be highlighted below.

Strategies used

During all the sessions, children have used lots of strategies. Two main ones were gestures and onomatopoeias to communicate and express what they wanted to say. Moreover, Bruton (2009) also identifies that children who are in the observational and listening period, have a tendency to use gestures, facial expressions and sounds instead of using verbal communication (see Appendix 2, p. 49). One of the reasons could be that they don't have enough English vocabulary acquired, or they have the fear to say something wrong. In Cindy's interview (Appendix 3) we can see that she completely agrees with the idea previously mentioned, but she also adds that children also tend to go through their previous knowledge in order to use it and make themselves understood.

As another strategy, the English teacher mentions that the majority of children use their L1 to communicate and interact, as they are faced with a complex situation and they are just

initiating their L2. In these cases, as mentioned before, pupils spoke Catalan, sometimes Spanish (e.g. "pequeño" or "cumpleaños") or they even made a mixture of both languages. For instance, child 3 was the one who used more her L1 to communicate and interact with the rest of the peers and with me (see Appendix 2.3). Child 4 sometimes used a mixture of her L1 and English (e.g. "This malament", Appendix 2.4, p.61), and child 1 and 2 tended to speak the majority of time in English and avoiding Catalan or Spanish.

Girls and boys also tried to make associations between the situation presented and the language used by the others (Tabors, 2005), as well as using known words which you, as a teacher, may understand. Furthermore, telegraphic speech was also used by some children. For instance, child 1 said "bye bye shoe" for saying that she took off her shoe, so she just joined content words for transmitting a message. To put another example, child 3 mentioned "Tu bum bum no", meaning that my heart was not beating; or "baby no" and "Me mama Marta".

Other children prefer not saying anything and wait for other to interact or imitate. Pupils imitate expressions and words pronounced by the referent person or the rest of the peers. This last strategy is shown in the Appendix 2, but below there are some examples:
- Child 1 repeated "hang it", "arm" and "What's the matter?".
- "Fever", "ballerina", "Who's that?" and "wait" are some of the words that child 2 repeated from me.
- Child 3 repeated "Can I have…?", "coffee" or "one, two, three".
- I said: "This big one" and the child 4 repeats it. She also repeated "like this" or "quickly".

Interaction

After 8 weeks, children tended to interact more than during the first sessions. In fact, they had the desire to talk more and explain you more things, even from external issues such as their hobbies. So, the communication between every child and me improved a lot. What is more, one of the essential issues highlighted by Cindy (Appendix 3) that contributes to the interaction between peers was the teacher's role. He or she has to be a figure who promotes the maximum input and enables interactional situations in which children can use the language significantly.

By being active, children automatically produce verbal communication. In role-play, children have the opportunity to change their roles and act according to the situation given and by following the rules established (Bodrova, 2008). This fact has a great impact in oral language development as they have the need to communicate in each situation, with the other peers

and with me. So, as the time of exposure increased, children heard more English and consequently, they finished producing more English than at the beginning of the sessions. The fact that I only knew English and I only could speak this language enabled children the need to communicate themselves in their second language or at least, familiarise themselves with the language. In connection with that, child 1, 2 and 4 were able to carry out an English conversation (see the speaking table in Appendix 2). Therefore, meaningful interactions and learning contexts were essential.

This aspect is closely related with the one below.

Relationships

Day by day, they built a more positive affective relationship with me. They sang songs and they tried to explain to me everything that happened to them. However, at the beginning of the sessions I did with them, they were asking: "Again? We always come with you and do English!" (in Catalan).

Some of them gained confidence more quickly than others and started to talk, interact and participate more and easily. For example, child 1 and 2 were more talkative than child 3 and 4, who were shier. In the audios recorded (in Appendix 1) it is seen the difference between the desire of talk and to interact of these children, as well as in Appendix 2, which shows their evolution through the weeks. So, at the beginning, I couldn't observe any type of motivation and desire to play in English in these two last children mentioned, but days passed by and I could observe that after some weeks, when they saw me come to the class, they were more excited and wanted to come to me and speak English, specially child 1 and 2. All in all, more positive attitudes and trust was built, so the communication increased rapidly.

Understanding

Children found more difficult to speak the language and produce output than understanding what I was saying. I could observe this fact when they perfectly answered the questions I was asking them or when they translated into Catalan what I was saying in English. The ones that used more the translation were child 1, 2 and 4. Below are shown some examples:
Child 2
- "Is it yours vol dir que és teu eh!".
- "Vol dir que has crescut però ets la meva filla"
- Cindy: "There are no more opportunities" / She: "Això vol dir que no hi ha més oportunitats"
- Me: "How much is that?" / She translates that in: "Quants diners?"

Child 4:

- Me: "Which are their names?" / She: "Com es diuen?" (asking A).

In this section it is also important to mention that child 3 was always asking "Què vol dir?" in all the things said or asked (see Appendix 2.3). This lack of understanding English deprived her meaningful interaction and communication with me.

According to the listening tables (see Appendix 2) we can examine that all 4 children started to understand English words related to specific objects or actions. Moreover, child 2 produced an increasing number of words. In terms of requests and directions, they also began to understand them without the need to rely on contextual cues; except child 3, who only followed simple directions with contextual cues. With regard to basic and advanced concepts, we find that the majority of them began to understand words in English in more complex concepts.

Apart from all those features analysed, another aspect important to contrast is the fact that those 4 children have had different types of English input. Child 1 and 3 don't go to after-school English classes, child 4 goes to a language school and child 2 has an English babysitter since she was born. In Appendix 1 we can hear the fluency in which child 2 speaks and the accent she has. Moreover, she is the one able to create full sentences in her L2. Child 4 has potential inside her but because of her shyness, she doesn't produce all the knowledge she has inside. Focusing on child 1 and 3, both don't go to after-school English classes, but between them there exist a huge difference. Appendix 2 shows a clear comparison in terms of vocabulary produced, interactions and understanding of the L2. As mentioned before, child 1 tried not to speak Catalan and on the other hand, child 3 find it hard to produce English words. What is more, as she did not understand all the things I was expecting them to understand, her interaction was not as efficient as the ones I had with child 1. Besides, in the vocabulary tables attached previously, it is seen a great difference between the huge amount of words produced by child 1 and 3, as well as the complexity of them.

5.3. Results

At the beginning of my Final Degree Project, I raised a question wondering it could be answered at the end of the research. Through the theoretical framework and the practical application, I could say that role-play fosters the acquisition of a second language.

So, answering my dissertation research question: **How does role-play affect pre-schoolers' second language acquisition?** and as reported by Cindy, through role-play children actively play and learn in significant and motivating contexts. It is a way of acquiring a new language naturally, as pupils have the opportunity to produce English output according to their needs. Furthermore, by being active while playing, children start to familiarize the language and acquire it without too much effort. The children observed and analysed are a clear example of the evolution and progress they can gain with English just with constant exposure, and active and motivating environments.

This role-play space in the school has enabled children the possibility to interact with meaningful contexts, leading them the full development of their curiosity and interaction between them. As mentioned before, role-play provides children opportunities to change your role and adapt yourself to the situation given in terms of actions and language. What is more, they are motivated to do their best and to act or imitate perfectly the new character.

Language contact through role-play contributes in children's learning, as it was a way to speak another language in life-like situations and in a huge amount of different experiences. By providing them a wide range of objects, spaces and roles; we are leading them to explore lots of possibilities that the situation allows. So, these situations enable and generate to children the need to use the language. This need also arises from the teacher. Cindy outlined that frequency and exposure in conjunction with the need to produce the language are the main factors that contribute in the acquisition of a L2. So, to minimize the use of children's L1, the teacher is presented as a person who don't understand nor speak Catalan or Spanish. This fact enables them the need to speak English to communicate or look for strategies to make oneself understandable.

In my practical observation I have realised that using real and contextualised environments has enabled children the possibility to relate the language used with the actions carried out. So, the learning had meaning and sense for them. Moreover, as mentioned before, there has been a process in terms of interaction and vocabulary used.

6. Conclusions

6.1. Limitations

It is necessary to remark some limitations found while carrying out in my dissertation. As it has been a case-study based on 4 children in one unique school, the results obtained may not be generalized. Furthermore, I only have had 8 weeks to observe the progress of those children. So, having more time would have enabled me the possibility to examine more strategies used by the children and how role-play contributes to the achievement and acquisition of a second language.

Another aspect I would like to highlight is that the sessions observed were too repetitive, not for the children but for us. This is due the fact that the sessions were carried on small groups; so, Cindy had to repeat the same session for all the groups. Furthermore, the fact of pretending to be an English person hasn't given me the opportunity to fully develop rich dialogues and interaction with children, as they did not have enough vocabulary or because the lack of understanding. However, this has not affected the proximity they finally gained with the reference teacher. In other words, as children were more used to the language and increased their confidence, they started to find a sense between the role-play material presented, the game proposed and the language used. Moreover, as the reference teacher only spoke in English, children needed to find strategies to communicate and express themselves with her, there was no other choice.

Last but not least, having evaluated the different stage in which child 1 and child 3 are, and knowing that both of them do not go to after-school English classes, it would have been a good idea to analyse their context outside the school in order to have a better and clear idea of the contact they have with English.

6.2. Reflections

Through this dissertation I have realised the importance of acquiring a new and foreign language in significant and meaningful contexts. Children in this stage learn while playing and having fun, they have to be motivated in what they are doing. Then, the language is just the bridge between you and them.

What I could see is that presenting myself as an English person from the beginning allowed me the possibility to see the interactions and strategies they used to communicate with me or

Cindy frequently and in a clearer way. Apart from being a challenge for them, they rapidly identify that with you, they have to communicate and make themselves understood in their L2. So, they find that interacting in English becomes a need and that it has sense. Moreover, by having a role model speaking English all the time, children unconsciously familiarize with the language and start to achieve different language sources. In fact, pupils learn what they hear most.

Certainly, the execution of this Final Degree Project has enriched me personally and professionally. I have learned a huge amount of different authors' ideas related to the theme investigated and I have had the opportunity to relate them in a model school for a lot of people. Apart from learning about the philosophy and methodology carried out in the school, I have gained tools to teach English by using meaningful methods and techniques. So, it has been a great opportunity to learn aspects which will, for sure, help me in my future profession as a teacher.

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8. Appendices

Appendices are all attached in a separated document.