

Becoming Bilingual: Children's Insights About Making Friends in Bilingual Settings

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Abstract The majority of the world speaks more than one language, yet the impact of learning a second language has rarely been studied from a child's perspective. This paper describes monolingual children's insights into becoming bilingual at four time points: 2 months before moving to another country (while living in Australia), as well as 1, 6, and 12 months after moving to Germany. The participants were two monolingual English-speaking siblings (a male aged 7–8 years and a female aged 9–10 years) who subsequently learned to speak German. At each of the four time points, interviews were undertaken with each child using child-friendly drawing and questionnaire techniques. Three themes were identified: (1) the children's awareness of language competence, (2) inclusion factors, and (3) exclusion factors that influenced friendship formation. The impact of language ability on making friends was a dominant theme that arose across the four time points and was triangulated across data collection methods. The children made friends with others who had similar language competence in German, even though they were younger, and did not share the same first language. Age-matched peers who were more competent in German were less likely to be described as friends. Across all three themes, the playground was highlighted by both children as the key site where becoming bilingual most strongly impacted initiation and negotiation of friendships. Becoming bilingual impacted the children's friendship formation and socialisation opportunities with more competent language users.

Keywords Bilingual · Multilingual · Friendships · Language · Children's speech · Children's perspectives

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Résumé La majorité de la population mondiale parle plus d'une langue alors que l'impact de l'apprentissage d'une langue seconde a rarement été étudié du point de vue d'un enfant. Cet article décrit les perceptions d'enfants monolingues en train de devenir bilingues en quatre temps: deux mois avant de déménager dans un autre pays (alors qu'ils restaient en Australie), ainsi qu'un, six et douze mois après leur déménagement en Allemagne. Les participants étaient un frère et une sœur monolingues anglophones (un garçon de 7 à 8 ans et une fille de 9 à 10 ans) qui ont ensuite appris à parler l'allemand. À chacun des quatre temps, des entrevues ont été menées avec chaque enfant en utilisant des techniques de dessin et de questionnaires adaptées aux enfants. Trois thèmes ont été identifiés: (1) la conscience des enfants de la compétence linguistique, (2) les facteurs d'inclusion et (3) les facteurs d'exclusion qui influençaient la formation d'amitiés. L'impact de la capacité linguistique sur la formation d'amitiés est un thème dominant soulevé à travers les quatre temps et qui a été triangulé avec les différentes méthodes de collecte de données. Les enfants se sont fait des amis avec d'autres enfants qui avaient des compétences linguistiques similaires en allemand, même s'ils étaient plus jeunes et ne partageaient pas la même langue maternelle. Les pairs du même âge, qui étaient plus compétents en allemand, étaient moins susceptibles d'être décrits comme des amis. Dans les trois thèmes, le terrain de jeux était signalé par les deux enfants comme le site clé où devenir bilingue avait le plus fort impact sur l'amorce et la négociation d'amitiés. Devenir bilingue avait un impact sur les chances de formation d'amitiés et de socialisation des enfants.

Resumen La mayor parte del mundo habla más de un idioma, sin embargo, el impacto del aprendizaje de una segunda lengua rara vez se ha estudiado desde la perspectiva de un niño. Este trabajo describe ideas de los niños monolingües para convertirse en bilingüe en cuatro momentos: dos meses antes de trasladarse a otro país (cuando vivía en Australia), así como uno, seis y doce meses después de trasladarse a Alemania. Los participantes eran dos hermanos de habla Inglesa monolingües, que posteriormente aprendieron a hablar alemán (un niño de 7 a 8 años y una niña de 9 a 10 años de edad). En cada uno de los cuatro puntos de tiempo, se llevaron a cabo entrevistas con cada niño utilizando técnicas de dibujo y un cuestionario. Se identificaron tres temas: (1) la conciencia de los niños de la competencia lingüística, (2) la inclusión, y (3) los factores de exclusión que influyeron en la formación de la amistad. El impacto de la capacidad lingüística en hacer amigos era un tema dominante que surgió en los cuatro puntos de tiempo y fue triangulado a través de métodos de recolección de datos. Los niños hicieron amigos con otros que tenían la competencia lingüística similar en alemán, a pesar de que eran más jóvenes, y no compartían la misma lengua materna. Pares emparejados por edad que eran más competentes en alemán eran menos propensos a ser descrito como amigos. En los tres temas, el patio de recreo se destacó tanto por niños como el lugar clave donde se hacen bilingües iniciación más fuertemente impactado y negociación de amistades. El convertirse en bilingüe impactó la formación de amistad de estos niños, y las oportunidades de socialización con usuarios del lenguaje más competentes.

Introduction

The majority of the world speaks more than one language, and children become multilingual in a variety of circumstances. While simultaneous multilingual children are exposed to two or more languages regularly within the first months of life, sequential multilingual children form solid foundations in the acquisition of a first language before learning additional languages. While simultaneous multilingual children frequently acquire their languages in the home, sequential multilingual children often acquire their additional languages in an educational or community setting (Paradis et al. 2011). Acquisition can occur rapidly; however, the exact rate will depend upon a number of factors including children's proficiency in their first language, age, and cognitive maturity at the time of commencing second language learning (Collier 1989). The impact of sequential language learning has rarely been studied from a child's perspective.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989) nominated protection, provision, and participation as the foundation for a child rights agenda. Since this time, children's right to participate and express their views has been advanced in early years research. Children's standpoint, explanations, and the matters of interest in their everyday lives are key agendas of quality research with children (Thorpe et al. 2004). Asking children to comment on their own lives enables adults to appreciate how children attend to being a member of a social group and what characterises 'childhood' for children (Mayall 2002). Engaging children as active participants in research can show firsthand how children experience and understand relationships of their social lives and their place in everyday life. For example, asking children to draw pictures about important aspects of their lives can provide opportunities for eliciting children's narratives and exploring children's shared meaning (Einarsdottir et al. 2009; Holliday et al. 2009). Enabling children to take the lead by telling stories about their lives positions them as experts and gains children's perspectives on what is of interest to them (Maguire 2005; Roulstone and McLeod 2011; Theobald 2012). In so doing, complex matters regarding children's relationships with others can be explored.

The study reported in this paper used child-friendly and participatory methods during interviews with two monolingual children at four different points in time, to investigate their experience of becoming bilingual in a new country. What soon became apparent in the children's accounts was the connection between second language competence and making friends.

Friendships and Children

Connectivity, communication, and relating to others are important to all aspects of life. Friendships are central to experiences of happiness and success across the life span (Gest et al. 2001; Theobald et al. 2014). Friendships are closely associated with children's success at school (Buhs et al. 2006) and facilitate children's language learning (Axelrod 2014; Genishi and Dyson 2009; Piker 2013). Making and maintaining friends are important for building confidence and resilience in children.

Being resilient, able to withstand challenges and positively respond when faced with the unexpected, is widely associated with health and well-being (Theobald et al. 2014).

Friendships are how children learn to communicate, talk to others, and share their ideas. The more children spend time with others and practice communication skills, the better equipped they are for making friends (Corsaro 2014). One element of friendship is that it involves children sharing common interests or doing things together (Hartup 1992). Interviewing young children (5–6 years) about their views of friendship, Theobald et al. (2014) found that children characterised friendships as: having shared interests, including others in play, having concern for others' wellbeing, and giving support. Corsaro's (2003) study of children in American and Italian preschools gave insight into how factors to do with gender, the size of the peer group, community beliefs, and available time and opportunities impact how children make friends. However, Corsaro highlighted that friendship is complex and as such is best understood in relation to the specific social situation of children's lives (Corsaro 2003). What is not well understood or documented in the literature are the dimensions of friendships when there are language differences between children.

Friendships and Multilingual Children

Previous interpretative studies have suggested a strong link between language ideology and identity, maintaining that language is a core cultural value (Lanza and Svendsen 2007; Smolicz 1981). For example, Lanza and Svendsen (2007) examined language use and social networks and found that a "sense of belonging" could not be attributed solely to a language spoken, but was gained through commonalities of other aspects of life (p. 295). Both studies highlight the complexities involved in understanding language, relationships, and identity, however, and have focussed on adults, and the view of children has been largely overlooked. An exception is the Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2013) study of peer group interactions in multilingual classrooms in Sweden. They found that children's identity as a competent language speaker was displayed or hidden according to the social orders of the peer group at the time.

Multilingual children can successfully find ways to relate with others and form friendships. For example, Björk-Willén (2007) demonstrated that multilingual preschool children employed shadowing and crossing to sustain participation in multiparty play. Shadowing occurs when children replicate another child's actions by copying "postures, gestures, intonation and pitch" (Björk-Willén 2007, p. 2136). Shadowing a common interest or language often resulted in being included in play activities. Crossing, using a language not usually used, enabled children to enter in games as well as manage the participation of others (Björk-Willén 2007). Cromdal (2004) found that bilingual children thwarted or permitted others' play activities by using language interchangeably (code-switching). Cekaite (2006) found that bilingual children used joking, body movements, and displays of emotion to get along with others. These studies acknowledge the interactional competence of bilingual children in initiating, forming, and influencing their relationships with

others. The current study seeks to add knowledge about the impact of language on friendship formation and maintenance over time by focussing on children's perspectives.

Aim

The aim of the current research was to consider two monolingual English-speaking children's insights into becoming bilingual at four time points (over 15 months): once before moving and three times after moving to a non-English-speaking country.

Method

Participants

The participants were two school-aged monolingual English-speaking siblings who lived in Australia at the beginning of the study, and subsequently moved to Germany. The first author had known the children since their birth, and the family was interested in documenting the children's transition to a new country. The children were invited to select their own pseudonyms, so will be known as Samantha and Bowser. Samantha was a typically developing female who was 9- then 10- years old during the study. Samantha's only sibling, Bowser, was a typically developing male who was 6- then 7-years old during the study. He had some difficulty pronouncing 'r.'

The children and their parents described themselves as Australian. The children's parents' first language was English; however, both had learned German as adults, since they had lived and worked in Germany in the past. Samantha and Bowser had lived in Australia for the majority of their lives and attended a public school in Australia that provided instruction in English. When they moved to Germany, the children attended an international school in a large German city where the lessons were taught in English and German. The children attending the school spoke a wide variety of languages, but the common languages were German and English and the teachers encouraged the children to speak English in the playground.

Instruments

Three child-friendly techniques were used to stimulate conversations with the children around becoming bilingual. The first was a drawing task (adapted from Holliday 2009) where the children were asked to "Draw me a picture of you talking to someone." The children were then asked a series of questions in order to explain the content and context of the drawing (Holliday 2009). The second was a Likert-scale questionnaire from the Speech Participation and Activity Assessment-Children (SPAA-C, McLeod 2004). The children were asked ten questions, such as "How do you feel about the way you talk?" (see Appendix). They were then provided with

five possible responses ☺ ☹ ☹ ○? indicating happy, in the middle, sad, another feeling, don't know respectively and were asked to colour their preferred response. If the children indicated another feeling, they were asked to draw and name the feeling (e.g. angry, nervous). Finally, the KiddyCat: Communication Attitude Test for Preschool and Kindergarten Children who Stutter (Vanryckeghem and Brutton 2006) was used to consider the children's attitudes towards their own talking. The KiddyCat contains ten questions (plus two practice questions); for example, "Do you think that talking is difficult?", and "Do you like to talk?", and a response of "yes" or "no" is required. While the KiddyCat was developed for children who stutter, it has also been used with typically developing children to understand their perspectives about talking (Vanryckeghem et al. 2005).

Procedure

Ethical approval to conduct the research was received from the first two authors' university. The children's mother provided written consent to participate in the research, and the children's mother also provided background information about the children's speech and language skills, language environment, schooling, and the family's plans for relocation. At the beginning of each interview, the children were read a child-friendly explanation of the study and were asked if they were happy ☺ to be involved. They each gave assent, both verbally and by signing their name on document containing the description of the task (cf. Conroy and Harcourt 2009; Hurley and Underwood 2002).

The first author (who was a monolingual English speaker) interviewed the children four times over a 14-month time period. Time 1 occurred 2 months before moving, when living in Australia, and while the children were identified by their mother as monolingual English speakers. Time 2 occurred 1 month after moving to Germany. Time 3 occurred 6 months after moving. Time 4 occurred 12 months after moving to Germany when the children had returned to Australia for a holiday. Three of the interviews (times 1, 3, and 4) were conducted face-to-face. The remaining interview (time 2) was conducted via SkypeTM.

Each child was interviewed individually in their own home with the children's parent(s) close by. Each interview generally was conducted in the same way. After an explanation of the tasks and signing the assent form, the children were provided with a set of ten coloured felt tip markers and an A4 sheet of white paper and were invited to draw a picture of themselves talking to someone followed by a series of questions to elicit a description of the picture. Then, the children were asked the questions from the SPAA-C and KiddyCat. The children were also asked to show the interviewer any artefacts (e.g. school books, readers) to demonstrate their learning of German. Throughout the tasks, the children were encouraged to tell stories about their lives. Each interview was audio-recorded, and the second SkypeTM interview was also video-recorded. A research assistant transcribed the interviews verbatim.

Data Analysis

The three authors individually undertook a thematic analysis of the data. This inductive, data-driven approach was used to identify interrelated concepts within the data according to each of the authors' interpretation of the transcripts of interviews, drawings, and explanations of drawings provided by the children, and the score forms from the KiddyCat and the SPAA-C. The artefacts and transcripts were analysed using the five phases recommended by Yin (2011): compiling the data, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Central themes arising from the data were then determined and are presented below.

Results

The initial aim of this study was to investigate children's experiences of becoming bilingual; however, the influence of becoming bilingual on making friends emerged as the children's primary focus across all four time points. Three key themes arose in the data:

1. Awareness of language difference/competence.
2. Being included: strategies and opportunities for making friends.
3. Being excluded: strategies of exclusion experienced when making friends.

Across all three themes, both children highlighted the playground as the key site where becoming bilingual most strongly impacted initiation and negotiation of friendships. Within each theme, our analytic observations have focussed on the children's own reflections to understand the relationship between language and making friends. These analytic observations were drawn from theoretical ideas of childhood studies (Mayall 2002; Prout and James 1997) that have regarded for children's standpoint and opinion. We have acknowledged that children have their own constructions about key factors in the own lives. As they make sense of their world, they collectively produce and use these constructions in interactions within their own peer culture (Corsaro 2014).

Theme 1: Awareness of Language Difference/Competence

Both Samantha and Bowser frequently commented on their competence in the languages they spoke. At time 1, when the children were both still living in Australia, their attitudes regarding their language capabilities were positive. Both children perceived themselves as competent communicators with their parents, friends, and teachers. On the SPAA-C, both children remarked that they did not enjoy talking to each other and they also expressed that they did not enjoy speaking in front of the class or groups of people (see [Appendix](#)).

At time 2, when the children had been living in Germany for 1 month, Bowser reported no awareness of issues with language competence on the KiddyCat. When describing his drawing, Bowser was aware of the inability of the Italian boy

“Antonio” in his class to speak German commenting, “he speaks Italy.” In contrast, at time 2, Samantha appeared less confident in her ability to communicate with others. When asked on the KiddyCat “Do you talk well with everyone?” She replied “not really” rather than “yes” (which was her response at time 1). When asked about how she felt when talking in German, she answered ☹ “in the middle” (neither happy nor sad; see [Appendix](#)). Samantha also reported feeling frustrated when she had to repeat herself “over and over again” because people could not understand her.

At time 3, Bowser continued to report that he did not find talking difficult and did not need help with his talking. He reported that he felt ☹ “in the middle” (neither happy nor sad) about talking in Germany because others could speak better German. He stated that he enjoyed speaking with his teacher, remarking that he was “the best teacher in the world!” because his teacher also spoke Australian English. At time 3, Samantha shared a deep understanding of what is required for communicative competence across languages “if you are talking to non-English speakers, to make it into a nice simple easy thing when its actually quite complex English, it’s a bit hard... you have to make it sound easy when its actually quite complex.” In addition, Samantha stated “I get stuck with my words, it’s been happening a lot because I’ve probably been around German speakers and non-fluent English-speakers, which makes me mixed up.” Samantha commented that she would like to speak more German at home so that she could have the opportunity to practice as much as the other children who used German as their main language at home.

At time 4, Bowser showed more awareness of his ability to speak in German remarking that it made him feel sad because “I don’t ever get to talk in German”. Time 4 was the only time when Bowser’s score on the KiddyCAT reflected he perceived that he had difficulty talking. Bowser scored 1/12 at time 1, 0/12 at time 2, 2/12 at time 3, and 9/12 at time 4. A score of more than 6/12 indicates that children perceive they have difficulty communicating with others. When asked how he felt when talking to his best friend in Germany, Bowser chose to draw an expression on the blank face on the SPAA-C and describing his feelings as “frightened.” Samantha continued to show an awareness of both her limitations and growing competencies in German. Her perception of herself as a competent communicator overall was demonstrated by her constantly low scores on the KiddyCAT. Samantha scored 1/12 at time 1, 2/12 at time 2, 1/12 at time 3, and 1/12 at time 4. She told the interviewer that she was in a special learning group for children who “can’t speak German.” When praised by the interviewer for her ability to say many words in German she conceded, “Well I’m still learning, but I’m not as good as others.” The interviewer asked Samantha if she was able to have a conversation in German, she replied, “a simple one, but enough that people can understand what I want to say.” At time 4 Samantha described a trip to London and the comfort of being back in an English-speaking environment, saying “I liked the feeling there, I think it was because I could just hear English again.”

Samantha reflected on the overall experience of learning German saying, “If I didn’t learn German I wouldn’t be able to communicate with other people in German and it would be really difficult. One of the other non-German speakers, they

didn't want to learn German, and they just sit there and do nothing." Samantha's reflection indicates the importance of the social aspect of language learning.

Analytic Observations

Both children expressed their awareness of becoming bilingual, but in differing ways. At time 1, prior to moving to Germany, both children described themselves as confident and competent communicators with their only concern being talking in front of the class or large groups of people. As time progressed, their experiences began to differ, with Bowser continuing to report that he was confident with his talking until time 4 when he expressed that he was sad that he never got to talk in German and that interacting in German with his friend made him feel frightened. In Samantha's case, the realisation of language difference occurred much earlier with a change in attitude towards her communicative competence already visible by time 2.

This difference in awareness may have occurred for a number of reasons. Using a developmental frame, the most obvious reason is that Samantha was older than Bowser. Moving away from identifying particular aspects of childhood as childlike (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998), a complementary way to consider this difference is to focus on how each child constructed their own competence. For example, Bowser constructed his competence in relation to others, citing the boy who only speaks "Italy" as less competent than himself. Samantha's assessment of her capability in the social world was based on her construction of to what communicating means. To Samantha, communicating seemed to be using the language "correctly," not getting "mixed up" as a result of the combination of multiple languages being used around her, and reflected on her feelings of ease when visiting London in an English-dominant environment. Theme 1 highlighted that children's constructions of their emerging bilingual competency over time was an ongoing process and was dependent on peer groups and playground interactions.

Theme 2: Being Included: Strategies and Opportunities for Making Friends

At time 1, both children seemed happy with their social situation and the way that they talked and interacted with friends. Both were able to name a best friend. Their pictures at time 1 showed them engaging happily in conversation with their friends during play (see Fig. 1). On the SPAA-C at time 1 when asked, "how do you feel when you play on your own?" Bowser replied, "I can always find another person [to play with]" his confidence and ease in social situations at this point in time. Samantha described having a particularly close friendship with one girl. When describing her drawing of herself and her best friend at time 1, Samantha remarked, "We've been friends since preschool. She's also sitting next to me in class."

At time 2, Bowser described that "Antonio," the Italian boy in his drawing, was included socially by his friends on the football team, despite the fact that he could not speak German. This showed awareness that other means of communication can be used to get along with others. At time 2 Samantha reported using SkypeTM to keep in touch with her friends back in Australia. In Germany, Samantha described



Fig. 1 Samantha's drawings at four time points show her emerging competence with speaking German, and the languages spoken by her friends and classmates. *Time 1* shows her speaking English with a friend while still living in Australia. *Time 2* shows Samantha (left) 1 month after moving to Germany. She is speaking English and her new friend, whose first language was Spanish, says "???". *Time 3* shows Samantha (second from right) and the same friend (right) asking "Um...can we play?" in English with the other girls responding in German. *Time 4* shows the Samantha (middle), her friend, and another girl all speaking in German. © Sharynne McLeod, 2015. Reprinted with permission

playing with a girl ("Maria") who spoke Spanish as her main language and had a similar competency in German. She also commented that Maria would speak to her in English as she knew that it was Samantha's preferred language. Samantha stated that Maria was teaching her to speak some Spanish. These comments indicate a connection between language competency and friendship. In this case, age was not definitive for friendship; rather, finding a mutual language was one strategy this pair used for being friends.

By time 3, Bowser had successfully formed friendships at school by playing football. He stated "I'm the boss...we always win!" He also reported that his friends spoke English with him and that a girl who only spoke German was not his friend, both because she did not speak English and because she was not good at football. Such comments indicate that friendship in Bowser's view meant having common interests and abilities. By time 3, Samantha was able to identify a best friend in Germany (Maria). Samantha commented that she and Maria spoke English with each other but also communicated using Spanish and German at times. Samantha remarked that at the beginning of their friendship she had to repeat herself many times but by time 3 Maria could understand her well. She also reported that

she and Maria had a sleep over and wore the same dresses. She drew Maria and herself wearing matching dresses in her picture for time 3 (see Fig. 1). Samantha suggested here that displaying mutual interests and likes, for example, wearing similar clothes, was an important part of being friends.

At time 4 when describing her drawing (see Fig. 1), Samantha introduced a new friend that she made, a bilingual German- and English-speaking girl named Josie. Talking about the type of interaction that usually takes place between the three girls in the picture, Samantha said, "...we just talk there and play, but we don't really play, we talk mostly, and then we just talk about stuff". When asked about the language they use in their interactions, Samantha said "We usually speak in English because that's our language that everybody knows and everybody can understand. So we mostly speak in English but sometimes we try and speak in German". When asked how she felt when talking with her friends Samantha remarked, "I'm happy." Samantha here suggested the importance of a common language in the peer group, indicating the importance of a sense of ownership and identity through her reference to "our language."

Analytic Observations

The children used different avenues to create friendships during their experience of becoming bilingual. Bowser observed at time 2 that another child who was not able to speak German was socially included because of his ability to play football. Bowser used the technique of shadowing (Björk-Willén 2007) and followed this lead by also using football as a means of inclusion in social situations, and this did not require verbal communication. By time 3 Bowser expressed confidence in his social interaction and enjoyment from playing with the other children. Samantha found it more difficult to engage with girls of her age because language was used as the main medium for socialising. Samantha reported that her best friend was younger than her and was also not fluent in German. Therefore, they employed the technique of crossing (Björk-Willén 2007) by finding a mutual language upon which to develop their friendship. Their bond was a result of both being different, despite the fact that they were not in the same age group or class. Samantha showed a desire to maintain her existing friendships back in Australia and kept in regular contact using SkypeTM. By time 4 Samantha reported that her friendship group had expanded with the inclusion of another girl who was able to speak English and was not as fluent in German. The construction of Samantha's peer group was based upon language competency and she did not mention common interests as an important factor.

Theme 3: Being Excluded: Strategies of Exclusion Experienced when Making Friends

At time 1, while the children were in Australia prior to moving to Germany, neither Bowser nor Samantha made significant mention of exclusion from social interactions or friendships. When asked "How do you feel when you play with the children at your school?" Bowser reported that he felt "medium" because "I

don't really get to play with everyone." Samantha reported occasionally having "little fights" with her best friend.

At time 2, 1 month after arriving in Germany, when asked about why he had not included himself in the picture he drew of children in his class playing football, Bowser remarked, "I don't play soccer [football], I walk around." When asked how he felt talking with his best friend or children at school in Germany and indicating his feelings on the SPAA-C, he told the interviewer "I don't have a best friend... I don't have any friends." When asked about his teacher, Bowser reported that he likes talking with him because "he speaks Perth" (the name of the Australian city where the children originated from, indicating that his teacher spoke Australian English). At time 2, Samantha began to express sadness about her friendships. On the SPAA-C when asked, "How do you feel when you play on your own?" Samantha responded, ☹ "A bit sad...no one to play with and it's a big school". Samantha indicated she felt socially isolated in the playground as a result of the transition.

At time 3 when describing his drawing, Bowser reported an attempt of one child to use speaking German as a tool for excluding him from play:

I was running and then I stopped and he said German stuff and I didn't understand...

And then I went "Mhmm" and he said "Hello" and I said "Guten Tag" and then he said "Ahhh Guten Tag bye-bye," he was scared because I knew what Guten Tag means...and he went "Ahh you English man" ...He was [so] scared that he couldn't really talk.

At school, children were instructed to speak English in the playground. At time 3, both Bowser and Samantha reported that children spoke German in the playground. Bowser said "They can just talk for lots of time and I don't understand and I can tell the teacher and they'll get in trouble because they aren't allowed to speak German...only in German time."

When describing her picture at time 3 (see Fig. 1), Samantha recalled a similar incident when she and Maria were excluded by children speaking in German: "...We always ask to play with them, cause we don't know what to do, and so we ask them and they are always saying that they need to talk [in German] and then they take up the whole break. They aren't the nicest people in the world."

At time 4 Bowser reported some negative interactions with children at school: "they're always mean... the boys in year 3 think they are the biggest and so they always boss us around." While Samantha reported feeling happy with her friendship group, she still reported difficulties speaking to other people in Germany: "most places they only speak German. And then I don't really know how to...because they're speaking really fast its harder to understand them and when you can't understand them it's really frustrating because you don't know what is going on and you can't do anything about it". Samantha also reflected on the changing attitudes of other children over her time in Germany. She remarked, "on the first day everyone was really good with me and everyone wanted to be with me...but then they all went away and only Maria was there with me."

Analytic Observations

Both children showed awareness of their language competence and highlighted occasions where code-switching was used by others to exclude them. Bowser's comments from time 2 resonated his feelings of social exclusion and loneliness in his new setting. Bowser measured his exclusion by whether or not he was included in football games, rather than his language competence. Samantha's construction of being a competent language user was associated with what she saw as missed opportunities for social inclusion because of her language barrier, "not knowing what was going on." Bowser also demonstrated his ability to influence his peer group—code-switching to German to a boy when he was expected to speak English was effective in gaining a higher social order in that interaction that made the other boy "scared."

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to examine two children's insights of becoming bilingual from their own viewpoint. Consideration of the two children side by side at each of the four time points allowed for comparisons to be drawn between their individual experiences of becoming bilingual. The children were of a different age, gender and had different personal interests. As observed in the data, these factors influenced how the children constructed their *own* communicative competence. Becoming bilingual impacted the children's friendship formation and socialisation opportunities with more competent language users. The implications of such findings will now be discussed across two areas: (1) interplay of language and friendship, and (2) the increased diversity in everyday settings of children's lives. Across all the themes identified in the results, both children highlighted the playground as the key site where becoming bilingual most strongly impacted initiation and negotiation of friendships.

Interplay of Language and Friendship

The data provided here revealed the intricacies of language and interaction, and in particular the effect of language on friendship formation that has been explored by only a handful of studies (e.g. Drury 2007; Gregory et al. 2004). Much of this research highlights how friends might support development of language. For example, Gregory et al. (2004) highlighted children's generative activity as they draw upon multiple communicative partners (including friends) to enhance their own language, literacy, and cultural competence. In the current study, the impact of language ability on making friends was dominant across the four time points and was triangulated across data collection methods.

The participants' accounts showed how children used language intentionally as a tool for inclusion and exclusion. This code-switching worked to control and limit Samantha and Bowser's negotiation of structures within their social worlds. For example, when the other children were only speaking German in the playground

(despite the school rules that English should be spoken), they worked to construct Samantha and Bowser as incompetent language users. Reinforcement of such an identity demonstrated the extent that language was used to hold power, limit access, and participation in the playground.

Samantha made friends with others who had similar language competence in German. Peers who were more competent in German were less likely to be described as friends. Finding a mutual language was one strategy Samantha and Maria (the primarily Spanish-speaking child) used for making friends. They also had in common that they had been excluded by language in the German environment. At time 3, Bowser expressed confidence in his social interaction and enjoyment from playing with the other children. At the same time, displaying competence in language, for example, Bowser saying “Guten Tag” to a German speaker, was used as an element of surprise and this strategy put others off guard, gaining ground in social interactions.

In the current study, language barriers impacted upon the enduring nature of the children’s friendship. Using other means of communication was influential in how the children’s friendships endured. For example, over time, Bowser made friends by playing football. This activity enabled Bowser to show peers that he was a competent member and a friend. For Samantha, however, sustaining relationships proved more challenging over time. When she first arrived, Samantha was popular as her peers saw her as novelty. As time went on, language competence was integral to being included in the peer culture. These findings highlight the “situated nature of friendship” (Corsaro 2003, p. 89). In other words, making friends is an activity that is tied to social action, the value placed on communicative activities within children’s peer groups.

Increased Diversity in Everyday Settings

As mobility and migration become more commonplace, children experience childhood in schools and other settings that are increasingly diverse (Genishi and Dyson 2009; Souto-Manning 2014). Diverse classrooms and playgrounds present challenges and opportunities for children’s communication and friendship formation. Children value playground friendships, being active and doing things together, and these are important factors for social inclusion (Hoyte et al. 2014; Rönnlund 2015). Adults in children’s lives may overlook the importance of playground interactions in favour of academic matters. The findings from this paper suggest that language use within the playground may be one gatekeeper to friendship formation and maintenance.

Institutional rules of the playground have consequences for social interaction. Children are enterprising when faced with barriers, finding other ways to communicate or manipulating rules to fit their own social agendas (Cromdal 2013; Rönnlund 2015). For example, in this study, children ignored recommendations regarding the language to be used in the playground. This manipulation restrained or enabled Samantha and Bowser’s interactions with others and had an impact on making and keeping friends.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

This study has provided the views of two children who were familiar to the author using child-friendly techniques. Gaining the accounts of more children and from a variety of contexts would provide more information about the experiences of children who are becoming bilingual. Future research may benefit from ethnographic observation within the playground and additional child-friendly techniques such as auto-photography (Noland 2006) or video-stimulated accounts (Theobald 2012).

Recommendations

This study highlights the interactional competence of children and the importance of language and friendships. Such understandings suggest three recommendations for those working with children in multilingual settings:

1. It is increasingly important for educators and policy makers to be made aware of how rules may be used or adapted by children in tactical ways. Encouraging the use of multiple languages in schools may afford children access to more equitable conditions for playground negotiations.
2. Exploring children's activities, highlighting commonalities, and allowing time for children to embrace diversity in everyday relationships and routines may help children find mutual interests and promote friendships.
3. Educators and others working with children can create safe times for children to share and discuss experiences in playgrounds, promoting social justice.

Summary and Conclusion

This study makes a unique contribution by providing child-centred and longitudinal data regarding the experience of becoming bilingual. The study captures the children's insights when they were monolingual living in a monolingual country, and followed them through 1 year of becoming bilingual within a new country that provided linguistically diverse experiences. The child-friendly participatory methods used in this study enabled children to provide rich descriptions and constructions about their own lives and respected the children's social competence and capacity to have an opinion. The current study demonstrates the complexity of developing friendships in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts from children's perspectives. Sharing mutual language competence, mutual interests, and engaging in activities together facilitated friendships of the children in this study. Language competence was used as a tool for inclusion and exclusion when forming friendships with other children, particularly in the playground.

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Appendix

See Table 1

Table 1 Samantha and Bowser’s responses about talking with different people over time (questionnaire adapted from McLeod 2004)

	Samantha time 1	Samantha time 2	Samantha time 3	Samantha time 4	Bowser time 1	Bowser time 2	Bowser time 3	Bowser time 4(a)	Bowser time 4(b)
1. How do you feel about the way you talk? *	😊	😊	😬 “nervous”	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊😊😊	😬
2. How do you feel when you talk to your best friend? *	😊	😊 “a little bit shy”	😊	😊	😊	“I don’t have a best friend”	😊	?	😬
3. How do you feel when you talk to your brother/sister?	😊	😊 “sort of mad”	😊	?	😬	😬	😬	😬	😬 “don’t care”
4. How do you feel when you talk to your Mum and Dad?	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊
5. How do you feel when you talk to your school teachers? *	😊	😊 “a bit nervous, a bit shy”	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊
6. How do you feel when your teachers ask you a question? *	😊	?	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😬
7. How do you feel when you talk to the whole class? *	😊	😊 “nervous and shy”	😊 “nervous”	😊	😊	😊	😬	😊😊😊	😬 “crying”
8. How do you feel when you play with the children at school?*	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	“I don’t have any friends”	😊	😬😊?	😊
9. How do you feel when you play on your own?	😬	😬	😬	😬	😊 “I can always find another person”	😬	😊	😊	😊
10. How do you feel when people don’t understand what you say?*	😊 “a little bit frustrated”	😊 “I have to say it [German words] over and over and over again”	😊	😊 “frustrated”	😊 “happy because I’m trying to make them laugh”	😬	😬	😊😊😊😊😊?	😬

*The phrase “in Germany” was added for visits 2, 3, and 4. At Time 4 Bowser completed the task twice. The first time (4a) he often circled a response (or many different responses), scribbled over it, then circled another/others. The final response(s) that were not deleted are indicated in the table above. He then requested to start again on a new sheet and provided more definite responses. On the second attempt (Time 4b) only his response to question 2 was changed from 😬 “frustrated” to 😬

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