THE ROLE OF PLAY AS A MEDIUM OF INCLUSION IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE PRESCHOOLS

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By

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Submitted for the award of PhD,
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Dedicated to my father,

Halim Çakırer

Sen olmasaydın, ben olmazdım…

"Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man,
and he is only wholly a man when he is playing."
J. C. F. von Schiller,

LUDO ERGO SUM

Agraïments, agradecimientos, acknowledgements,

En 2002, cuando llegué por primera vez a un pequeño pueblo situado en Castilla-La Mancha (España) hacer un doctorado en este país era un sueño. Me enorgullece que después de 12 años de sueños, la perseverancia, la dedicación y el trabajo duro me haya permitido alcanzar este objetivo. A lo largo de los años varias personas han sido parte de mi vida de muchas maneras y sin ellas hubiera sido imposible llegar a depositar mi Tesis Doctoral.

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RESUMEN

Esta Tesis Doctoral consta de tres estudios independientes que pretenden analizar el proceso de inclusión de la diversidad cultural en los niños preescolares y el papel del juego durante este proceso. En una primera fase se ha realizado un estudio de caso intrínseco que tiene por objeto identificar el proceso de inclusión de un niño turco de 5 años de edad en un preescolar internacional situado en Sant Cugat, Cataluña (España) y el del papel del juego durante este proceso. Los datos fueron recogidos mediante observaciones participativas, conversaciones informales con los padres y los maestros registradas en notas de campo tomadas después de las sesiones de observación y conversación. Los resultados del análisis cualitativo de los datos indicó que los desafíos para la inclusión se produjeron debido a las preocupaciones económicas, las limitaciones de tiempo, las expectativas poco realistas, las actitudes de los padres y profesores, las características personales y la competitividad causada por las condiciones de trabajo inestables. En este parvulario, con una orientación altamente académica, el juego libre no parecía tan frecuente como se esperaba con el fin de fomentar una cultura común donde los niños pueden aprender sobre la cultura popular y descubrir sus intereses comunes. Ante estos resultados contrastados con la literatura y experiencias se optó por recoger las opiniones de los maestros respeto el papel del juego en el proceso de inclusión de los niños con diversidad cultural iniciando así la segunda fase de la investigación.

Para dar respuesta a este segundo objetivo surgido de los resultados del análisis de caso anterior se eligió una escuela pública ubicada en Terrassa, Cataluña (España). Se entrevistaron cinco maestros quienes valoraron altamente el juego como medio para la inclusión social y educativa, aludieron la contribución del juego en el proceso de inclusión al mismo tiempo que reconocieron que era preciso introducir algunos cambios en el entorno para que este fuera más eficiente para facilitar la inclusión de la diversidad cultural. Expusieron que el énfasis académico en el plan de estudios afecta negativamente en el tiempo de juego. Además, su papel como "guardián" en el recreo, cuando los niños participan en el juego libre al aire libre, interfiere negativamente. Estos resultados contrastados con los del anterior estudio llevaron a la tercera fase de la tesis.

Con el propósito de analizar las estrategias de inclusión y exclusión que los niños utilizan en sus actividades de juego al aire libre durante el recreo en una escuela con diversidad cultural se procedió a un estudio sociométrico que junto con la participación del profesorado y observaciones preliminares de la dinámica del aula derivó a la selección de un niño de procedencia catalana y una niña de procedencia marroquí, ambos de cinco años de edad, para ser observados en el entorno natural de juego en el recreo. Después de analizar las grabaciones audio-visuales se puede decir que las estrategias que emplean los niños para incluir y excluir a sus compañeros durante el juego al aire libre en el recreo en un entorno culturalmente diverso sugieren que el niño popular con un fondo cultural dominante utiliza estrategias verbales y no verbales para incluirse a sí mismo, mientras que el niño impopular utiliza con más frecuencia estrategias no verbales para la auto-inclusión, especialmente la mirada y el acercamiento físico.

En conclusión, aunque los niños que provienen de diversos orígenes culturales no deben ser calificados como niños con necesidades educativas especiales si que se precisa una intervención frente a sus necesidades derivadas de las discontinuidades culturales permitiendo mejorar sus habilidades sociales en el juego y desarrollar sentimientos de pertenencia a su comunidad consiguiendo así una inclusión real.

ESTRUCTURA DE LA TESIS

La presente tesis doctoral se estructura en cinco capítulos. El primer capítulo describe el estado del problema de investigación y justifica la relevancia del tema, resume las fases y estudios realizados dentro de esta investigación doctoral, define los objetivos de la investigación y se presentan las preguntas de investigación para alcanzar los objetivos definidos.

El segundo capítulo recoge una visión general del marco teórico que lideró al diseño empírico y la discusión de los resultados. En este capítulo se aglutinan tres bloques temáticos: la diversidad cultural en los primeros años, su inclusión en las escuelas que atienden a los niños con diversidad cultural y el papel del juego en el proceso de inclusión.

El tercer capítulo expone la metodología de esta investigación de tesis, su diseño, los participantes, las herramientas utilizadas para la recogida de datos y el proceso seguido junto con sus limitaciones, los pasos de análisis de datos, los resultados obtenidos y la discusión de los mismos junto con unas breves conclusiones. Estas secciones se describen por separado en tres fases de la investigación, cada una de ellas corresponde a un estudio de caso.

El cuarto capítulo, a modo de conclusiones generales, da respuesta a cada uno de los objetivos y preguntas de investigación. Analiza las limitaciones surgidas a lo largo del estudio, argumenta las contribuciones e implicaciones para las prácticas educativas en la primera infancia y sugiere algunas recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones.

Para finalizar, el quinto capítulo lista las referencias citadas en el texto siguiendo la normativa APA. Los apéndices se presentan en formato digital en un CD-ROM que se adjunta al texto escrito. A pesar que la doctoranda de procedencia turca tiene conocimientos de la lengua catalana y española se ha optado por escribir la tesis en ingles.

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Master Interuniversitari de Psicologia d'Educació (MIPE)

Grup de Recerca d'Educació Infantil (GREI)

Special Educational Needs (SENs)

Public Preschool (CEIP)

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Ley Orgánica de ordenamiento general del Sistema educativo (LOGSE)

Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2/2006, (LOE)

Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya (Idescat)

The Reception Plan of Educational Centers in Catalonia (El plan de acogida del centro docente en Cataluña) (PACC)

Spaces of Educational Welcoming (Espais de Benvinguda Educativa) (EBE)

CHAPTER I. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

"Play is the beginning of knowledge."
George Dorsey

1.1. INTRODUCTION

During their early years, children start to understand their physical and social environment by engaging into interaction with their physical surroundings as well as with the people around them. As they are considered as being hungry to learn, every experience offers them invaluable opportunity for acquiring new knowledge for their part. In a perfect world, we would assume that all the children would have same opportunities, would have access to a very rich environment that would enhance their learning potentials to the maximum level. Unfortunately, in reality, the social and physical contexts that we lead our lives in do not offer opportunities addressing the individual needs of each and every child.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) signed by 193 countries came into force to assure that signing states guarantee to fulfill the fundamental needs of children aged up to 18 years old in September 1990 (UNICEF, 1989). According to the article 28 of this document "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity". The article 29 of the same document emphasizes that the education of children should target "the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own" and the States Parties should assure that the education given to the children prepare them "for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin" (UNICEF, 1989:8-9). By approving this convention in December 31st, 1990 Spain (Boletín Oficial Del Estado, 1990) became one of the 193 countries which ensure to implement legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to provide equal opportunities to children's access to a quality education that flourishes respect towards their cultural backgrounds and cultural diversity.

In 2002, I volunteered to work in a youth camp focusing on social inclusion of children in a small town called Hellín, Albacete, Spain. During those three weeks of playing with children, I realized

that children demonstrated excluding behaviors when playing with ethnic and racial minority children (to be more specific local children rejected to interact with gipsy children). This experience also proved me the power of play in uniting the children. I wanted to gain further understanding about exclusion during play and the cultural differences. When I was a student in Master Interuniversitari de Psicologia d'Educació (MIPE) in 2008, I was introduced with the concept of inclusive education which triggered my curiosity.

I started to search about the programs developed for attending the needs of young children coming from different cultural backgrounds in Catalonia. Carrasco (2004) emphasized the lack of social and educational research on young immigrant population due to lack of public funds in Catalonia. Furthermore, I decided to focus on the early years because Harrist and Bradley (2003) identified the kindergarten level (P5) as a good time for an intervention to decrease exclusion in the classroom. They emphasized the importance of early intervention and socialization in this age group. After citing several authors such as Newcomb and Bagwell (1995) and Patterson et al. (1992) they concluded that as kindergarten teachers are expected to teach socialization to kindergarten students and friendship in early childhood tended to be defined in terms of cooperative activities, this age period (5 years old) had particular importance to acquire inclusive values. Porter (1971, in Ashiabi, 2007) suggested that racial awareness in children appeared around three, four years old. Finkelstein and Haskins (1983, in Ashiabi, 2007) argued that ethnic/racial awareness influenced the playmate preferences as the children showed a tendency to play with same-color peers. Harrist and Bradley (2003) argued that taking preventive measures to lessen exclusion in early years would contribute to the lowering the chances of negative social experiences in the future. According to these authors, early prevention of exclusion helped to avoid negative consequences of being rejected by the peers in the future. They assumed that expanding the range of acceptable play partners within a classroom would enhance the formation of new friendships that might otherwise not come into being and a newly formed mutual friendship could change the excluded children's experience significantly.

Connolly et al (2002, in Nutbrown and Clough, 2006:7) stated that "From about the age of five onwards, children should be encouraged to understand the negative effects of sectarian stereotypes and prejudices and to be able to identify them in their own attitudes, where appropriate". Cillessen and Bellmore (2011) pointed out the need for further research on variations of young children's social competence in cultural contexts.

In 2009 I participated in a research with GREI (Grup de Recerca d'Educació Infantil) (Cakirer et al. 2011) conducted in a culturally diverse nursery about inclusive education. During its field work and literature review for this study, it became clear that research conducted on inclusive education mostly chose a population with a kind of disability and approached inclusion from Special Educational Needs (SENs) lens. Although inclusion was described as "inclusion is about minimizing all barriers to play and learning for all children" and in the early education contexts "inclusion is reducing barriers to play, learning and participation for all children" (Booth, Ainscow and Kingston, 2004:3), children who were not receiving special education were either left out of the scope of the studies or were included as control groups. However, with the increment of immigration flow in 1980s, the percentage of people proceeding from a different cultural living in Catalonia eventually became the Spain's highest among all the other autonomous communities throughout the years (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2011).

I was already aware of the difficulties that Gipsy and Moroccan people were facing due to the characteristics of their culture of origin. Given that I come from Turkey, I was interested in and curious about how Turkish children got included in Catalan schools. I was aware that the Turkish population between 3 and 5 year-olds was very limited in Catalonia, I was fortunate to get an access to a five-year old Turkish boy's inclusion process 2010-2011 academic year. That is when the foundations were laid for my doctoral dissertation research. It includes three independent studies, which were formulated and conducted one after another due to additional data collection necessity appeared during the research process. The guiding questions of this research are: *How does the inclusion process develop in culturally diverse preschools? How does play contribute to culturally diverse preschoolers' inclusion process?* By answering these two questions the general objective is to examine the inclusion process of culturally diverse children and to analyze the role of play during this process in culturally diverse preschools serving 3 to 6 year-old children.

The first study within this research is an intrinsic case study which aims at analyzing the inclusion process of a 5 year-old Turkish in an international preschool located in Sant Cugat, Catalonia, Spain and the role of play during this process. Data was collected through participative observations, informal talks with the parents and the teachers and extensive field notes taken after the observation sessions. Data was analyzed qualitatively. The results of data analysis indicated that the challenges to inclusion occurred due to economic concerns, time limitations, parents' unrealistic expectations, teachers' attitudes and personal qualities and the competitiveness caused

by the instable working conditions. In this highly academic oriented kindergarten, indoors free play did not appear as frequent as it should have in order to foster a common peer culture where children could learn about the popular culture and discover their common interests.

The second study is a case study examines the perspectives of five P4 and P5 level (4 and 5 year-olds) teachers about the inclusion of children coming from different cultures through play at their preschool. A public preschool (CEIP) located in Terrassa, Catalonia was selected as a case for study and five teacher working at this school in 2010-2011 school year were interviewed. The results of qualitative data analysis indicated that teachers highly valued play and recognized its contribution to the inclusion process, while still acknowledging that some changes should be introduced in the setting to make use of play in a more efficient way for facilitating the inclusion of culturally diverse children in the future. They acknowledged that academic emphasis in the curriculum negatively affected play time. Furthermore, their role as a "guardian" in the playground, when children engaged in outdoor free play in recess was another issue that needed further attention.

The third study employs a two-case study design to analyze how children include and exclude their peers in the play settings in a culturally diverse public preschool located in Terrassa, Catalonia. A five year-old Catalan boy and a five year-old Moroccan girl were selected as cases through sociometric interviews with children, informal talks with the teachers and non-participant preliminary observations. The primary data source was the video-taped naturalistic observations of focal children's play interactions in different playgrounds. The strategies that kindergartners employed to include and exclude their peers during outdoor play in recess in a culturally diverse setting suggest that the popular child with a dominant cultural background uses both verbal and non-verbal strategies to include himself, whereas the unpopular child frequently uses on looking behavior, staring, gazing, approaching physically among other non-verbal strategies as her main self-inclusion strategies.

In conclusion, although children coming from diverse cultural backgrounds do not qualify as children with special educational needs in early their early years, an intervention addressing their needs arising from cultural discontinuities should be implemented in order to improve their social skills in play, through which they make friends, become part of the peer culture and develop feelings of belonging to their community.

1.2. RESEARCH AIMS and QUESTIONS

1.2.1. General Objective

- To analyze the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschools and the role of play during this process.

1.2.2. Specific Objectives

Departing from this general objective, this research intends

1- To analyze the inclusion process of a Turkish five year-old boy in a trilingual preschool located in Catalonia, Spain.

2- To analyze the preschool teachers' opinions about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children.

3- To describe the inclusion and exclusion strategies that children use in their outdoor free play activities during recess in a culturally diverse preschool.

1.2.3. Research Questions

In pursuing the above objectives, five research questions are formulated to better understand the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschools and the role of play in this process.

1- How does the inclusion process develop in culturally diverse preschools? (Study 1, 2, 3)

2- How does play contribute to culturally diverse children's inclusion process in preschools? (Study 1, 2, 3)

3- What are the challenges encountered during the inclusion process of preschoolers coming from a different culture? (Study 1, 2, 3)

4- What do the teachers think about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschools? (Study 2)

5- How do 5 year old children include or exclude their peers during their play in a culturally diverse preschool? (Study 3)

1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This doctoral dissertation is structured as five chapters. The first chapter presents the statement of research problem and justifies the relevancy of selected research topic, summarizes the studies conducted within this doctoral research, defines the research objectives and presents the research questions to pursue the defined objectives.

The second chapter includes an overview of the theoretical framework that leaded to the empirical design and the discussions of the results. This chapter agglutinates three main blocks of the research topic: cultural diversity in the early years, inclusion in schools serving to culturally diverse children, and the role of play in the process of inclusion.

The third chapter elucidates the methodology of this dissertation research, its design, participants, data collection tools and process, data analysis steps. These sections are described separately as three phases of the research, each of which corresponds to one study.

The fourth chapter discusses the pertinent results of the three studies which address the research questions in general. It also discusses the general limitations, contributions to relevant literature, implications for the early childhood practices and recommendations for future research.

At the end of the dissertation, the list of references cited in the text. Appendices are presented in digital format as a CD-ROM, which is attached to the dissertation.

This given structure of the dissertation is intended for facilitating its readability and comprehension of the study conducted.

CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"The creation of voluntary intentions and
the formation of real-life plans and volitional motives
-all appear in play and make it the highest level of preschool development"
L. S. Vygotsky

This chapter focuses on the interrelations among cultural diversity, inclusion and play in the early years. While play is discussed on the basis of the assumptions of socio-constructivist theory, the relationship between inclusion and play is examined through the lenses of cultural diversity. Therefore, this research suggests that in culturally diverse early childhood educational contexts, play should be discussed from cultural perspective, rather than disability perspective of inclusive education.

2.1. CULTURAL DIVERSITY and PEER CULTURE in the EARLY YEARS

This section presents an overview of conceptualization of culture and cultural diversity in early childhood education (ECE) in Spain and in Catalonia, with a special emphasis on the cultural diversity in the 2nd cycle of ECE.

2.1.1. Early Childhood Education in Spain and Catalonia

Early childhood education aims at integrating young children in their own cultural groups and providing necessary abilities, skills and knowledge to enable their active participation in their respective communities (Bassedas, Huguet and Solé, 2006).

Early childhood education, as in all the countries around the world, is shaped by the country's political and ideological stance during a specific era. In early 1800s, early childhood education movement appeared as a response to social needs. Mothers would take their children to playgrounds under the supervision of an unqualified *"amiga"*. In 1839, the first official preschool was opened in Madrid. During these years, constant conflict between the political parties ruling the government and religious sectors had an influence on the ECE system in Spain. After the return of monarchy in 1978, a democratic constitution was established and the education system started to decentralize, recognizing that each autonomous community is competent to arrange their own educational affairs. In 1990, Spanish government published Ley orgánica de Ordenamiento General del Sistema Educativo (LOGSE) to regulate ECE in Spain. According to LOGSE, ECE

provides services for 0 to 6 year olds, is complimentary to the family system and their needs and is not compulsory. LOGSE involves the standards regarding the children/teacher ratio, physical space, educational activities and materials (Molero Pintado and Pozo Andres, 1992).

In addition to ECE being non-compulsory, LOGSE indicates that; family-school collaboration should be established; all ECE services and curricula should be compatible with the children's ages, capacities and needs and should provide experiences that would enable young children to be competent and successful in the following compulsory schooling years. According to LOGSE ECE serves two main function, namely, an educational and social. Assisting women to incorporate in work life is the social and supporting children to development at their maximum potential is the educational function of ECE. Main objectives of the education this age period include; promoting children's development respecting their diversity and individual differences; compensating social and cultural inequalities, preparing the children to the upcoming compulsory schooling years. This legislation divides ECE in two cycles: 1st cycle corresponds to the education of babies (3 months old and onwards) and infants until the age of 3. The content of the 1st cycle curriculum is decided by each autonomous community. The 2nd cycle corresponds to the education of 3 to 6 year-old children (Bassedas, Huguet and Solé, 2006). Although not compulsory, this 2nd cycle is exempt from payment. According to the data presented in World Data on Education (UNESCO-IBE, 2010) in 2007-08, the schooling rate in both 1st and 2nd cycle of ECE was 97,5%, and for 5 year-old population, it was 98,8% in Spain; in Barcelona province, the schooling rate in 2nd cycle of ECE was 96,37%, and for 5 year-old population it was 96,99% during 2009-2010 academic year (Diputació de Barcelona, 2011).

This dissertation project aims at analyzing the inclusion process of children attending 2nd cycle of ECE, more concretely P-5 level (5 year-old group). Further justification of selecting this age group is presented within the empirical framework chapter.

According to the framework for minimum requirements, established by Spanish government and implemented by Departament d'Educació (Secretary of Education, Catalan Government, 2009), children should acquire adequate skills to become autonomous and act autonomously; to be able to think and communicate; to discover and take initiative; and lastly, to co-exist with others within their communities and environment. The areas that are covered in the Catalan ECE curriculum include, discovering one's self and the others; discovering the environment; communication and languages. Educational practices addressing "*discovering the environment*" area include activities

targeting children's awareness of cultural diversity. Hence, teachers are expected to deliver curriculum content to introduce the reality about cultural diversity present in Catalonia in the 2nd cycle of ECE.

Article 16 of the Spanish Educational Law established in 2006 (Ley Orgánica de Educación, LOE, 2/2006), indicates that in the early childhood education, the working methodology should be based on the experiences, activities and play. Therefore, from LOGSE and LOE, it is possible to conclude that play has an important role in ECE, and consequently in enabling children with skills and knowledge to discover the reality of cultural diversity present in communities which they belong to.

2.1.2. Cultural Diversity in Early Childhood Education Context

We become cultural beings as soon as we are born and we become part of the group by interacting with other people around us. Soto (2006:20) defines culture as "group of representations and practices that permit, guarantee and organize life". Culture is the individual's capacity to give multiple responses to solve our everyday existence. Another definition of culture is suggested by Smidt (2009:41): "culture could be defined as the ways in which groups of people pass on beliefs and values and the product of human work and thought". "Culture imposes order and meaning on our experiences. It allows us to predict how others will behave in certain situations" (Gollnick and Chinn, 1998:4). Cole (1998:16) defines culture as a "species-specific medium of human development" which functions as a coordinator between people and people; and people and the physical world. Culture has both explicit and implicit aspects. For people coming from a different cultural background, it would be challenging to understand its implicit aspects, such as values, beliefs and customs (Devarakonda, 2013). According to Soto (2006), culture designates the life stages, the ability of adaptation to a variety of life situations, the course of complex learning path, long-term habits and it entitles people to communicate with each other through cultural tools, such as language. Shortly, culture is what gives meaning to personal life experiences.

Each context is organized or structured in a different way depending on the culture in a way that the group continuity in time is assured. Therefore, as a school being a context, has its own structure formed by the culture it exists in. Early childhood education is especially important as it prepares young children to become cultural subjects who can confront to the dynamics of the life,

survive and adapt to different worlds. School provides structured possibilities of interrelation opening a way for various kinds of relation formation (Soto and Tovias, 2000).

Lalueza (2012:156) in his extensive literature review about psychological approaches explaining cultural diversity citing Rogoff's work defines cultural diversity as "the function of the same process of development that is oriented towards the goals established by the culture and that is produced through participating in practices of each specific socio-cultural context". Cultures relate to each other through its members who create some kind of links through social activities. Viewing the cultural diversity from a positive stand point is possible through coexistence, getting to know about the differences and creating opportunities for positive experience (Soto and Tovias, 2000).

If a child's cultural background has easily perceivable consequences on child's life such as the physical appearance or a lower socio-economic status, people tend to have negative bias about his/her potential to change and to integrate (Soto and Tovias, 2000). Children can perceive individual differences, gender differences to be distinguished first followed by the perception of racial differences, when they are as young as 3 years old and may start to express opinions which are usually negative stereotypes (Brown, 1998). Children start developing racial consciousness when they are approximately four years old. Their playmate preferences during early years indicate that their choices highly depend on belonging to same race (Fishbein, Malone, and Stegelin, 2009). Children until the age of 6 rely on visible qualities of culture, such as, language, food and race and children do not hesitate to express their opinions about these qualities (Ramsey, 2006).

After defining culture and cultural diversity, it is essential to define the term of cultural diversity within the scope of this research. In this study, when cultural diversity is mentioned, the intention is to describe those children fulfilling at least one of the following characteristics: having parents (either one of them or both) come from a cultural background other than Catalan and Spanish; being born either in a country other than Spain or to a non-Spanish/Catalan speaking home setting; having a mother tongue other than Catalan or Spanish; coming from a family which follows religious rituals other than Catholic Cristian; having physical aspects specific to a race.

Early childhood education is particularly important in this sense, because children should learn about the diversity and value it as richness rather than interiorizing the negative stereotypes present in their surrounding culture as the only reality. Depending on how cultural diversity is viewed by

the members of the dominant culture sometimes having a different cultural background, speaking a different mother tongue may not have a value. If the educational objectives are established according to the expectation of a cultural system which does not value cultural diversity, this may cause a limitation to active participation of a child's in his own learning process (Mc Dermott and Varenne, 2005). Furthermore cultural diversity awareness at early ages, promote empathy and respect towards people with cultural differences (Devarakonda, 2013).

Between the ages of 0-6 children acquire basic cultural codes and connect their self with the collective belongingness (Soto and Tovias, 2000). At the age of three, children are conscious about social relationships. They are able to make and to keep friends, engage in cooperation to negotiate and share their interests with people around them (Trevarthen, 1998). The basic strategies that children use to improve their symbolization skills include experience, observation and imitation. Culture related content can be transmitted both verbally and non-verbally (Soto and Tovias, 2000).

Ramsey (2006) in her extensive literature review on multicultural early childhood education states that in the 1970s and 1980s the focus was on race, ethnicity and culture when educating young children from a cultural diversity perspective. Since then, from a variety of multicultural early childhood programs "some address the educational needs of students who experience cultural gaps between home and school or are targets of discrimination; others focus on learning about and respecting other individual groups; and still others engage in students in challenging the inequalities of our society" (Ramsey, 2006:282). Throughout the last three decades, focus of multicultural education changed from altering individual attitudes and valuing diversity to tackling with inequalities and discrimination appearing in the society.

Devarakonda (2013:.58-59), citing Banks (2004) work introduces five dimensions of multicultural education:

1- Using cultural artifacts (such as books, puppets, games, costumes, etc) representing a variety of cultures to support the curriculum applied in an ECE setting…

2- Constructing knowledge in four levels: a) acknowledging those people who belong to different cultures and who can have a meaningful influence over the curriculum. b) relating a specific concept to different cultures. c) using developmentally appropriate information. d) developing critical thinking skills through applying the knowledge that children previosly have constructed.

3- Reducing stereotypes attached to cultural aspects and promoting democratic attitutes, values and behavior within the setting and the staff who work there.

4- Employing equity pedagogy, meaning that staff situmulate children's learning and enhance their academic abilities, using a variety of teaching methods and materials to match with the learning styles that culturally diverse student body has.

5- Increasing opportunities of interactions between the children and staff and enhancing the achievment levels of culturally diverse children.

Essomba (2003:36) emphasizes that "it is not the same being a Moroccan in Morocco as being a Moroccan in Catalonia". Therefore, it is important not to introduce stereotypical elements of a culture in an early childhood classroom, as it would not be correct to assume that all the families proceeding from the same country would have the same values, daily cultural practices or the belief system. Furthermore, Essomba (2003) suggests three pedagogical and practical principles fundamental in ECE:

a) Providing educational propositions basing on the reality of the families whose children attend the center and contextualizing the themes about cultural diversity according to each family's own situation and restraining from stereotyping caused by the country of precedence.

b) Attending the personal process of identity construction of each child, without emphasizing a particular characteristic of their culture.

c) Providing a context that is open for a dialogue within the school community, without putting any obstacles to identify, to discuss and to negotiate the meanings attributed to the beliefs, values, daily cultural practices of each culture present in the community.

In this research, the term multicultural preschool is used for the centers delivering education in 2nd cycle of ECE whose studentbody is culturally diverse. Likewise, the term multicultural kindergarten is used for classes of P-5 (5 year-olds) in which children coming from different cultural backgrounds attend.

2.1.3. Peer Culture, Friendship and Peer Preferences During Early Childhood

When children enter in a culturally organized joint activity as novices, children may struggle to comprehend the cultural objects and social relations that surround them. As a way of dominating their new environment, children may manipulate the culture they are born in and they may even

reinvent their own language (Cole, 1998). In order to understand preschoolers social interaction it is essential to gain understanding about what friendship means, how it is manifested in peer culture and how they choose their friends. Corsaro's (2003) work presents a strong foundation on this theme.

Corsaro (2003:37) takes an interpretevist stance towards the conceptualization of culture and defines peer culture as "*a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that kids produce and share in interaction with each other*". According to him, children strive for having a sense of control over their lives and through their peer culture; they share their sense of being in control with other peers whom they interact daily.

In this dissertation research, the term peer is used for five year-old children who either share the same classroom or share the same playground every day and engage in play interaction. Their play interactions are assumed to be part of their peer culture, which is regarded as influenced by the local dominant culture, as Corsaro (2003:37) expresses that "kids produce a series of local peer cultures that become part of, and contribute to, the wider cultures of other kids and adults within which they are embedded".

According to Corsaro (2003), for younger preschoolers being friends mean playing together. He observes that three- and four-year old children refer to their peer with whom they play frequently as friends. Nevertheless, five- and six- year olds have rather sophisticated conception of friendship. When children in those age groups talked about friends and friendship, they tended to be more aware and reflective about the significance of having someone as a friend. For them, friend not only meant the children with whom they played but also, those children whose backs they would watch and with whom they would share secrets. For children in those age groups friends usually meant cliques, "group of kids who played together on a regular basis and referred to each other as good or best friends" (Corsaro, 2013:72), and the cliques tended to be same-sex peers. Having formed a clique with a peer gives more security and confidence in children's social interactions during play. Corsaro (2013) explains that same-sex cliques share similar play interests and instead of excluding other children from their play, they seek their close friends as play mates for specific types of play, e.g. soccer for male cliques; socio-dramatic play for female cliques. However, this does not mean that best friends do not have conflict. In fact, Corsaro (2003:74) reports a teacher's comment "these best friends are fighting all the time". He attributes this comment to the fact that

children's high expectancies from one another and their feelings of insecurity about sustaining a friendship in a very dynamic preschool context.

Corsaro (2003) specifies some factors that have an impact on children's friendship formation: inter- and intra- gender relationships, group size, time period that children spend together is a specific context, preschool curriculum and how it is implemented, social and cultural values of the society and the peer group. He argues that gender based play interactions are more obvious during free play periods. A preschool curriculum including structured or semi-structured activities promoting inter-gender interactions may reduce the gender-segregated play interactions and formation of same-gender cliques. In a school in which Head Start program is implemented to address the needs of the children coming from low socio-economic class families, Corsaro (2003) observes that the cliques have weaker power. He points out that this may result from the short amount of time that children spend together weekly and from the programs special slogan that conveys the message of all children are valuable in the group.

Walden, Lemerise and Smith (1999) conducted a study on the development of friendships and peer acceptance and their relation to children's emotional regulation and social-emotional behavior with others among a group of 3- 5-year-old children and in this study they concluded that friendships at early ages were consistent in different situations and they were stable over a time period and first impressions had a long term effect (Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow, and Poteat, 2000). Preschool children's social behavior had a significant impact on their popularity within their peer group. However, peer acceptance resulted mostly from having a number of mutual friends (Walden, Lemerise and Smith, 1999; Lindsey, 2002). Nevertheless, being liked or disliked in a peer group did not guarantee having friends (Walden, Lemerise and Smith, 1999). Furthermore, Cillessen and Bellmore (2011:407) suggest that "the ability to form friendship may be a better indicator of social skill than group acceptance".

According to Sheridan, Buhs, and Warnes (2003), children's peer relationships must be examined in which they participate actively, as the social norms and demands appearing in their specific contexts have direct repercussions on children's relationship formation.

Corsaro (2003) suggests that children can easily get threatened by a peer who tries to join them without being invited. He further explains that preschool playgrounds are full of distractions and stimulus causing difficulties in sustaining a play episode. Once children are engaged in play with a

peer group, they take their guards to protect their play from getting interrupted. Therefore, a new peer who is trying to join without an invitation is seen as an intruder, rather than a friend who wants to have fun together.

Social behaviors are subject to different interpretation depending on their social and cultural contexts. Understanding the existence of such different interpretations is a key to successful peer interaction and social inclusion of culturally diverse children (Kemple, 2004). Studies conducted from a diversity perspective in early childhood (Coie and Cillessen, 1993; Kistner, et al, 1993) suggest that peers end up being not preferred as friends because they behave in a way that their peers dislike. Being socially withdrawn, disruptive, uncooperative, hyperactive, anxious, immature and lacking in pro-social skills can be included to types of unpleasant behaviors subject to exclusion from a peer group and becoming an unpopular child (Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow, and Poteat, 2000; Walker, 2004). It is also added that children who are "different" for having physical qualities have a tendency to be excluded. These different physical qualities can be resulted from a physical deficiency, having a different racial and cultural background or simply because being physically unattractive. Preschoolers not only choose to become friends who are similar to them but also, they tend to cause difficulties in becoming friends with those children whose behaviors are very different from the rest of the peer group (Lindsey, 2002).

Finkelstein and Haskins (1983) with a quantitative design, studied peer preferences of 38 black and 25 white children attending kindergarten during classroom time and outdoors free play period. They concluded that children preferred to interact with same-color peer, especially more often during outdoor free play periods and their tendency to choose a same-color peer increased throughout the school year. Howes and Wu (1990) examined and compared 104 kindergartners with 106 third graders in terms of peer interaction, social status and reciprocated friendships. In their study they found that kindergartners engaged in positive cross-ethnic friendships less frequently than the third-grade children, less likely to access to cross-ethnic peer groups and tended to engage in a conflict more than the third year graders. Furthermore, these authors argued that it would not be accurate to conclude that making cross-ethnic friends and having an equal social status with other members of the peer group would be enough to develop positive self-esteem and self-identity. Children who have a limited contact with same-ethnic peers may suffer from understanding his/her own ethnic identity and may have some difficulties to accept the value of cultural and ethnic diversity.

Unpopular children in a peer group tend to lack communicative skills which may lead to getting excluded from play interactions (Walker, 2009). Kindergartners need some social and communication skills in order to be successful in engaging in social play: ability to initiate play interactions, having skills to co-operate during a play, ability to follow the rules set by the group, or to be able to set the rules of a game, to take turns during dialogues with other children and to engage in reciprocal communication (Glenn, Cousins and Helps, 2005). Exclusion may occur due to a child's cultural and racial differences in playgrounds (Wohlwend, 2004) as kindergartners tend to prefer playing with same color peers during recess (Finkelstein and Haskins, 1983) and children coming from different culture may have language and communication difficulties causing them to need assistance to facilitate their participation in play activities (Casey, 2005).

In the early years, both teachers and parents should be involved in young children's process of constructing friendship and necessary competences to engage in successful social interactions (Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow and Poteat, 2000; Lindsey, 2002). When a child is having problems to become a peer group member during preschool years, instead of waiting for these difficulties to disappear on their own, it is essential to offer support and help the child to adjust to his/her social environment and to become a social peer network. Once a child is adapted to his/her social contexts, school adjustment becomes a rather easier process (Johnson, Ironsmith, Snow and Poteat, 2000). Otherwise, early experiences of peer rejection can have a dramatic impact on self-concept, social skills and school success even in adolescence (Sunwolf and Leets, 2004).

Tay-Lim and Gan (2013), in their collective case study examined eight preschool children's perceptions of peer-rejection, and they concluded that children perceived themselves subject to peer rejection starting from three years-old. Children who participated in their study identified four concrete categories of rejection: employing exclusion, showing disapproval, employing verbal hostility and using physical aggression. Children participating in this study reported that certain facts leaded to their rejections, such as exhibiting negative behavior and having a perceivable difference from the other peers. Furthermore, children identified the free play context as the most popular arena where they suffered from peer rejection.

Fishbein, Malone, and Stegelin, (2009) after an extensive review, detected that there was a lack of studies focusing on the children's playmate preferences in early childhood. As a result they conducted a study using sociometric ratings, aiming at examining the influence of race, sex and perceived physical attractiveness on playmate choices, by collecting data from culturally diverse

four-year olds, which included 15 white boys, 16 white girls, 7 black boys and 12 black girls who attended a program with a curriculum that put no specific emphasis to culture related issues. Results of their study indicated that white boys were the most popular play mates amongst both the white and the black boys, and girls preferred same-race playmates. They concluded that children's playmate preferences were influenced by children's racial attitudes.

2.1.4. Diversity of Population in Spain, Catalonia and Catalan Preschools

In this section statistical data about foreign population living in Spain and Catalonia is presented. Here, the term diversity indicates the variety of countries of origin. When presenting data, instead of immigrants, the term foreigner is used as a direct translation of "extranjeros", which is the term that official documents use.

Starting from 1980s Spain became a popular destination for immigrants, mainly proceeding from third world countries. In the beginning immigrants arrived in Spain to find better living conditions and most of them took jobs that locals would not apply for (Montón, 2002).

According to statistical data (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2011) published in 2011, Spain had 46.815.916 inhabitants and approximately 11.2% of its population proceeded from other countries. The majority of foreign population came from Romania (747.146), Morocco (640.332) and Ecuador (304.030). Amongst the 17 autonomous communities in Spain, Catalonia was home to the most number of foreigners (1.128.445, 15% of total population of the autonomous community), followed by Comunidad de Madrid (945.252) and Comunitat Valenciana (756.772).

According to the statistical data published by Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya (Idescat, 2011) in Catalonia, Barcelona was the municipality in which the most amount of foreigners inhabited with a total of 278.269 people (17,23 % of the total population of the city). Two cities from which the schools were selected for this dissertation research, Terrassa ranked 4th (with 213.697 foreign population, 14,84% of the total population of the city), and Sant Cugat 18th (with 11.180 foreign population, 13,42 % of the total population of the city). More detailed statistical information related to these two cities is given within the empirical framework chapter, under the *Context of the Study* section of each study.

When we take a look at the information about diversity in early childhood in Spain, the statistics indicate that during 2010-2011 academic year the total number of foreign students attending an ECE center was 133.841 (17,1% of the total) (Ministerio de Educación, 2010).

During 2010-2011 academic year 1.147.531 students were attending different levels of Catalan schools. 13,7% of all the students had a foreign nationality. The majority of these students coming from other countries attended public schools (17,5% versus 6,4% attending private centers) (Departament de Benestar Social i Família, 2012).

In ECE context, the statistical data indicate that in Catalonia 9,9% of all preschoolers were foreigners. The table below presents the distribution of foreign 3 to 6 year-olds attending the 2nd cycle of both public and private ECEs in each county. Carrasco (2004) suggests that the percentage of children, whose parents have different cultural origins, born in Barcelona continues to increase and as a result the population of children with a different cultural background will be in raise.

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ALUMNAT ESTRANGER SEGONS LA ZONA D'ORIGEN.
PÚBLIC I PRIVAT. Curs 2010-11

Concepte / Comarca	Unió Europea	Resta d'Europa	Magrib	Resta d'Àfrica	América del Nord	América Central i del Sud	Àsia i Oceania	Total
Alt Camp	41	15	149	4	--	19	3	231
Alt Empordà	180	33	618	59	2	109	12	1.013
Alt Penedès	23	14	320	4	2	45	23	431
Alt Urgell	16	12	14	2	--	10	3	57
Alta Ribagorça	7	4	5	--	--	2	--	18
Anoia	41	7	248	23	--	23	20	362
Bages	66	28	544	60	4	49	41	792
Baix Camp	179	29	662	19	2	108	37	1.036
Baix Ebre	111	19	220	4	--	19	42	415
Baix Empordà	109	31	570	50	1	59	27	847
Baix Llobregat	289	49	1.027	61	4	267	170	1.867
Baix Penedès	67	11	352	4	2	59	19	514
Barcelonès	679	293	1.339	255	44	1.349	1.945	5.904
Berguedà	20	4	90	1	1	10	4	130
Cerdanya	21	4	3	3	--	11	2	44
Conca de Barberà	9	1	41	2	--	--	4	57
Garraf	139	19	190	6	3	35	23	415
Garrigues	24	--	32	4	--	--	--	60
Garrotxa	24	6	65	98	--	19	88	300
Gironès	134	33	601	327	3	181	81	1.360
Maresme	117	25	869	230	7	130	114	1.492
Montsià	173	30	103	2	--	40	21	369
Noguera	59	9	106	25	--	13	3	215
Osona	62	8	724	131	--	52	69	1.046
Pallars Jussà	11	3	17	3	--	3	2	39
Pallars Sobirà	12	--	3	--	--	4	--	19
Pla d'Urgell	76	5	125	21	1	9	9	246
Pla de l'Estany	20	6	64	55	1	6	7	159
Priorat	13	2	22	--	1	1	--	39
Ribera d'Ebre	45	5	51	--	--	4	5	110
Ripollès	8	1	45	1	--	7	1	63
Segarra	47	47	70	57	--	19	4	244
Segrià	252	42	470	231	1	64	27	1.087
Selva	173	61	246	84	2	60	111	757
Solsonès	9	1	62	2	--	3	4	81
Tarragonès	182	53	678	115	2	120	61	1.211
Terra Alta	29	--	6	--	--	4	1	40
Urgell	51	12	146	35	--	20	4	268
Vall d'Aran	12	--	17	--	--	6	--	35
Vallès Occidental	277	50	1.344	239	12	434	211	2.567
Vallès Oriental	89	37	691	243	6	160	75	1.301
Total	3.896	1.009	12.949	2.460	101	3.553	3.273	27.241

Font: Departament d'Ensenyament. Estadística de l'ensenyament.

Table 1: The distribution of foreign 3 to 6 year-olds
attending the 2nd cycle of ECE in counties of Catalonia.
Source: Departament d'Ensenyament (2011a). (Secretary of Teaching, Statistics of Teaching)

As the data for this research was collected from three schools located in Vallès Occidental County, it is essential to emphasize the diversity in 2nd cycle of ECEs located in this county. The table above presents that the total of 3 to 6 year-old students attending public and private preschools in the county was 2.567 during 2010-2011 academic year. This number indicates 7.73% percent of the grand total of preschoolers attended in public and private ECEs in Vallès Occidental. The majority of foreign preschoolers were carrying Moroccan nationality (52,35%) (Departament d'Ensenyament).

The table 1 below presents the evolution of foreign student population between 2006 and 2010. The percentages related to the ECE ("Ed. Infantil" on the table) indicates an index around 0,5-0,6 and there is a slight decrease in 2009-2010. Considering the evolution of foreign population during the time range presented in TABLE 2, it can be concluded that the newcomer population was not getting access to quotas designated for ECE centers as much as the local population did.

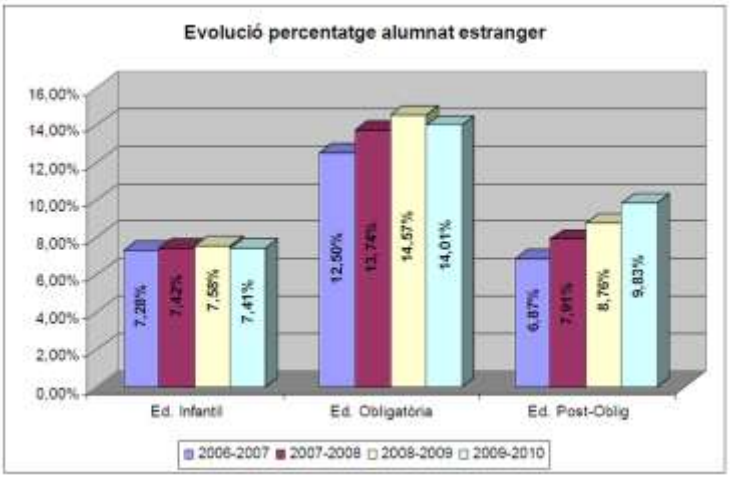

Table 2: The evolution of foreign student population between 2006 and 2010
Source: Diputació de Barcelona, 2011

Another interesting fact to mention in this section is the diversity of the faculty working as ECEs in Catalonia. Although official statistical data couldn't be retrieved, from the researcher's field experience, it was concluded that the diversity of student body was not reflected to the faculty members. Since teachers working in the public school system had to be fluent Catalan speakers, the faculty bodies tended to be Spanish citizens with a Catalan cultural background. Citing

Perera's work (2001), Nutbrown and Clough (2004) suggest that the teachers' personal histories of inclusion and exclusion may have a powerful effect on their inclusive practices. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that teachers with a culturally diverse background may have more dispositions to implement inclusive practices than teachers without multicultural life experiences. As in general the faculty members in Catalan preschools tend to be homogenously from the dominant culture, it is thought that the results presented in this research could broaden their perspectives on cultural diversity and the needs of children with different cultural backgrounds.

By basing the interest of this present research on the statistical data provided above and some facts about faculty members the intention of the researcher is to present some results that could be used in the future to develop a culturally responsive early childhood curriculum based on play in order to prevent children from the side effects of this immigration flow in Catalonia; and to provide new ideas and strategies to the teachers' that they can make use of during their students' inclusion process to Catalan culture, facilitating their senses of belongingness to their new culture and protecting them from losing their own cultural identity.

2.2. INCLUSION and CULTURAL DIVERSITY in the EARLY YEARS

2.2.1. From Special Educational Needs to Inclusion of All Children: A Historical Overview

The Warnock Report (1978) can be referred to as a cornerstone in emergence of *"inclusion*" in the educational setting. This report widened the concepts of "special education" and "special educational needs" to facilitate the integration of children with disabilities in mainstreaming schools, in a way that schools became available to all children regardless of their differences. According to this "Educational Needs" of all children and "Special Educational Needs" (SENs) were in a continuum and focus on disabilities was removed. SENs were identified as the type of supports that any kind of students (handicapped, with a different cultural background, with a different language, etc.) needed to follow the normal curriculum. This model was accepted by Ministry of Education and Culture in 1982, in Spain and in Catalonia, through the act 299/1997 this model was put into effect. LOGSE, in 1990, also included this recent concept of SENs and attention to the diversity.

During mid-1980s, researchers started to question the initiative of Warnock Report due to its focus on SENs instead of focusing on the learning conditions. Not centralizing on the learning conditions led to students with SENs to be considered as the group with intrinsic difficulties for learning. Ainscow (2004, in Booth et al., 2004), one of the most influential researchers in inclusive education literature, adopted a new perspective in the second half of 1980s. According to him, schools had to perceive every child as unique and special; as a consequence, schools had to attend individual needs of all the students. This proposal was situated in an interactive perspective and intended to relate learning difficulties of a child with a learning context in which those difficulties were produced. A new concept, "barriers to learning and participation", was introduced, so that focus was moved towards the context where problem of learning were occurred rather than the problem itself. The aim of this approach was to achieve that all the children can successfully participate in educational experiences shared with everybody. To make this possible, it is essential to assess the context where learning takes place instead of the student.

In 1994, UNESCO Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education gave a new push to inclusive education. It addressed the importance of inclusion of children with disabilities or impairments, initiated a significant movement for promoting the idea that regular schools implement an inclusive orientation. Salamanca statement (1994:9) identified the inclusive schools as "the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all." And until today, this conference has been a great support for movements that defended inclusive schooling.

In line with the approaches of these two documents mentioned above, in some countries it is still thought that inclusive education serves children with special educational needs that occur due to a physical or biological deficiency or impairment in common educational settings (Ainscow, 2009, in Hick et al., 2009) (this idea in fact corresponds to integration rather than inclusion). However, internationally, inclusive education is accepted as an educational reform which supports and welcomes diversity amongst all students. In 1990, UNESCO's Education for All conference in Jomtien, Thailand, identified the vulnerable and marginalized groups of learners as victims of educational exclusion worldwide, stressing the idea that physically disabled students were not the only group who suffered from exclusion in educational settings. 10 years after the conference in Jomtien, in 2000 a conference held by UNESCO in Dakar reviewed the outcomes of this previous conference and concluded that most of the goals weren't reached. Following a similar path like in

Jomtien, new goals were established. Among these goals there was one goal about inclusion which was emphasizing the ethnic minorities facing a challenge. The goal stated that "Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality" (UNESCO, 2000:8), and it was added as an additional commentary that "Starting from early childhood and extending throughout life, the learners of the twenty-first century will require access to high quality educational opportunities that are responsive to their needs, equitable and gender-sensitive. These opportunities must neither exclude nor discriminate. Since the pace, style, language and circumstances of learning will never be uniform for all, there should be room for diverse formal or less formal approaches, as long as they ensure sound learning and confer equivalent status" (UNESCO, 2000:12) Through these statements, UNESCO highlighted the importance of inclusive education and suggested that inclusion had to start from the early childhood years.

Inclusion has had different definitions throughout the historical discourse of inclusive education in different contexts. Inclusion may be seen as a political and social challenge or as an impulse for maximizing active engagement and minimizing the probability of being left out from the school and from the society (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006). "'Inclusion is commonly understood as representation of various dimensions of diversity in children's educational experience"(Williams, 1992:304). Successful inclusion is "theoretical, social and curricular means for assuring that all children are fully accepted members of the learning communities in which they participate" (Mallory, 1994:58).

In order to have a common understanding about inclusion, there appears an urge for an operational definition of inclusion related to the context of this research. Carrasco (2004) defines inclusive education as people's knowledge acquisition through active participation in their learning process within the educational institutions and their communities. Booth, Ainscow and Kingston (2004:3) stated in, Index for Inclusion: Developing Play, Learning and Participation in Early Years and Childcare, the leading source for implementing inclusive education that "inclusion is about minimizing all barriers to play and learning for all children" and in the early education contexts "inclusion is reducing barriers to play, learning and participation for all children". According to these authors inclusion means reducing all forms of continuous or periodical pressures which limit children's active involvement in play and learning due to obstacles caused by both children's individual characteristics and external factors. In the inclusive early childhood contexts all children

are expected to get involved in decision making processes related to their educational processes, and to become full members of their peer group. Lead by this perspective, in this study the inclusion process is defined as the facilitation of children's active engagement in play moments and learning experiences by removing the barriers that are caused by cultural differences through providing a culturally sensitive play context.

In early childhood education, inclusion implicates the teachers as well as the children, meaning that children's full participation is not the only criteria for a preschool to be qualified as inclusive. Teachers also must participate actively to ensure the removal of the barriers. In accordance with this principal of inclusive education, teacher, as a mediating figure, have the responsibility of organizing the educational context not only from the perspective of the dominant culture, but also through searching for opportunities to refer to the child's own cultural background. A teacher working in an inclusive early childhood setting has the obligation of finding ways of making the most of what a child has acquired in his cultural environment in order to facilitate his active participation in the educational context (Williams, 1991). She has to organize the educational setting in a way that each child can get access to his needs and is provided a variety of possibilities to get engaged in the activities (Leatherman, 2007).

2.2.2. Inclusion of Culturally Diverse Children in the Early Years from Socio-Constructivist Perspective

Early childhood period can be considered as a fundamental developmental stage, as it is when the children start making sense of the world and they are very open to learning experiences. Although at this stage children acquire a wide range of skills, knowledge, and attitude, it is known that, due to individual differences, every child has his or her own pace to learn. Offering an environment that respect their progress in learning and that provide support for further gain for all the children in an early childhood setting fosters a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Children need to interact with normally developed peers to acquire appropriate social skills and to reinforce their verbal and non-verbal communication ability. Children who have communication difficulties; who do not have the competences needed for maintaining social relations; or who have suffered from peer rejection, engage in social interaction with their peers less frequently (Kemple, 2004). Until early 1990s the concept of "inclusion" referred to the placement of students with a disability or impairment in general schooling settings. As an extension of this approach, inclusion

was defined as a process of welcoming pupils with an identified special education need in a school or a community, providing an environment in which these students could become full members, their contributions would be valued and the diversity they bring to the school would be seen as richness (Hick et al., 2009).

In this research project, inclusive education is defined as the process of valuing all the children equally regardless of their cultural backgrounds, of offering a supportive learning environment which does not contradict with their families' cultural practices at home and of providing adequate means to remove all the barriers to learning which are caused by cultural differences between the educational settings' dominant culture and the children's home cultures and of facilitating children's active participation in peer culture through play.

This research bases its theoretical and methodological foundation on the assumptions of interpretivism and socio-constructivism. According to socio-constructivist approach, children must be active participants in their cultural context for a fruitful learning experience. This is a prerequisite; however, it is not enough for a successful learning. Teacher as a mediator has a very important role. With adequate guiding, learning potentials of every child can come out as an actual performance (Vygotsky, 1979).

Mallory and New (1994), departing from the socio-constructivist perspective, introduce four principles to be followed for inclusion in the early childhood education: the classroom functioning as a community of learners; reinforcing social relations between children is through offering peer collaboration experiences through play; the teachers considering the concepts and social knowledge associated with the child's family and larger community which surrounds the child; assessment procedures being focused on the ability of the child to solve culturally relevant problems within dynamic social context, instead of his or her individual deficits. Odom et al. (1996) add to these with organizational networking and teacher preparation.

Some children may progress in learning with a different pace than their peers due to several factors arising from biological or physical differences, socio-economic status or cultural differences. Inclusion in the early years should be addressed in a rather different way as it has some unique characteristics due to the nature of the educational practices at this age period.

Odom et al. (1996) states three features of early childhood which have direct effect on inclusive planning:

1- The nature of preschool children's development and early childhood teaching practices: Educational objectives in this period focus on the development in language, cognition, social skills, motor abilities and adaptive behavior and according to this focus teaching practices require child-initiated strategies through which the children engage actively in their learning process. Although teachers expect to have students ready to participate actively in social play and to show eagerness to learn, in a classroom full of youngsters who don't share a common language or culture ensuring a decent learning environment can become a challenge. Therefore, teachers must be aware of using adequate strategies to promote the children's active participation.

2- Organizational structures: In some cases, it may be necessary to form collaborative relationships with public or private agencies to receive services which contribute to a better inclusive setting. For example, a child with a kind of impairment may need extra help in the classroom, or classroom teacher may need assistance to transform the curriculum in a way that can match with the child's individualized education plan. In other cases, a cultural mediator may be helpful to adjust the educational setting so that it becomes responsive to child's cultural background.

3- Teacher Preparation: Teacher may require additional training regarding to the inclusion in early childhood settings. Mogharreban and Bruns states (2009:407) that "positive outcomes for all young children require a combination of knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and inclusive attitudes and skills on the part of the teaching professionals".

Mallory and New (1994), departing from the socio-constructivist perspective, introduce four principles to be followed for inclusion in the early childhood education:

1- Inclusive classroom functions as a community of learners: Inclusion process should foster the feeling of belongingness in every child, in a way that the child is valued for what she or he has to contribute and is motivated to participate as a member of the diverse and equitable community.

2-Social relations are catalyst for learning in the inclusive curriculum. In the early childhood setting, the most effective and natural way of reinforcing social relations between children is through offering peer collaboration experiences through play. De Groot Kim (2005) cites Brown et al.'s (1996:26) study which concludes that "young children who have frequent and varied positive peer interactions during early and middle childhood have greater peer acceptance and more extensive networks of friends".

3- Content and context are linked through inclusive curriculum and instruction: Motivational qualities of contextualized instruction must be assured by providing opportunities for solving socio-culturally relevant problems. This requires the teachers to consider the concepts and social knowledge associated with the child's family and larger community which surrounds the child.

4- Processes for feedback and assessment are authentic and emotionally supportive: Assessment procedures should be focused on the ability of the child to solve culturally relevant problems within dynamic social context, instead of his or her individual deficits.

Understanding the link between different factors and outcomes is crucial to the identification of the learning barriers and facilitators in preschool inclusion. This research does not include the family or community practices as an objective of study. However, it is worth mentioning that learning context may be influenced by family goals for children's participation and cultural values of family and of the community members.

Early years practitioners are particularly responsible in fighting against discrimination of any kind because children come to their attention at the very beginning of their attitude development. Thereby, the main responsibility of the early childhood educators is to help the children to acquire stable self-identity, and help them to unlearn the prejudices and discriminatory attitudes they absorb from their surrounding environment (Brown, 1998). Paley (1992) in her book questions the reasons why teachers let children to exclude each other during class hours and suggests that although both teachers and children realize the severity of social exclusion, especially teachers tend to have ambivalent opinions on the issue as many think that children should have the right to choose with whom they would like to play.

An extensive review of literature related to inclusive education in early childhood has presented that most of the researchers had focused on the biological or physical deficiency aspects and the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstreaming classrooms (Odom et al., 2004; Martínez Abellán, Haro Rodríguez, and Escarbajal Frutos, 2010). However, studies which focused on inclusion of children with diverse cultural backgrounds in early childhood settings were rather limited (Ainscow and César, 2006; Reveco, 2009; Petriwskyj, 2010).

In her study, Petriwskyj (2010) examines the inclusion in the context of diversity rather than just from the disability aspect. She identifies seven keys to successful inclusion: (1) Teacher professional preparation (2) Family and school support (3) Provision of consultation time (4) Staff

confidence about having the skills to offer a quality program (5) Not having negative attitudes (6) School culture that supports change in practices (7) Increased organizational and pedagogic flexibility. In the same study, she mentions about three possible barriers: (1) Possible obstacles: inadequacy of support resources (2) Limited availability of professional learning (3) External outcomes pressures (academic assessments).

This research follows Petriwskyj's (2010) suggestions when analyzing the kindergarten context examined in the first study.

2.2.3. Teachers' Perspectives on Inclusion

Teachers are important protagonists in children's inclusion process. Since the second objective of this study is to examine teachers' opinions on the role of play as a medium of inclusion, it is fundamental to understand the teachers' perspectives on inclusion in general. Teachers' perspectives on play and its role on inclusion are presented in latter section. Williams (1991:303) emphasizes the importance of adults' roles and their need to understand and reflect on any conflicts occurring between their attitudes, feelings, behaviors and their classroom practices in inclusive settings: "Adults need to understand more about the inner structures in the children they teach. Likewise, adults need to examine possible discontinuities among their own attitudes, behaviors, and current knowledge as sources of negative or mixed messages to children as they strive to implement inclusionary practices in their classrooms". Agreeing with Williams, this section provides an overview of research conducted on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion to enable reflection on previous knowledge.

As previously mentioned, the most of the studies conducted on inclusion focused it from disability perspective, examining the inclusion process of children with special educational needs (SENs). In the literature review, the research found on teachers' attitudes were conducted from this perspective, not mentioning cultural diversity, explicitly, as focus of inclusion.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002), in an extensive literature review on teachers' attitudes towards integration and inclusion of children with SENs. They concluded that although the teachers tended to manifest positive attitudes, the findings of the research conducted in this field was not sufficient to declare that teachers were 100% in favor of inclusion, or that teachers did not agree totally with the no-rejection approach of inclusion philosophy. The literature indicated that teachers' attitudes

changed depending on three variables: Child-related variables, teacher-related variables, and educational environment-related variables.

Child-related variables included the actual disability and SENs condition of a child. When the child's condition was perceived as *severely handicapped*, teachers' presented negative attitudes to their inclusion in normal classrooms. Teachers' expressed that children with *serious cognitive and emotional-behavioral problems* would benefit better from part-time inclusion programs rather than full-time ones. Their attitudes were found to be more positive about the inclusion of physically disabled children.

The findings on the ***teacher-related variables*** in the literature were rather inconsistent. Teachers' genders were not found to have a great impact on their attitudes towards inclusion. However, the length of their teaching experience was found negatively correlated. Younger teachers with less teaching experiences had more positive attitude towards inclusion than those teachers who had been working more than 11 years. *The grade level that teachers were teaching* was found to be another teacher-related variable. Teachers who taught to younger grades (pre-school, elementary school) found inclusion more effective than those teachers who had older students (secondary school). Teachers, who had more *experience working with SENs children***,** reported more positive attitudes towards inclusion. *Training* was another theme mentioned by the teachers. It was referred to be a fundamental need for teachers to develop positive attitude towards the inclusion of children. *Teachers' beliefs on the source of the disability* had repercussions on teachers' attitudes. Teachers who believed that a child's difficulty is inherent in the individual student implemented less effective interaction, than the teachers who thought that student's difficulty resulted from an interaction between the student and environment. Furthermore, *teachers' socio-political views* reflected their attitude towards inclusion. Teachers who believed that inclusion is the public schools' responsibility were more in favor of implementing inclusive practices.

Within the ***Educational environment-related variables*** availability of support staff, support services, availability of a specialist resource teachers and encouragement of head-teachers affected teachers' attitudes positively, whereas, insufficient physical space with too many students, lack of time for preparation, pre-prepared exclusive teaching material, adequate support system had negative effects.

Leatherman and Niemeyer (2005) through their study, which examines how attitudes towards inclusion of two in-service and two pre-service preschool teachers were reflected on their classroom practices, further support the conclusions of the mentioned literature review by finding that previous experiences of teachers in inclusive settings have an impact on their attitude and that availability of pre-service training, support from administrative staff and resource teachers contribute to the success of inclusive in-class practices.

Lieber et al. (1998) conducted a research with 23 preschool teachers and described their beliefs about inclusion and its benefits based on self-report. They found that the common belief amongst the teachers was that inclusion meant that all the members were equally important in the group. They reported that the teachers' inclusive practices differed according to how they viewed the group structure. The teachers who considered that every child was an individual and there was not just one way to act as a group promoted children's independence and particularity. Whereas, the teachers who considered that everybody was responsible of following the group norms were more in favor of conformism and they expected children to behave within acceptable standards. In their study, the teachers manifested different opinions towards diversity. Some were in favor of minimizing the differences, and some expressed that a context where diversity is obvious and the explicit differences are emphasized would be fruitful for children's learning experiences when dealt properly by the teachers. Inclusive programs were seen as opportunities to learn social skills and to learn the values to co-exist harmoniously in social context. According to the teachers inclusion was considered beneficial for every child. Typically developed children would learn through teaching their peers with SENs; whereas, the children with SENs would learn through observing, imitating and engaging in social interactions with their typically developed children.

The next section presents research on inclusion programs addressing culturally diverse children in Catalonia.

2.2.4. Inclusion of Culturally Diverse Children in Catalan Schools

A child coming from a different cultural background is usually regarded as a vulnerable individual at risk of social exclusion or a student with SENs, even though mostly in short-term. However, children, as a social group, usually suffer from invisibility and when those children are immigrants this invisibility is usually doubled. On the other hand, if those children are coming from cultures that manifest phenotypic ally visible characteristics, then they are exposed to overdose of attention. Therefore, it would not be inaccurate to suggest that it is unfair to accept some foreigners as just

foreigners, whereas other foreigners are immigrants due to their visible characteristics (Carrasco, 2004).

In the section *"2.1.4."* of this dissertation an overview on statistics about the cultural diversity in Catalonia is given. From the statistical data provided in the mentioned section, it is understood that there has been a constant increase in immigration flow towards Catalonia since the early 1990's. According to Carrasco (2004) educational institutions are common grounds where the majority, minority, native population encounters immigrant population proceeding from different parts of the world. Due to economic and cultural superiority perceived by the local majority, especially in public schools, conflicts, contradictions and tensions may occur among students, teachers and parents. In Spain, LOGSE established a ground needed for the compensation of inequalities caused by children's socio-cultural situations. (Montón, 2002).

The majority of immigrant students arrive to Catalan education system either with no prior schooling or with only basic knowledge. If a child arrives to Catalonia with regular schooling past, the main concern is the Catalan language knowledge. It is believed that once students learn Catalan, their social adaptation gets easier. Furthermore, when facilitating the inclusion of immigrant children, it is fundamental to respect their mother tongue because it is directly connected to children's home cultures, values and traditions. Children's social and cognitive development depend very much on children's language skills. Therefore, respecting and promoting children's mother tongues contributes highly to children's holistic development (Montón, 2002).

Departament d'Ensenyament (Catalonia Secretary of Education) published The Reception Plan of Educational Centers in Catalonia (El plan de acogida del centro docente en Cataluña) (PACC) in 2001. This educational plan was supposed to be developed and applied through schools' curriculum and linguistic projects. Additional to promotion of language and social skills, this plan also included suggestion for promoting children's affective wellbeing. "The objective of a reception plan is to organize educational interventions oriented to students and families so that they become adapted to the educational institution. Furthermore, it should also be taken into account those actions needed for the school (organization staff) to gain knowledge, to comprehend and to adapt to different family situations of students, whether or not they have immigrant background" (Palaudàrias and Garreta, 2008:505). This plan included an educational intervention model that had different characteristics according to the education level. Since early childhood

education was not compulsory, and in the autonomous community level, educational policies regarding to early childhood education were inexistent, this plan did not include an exclusive section to this stage (Carrasco, 2004). On the contrary, in elementary education and secondary education the plan emphasized the need for Catalan language acquisition and stated to need to exert effort to teach the local official language to new comers (Arnau, 2003). Later in 2003, Language and Social Cohesion plan was introduced basing its foundations on PACC. According to this plan, the reception classes were converted into transition points towards regular classrooms (Pàmies, Carrasco and Narciso, 2012). Its goal was to promote interaction between students with diverse cultural backgrounds and children that belonged to the local dominant culture and assure the integration of all the students in the educational institution (Palaudàrias and Garreta, 2008). Falcón (2011) supports this goal by stating that focusing only on the immigrant population and implementing intervention programs targeting solely the children in this group is considered as the problem of educational system. Therefore, it is essential to include native population when planning and implementing interventions for educational inclusion. On the other hand, implementation of reception classes (where new coming children were immersed in intensive Catalan language classes) was very common throughout Catalonia. Carrasco (2011) argued that the reception classes were created only for the foreign students and for this reason they should not be regarded as promoters of intercultural or inclusive education. Montón (2002) emphasizes the importance of intensive Catalan language classes and suggests that instead of segregated reception classes, new comers should be exposed to Catalan in regular classes through sharing experiences with their native teachers and peers. When a child is directed to a segregated classroom with other non-Catalan speakers, they do not feel welcomed in their new home community. Not only their first impression of their new school would be unwelcoming, but also this segregation would hinder their possibilities of building positive social relationships with their teachers and peers. Another strategy is rotationally assigning peers as tutors to provide support to the newcomer students.

Some schools, instead of offering a segregated reception class, implement the reception plan by appointing a reference teacher to the immigrant student. This reference teacher supports the student's efforts to overcome his or her difficulties by collaborating in their solutions. In preschool classes, which tend to have around 25 students per class, in order to provide young children personal attention and support their language development a support teacher can be assigned to that class along with the classroom teacher or the class population should be decreased (Montón, 2002).

Pàmies, Carrasco and Narciso (2012) conducted a research on three Spaces of Educational Welcoming (Espais de Benvinguda Educativa, or EBE) located in Reus, Catalonia, which were created as experimental spaces of supporting the initial incorporation of immigrant students to these three spaces and the schools that immigrant children attended. Data was collected between 2008 and 2010 through in-depth interviews with children, families and other agents present in the school setting. This qualitative study included one public elementary, one public secondary and one semi-private elementary and secondary level combined school. By the act number EDU/3072/2008, of October 17th EBE was defined as educational family reception spaces of support, counseling before the regular school period had started. The results of their study indicated that EBEs did not have an influence on students' routines between reception class and regular class or on their length of stay in the reception class. The schools had different opinions about their functions. One school expressed that it was an unnecessary resource, whereas another one regarded more positively as providing services that were inexistent before within the school's possibilities.

To sum up, Catalan education system puts an emphasis on developing Catalan language so that children can interact with native peers and teachers to develop social skills. The inclusion perspective suggests that children's original culture and language should be respected all the time. Just because assuming that young children have better disposition to learning new languages, the individual needs of young children should not be ignored. The lack of educational policies related to early year education jeopardizes children's inclusion process and their holistic development. Although Catalan language acquisition is seen the focus of immigrant children's inclusion process, the interventions for their inclusion should also include the native peers, individual attention, grouping with normally developed peers, family involvement and other necessary elements to guarantee children's emotional wellbeing and feelings of belonging to their new home culture.

2.3. PLAY, CULTURE and INCLUSION

2.3.1. Play and Its Social and Cultural Foundations

Play relates the children, brings out their creativity, helps them relate to each other through bonding with one another and it motivates them to learn (Igoa, 1995).

Throughout the history, psychologists have examined the nature of play in order to generate a common theory of play. Since every theorist has approached to the issue of play from a perspective in line with their own theoretical background, there is still no consensus on the genesis and ontology of play. Elkonin's (2005) exhaustive work on play theories explains a variety of perspectives, such as naturalistic perspective, psychoanalytic theory, constructivist approach and social constructivist perspective, and he analyzes each perspective comparatively. Since the theoretical and methodological assumptions of this dissertation research are based on socio-constructivism, only socio-constructivist conceptualization of play is referred. However, when discussing about the social aspects of play Parten's (1932); and when discussing the cognitive types of play Similansky's (1968) work are referred as it is essential to describe the play behavior both in social and cognitive levels (in Swadener and Johnson, 1989).

Elkonin (2005), in his comparative analysis of play theories, being a follower of this perspective, gives a special importance to social constructivist perspective and explains the genesis of the play theory accordingly starting from the early works of Soviet psychologists like Ushinskii and Bolonski. In his article, Elkonin (2005) identifies the work of Vygotsky as a cornerstone in socio-constructivist play theory. Vygotsky (1931, in Elkonin 2005:82) defines play as "a social activity through which children master social relationships and which serves as an opportunity for apprenticeship for future development of the children".

According to Vygotsky (1980) play can't be regarded as being a pure source of pleasure. Play arises from child's desires that are impossible to be satisfied immediately. However, not every desire can be regarded as a trigger of a play situation. A child can be considered as engaged in a play only when his desire has a rather generalized emotional effect on him (e.g. a boy wants to drive a car, but not only the car of his daddy but any car). In order to fulfill this desire he uses an object as a pivot and creates an imaginary situation in which he can act as the way he wants and satisfies his need in the illusionary world he creates. To be capable of creating an illusionary world and using an object as a pivot of the desired object children need to be able to overcome the limitations of the perceptual field and pass to the meaning field. Therefore, by engaging in a fictional situation children learn to guide their behavior not only by the immediate perceptual characteristics of an object, but also by the meaning of the situation. Vygotsky notes that the ability of divergence between the perceptual field and the fields of meanings appears during preschool years (after the age of three). In other words, when children come across with a desire

that they can't fulfill immediately, they think about a resolution to this problem. As they still don't have enough linguistic skills, like adults do, they can't just talk over it and solve the problem. Rather, they create an imaginary situation, they use an object as a pivot and they act in this fictional situation at freewill with the purpose of satisfying their desire that have a generalized emotional effect on them.

Up to this point, Vygotsky's assumptions on play can be summarized as follows (Elkonin, 2005):

- Play occurs when desires, which are generalized affects, cannot be gratified immediately.
- Creation of a "make believe" situation is the center point of play. In this "make believe" situation children tend to take on adult roles and transfer meanings from one object to another. This transference can only occur when child acquires the capacity to distinguish visual field from the sense field.

Some authors define play by associating it to learning. According to Perry and Dockett (1998) play offers a setting in which children can test their knowledge and teachers may expand their understandings on children's interests and learning agenda.

Other authors examine the relevancy between play and socio-cultural context. Winnicott (1998) defines play as the base of cultural experience. In accordance with Winnicott's idea of play Ortega (1991) identifies play as a medium for a child to understand relation systems, values and other key factors relevant to immediate culture surrounding him/her. Play helps the children to dominate their surrounding environment through adjusting mental representations to practical actions (Ortega and Fernandez, 1997). Soto (2006) identifies play as a method that can be used in children's socialization process.

Bandura (1986, in Ashiabi 2007:204) states that by entering into interactions with their peers, children construct their knowledge base not only about the other children but also about themselves and their environment. Another socio-constructivist, Glover (1999, in Ashiabi, 2007:200) supports Bandura's opinion and suggests that children construct knowledge and expand their skills by interacting with others, with their surrounding environment and on their own during play.

Some important characteristics of play include: being enjoyable, chosen at freewill, intrinsically motivating, fictional, actively participative and predominantly for the moment (Ashiabi, 2007),

symbolic, meaningful to children, active, gives pleasure, requires voluntary participation, demonstrates a series of rules and episodic (Fromberg, 1987, in Perry and Dockett, 1998: 5-6).

Children construct their worlds through social and linguistic interaction (Leatherman, 2007), and play provides an ideal context in which they become active actors and where they construct knowledge through significant experiences (Perry and Dockett, 1998). In this study, play is defined as situations created by children that provide children social interaction experiences so that they can test their perception of the world and construct knowledge by interacting with peers. This definition refers to the general conceptualization of play. In this research, play has appeared in different forms, such as functional play, free play, sand play, games with rules and socio-dramatic play. Types and socialization levels of play, those relevant to this research, is further explained in the following section.

Play is an indispensable part of early childhood education. Vygotsky (1980:101) explains us how play contributes to child's development: "Play creates a zone of proximal development of the child. In a play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior. ..., play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development." Ashiabi (2007) cites Bredekam and Copple's work (1997) to support the idea of play as being the most developmentally appropriate medium of learning in early childhood.

According to the socio constructivist paradigm, nature of the constructed knowledge as well as individual's knowledge construction process is influenced by the social environment. Thus, social interaction is a prerequisite for a successful knowledge construction. However, not all kinds of social interaction ensure learning. Social interaction that leads to learning should be focused on the articulation, clarification, justification and the evaluation of information. A context that provides scaffolding, e.g. teacher-guided play, can be counted as favorable for learning.

Göncü and Gaskins (2011) state that play is part of children's daily routines and is subject to their cultural context. Hence the social and cultural features of play are important to mention. Göncü (1993a) argues that neither Vygotsky nor Piaget provided a deeper understanding on how children at early ages construct socio-dramatic play episodes jointly with adults or other children. According to Göncü and Gaskins (2011) children's play takes form through relationships between children and children, or children and adults and is highly influenced by children's socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, they suggest that the dynamics of children's play should be examined context-

base focusing on children's meaning exchanges through interactions. Socio-dramatic play being an intersubjective activity is structured by the culture and cultural differences may have short-term or long-term influences on children's play episodes. In play contexts, Göncü (1993b:185) defined intersubjectivity as children's construction of "shared understanding" when they are active participants. The nature of socio-dramatic play demands children to negotiate their roles and its content. They need to arrive to a common ground so that they decide on the play theme that they are going to perform (Göncü, 1993a). According to Vygotsky (1980) and Parten (1932; in Göncü, 1993a) children develop intersubjectivity skills from the age of three and onwards. However, Göncü (1993b) concludes that children acquire the ability to establish a shared understanding before they are three years old and as a result they start choosing collaborative play over playing solitarily. In her doctoral dissertation Brennen (2008) concludes that by acquiring intersubjectivity skills and engaging in shared activities, children's feelings of belonging to their community develops leading them to form their cultural identity.

2.3.2. Socialization and Cognitive Levels of Play

Play can be examined under several categories depending on several criteria such as, where it is played (indoor vs. outdoor play), who initiates it (teacher initiated, child initiated), how it is played (construction, functional, socio-dramatic, games with rules, etc.). In his exhaustive review of current research on play, Meire (2007) presented the complexity of conceptualizing play and the varieties of its categorization. In this dissertation, socio-dramatic play and free play in outdoors are of special interest, as it is assumed that these types of play have significant roles during young children's inclusion process. Furthermore, Parten's (1933) categorization of play's socialization levels and Similansky's (1968) categorization of play's cognitive levels are highlighted so that two important aspects of play are presented (Swadener and Johnson, 1989).

According to Parten's (1933) theory of social maturity levels children's play is categorized under four types: a) *Solitary play* occurs when children are engaged in play as they manipulate objects or in pretend play situations by themselves. They do not seek company of other children. b) *Parallel play* occurs when children play physically close to other children but they do not interact with them. c) *Associative play* appears when children interact and play together in short-term groups, whose members change rather quickly. During associative play children enter in a group, leave it and re-enter to another one abruptly. d) In cooperative play, children as a group interact harmoniously and carry on with a play episode in which they construct a common understanding

through role and/or rule negotiations for a rather long period of time. From this categorization of play solitary play is left out of the scope of this study, since inclusion process involves interacting with others. It is not possible to examine inclusion in play contexts when a child prefers to engage in solitary play and does not seek for other children.

Smilansky (1968) based her categorization of play according to its cognitive levels, each of four categories corresponding to four Piaget's cognitive stages. Therefore, cognitive level categories of play are hierarchical; they occur in a fixed sequence. a) *Functional play* is the basic play activity involving physical movements in repetitive nature, such as running, banging, etc. b) *Constructive play* is using material which can be manipulated in different forms, eg. Playing with Legos, block play, etc. c) *Dramatic play* involves pretend situations, in which children act as if, they use imagination and take on roles. d) *Games with rules* are played according to shared understandings of players and upon their acceptation of predetermined guidelines to follow while playing.

Swadener and Johnson (1989) state that when social and cognitive levels are combined for play analysis, at the lower end of this hierarchical categorization, solitary-constructive or parallel-functional play are found to be at the bottom end; whereas, socio-dramatic play or games with rules are situated at the top.

The following sections provide a more detailed presentation of socio-dramatic play and outdoor free play due to their relevancy to the inclusion process of culturally diverse preschoolers.

A. Socio-Dramatic Play

"Socio-dramatic play occurs when several children take on different roles and interact with each other in terms of a situation that they have spontaneously created" (Elkin Rosen, 1974: 920). Smilansky and Shefatya (1990, in Ashiabi, 2007: 200) identify socio-dramatic play as cooperative play within the categorization of play according to its social levels. Lindqvist (2001) states that during socio-dramatic play children use their imagination and they include their emotions, thoughts and their perception of the external world as they assume different roles and they act according to these roles in fictional situations. By sharing a common understanding of topics and themes, and by communicating with peers in the setting, children engage in socio-dramatic play and start creating new meanings to expand their play (Fraser, 1986, in Fraser 2007: 15).

Vygotsky doesn't define socio-dramatic play explicitly, however, he gives the idea that when he talks about play, he implies socio-dramatic play: play is essentially social, is mediated by meaning,

learned with other people in social contexts and requires interaction. It has imaginary elements and it is inherently rule-bound (Wood and Benett, 1998). Adult world is a very rich source for children's socio-dramatic play. They place themselves in a play episode, reflecting on current their situation in adult world, as well as projecting their future beings. Through this reflection and projection process, children reconstruct the values, norms, rituals and rules of their surrounding cultures in order broaden their peer culture and satisfy their own needs. As a result they end up creating an "as if " adult culture within their own peer culture. When engaging in socio-dramatic play, children switch from adult world to their peer culture back and forth. For young children, socio-dramatic play is a window through which they foresee (Corsaro, 2003).

According to Corsaro (2003), children's life circumstances influences their expectations and predispositions, which are characterized according to their socio-economic status, manifested through socio-dramatic play.

"While the developing expectations of the upper-middle-class kids are characterized by security and control over their lives, the emerging orientation of the economically disadvantaged kids seems to be one of sober recognition of the difficulty of their circumstances. Yet in both cases, these predispositions are not determined in advance, nor are they simply inculcated by adults. They are, rather, innovative and creative productions in the kids' peer cultures, which, in turn, contribute to the reproduction of the dominant culture with all its strengths and imperfections" (Corsaro, 2003:137).

Socio-dramatic play has a very important role in child development as it contributes to different aspects of development. "Socio-dramatic play improves children's ability to cooperate, to participate in social activities and to understand others (Smith, Dalgleish and Herzmark, 1981, in Ashiabi, 2007: 202). Socio-dramatic play requires negotiations skills and ability to compromise as it involves role taking. By engaging in a socio-dramatic play children acquire communicative skills and they become more successful at resolving conflicts related to peer interactions (Ashiabi, 2007). As socio-dramatic play requires role taking, it enhances children's perspective taking ability as well as communication skills and empathy (Hughes, 1999). While playing in a socio-dramatic play children share their emotions, they develop sensitivity to the others' needs and their problem-solving skills get better resulting in a boosted self-confidence (Ashiabi, 2007).

From these authors' statements about the contributions of socio-dramatic play, it's accurate to think of it as a medium of inclusion process where culturally diverse children are present. Socio-dramatic play, in the early childhood education context, would empower the children that are subject to exclusion due to their cultural differences. Research conducted by Elkin Rosen (1974) concludes that acquisition and performance of socio-dramatic play improves the problem-solving behavior of culturally disadvantaged children.

Socio-dramatic play's contributions are not just oriented to empowerment of culturally disadvantaged students, but also detection of the children who tend to have a negative attitude or beliefs towards cultural diversity. Citing from Macnaughton's study, Nutbrown and Clough (2006) considers socio-dramatic play as a rich resource of information about stereotypes. Following this idea Brown (1998) suggests that close observation and careful assessment of the extent to which play is discriminatory can help the investigators and practitioners to decide how and when to intervene to counter the stereotypical thinking that children have already interiorized and to build relationships based on anti-discriminatory understandings.

In this research, socio-dramatic play is assumed to appear during outdoor free play periods. Although, in the outdoor playgrounds rule-based play is thought to occur more frequently than socio-dramatic play as Vygotsky (1980:94-95) states, "the imaginary situation of any form of play already contains rules of behavior, although it may not be a game with formulated rules laid down in advance", and adds to this by suggesting that "so-called pure games with rules are essentially games with imaginary situations".

B. Outdoor Free Play

Outdoor play provides countless opportunities for experiencing the nature, and everything that it has to offer; children are usually allowed to be themselves, to play freely, to be messy, noisy and active. By engaging in and interacting socially, children learn to build relationships, acquire social skills to make friend and develop self-esteem as they try their physical limits and confront challenges that the risk of being outdoors bring along (White, 2007). Often regarded as free play by adults, outdoor play in recess is solely child-centered play, during which children choose their playmates (Çakirer and Fuentes, 2013; Casey, 2005).

Outdoor play period is when children actually have the opportunity to interact freely with others. Some children may present some difficulties due to their cultural differences, economic status,

social-communicative skills, and their personality qualities, and having low self-esteem (Andre, 2006). As teachers tend to allow them to choose their play mates during free play (Hollingsworth and Buysee, 2009), this may cause some children to become at-risk of exclusion if they are unpopular within their peer group because of their physical and cultural differences. However, outdoors free play should be available during recess, as it facilitates free peer interaction (Williams, 1991), providing opportunities for children to interact with their peers.

According to Andre (2006), providing just a space for free interaction is not sufficent for making friends. Making friends i the result of social exchange. Children have to engage into interaction with others to make friends. She adds that participation in peer groups during outdoor free play period depends on children's negotiation skills. Inclusion does not happen immediately. Entering in a peer group and getting accepted as a play partner takes time.

2.3.3. Inclusive Play and Teachers' Roles

All children live to play. It is a good start for including cultural diversity, diverse languages and to teach them to share (Igoa, 1995). Smith (2012), in her research conducted with teachers, found that the teachers believed in the power of play in educational settings. Teachers that participated Smith's study believed that play contributed to the development of social responsibility, oral language, classroom community, teacher planning and student academic success. Additionally, they expressed that play positively affected children's problem solving skills and provides a secure and safe space for children to get prepared for real life occasions.

Retting (1995) suggests that play experiences enable children to acquire knowledge about the norms and values of their surrounding culture. Engaging actively in play moments children practice adult roles and skills, which they observe in their daily lives and which are subject to the cultural characteristics. Lillemyr et al. (2011:46) argues that "sources of play from real-life experiences will depend on cultural characteristics". These authors conducted research with indigenous and non-indigenous children living in three different countries to compare their play interests. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between their play preferences. Indigenous student tended to engage more in teacher-directed play whereas non-indigenous groups demonstrated a rather positive attitude towards free play. Their findings can be interpreted as children having different cultural backgrounds may manifest distinct patterns of play. By observing and experiencing different play behaviors children can construct their knowledge about cultural differences and develop a positive attitude towards those differences (Retting, 1995).

In inclusive play settings every child feels welcomed and valued for who they are, regardless of their differences. Through inclusive play, children comprehend the realities of life, similarities and differences between each member of the community, learn to co-exist with people different from themselves, acquire inclusive values such as tolerance, respect, acceptance and appreciation of diversity in its every sense and develops a positive self-image and sense of belonging to a group (Casey, 2005).

Although there is an agreement on the importance of role of play in young children's inclusion, majority of studies on this topic focuses on the inclusion process of children with special needs, disabilities or diagnosed behavioral problems (Guralnick, 2000; Odom, 2000; Wolfberg et al., 1999; Arthur, Bochner and Butterfield, 1999; Craig-Unkefer and Kaiser, 2002). Cheng and Johnson (2009) in their review on the published studies about play state that cultural differences, multicultural education and diversity were the least addressed topics in this research field. Tang and Adams (2010) found in their study that play facilitated the inclusion of two newly arrived children who belonged to an ethnic minority. Much research on inclusion children's inclusion and exclusion strategies has been conducted; however, they have focused more on the strategies that the children with special needs or some kind of disability of behavioral difficulty use (Wolfberg et al., 1999; Hewett, 1999; Kim, 2003) whereas some investigators focused on the strategies or interventions that the adults use for facilitating children's social interaction during their play activities (Hollingsworth and Buysee, 2009; Craig-Unkefer and Kaiser, 2002). By focusing on the play behaviors of culturally diverse kindergartners, the research intends to contribute to literature about inclusion from cultural diversity perspective

Igoa (1995) makes the following suggestions to provide adequate play context to children coming from different cultural backgrounds.

1- Providing one-on-one time for each child so they can develop a sense of individual connection with someone, rather than just feeling part of a crowded community.

2- Offering a variety of games reflecting the cultural diversity of children.

3- Creating a warm and welcoming athmosphere so they do not remain as outsiders.

4- Providing play material which reflects the cultural diversity of children.

5- Promoting appreciation for the richness that cultural diversity brings along.

Kemple (2004:11) emphasizes teachers' important contributions to children's social skills and their inclusion in a peer group: "True social inclusion requires intentional facilitation by skilled and knowledgeable adults. ... The classroom teacher is in a position to help children gain access to the arena of peer interaction, and to facilitate the acquisition of social skills within that context".

In ECE, teachers' provide a bridge between children's readily available knowledge and new learning experiences by choosing elements that would be meaningful for children's lives (Williams, 1991).

Socio-constructivism attributes an active role to teachers as they should construct knowledge on the needs of the children through engaging into interaction with their students (Leatherman, 2007). However, Lillemyr (as cited in Lillemyr et al., 2011) found that in Australia and the USA teachers depreciated the power of play in developing social skills and sense of belongingness.

Ashiabi (2007) identifies two kinds of socio-dramatic play: child-initiated and teacher-guided. As teacher-guided play provides scaffolding it enhance students' developmental and learning experience. He adds that teacher-guided socio-dramatic play is more likely to encourage the development of an inclusive attitude in children as the teacher may arrange the roles and enable children with limited peer interaction to interact with more sociable and competent peers. Inclusion process would be influenced in a positive way if the teacher offers her/his guidance and support to children who are at risk of exclusion.

In order to ensure that play turns into a learning experience, teachers should carefully organize the play area, time and resources appropriately. When planning the time, teachers must spare enough time for extended episodes of play, as children need time to plan, negotiate the roles, debate and act. Socio-constructivists expect early childhood educators to be active agents in children's learning process and they attribute a role to teachers which includes modeling, guiding and scaffolding in their students' knowledge construction (Perry and Dockett, 1998).

Teachers are vital actors in turning play into a learning medium as well as facilitating the inclusion process during play hours. Teachers' beliefs, practices, past experiences effect how play is used in the educational context. Hadley (2002) defines two kinds of teacher involvement: a teacher *outside the flow* doesn't actively participate in children's play, but once in a while makes reflections on behalf of the children. These reflections may or may not lead to modification and

extension of play. When a teacher is *inside the flow* she actively participates in the play, takes on different roles, directly communicates with children and may extend the play as a participant. Teacher being either inside the flow or outside the flow assumes other roles such as an observer and recorder, stage manager and facilitator, mediator or a pure participant during a play session (Dau, 1999).

Depending on the role the teacher assumes during the play, she may use some strategies to enhance culturally disadvantaged children's participation. These strategies may vary from using visual aids to choosing play material reflecting the diversity present in the classroom. Teachers also should use every opportunity to provide information on diversity as this theme occurs during children's socio-dramatic play (Ashiabi, 2007).

Teachers, taking on a facilitator role in children's inclusion process, mediate between the world and children's self-perception (Williams, 1991). Being included as a child with a different background in play or in a classroom means that child has developed a sense of belongingness to the group and environment. Teachers contribute to children's sense of belongingness through providing play opportunities (Lillemyr et al., 2011). Teachers have their own perceptions of play and each of them has a personally constructed meanings of play based on their past cultural and educational experiences. These constructed significances directly affect teacher's play practices as well as how children access play settings (Smith, 2012).

In an extensive literature review, Martínez Abellán, Haro Rodríguez and Escarbajal Frutos (2010) presented an overview of inclusive practices and research conducted in different autonomous communities of Spain. In their overview, most of the studies that they comment focus on the special educational needs perspective of inclusion. Nevertheless, they point out the training of teachers in intercultural matters as an achievement during the last decades of implementation of inclusive education in Spanish schools.

In my extensive literature review, no research examining the inclusion of culturally diverse children in play settings conducted in the second cycle of Catalan early childhood education centers were found. This research intends to provide an opportunity for teachers to examine their opinions and beliefs about the role of play in culturally diverse preschools through reflecting on their experience. This research is of particularly interest in Catalan context, because Catalan educators are not knowledgeable about how to intervene adequately when a child is faced with

exclusion during play (Molins-Pueyo, 2012). By displaying how Catalan teachers envision about play and how it can be used as a medium of inclusion in culturally diverse settings, the results presented in this dissertation would contribute to assessment of teachers' training needs and the planning of more adequate play settings and more effective interventions related to inclusion of young children with diverse cultural backgrounds in the future.

2.3.4. Inclusion and Exclusion Strategies in Children's Play

The research conducted on inclusive education and children's play primarily focused on children with SENs. As a result, in the relevant literature it is more frequent to find the strategies that children with a kind of disability employed or the strategies that normally develop children used against those children with SENs, during their play in inclusive settings are described (Wolfberg et. al, 1999; Casey, 2005).

Inclusion strategies described include: Watching, gazing physically approaching, following, touching, holding hands, hugging, kissing, imitating, tapping on shoulder or back, a head nod, pointing at objects, taking play objects from peers, grabbing play objects and smiling, sharing, gesturing, talking with peers, writing names of the friends on sand, interpreting social cues and responding social cues.

Exclusion strategies include: Not taking initiative to engage in a social contact, treating a child as invisible, playing around a child and ignoring its presence, conflict over space and property, intruding into play space, struggling over material, physical aaggression, power struggle, insisting on helping when not required,Publicly announcing that a child has done something wrong, talking about a child behind his/her back, ganging up on a child, complaining about a child to an adult, physically removing oneself away from the child.

Corsaro (2003) identified several strategies that successful players used to access to play. His finding that indicates the children rarely make use of direct question "Can I play?". According to him, successful strategies were being physically close to the play zone, watching the playing peers carefully and imitating behaviors. Serra (2012) in her doctoral dissertation research on children's culture in playgrounds of in three Catalan early childhood education centers (P3, P4, P5) supports Corsaro by stating that children does not frequently ask verbally for a permission to enter the game. Furthermore, she identifies several self-inclusion strategies: asking continuously and insisting on

playing, telling the advantages if they let him/her to play, looking for an adequate object so that the other would let him in the play, showing them a valued object, and threatening the group to complain to the teacher about them not letting him/her in their play.

Serra (2012) names exclusion strategies as excuses why children don't get included in a playgroup and defines nine different reasons: being very young to play with, being from a different class, excessive number of players and no enough space for everybody, being from the opposite sex, nothing to play at that moment, not having an adequate play object, having things that are considered as inadequate, demonstrating disruptive behavior, the play being already in progress.

Tay-Lim and Gan (2013:54) names self-inclusion strategies as coping strategies and they define seven different types: "seeking adult's help, conveying desire directly, employing problem-solving strategy, resorting to hostile retaliation, complying with demands, seeking alternative playmates and making withdrawals".

CHAPTER III. EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

> *"… in education there is no single correct research procedure and no superordinate methodology, power relations feature in and between research traditions; and social research is always valued research, in that both the values of participants in the research and the values of the researcher himself or herself are central to the construction of research texts."*
> *(Scot and Usher, 2011; p.2).*

This dissertation research is composed of three phases, each of which corresponds to one of the three studies. In this chapter presents the empirical framework of these three studies explaining the qualitative nature of each of them in depth.

Qualitative research enables the researcher to interpret and gain an understanding of particular subjects or processes (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). As a characteristic of all the qualitative studies, this study had an emergent design (Creswell, 2007), meaning that its design changed during the research process throughout the field work and data collection period in order to reach valid answers to the research questions and to achieve its aims.

"Science starts with a recognized problem" (Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch, 2008:17). After the recognition of the problem, researchers focus on the topic that they want to investigate. In order to determine the aspect they want to examine of their chosen topic, the researchers need to make philosophical assumptions (ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical and methodological) and combine those assumptions with their world views in order to design a research in their area of interest. Research design is essential for turning research questions into a structured project so that they find their answers (Robson, 1993). "The questions that researchers ask arise from their experiences and concerns located in socio-cultural traditions." (Scot and Usher, 2011:32-33).

Unlike the positivist paradigm, which seeks to discover logical rules, casual significance and universally valid laws to be able to generalize the knowledge acquired through manipulating variables, asking standardized questions and testing hypotheses, interpretivist paradigm tries to explore the human action through daily life interactions and tries to make sense of nature of the social reality which is not objective, meaning that there are more than one realities (Scot and Usher, 2011). Interpretive approaches enable the researcher to address questions related to the influence

of the dynamics existing in children's socio-cultural worlds over their life courses by including the researcher's perspective and by giving meaning to the interactions between the studied children and herself in the context studied (Gaskins, Miller and Corsaro, 1992).

Led by the aims of this doctoral research, which were to analyze the inclusion process of a Turkish five year-old boy in a trilingual preschool located in Catalonia, Spain; to analyze the preschool teachers' opinions about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children and to describe the inclusion and exclusion strategies that children use in their outdoor free play activities during recess in a culturally diverse preschool, the intention is not discovering universally valid laws of inclusive education or application of play in every context of culturally diverse early childhood education. Instead, it seeks to understand the inclusion process of culturally diverse children and the roles of play in this process in the three specific case studies to analyze the role of play as a means of inclusion process in those specific, culturally diverse early childhood contexts. Qualitative design is also adequate for this study since instead of testing something that was already studied before, it aims at trying to learn something new (Richards, 2005) about the three contexts and it intends to understand one things (the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children) in detail. Additionally this study aims for explanations in detail (Stake, 2010).

In the following three sections, the research methodology of each study conducted within the scope of this doctoral research project is presented. Under each section, research design, context, data collection tools and process, data analysis procedures of the corresponding study are explained in detail. After the presentation of the methodological framework of each study; findings, discussion, ethical consideration and limitations of each study is presented followed by the conclusions for each study.

3.2. STUDY 1: CASE OF A TURKISH BOY: EXAMINING HIS INCLUSION PROCESS

"Please do not leave me alone, I'm scared to be by myself in the classroom" were the words Mehmet used to say each time the researcher, who was his support teacher as well, had to leave the classroom because her daily duty was over (Çakırer, 2011: 1041). Feelings of insecurity were quite normal for a 5 year old, who had recently arrived in a setting in which he was not able to understand anything or to express himself without an external support. Although language seemed

to be the principal barrier to Mehmet's inclusion and his active participation into the setting, it was not the only factor that complicated his inclusion in his new classroom.

The first study of this doctoral research project examines the case of Mehmet, a 5 year-old Turkish boy, who had arrived to a private pre-school without having the ability to communicate in any of the three working languages of his new school. The main questions examined by this study are: How does the inclusion process develop in culturally diverse preschools? ; How does play contribute to culturally diverse children's inclusion process in preschools? What are the challenges encountered during the inclusion process of preschoolers coming from a different culture?

Through answering these research questions the aim of this study is to analyze the inclusion process of a child with a different cultural background in a culturally diverse p

3.2.1. Research Design

This qualitative study looks at the specific environment and the inclusion process of a 5 year-old Turkish boy. Qualitative research enables the researcher to interpret and gain an understanding of particular subjects or processes (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Case study design is chosen because the aim is to examine a particular case within its real context through collecting data from multiple sources. Although Stake (2005) refers to case study as a deliberate choice of the object of the study, rather than a methodological decision, Creswell (2007:73) views it as a methodology and defines it as "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case)* or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case *description* and case-based themes". In this study, the studied case is the inclusion process of one Turkish boy. According to Creswell (2007), an intrinsic case study design is used when the researcher wants to pursue an understanding of an unusual case. This design is a perfect fit for the aims of this study since the chosen case (Mehmet's inclusion process) presents rather unusual characteristics including the student being at a late stage of incorporation to his second school after the initiation of the current academic year (2010-2011), his lack of verbal ability to express himself in any of the three working languages (English, Spanish and Catalan) of his new class, and coming from a different cultural background, which is not frequently represented in Catalonia, from the rest of his classmates. In 2010 only 0,06% (766 inhabitants) of the whole foreign population living in Catalonia were coming from Turkish origin (Idescat, 2013).

Another reason why a Turkish child is chosen as a case in this study is that the researcher also comes from Turkish background. Sharing a common cultural background and having the same mother tongue has enabled to access data which is collected not only in the school setting but also from the Turkish parents. The researcher's cultural knowledge has contributed to the analysis and interpretation of the data, especially of those which is related to the child's cultural background.

This study intends to provide in-depth analysis of an unusual case of a child who faced with certain challenges during his inclusion process. Collected data includes the researcher's participant observations which were registered as field notes, and anecdotes taken after informal talks carried out with teachers and the parents. Data was analyzed qualitatively. The researcher read through these field notes and anecdotes elaborating more complete texts out of them. The themes emerged from the research questions and the theoretical framework. For the first research question regarding the challenges encountered during the inclusion process, the themes were elaborated on the basis of Petriwskyj's (2010) suggested inclusion model which includes both keys to successful inclusion and possible obstacles that might jeopardize the success of inclusion process. The data derived from the field notes were read repeatedly and gathered under six themes following Petriwskyj's model: Administration, curriculum, teaching strategies, teachers' attitudes, working as a team/collaboration, teacher-family collaboration. With respect to the second research question, "What is the role of play during this inclusion process in this specific context?" the data was gathered under two themes, indoors and outdoors, relating to the two different physical settings of play in this specific context.

Research based on participant observation carries risks of external validity due to researcher's subjective participation as well as of internal validity as researcher's active involvement during data inquiry may affect the results derived from the data obtained (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). However, the current study is an intrinsic case study; hence, it does not seek for generalization. The results presented here should be considered only within its context.

In order to ensure the internal validity of the study researcher participating in the observations should be aware of important background facts which may affect the observations; should be aware that her presence may lead other participants to exhibit different behaviors which would not occur during the natural course of events; should be self-reflective about the degree of her own attachment to the group Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). In this study, the researcher obtained the child's history through his parents. Additionally she participated in a teacher-parent reunion

which enabled her to identify key past events which could have an impact during the observations. Participant observations facilitated by the presence of the researcher since she has been the natural part of the group as a practitioner (support teacher) rather than just a person collecting information for her own sake. Her double role was helpful to obtain genuine observational data.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) suggest the triangulation of data source, observers, time and space to further ensure the internal validity. Triangulation means exploring signs that would indicate a similar finding or discard any contradictory finding through verifying the collected data using multiple sources and inquiry methods (Miles and Huberman 1994). Due to access restrictions (only the researcher herself was allowed to enter in the area) triangulation of observers could not be employed for this study. Nevertheless, other suggested triangulations were applied. Data source triangulation was possible as data collected from parents and teachers through informal talks were included in the analysis. Triangulation of methods also assisted the researcher to generate reliable and valid evidence. Data collected during participant observations, self-reflections annotated in the field notes as well as the data derived from the informal talks were compared and results from the analysis gathered together as a form of verification. In order to discard the possibility of including only selective behaviors or events, the observational data was collected through tracking the focal child through the course of the day, in different days and different time slots during a two month period (more details about the time slot is presented in section *3.2.4. Data Collection Tools and Process)*. Tracking Mehmet throughout his inclusion process during different moments enabled the researcher to get a more complete picture of his behaviors and of the setting (classroom and playground) he was in.

3.2.2. Context of the Study

This study was conducted at a private early childhood education center located in Sant Cugat, Vallés Occidental, Catalonia, Spain. In 2010, 12,08% (107,203 inhabitants) of its population was foreigners and from this percentage only 5.24% (611 children) was between 0-4 years old and only 5.71% (666 children) was between the ages 5 and 9 (Idescat, 2013a). During the course of this study only 19 people (0,16% of the total foreign population) belonged to the Turkish community living in Sant Cugat (Idescat, 2013b), four of which were Mehmet and his family members.

The early childhood education center he attended was a section of a school complex which also included elementary school and high school section. It is located in an upper class neighborhood

made up of primarily financially well-situated Catalan families and families of expats coming from different countries. This private school is very reputable as it has a trilingual curriculum and aspires for high academic achievement. The early childhood education section serves to children between ages 1 to 5. At the time of the study Mehmet was attending to P-5 (kindergarten level, for 5 year-olds.) In his class, during the first month there were 27 students. After the first month a student dropped out due to not being able to adapt to the classroom life. From these 27 students, 22 of them were bilingual (Spanish-Catalan), 4 of them were multilingual (speaking three or more languages including Italian, German and Chinese) and had parents with different nationalities. Two of the students were considered as native English speakers. The only child who spoke none of the languages used at the school was Mehmet, as he only understood and spoke Turkish.

The physical space of the classroom was rather limited, not enough for carrying out dynamic group activities. There were 5 circular tables. 5 or 6 students were sharing a table. The walls of the classroom were decorated with letters and numbers with the purpose of reinforcing the children's reading and writing skills. The pictures on the classroom boards changed depending on the topic of the week. These pictures were always accompanied by their names written in English. There was a book corner which included children's books in three languages (Catalan, Spanish and English). Just across this corner there was a bookcase that held English books for practicing reading; play objects such as play dough and some other used for construction play. Each student had a cubby hole and a hanger assigned to their names and numbers. A number was given to each student in the same order as they appeared in the attendance list, except from Mehmet, as he joined the class a month later than the rest of the class, he was given the last number, 27, although his name appeared in a prior rank. The children got in line in respect to their assigned numbers each time they needed to leave the classroom as a group.

The playground consisted of 5 sections: a zone with basketball hoops, a soccer field, sand-play area, an area with slides and stairs for climbing and lastly another area where games such as hopscotch were drawn on the ground. Depending on the day and the hour of the recess, preschool students shared these sections with the elementary school students.

Due to the size of the classroom, children tended to work and play while they were sitting in their seats whereas they had a great freedom to play, run and interact with their peers outdoors during recess. The class split into two groups when they had computer class. Also the children were pulled out to the hallway individually or in groups of 2 or 3 for practicing reading.

This study was conducted in this private school because the child selected as the case, Mehmet, was enrolled here and also it had some other characteristics relevant to the purpose of this study such as offering a trilingual curriculum and both the student body and the faculty reflecting cultural diversity. Since it was a reputable school due to being international and attended by learners with diverse cultural backgrounds, it seemed to be the perfect setting to examine the inclusion process from the cultural diversity perspective.

3.2.3. Participants of the Study

This study included data collected from the Turkish Boy, Mehmet, his parents and those teachers who either directly or indirectly taught Mehmet during his kindergarten year.

The Turkish Boy: Mehmet arrived to Sant Cugat, Vallés Occidental, Catalonia for the first time when he was 2 years old. He attended to P2 class at the school where he was attending at the time of this study. Due to his father's work conditions, his parents decided to return back to their country of origin, Turkey, after a year. He participated to a private nursery in Turkey the next year, where he continued his education for two more years (P3 and P4). In August 2010, the family returned back to Sant Cugat. In the beginning of 2010-2011 academic year, he started attending to a Catalan dominated private preschool, where the working language was only Catalan. A month later, due to his difficulty in adapting to the school, to the working language, his aggressive behavior and manifestations of resistance towards going to school, his parents decided to change to the international early childhood education center where he was attending at the time of this study. His older brother, who was 8 years old, attended the elementary school section of the same school. He and his brother encountered each other only some days in between recess periods (kindergartners had recess period prior to the elementary school pupils).

His new school, a highly reputable international school, conducted an assessment evaluating his skills and competences, and only after this evaluation he was accepted to be enrolled with the condition that he would have somebody to support him in his native language at the school (in the classroom and in the playground). To fulfill this requirement the family contacted the researcher who was the only Turkish educational psychologist living in Barcelona Metropolitan area. During this first contact, the researcher informed the parents about her research interest and asked for full permission to include the inclusion process of Mehmet to her research. The family gave full

consent for the study. The school principal and the coordinator of the early childhood education section provided the researcher full access to the school.

The first week was dedicated to (two full days, three half days) observing him during his school activities in order to assess the context and the child's standing point within this context. The conclusion of this first week of observation was that a part from the language skills he lacked, he had low self-esteem, difficulty in starting a play interaction and in entering to a readily established play sequence during recess period, difficulty in understanding cultural codes (such as body language and gestures). His strengths were that his physical development was typical to his age and his cognitive skills were rather good as he could carry on with his academic work at ease when the information and directions for the given task were translated into his native language.

The Teachers: Nine teachers participated in this study. Seven of them were directly involved in Mehmet's inclusion process, one of them being another class' teacher, who had observed some of Mehmet's incidences and the last one being the early childhood education coordinator. All of the participating teachers were bilingual, either speaking English and Spanish or Spanish and Catalan. Teachers of reading, Spanish and Catalan had a teaching degree in early childhood education whereas; the classroom teacher had a bachelor's degree in elementary education. Their professional experience ranged from 5 years to 12 years. The classroom teacher, who spent the most time with Mehmet was a native English speaker. She had 11 years of experience and she was teaching in this particular center for the last two years.

The Parents: Mehmet's mother and father decided to move to Spain for the first time three years ago due to the father's work conditions when Mehmet was two years old. After living there for a year, they moved back to Turkey. They continued to visit Spain during summer holidays. In August 2010, once again they moved to Sant Cugat, Vallés Occidental planning to stay for an indefinite time period. They both came from a mid-upper socio-economic class and they had higher education degrees. The father spoke three languages: Turkish, English and Spanish. The mother spoke Turkish and had an upper elementary level of Spanish. The father worked for the Catalonia branch of a Turkish textile company whereas his wife had been a housewife since Mehmet's birth. The father was the dominant figure in the family; he was the contact person for official procedures related to school. The mother was the one who kept daily contact with the teachers and the other parents.

3.2.4. Data Collection Tools and Process

This study was conducted during the fall semester of 2010-2011 academic year, between October 4th and November 30th. During this time period, participant observations were conducted for three half days, two full days, every week in October and one full day and two half days or two full days every week during November. The class met for 8 hours a day, from 9:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. every week day. In this sense, half-day means either from 9:00 a.m. to 13:00 pm or 10:30 to 14:00 including lunch time.

The main data collection method in this study was participant observation, during which the researcher also had a role as a support teacher, interacting with Mehmet, other children and teachers present in the setting. During the classroom activities, the researcher usually sat next to Mehmet in order to help him to carry on with his work. During playground hours (total of two hours a day, in three different sessions throughout the school day) she observed him from a distance and only intervened when an incident, such as him crying or getting in to a conflict with his peers, happened. The participant observations focused on the detection of the challenges that occurred during his inclusion process. She observed him and his teachers in the classroom, when entering to the classroom in the morning and exiting the classroom at the end of the day when one of his parents (usually the mom) came to pick him up, during classroom work time including mathematics, English reading and writing practices, Spanish and Catalan classes, creative art activities, free play time (although rarely occurred, in those rare occasions constructive play or playing with play dough were observed), class group activities outside the classroom such as computer-based learning activities, music class, Christmas show rehearsals and recess period at the playground. Lunch time was only observed once in the first day. These observations were not recorded as videos, since the school administration did not give an authorization. However, extensive descriptive and reflective field notes (Creswell, 2011) were taken by the researcher right after that school day was over. She recorded them in the form of phrases, quotations and short descriptions of the significant incidents in her native language, Turkish. Then, at the end of each week she used a word processor to type these notes, expanding them and adding more details and her interpretations.

Another data source was the interviews in the form of informal talks with the teachers between classes, during recess periods, lunch time and classroom activities (especially when a significant incidence occurred), and with the parents when they picked the researcher up from the train stop to

take her to the school and when they came to pick Mehmet up at the end of school hours. Interviews in this form were not recorded with an audiotape. Nevertheless, the significant excerpts were included in the field notes as quotations. These talks addressed the following themes: the inclusion process of Mehmet, the functioning of the school in general, the attitudes of the teachers who were involved in Mehmet's inclusion process at the school, what the parents thought about the classroom teacher in general, and details about the intervention that would facilitate his inclusion.

3.2.5. Results

3.2.5.1 Challenges Encountered

The results corresponding to the first question "What are the challenges encountered during the inclusion process of preschoolers coming from a different culture?" are presented under six themes: administration, curriculum, teaching strategies, teachers' attitudes, working as a team/collaboration, teacher-family collaboration. For each theme, participants' statements or descriptions elaborated from participant observations illustrates the patterns of a challenge encountered during the inclusion process of this peculiar child coming from a different cultural background. At this point it is important to acknowledge that not all the educational practices had a challenging nature. There existed some positive examples of practices favoring inclusion implemented by some teachers. Nevertheless, they are not mentioned in this section since hereby only the first research question aiming at examining the challenges encountered is responded.

a) Administration

"Mehmet got accepted to this school under the condition that he gets a support teacher. The principal of the school and the coordinator of the preschool asked us to find a native Turkish speaker to help him to get along with the pace of his classmates." reported the father when he first met with the researcher prior to Mehmet getting started with his schooling in this center. He also explained that Mehmet's abilities were assessed and his communication skills were not adequate. It was the main reason why the director of the school required a support teacher as a prerequisite. These statements describe the decision making power of the administration. Although the people in charge were worried about Mehmet's inclusion, they asked the parents to find someone and to be responsible for this support person's expenses rather than offering him support services from

inside the school faculty. This example demonstrates that school administration gave the financial responsibility of any extra cost to the parents, and did not assume the particular situation of Mehmet as a part of educational services offered by their school.

When the parents and Mehmet met the classroom teacher for an introductory meeting, it turned out that the administrative staff had not given any prior notice to the classroom teacher regarding to the presence of a support teacher, namely the researcher. The teacher said "Nobody told me that she would be with us in the classroom. But if that's what the principal said then I have to comply with their decision." As illustrated in this classroom teacher's statement, there was an obvious problem in communication between the administration and its staff. However, as the administration had the power, the teacher did not even question their decision and she did not even ask why he needed support. The structure of the school organization, hence, is hierarchical and the relationship between the administration and the teachers is vertical, meaning that the teachers are expected to obey the decisions taken by the administrative staff. Another relevant example to this situation is an incident occurred during an activity: Mehmet's class was scheduled to go to the vegetable garden located back of the school grounds. In the original activity programmed by the preschool coordinator only half of the class was supposed to go at a time and the rest of the group would take the computer class. Instead of taking half of the class, the classroom teacher talked with the computer teacher and organized the activity for the whole group. When the coordinator learned this, she came into the classroom and told the computer teacher in a very irritated manner that she was the person in charge and the teachers had to carry out the activity as the way it was planned by her. She said "you cannot change the things the way you want. I set the rules, you obey."

From the examples provided above one can conclude that the administration transferred the responsibility to the parents when they were put into a situation that would demand extra services, they had very strict rules to be followed by the teachers, the communication flow was not functioning adequately and the teachers were not asked of their opinions about their classroom practices, but they were mandated to do as required. All of these facts can be referred as challenging to inclusion process in an educational setting.

b) Curriculum (Plan de estudio)

Under this theme, examples related to the educational objectives, the content of the lessons and evaluation of children's acquired skills are presented.

This school that offering a curriculum aiming at the acquisition of reading and writing skills in three languages and of mathematical skills requiring a comprehension of problems asked in English was quite demanding for 5 year-olds. Actually it was rather overwhelming for this particular child who was not able to understand even basic comments such as "open the door" in any of the three working languages of the class. During the researcher's presence at the school, she expressed her opinion about the academically oriented curriculum being very hard for the children at this age. More than one teacher agreed by stating that parents were paying specifically for this kind of education. One teacher stated that "Parents want their children to learn English and they are very demanding. We have to fulfill their demands, even though this would mean that the children have to work very hard instead of having fun and enjoying their preschool years".

The weekly class schedule demonstrated that children were expected to work in the classroom, and there was no time slot spared for indoor free play. A normal school day lasted for 8 hours which included 2 hours for recess in the playground. The weekly schedule included 3 hours of Catalan and Spanish and at least 15 hours of English (including reading, writing and mathematics). Children were expected to learn to read in all of these three languages. English classes had a very academic focus, rather than concept acquisition, the objective of this class was that children acquire reading and writing skills. Social skills and competencies related to emotional comprehension literacy were not delivered explicitly through curriculum content. They were addressed either in the playground or right after the recess period if an incident happened when the children were outside.

The content of the subjects were delivered through worksheets on which each child had to work on individually, without copying from each other. These worksheets were the same for all the children. Some of the children, who had not acquired the concepts in the corresponding language, were expected to learn to read and write the word corresponding to that concept.

In the mathematics class the most usual activity was called "Quinzets" meaning that students were given a worksheet with four problems written on it. These mathematical problems included basic subtraction and addition problems and a picture of the object presented in the problem. When the researcher expressed her opinion on these problems being very hard for the children to understand

in English, especially for Mehmet as he could not understand any words except from the numbers, and it was difficult for him to solve the problems without a visual aid, the teacher replied by saying "this activity aims at developing their listening skills. They must listen very carefully in order to solve the problems. If they listen carefully, they can solve them."

Evaluation done by the classroom teacher was given to each children one by one in a form of a worksheet that included four sections: writing one's own name, number and the date, the letters (recognizing their sounds and copying their forms), numbers, drawing a family member. This assessment sheet and the evaluation criteria was the same for every child. This illustrates that the assessment was intended to evaluate mainly the academic skills, overlooking the social skills or any other individual competency acquired. Mehmet's mother informed the researcher about his results saying that "His teacher told us that he failed the evaluation and said that we should not let him know about his results as he may get upset. She also added that although his academic progress was insufficient, he now seemed more adapted to his classmates and she was happy with his general performance."

c) Teaching strategies

During an informal talk while having lunch with the teachers, another classroom teacher of 5 year-olds commented: "I have six students that are really good, and several others have difficulty in learning. I am having hard time to balance this diversity." This example shows that the teacher is actually aware of the limitations of the strategies she uses in her classroom.

Mehmet's teacher, on the other hand, did not bear in mind the individual differences between the children.

When Mehmet arrived to his new class, he was already introduced to his class, but his classmates were not introduced to him. As a result, his classmates could call Mehmet by his name, whereas, he could only identify two or three of his peers by their names, of whom he already knew through his neighborhood. The teacher did not plan any extra activity for his introduction, and this lack of using adequate strategy for introduction slowed down his process of getting to know his classmates.

During classroom activities the pattern of teaching did not exhibit much variation: The classroom teacher got the attention of the children with a short chant: "Stop. Look. And Listen." She handed the worksheets or activity books to the paper passers. After everybody had their papers, teacher stood up in front of the blackboard and explained what the children should be doing next. She

wrote or drew a few examples (depending on the work, sometimes she did all the worksheet on the board), then she sat back to her seat by her table and got busy with her paperwork until the children finished their work and formed a line to show it to their teacher in order to get her approval. She did not walk around the tables to guide the children who were having difficulty with the worksheet. Children were expected to work individually and quietly. She tended to intervene only when the children got noisy. She tried to quite them down by either ringing a bell or elevating her voice.

The teacher started using gestures and body language after the researcher suggested her that it would help Mehmet's understanding. Visual material put on the classroom walls was not enough. The walls were decorated with letters and numbers. Only the pictures of the key concepts related to the topic of the week were put on the wall with their names in English written under them.

d) Teachers' Attitudes

This theme includes the feelings, beliefs, expectations, behaviors of the teachers towards the inclusion process of Mehmet and the other children who were thought to be different from the others.

The classroom teacher who defined herself as impatient and who had low expectations for children who did not have adequate academic competence, overall seemed unready to accept a newcomer, and even more unwelcoming for a student who obviously needed special attention and adaptations taking into account to his language limitation. An example of lacking readiness to receive a newcomer appeared during the introductory meeting. Four days prior to Mehmet's arrival to his new class, the parents, Mehmet, the researcher, as his native support teacher, and the teacher met in the tutorial room. The parents were expecting to receive information about the weekly schedule, general functioning of the classroom, the work he had already missed in the class and guidance about the extra support that he would receive during his inclusion period. However, the teacher's intentions during this meeting were different. She only asked for information about Mehmet's daily life and tried to get to know him better and could not offer answers to the demands of the parents. When she was asked to give a weekly schedule, she said she had no time to prepare it and she would hand it to the researcher soon.

She carried out the classroom activities without prior preparation. She tended to choose the worksheet that would be done at that moment, sometimes changing her idea at the very last minute,

without giving notice to the researcher. The worksheets were sent by the coordinator on a weekly basis and she was expected to complete all the work by the end of the week. The most of the time, she fell behind the planned activity schedule. She tended to lose paper work, as her table was constantly disorganized. She never planned extra work, or a variation of the delivered content in order to facilitate Mehmet's learning process. He was expected to accomplish the work as his classmates did. Meanwhile, the classroom teacher manifested low expectations regarding to Mehmet's academic performance saying that "We all know that he will not acquire the competences set by the curriculum at the end of the school year. What we should aim at is that he feels comfortable in the classroom."

She had already identified the children who needed special attention and named them as "My wonder team" and "My special kids". She expressed negative feelings towards these children putting the blame on their parents. An example citing to these negative feelings is "I have no patience… Their parents are really bad. This kind of people should have no kids. They just do not care about their children." When I asked her who her favorite student was, she mentioned the name of a boy, who was very quiet in the classroom and never acted in a bad manner when the classroom teacher was around.

Another negative attitude she had towards Mehmet was when he spoke Turkish to express himself: "I feel totally lost when he starts speaking Turkish with me. It is not my job to learn Turkish. OK, when I go somewhere as a tourist I try to learn a few key words. But this is my classroom and I am not obliged to learn all the languages spoken by everybody in the classroom." This statement clearly presents that the teacher was not willing to learn something new, even if it meant getting Mehmet's attention, winning his heart and facilitating his inclusion and feelings of belonging.

Mehmet was aware of the teacher's negative attitudes and one day during a classroom activity, just after the teacher yelled at the class, he said: "I do not want to be a teacher when I grow up." When he was asked the reason for his words, he replied: "The teacher is always angry."

Mehmet's mother was also aware of the teacher's negative attitude and one day during our informal talk she compared her with Mehmet's previous teacher in Turkey: "In Turkey, his teacher was very motherly. She would hug him and pay him extra attention. She would let him be the protagonist in his class. But this teacher, as he reports, is stricter. She does not seem to be warm

and caring for the children's happiness. That's probably why Mehmet is having hard time adapting to his new teacher."

e) Working as a Team/Collaboration

Working as a team/collaboration theme presents examples of collaboration of the staff within the classroom and collaboration between the classroom teachers of other classes of P5.

When the classroom teacher met the researcher at the introductory meeting, she said: "I'm easy. If I do something wrong you can let me know about it." This statement is barely an example of willingness to work collaboratively. On the contrary, this quotation demonstrates that the classroom teacher saw the researcher, who also was the native support teacher as a pair of eyes that would intrude in her classroom and inspect her teaching practices. In the classroom she expected the researcher to translate the basic instructions to Mehmet, so that he could understand what he was asked to do and intervene punctually to the student if he engaged into a conflictive situation. She did not tend to share her daily or weekly planning with the researcher as there was no weekly plan made to follow. She did not discuss about the possible variations of the activity or of the teaching strategies in order to facilitate Mehmet's learning experiences.

One week after she started going into the classroom with Mehmet, the researcher found out that there was a school psychologist. She met the school psychologist when she came into the classroom to observe another child. The psychologist and the support teacher never had a formal meeting to discuss what could be done together for the inclusion of Mehmet to be satisfactory. She gave some insubstantial advice when the researcher asked her some questions about what would be the best way to intervene, especially when Mehmet got engaged in a conflict.

The computer teacher, who was a classroom teacher for 4-year old group, thought that the team work did not existed at all in that school: "There is a weekly faculty meeting in which we are given the weekly programming and we discuss how we can address the topic of the week. For example, this week's theme is Halloween. With all the teachers we decide that we will put Halloween stuff on the outside walls of the class. This decorating becomes like a competition. You can tell which teacher works more by looking at the walls. Even though in the meeting we decide on some standards, some teachers just do not follow them. As this is a private school, and nobody works on a fixed contract, the one who works less has the risk of losing her job. That's why some of the teachers want to look better." From this verbatim one can conclude that there was a rivalry

between teachers, rather than collaboration. This same teacher talked about the difficulty she had when she was doing the computer classes: "I was just given the keys of the computer room and I was told to do whatever I like with the children. But this should not be the way to do a computer class. There should be some objectives and a weekly program. However, nobody explained me what to do. I am expected to discover the possibilities by myself." From this quotation it can be seen that she needed to work collaboratively, but could not find someone that would work with her on the better functioning of the computer classes.

f) Teacher-Family Collaboration

Teacher- family collaboration appeared through the use of students' agendas. When a material was needed for covering the topic of the week, the teacher wrote it on their agendas and asked the parents to send that material to the class with the student. Sometimes, the parents would collaborate sending exactly what was asked. However, more frequently they sent wrong things and in those cases the teacher became irritated. "I wrote on their agenda to send photos of different kinds of trees, but instead they sent these dirty leaves. What shall I do with these? I would throw them right away, but then it may upset the parents not seeing what they've already sent, put in the classroom. These people just cannot get things done in the correct way."

As mentioned above, the agendas had a very important role as the medium of communication between the teacher and the parents. Nevertheless, the teacher tended to underestimate their function and saw them as an overload: "Writing into these agendas is consuming way too much time. I should be doing something else, I should be teaching rather than wasting time writing to the agendas every day, revising them the day after." Teacher-family collaboration appeared to be a problem again when parents of 12 children cancelled their tutorial meetings with the teacher and asked for a re-scheduling: "I do not have time to re-schedule for 12 parents. What do they think when they cancel a meeting? Do they have more important things to do and I do not?" complained the teacher, her body language and voice expressing her desperateness.

From Mehmet's parents' perspective the teacher was not seem adequate for her job. Mehmet's mother once mentioned that at the weekends when they gathered with the other parents, almost everybody would complain about teacher's unappreciative attitude towards teacher-parent collaboration.

3.2.5.2. Play Occurrences

The results answering the second question *"*What is the role of play during this inclusion process in this specific context*"* are presented under two themes, using the physical contexts of play as the basis for coding: indoors and outdoors. These two themes were based on the class schedule, in which the recess periods outdoors were explicit, but no specific time slot spared for free play indoors in the weekly program. Below in table X the weekly class schedule is presented.

P5-A 2010-2011	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:00-09:15	Homeroom bits	Homeroom bits	Homeroom bits	Homeroom bits	Homeroom bits
09:15-10:15	Reading/ Computers	Psycho-Motor Education	Mathematical Development	Spanish	Catalan
10:15-10:45	R	E	C	E	SS
10:45-11:45	Catalan	Spanish	Language	Maths Dev.	Swimming
11:45-12:00	Habits+bits	Habits+bits	Habits+bits	Habits+bits	Habits+bits
12:00-12:40	L	U	N	C	H
12:40-13:30	R	E	C	E	SS
13:30-13:45	Habits+bits	Habits+bits	Habits+bits	Habits+bits	Habits+bits
13:45-14:30	Language	Maths Dev.	Music	Language	Maths Dev.
14:30-15:15	Reading/ Computers	Creative Development	Knowledge of the World	Knowledge of the World	Language
15:15-16:00	Creative Development	Creative Development	Catalan	Music	Spanish
16:00-16:20	R	E	C	E	SS
16:20-17:00	Story time	Values	Story time/ Spanish Reading	Story time/ Catalan Reading	Values

Table 3: Weekly Schedule for P5-A

a) Indoors

Play occurred indoors did not have a pre-determined specific time slot, meaning that free play indoors was seen as an extra activity used as a time-filler for those who would finish their work before the class period was over. As can be seen from the weekly schedule, the strong academic orientation of the preschool limited the free play interactions in the classroom. Play in the classroom as an extra activity occurred mainly during language or mathematical development classes, which were delivered by the classroom teacher. Children were allowed to play sitting on their assigned places, sitting on their chairs and using their space on the table, only if they finished their classroom work before the class period ended. They were allowed to choose between play dough and other constructive play material. There existed no play corners inside the classroom and the classroom space was not large enough for playing around. Children were not encouraged to play as a group as the teacher asked for silence in order to make sure that the children who had not completed their work could continue on their task without getting distracted. In such a context, where only individual free play with limited options depended on the children's speed of completing their classroom work, Mehmet invented play moments for himself when he got bored of the class work, mostly which he did not understand due to language barrier. In one occurrence, Mehmet enjoyed playing with his plastic glass. He showed ability to create play and play by himself when he found a play object (with a plastic glass or a pencil).

b) Outdoors

The playground consisted of 5 areas: a zone with basketball hoops, a soccer field, sand-play area, an area with slides and stairs for climbing and finally another area where games such as hopscotch were drawn on the ground. It was a very spacious play area. During the first recess period children were allowed to play anywhere; whereas, during the second recess period, they were allowed to use the zone with basketball hoops, sand-play area and area with slides and stairs for climbing. Teachers who had a duty call on that day were in charge of monitoring the children during the first recess period. The classroom teacher was there with the children in the playground during the second recess period. There was a "police duty" practice during the first recess, when the classroom teacher was not present at the setting. Two different children were in charge of "police duty" every day. Those children were responsible of informing the teacher and all their classmates of an incidence happened during the recess period, just after the class returned back to indoors.

Mehmet's parents reported that he used to be very active and had leader role at his preschool in Turkey. He used to be the center of attention and leaded other children and initiated play. However, this was not the case for him during recess periods at his new preschool.

Mehmet's class-mates tended to play in groups of 5-6 children. Symbolic play appeared very often in one group, whereas the other group usually played soccer. However, Mehmet did not have a fixed play partner and usually played alone. Mehmet's mother reported that Mehmet thought his classmates did not like him and that was the reason why he chose to play alone. Mehmet, on the other hand, said "I want to play alone; they do not know how to play." He usually engaged in play involving random running, free throw shooting, ball throwing, ball chasing and moving around, throwing and catching an object, whereas his peers usually played soccer as a group or engaged in socio-dramatic play. His limited verbal communication skills and different way of establishing friendship (explained below) were two main reasons why he interpreted that his peers did not know how to play. However, several times he engaged in play with a girl who attended the neighboring P-5 and whom he knew before he was enrolled at that school, because they were neighbors and their brothers were best friends. His play with that neighbor girl tended to last a short while, until the girl usually walked away to engage in more active play with her class-mates. Throughout the participant observations he played with his class-mates only during four play occurrences. Twice of these were playing soccer with two or more boys, one of them was rough and tumble play and the last group play occurred when Mehmet started to throw the ball to his classmates, and some of them interpreted this action as a start of a play moment. However, one boy did not and he complaint to the class teacher about Mehmet's disruptive behavior. Mehmet's play was observed to last longer when he played with only one more child. In a group, his participation in the play was rather limited to running after a ball, or throwing the ball.

Having a play object facilitated Mehmet's play behaviors. The days when he brought his ball to the school, he engaged in play involving chasing the ball and hitting it randomly by himself, in basketball (usually shooting free throws by himself) and in soccer with his peers. He was observed to play with a hairgrip (throwing it up and catching it) with the neighbor girls and in one occurrence he played alone with his spin top.

His main communication medium during recess was screaming (when he needed to get attention, either just the names of the children or in Turkish), crying (when he was upset and he could not express his feelings, emotions and needs by using words) and one-word or two-word sentences in

Spanish (e.g. “Pelota” and in one case he insulted a child in Spanish). He presented some difficulty in differentiating rough and tumble play from aggressive behavior. This difficulty in one play occurrence caused a trouble for him. Although he was trying to hit the ball, his teacher interpreted as if he was hitting his peer and wrote a complaint on the agenda to let them know about this aggressive play behavior. In another occurrence, Mehmet wanted to complain about a peer who had hit him. As he still had not learned the names of his peers, he complained about a wrong boy. This error also put him in a difficult position.

He tried to initiate play or engage in the others’ play by showing physical affection, such as kissing, hugging or squeezing his peers’ cheeks. In Turkish culture these examples as social cues would mean “I like you a lot and I want to play with you” in such a context. However, children with a cultural background other than Turkish tended to interpret this manifestation of physical affection as being offensive. Therefore, they reported their unrest to the teacher present in the playground at that moment.

Teachers that were on duty at the playground, frequently intervened when a conflict appeared. Otherwise, they kept their distance while observing the playground. However, in one occasion teacher on duty intervened and tried to avoid a conflict by getting closer to Mehmet and a boy who was stigmatized as “problem child” and by not allowing them to play together. This occasion can be interpreted as the teacher taking on a protective role with the assumption that Mehmet was a vulnerable child who needed a protection from the problem child.

The classroom teacher addressed only once the importance of not leaving somebody out of their play and playing together as a group during circle time just after the children who had “police duty” informed her about the conflicts occurred during that recess period. She told the whole group “I love those games which everybody plays together. If a peer wants to play with you, allow him or her in your game. It is not a nice feeling to be left out, is it?” The whole group confirmed the last statement of the teacher.

3.2.6. Discussion

This international preschool setting appeared to be rather traditional in the sense of how the administrative staff mandated the teachers and oriented the curriculum. The lack of coordination skills were the most obvious challenge during Mehmet’s inclusion process (Çakırer, 2011). Also, not assuming responsibility in offering extra support, but expecting it from the parents was another

challenge that contradicted with the inclusive philosophy. This expectation and transfer of the responsibility is thought to be caused by economic concerns. In a private school making profit is undoubtedly an important issue; sometimes even more important than providing a quality education. Nevertheless, this should not mean cutting expenses that is required by the inclusion process. Administrators must collaborate with their teaching staff and assist them through implementing an inclusive policy. The administrators, teaching staff and the parents have to share the responsibility and their common priority must be the success of all children regardless of their individual differences (Mogharreban and Bruns, 2009).

Another clear challenge was the time. As demonstrated in the examples under the teacher-parent collaboration, it was an excuse used by the teachers. Inclusion is a time consuming process and it needs detailed planning and careful application. Time is surely an enemy when the content of the delivered curriculum is very dense. Instead of aiming at delivering a very dense academic curriculum and trying to fulfill the parents' high expectations on children's academic achievement in the early years, inclusive preschool should provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum, ensuring adequate time for play and peer interaction (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006).

Knight (2002) suggests that inclusion of a student highly depends on teachers' behaviors, attitudes and teaching skills. The results presented regarding the teachers' attitudes show that teachers' negative attitudes have negative effects on the children and the parents. A successful inclusion starts with goodwill and commitment. According to socio-constructivist theory, inclusive classroom is a place to learn, grow, interact, and form relationships. In an inclusive classroom both adults and children learns from each other, teachers are aware of the differences so they accommodate their educational practices in order to assure that everybody can participate. Inclusive education requires flexibility and patience of the teachers. Being open to be criticized and asking for feedback are the other qualities of a teacher who uses inclusive practices (Leatherman, 2007).

In an inclusive setting, activities should be planned together; the content of teacher directed activities, their order, and time period to be spent on each activity should be decided on jointly (Hewet, 1999). Collaborative team work increases the teachers' ability to respond to the diverse needs of children effectively (Petriewskyj, 2010). When we take a careful look at the findings presented regarding working as a team/collaboration, the lack of collaborative work can be attributed to the inadequate communication flow and the competitive culture of the staff due to

their contract conditions. Not having a stable position leads the teachers to become rivals. This can be seen as another challenge for the implementation of inclusive policies in this particular setting.

Outdoor play is, whether implicitly or explicitly, structured by the physical and cultural context of the setting (Tovey, 2007). According to Wohlwend (2004) exclusion in the playground does not only result from individuals inadequate social behaviors. Individual differences, such as gender, social class, ethnic origin and religious beliefs may appear as underlying factors why a child gets excluded from an outdoor play activity by his or her peers. In accordance with this statement, Mehmet's case presents an example of a child with a different cultural background and with a communication difficulty resulted from language differences. Although not being classified as having a communication disorder or special educational needs, Mehmet had obvious communication difficulty. According to Guralnick et al. (1996) even normally developing children suffer from communication difficulties leading to misinterpretation of social codes and not being able to give suitable response to those codes. The results of this study support this argument, as in one occasion Mehmet's physical affection, such as squeezing cheeks of his peers, were interpreted as offensive and harmful behavior, although Mehmet's intention was to join in his peer group. Since he lacked language skills to express his intention, he got excluded from the group when children complained to the teacher about their unrest.

Perry (2001) argues that establishing play routines that children can immediately notice and engage in the play activity without any hesitation facilitates forming mutual play relationship when children lack language skills. She emphasizes the role of teachers in detecting and understanding children's play routines and using functional strategies to teach children with language difficulties the routines that their peers use. In Mehmet's case, none of the teachers present during recess periods emphasized children's routine play behaviors. Following Perry's suggestion could have facilitated his inclusion process. Hence, in the future it is important that teachers acknowledge their roles as being not only more participative, but also as being careful observers, detecting play patterns and realize the importance of teaching these play patterns to children lacking language skills.

Wohlwend (2004) suggests that use of play themes relevant to children's popular culture (e.g. Power Rangers) and use of verbal rituals (e.g. chants, elimination songs, etc.) facilitate a child's joining to a peer group play. Following these suggestions teaching Mehmet songs, animation characters and chants related to children's popular culture present in that setting could have eased

the challenge of being accepted by his peers in the playground. In this study there was no evidence of a teacher trying to teach Mehmet about his peers' popular culture. Furthermore, from a sociocultural perspective an intervention targeting the whole group instead of providing social skills training to the excluded child would have been more beneficial for fostering inclusive values in the classroom. Accordingly, Wohlwend (2004) concludes that classroom meetings where problems can be discussed openly and children gain awareness on the effects of play group membership foster a more accepting peer culture. She emphasizes that these meetings must include the problems that concern the whole group and name mentioning should not be allowed. In this case study, after recess periods the classroom teacher held short meetings during which the children with the police duty informed about the incidences that occurred during outdoor play, mentioning names and putting children under suspicion. Although the classroom teacher's intention was to discuss the conflicts, to find ways for their solutions; and the message conveyed at the end of these meetings emphasized the importance of playing with everybody and playing together, the teacher obviously was not aware of the possible danger for the children whose names had been mentioned. Following Wohlwend's suggestions the teacher should revise the structure and the flow of these meetings and ensure that no names are mentioned to avoid any other possible reasons causing exclusion among children.

Outdoors free play hours are when children have more control and more freedom to move around the physical space. Free play is often confused with recreational time, which is when children are left on their own to act the way they like. However, according to Tovey (2007) children with less experience with free play outdoors can suffer from side effects of this freedom, especially when children engage in socio-dramatic play. Socio-dramatic play requires children to agree on the play script, roles and should take turns. Children who do not have enough joint pretense experience in that specific context would need an adult guidance in order not to be left out. The results of this case study indicate that Mehmet lacked social and communicational skills to join in socio-dramatic play interactions. Constant absence of an adult facilitation leaded him to engage in mainly functional play, as it was easier for him to access. Mehmet probably could have used the teacher's facilitation to get engaged in socio-dramatic play with his peer group. Tovey (2007) emphasizes that adults must assume an important role during children's free play outdoors and they should enter in play as a player and support the less experienced child to develop negotiation and communication skills so that he can remain in the play episode as long as it continues on. However, she cites other researchers' studies as an evidence of adults taking on monitorial roles, rather than

being active participants in children's play. Teachers, who adopt such roles, are tended to be seen as authorities to intervene only when a conflict occurs among children. The results presented in this study run parallel to the studies cited by Tovey (2007). Teachers interacted with Mehmet when one child complaint about him due to his disruptive behavior. Mehmet wanted to play with his ball and he threw it at his peers randomly hoping to initiate a play episode. This complaint indicates an example of teacher seen as an authority to intervene only when a conflict occurs. Another role that another participant teacher assumed was protective. She did not allow Mehmet to play with the "problem child", assuming that Mehmet was vulnerable and would get into trouble if he played with that child.

Facilitating children's inclusion in peer play requires teachers to assume more responsibility, taking on active roles, rather than being distant and vigilant (Tovey, 2007). In this setting teachers did not assume active roles and did not show effort to join in children's free play as players. This finding contradicts with Tovey's suggestion. Hence, teachers are suggested to revise their roles during free play periods and reflect on their responsibilities for facilitating Mehmet's inclusion.

Mehmet found himself play partners and initiated play when he brought a ball to the school. Letting children bring play objects popular within the peer culture is another way to support children's inclusion in a peer group (Wohlwend, 2014). As soccer had an important role in the local culture, the boys enjoyed playing with the ball. Hence, their desire to join in a ball play with Mehmet increased when he owned the ball and the others did not. This finding also supports Garrick's (2009) finding that balls are important materials for promoting social play.

To sum up, this case study examined the challenges that a culturally different preschooler encountered during his inclusion process with a special emphasize to play occurrences in two different physical settings. The evidence presented above suggests that the challenges to inclusion occur due to economic concerns, time limitations, parents' unrealistic expectations, teachers' attitudes and personal qualities and the competitiveness caused by the unstable working conditions (having temporary contracts rather than a permanent position within the school). In a highly academic oriented context, free play does not appear as frequent as it should to foster a common peer culture where children can learn about the popular culture and discover their common interests. Group meetings are suggested to be structured in a way to promote inclusive values. Rather than teaching the individual the social skills he/she lacks, an intervention targeting to the whole class group would be more effective when approaching this issue from a socio-cultural

perspective. Ultimately, adults present in the free play setting should assume a more active and participative role and facilitate inclusion of children at risk of exclusion in socio-dramatic play with his peers by organizing the resources and the setting and by teaching knowledge on children's popular culture and play routines.

3.2.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Conducting a valid research means not only following the methodological steps in a correct manner, but also being sensitive to moral code and paying extra attention to ensuring the well-being of the participants of the study and avoiding any kind of risk that would cause harm to the objects of the study (Aubrey, et. al., 2000). Studies conducted in early childhood contexts usually involve data collection processes which require personal interactions, leading to subjective perspectives or biases inevitably affecting the process. In such cases, as Aubrey et al. (2000:157) state, "Being able to show that one has done one's best to consider and attend to all potential sources of grievance, followed by sensitivity to people involved as well as to the research process, acting 'in good faith' at all times, are all indications of research expertise".

There were not, neither official nor formal requirement of passing through an ethical committee evaluation or a document-based permission system for conducting a study prior to initiation of the study. However, while conducting this study, the researcher took into account all ethical requirements of conducting a research as a novice researcher and she followed Código Deontológico del Psicólogo (*Codes of Ethics of The Psychologists*), published by Consejo General de la Psicología de España (1993) (General Council of Psychology in Spain). Article 37 of these Codes calls for respect to participants' privacy, intimacy and dignity and emphasizes that the researcher must pay special attention to any delicate situation that may occur through the research process. Throughout this study participants' privacy was respected. In order not to take any risk of causing harm or any other kind of inconvenience to research participants and the institution's reputation in the future, the name of the child has been changed and the name of the school as well as the names of all other participants are not revealed in this text.

Field notes taken after the observations were only read and coded by the researcher herself to ensure the privacy of the participants.

Participants of the study were informed verbally by the researcher about the aim of the study and they were asked for voluntary participation. They were told that they had right to no participation or seek information and clarification at any time. Additionally, it was explained that the main purpose of conducting the research was purely academic and therefore the information to be gathered was going to be used only in academic contexts.

Limitations restrict extend of a study due to uncontrollable conditions during its execution and may affect the results of the study. Qualitative studies have an evolving nature, meaning that it is subjected to change in the course including the data collection plan and agenda, which has to be adapted to the realities of the setting. Although the results of this study have addressed the two research questions, it must be emphasized at this point that the presented results were subjected to the following limitations.

The results of this study must be interpreted within the specific context of one case. Choosing more than one case at the same school or studying different cases at different schools would greatly extend and enrich the data and the results.

The results, though illuminating in its own case, have to be used and placed in this perspective. As generalization of a case study is not possible due to its particular nature, still, it may be possible for other researchers to use the results of this study to gain useful and valuable insights on the research topic in inclusive early childhood education and play.

Due to manpower, time and resources constraints, it was not possible for the researcher to obtain broader perspectives of the teachers. Conducting semi-constructed interviews with teachers and the parents might have revealed other challenges or opinions about play's contribution to Mehmet's inclusion process.

Another limitation was that the data could not be recorded at the time of collection. As neither video nor audio recording was authorized by the administration, the researcher had to rely on her field notes taken after the observations. The participant observation made it impossible to take notes while interacting with children or helping Mehmet with his school work. Another limitation resulted from not being authorized to record voice or image is the lack of inter-rater reliability while coding the challenges to inclusion and the play occurrences. Two or more researchers participating data collection would allow more details to be observed and recorded. Play occurrences and challenges appeared

during Mehmet's inclusion process could be analyzed more accurately by reviewing videotapes or listening to the recordings of semi-structured interviews formally conducted by teachers and the parents.

It is also important to recognize that the teacher arrived initially to work as a support teacher and she was paid by the parents. Due to the researcher's double role (as a researcher and as a support teacher) the teachers' and the parents' informal interviews may have been unintentionally biased. Additionally informal interviews time-restricted and not planned nature may have led to misunderstanding and misinterpreting information causing invalid conclusions to be made of interview statements. Including formal interviews with the teachers and the parent and recording them would facilitate analysis of the complexities of inclusion of children coming from different cultural backgrounds.

The time period of the study could have been extended to the second semester, and this would have helped to examine the dynamics of children's play and evaluate its affect over the success of the inclusion process.

Lastly, this study had to focus more on the challenges encountered rather than the role of play during a culturally different child's inclusion process mainly because the child did not have much opportunity to engage in interactive play with his peers indoors. This particular school proved being inadequate for carrying out a study on power of play in culturally diverse children's inclusion process, as the academic orientation dominant in the context caused an underestimation play limiting the existence of play only in outdoors as free play, without considering it as a medium of inclusion.

3.2.8. Conclusions

Inclusive education is gaining more importance as the classrooms start to get more heterogeneous cultural wise. Until a few years ago a research concerning inclusive education studied this process from a special education, disability perspective. Considering current reality of the European cities as being multicultural due to high percentage of immigration, more research needs to be conducted focusing on the cultural diversity aspect rather than just examining the inclusion process of children with disability.

This study was the researcher's initial contact with an international preschool in Catalonia. She was at the beginning of her research career and at that time she did not have access to any other schools to carry out her research. After the data analysis and considering the limitations of the study mentioned above, the results were not found strong enough to reach a conclusion about the role of play in inclusion process of a kindergartner coming from a different culture. In order to examine the role of play as a medium of inclusion, the researcher reformulated her research question as "What do the teachers think about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschool education?" Therefore, she conducted the second study to get to know the teachers' perspective and their opinion about the use of play in culturally inclusive early childhood education contexts.

3.3. STUDY 2: TEACHERS' OPINIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF PLAY IN INCLUSION

In the first study, play did not have an active role as a medium of Mehmet's inclusion process as it was undervalued because of parents' and the school's high academic expectations. In this highly academic oriented context play mostly occurred outdoors in the form of free play. As it was not possible to observe inclusive play moments in the first study, in this second study the aim is to examine teachers' opinions on the role of play as a medium of inclusion. The intention is to understand the value attributed to play by teachers who work in a culturally diverse preschool. The perspectives of the P4 and P5 level (4 and 5 year-old groups) teachers of second cycle of early childhood education on the inclusion of children coming from different cultures through play are presented in this section. The guiding questions of this second study are: What are the challenges encountered during the inclusion process of preschoolers coming from a different culture? What do the teachers think about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschools?

This case study was conducted in 2010-2011 academic year in a public early childhood education center located in the Barcelona metropolitan area, in the autonomous community of Catalonia, located in north-east of Spain and it proposes to analyze the preschool teachers' opinions about the use of play as a medium of inclusion in culturally diverse preschool settings. A public preschool

located in the Sant Llorenç neighborhood of the 6th District in Terrassa, Catalunya was chosen to be studied as a case because it fulfilled the following requirements of this study: having a culturally diverse student profile and using play corners as a pedagogical method on a weekly basis with a fixed schedule. In this study two P4, two P5 and one special education support teacher were interviewed. P3 teachers were not included in this study on purpose.

In addition to the guiding question, this study seeks answers to the following questions: Which factors affect the inclusion process of children coming from different cultures in a positive way during play in the play corners and on the playground?;What do you think could jeopardize the inclusion process of cultural diverse children in this school's play contexts?; What could be changed to make the play more effective in facilitating the inclusion process of the cultural diversity in this school?

3.3.1. Research Design

Qualitative studies explore the human action through daily life interactions and try to make sense of nature of the social reality which is not objective, meaning that there is more than one reality (Scot and Usher, 2011). Purpose of this study is to examine teachers' opinions on the role of play in the inclusion process of children with culturally diverse backgrounds. In order to examine their perspectives on this topic a case study design was employed. Case study design was chosen to examine a current issue over which the researcher had no control to manipulate or to change the examined situation (Yin, 2003). Creswell (2007) views it as a methodology and defines it as "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case)* or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time" (p.73). In this study the focus was on the teachers who worked in one multicultural preschool (CEIP), located in Terrassa, Catalonia. Hence, that school was chosen as a unique case, because the intention of the researcher was to learn about the teachers' opinions about their current experiences in that specific school, which was known to be located in a rather marginal area with a high percentage of immigrant children. They were asked about their experiences of play in their current classes. Although teachers were in charge of teaching P4 and P5 level students, the physical context was the same school and the play context was organized in

the same structure for all the classes. The teachers' opinions reflected in this study are derived from their experiences in this CEIP.

This case study is qualitative micro-research, which employs a case study design to discover the teachers' opinions on the role of play in facilitating culturally diverse children's inclusion. Data derived from the interviews were analyzed in terms of components of play perceived as being useful (or not) and connections were made between these components as evidence in the selected early childhood education context (Stake, 2010). Content analysis of the data derived from the interviews was administered using deductive reasoning, as we wanted to see whether all the teachers had similar perspectives about the utility of play in the same school context and to generate a detailed description of the play as a phenomenon useful in culturally diverse children's inclusion processes (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Analysis was conducted directly from the recorded data and audio data was analyzed using a computer assisting analysis tool, namely Atlas.Ti version 6.0.1 (2009) since it allowed the researcher the ability to work data directly from the audio files to code the data collected from the semi-structured interviews.

Three phases for the deductive content analysis were followed as suggested by Elo and Kyngäs (2008):

1st Phase-Preparation: As the first step, the interviews were listened to several times and decision was made on the analysis unit. The analysis unit, in the beginning was each individual interview; there were five interviews so it meant five units to analyze. Each analysis unit was named as P01, P02, P03, P04 and P05. During the second phase, the units of analysis were the interviewees' answers in forms of sentences related to the guiding questions of the research.

2nd Phase-Organizing: The next step was to develop a categorization matrix. An unconstrained matrix was created on the basis of the research questions: What do the teachers think about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschool education?; Which factors affect the inclusion process of children coming from different cultures in a positive way during play in the play corners and on the playground?;What do you think could jeopardize the inclusion process of cultural diverse children in this school's play contexts?; What could be changed to make the play more effective in facilitating the inclusion process of the cultural diversity in this school?

Following these research questions and reviewing the interview scripts, as well as, repeated listening to the interviews for clarification of the overall content of the interviews, the categorization matrix was developed under three themes: (1) play promotes inclusion; (2) factors of play that hinder inclusion; (3) suggested changes for improvement

After the creation of an unconstrained categorization matrix, the following steps were taken for data analysis.

(1) Annotate media segments (mark the start and end of significant excerpts of the interview on the audio file) containing significant answers to the guiding questions of the interviews by listening to each interview individually. Special attention was focused on the following: Which factors affect the process of inclusion of children coming from different cultures in a positive way, during play in the play corners and on the playground?; What do you think could jeopardize the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in this school's play contexts?; What could be changed to make play more effective in facilitating the inclusion process of the cultural diversity in this school?

(2) Link the annotated media segments (quotations) to the corresponding category using the unconstrained categorization matrix through listening to the all quotations individually: Promotes, Hinders, Suggested Changes.

(3) Gather the similarly labeled units of the five interviews all together and list the quotations that are coded under the same theme.

(4) Listen to the quotations similarly coded under the same theme and select examples of the verbatim to be included in the data presentation.

(5) Transcribe the selected verbatim.

(6) Extract common sub-categories from the transcribed data. For example, under play promotes inclusion theme, the sub-categories derived from data are: (a) Play facilitates attention to diversity. (b) Play offers a space for observation. (c) Play facilitates learning without pressure. (d) Variety of motivating play choices. (e) Organization of playgroups influences interaction.

3rd Phase-Reporting:

As the final step, the coded sub-categories were connected with a selection of transcribed verbatim into a logically structured text that presents the data under the results section of the study. The

words presented in this article are direct translations of the teachers' own words as recorded during the interviews. Hence, there may be grammatical errors in the sentence structures.

In order to clarify the analysis process, an example is presented below.

After completing the first phase, a new Hermeneutic Unit in Atlas.Ti was created. 5 interviews were introduced, P-01, P-02, P-03, P-04, and P-05 as P-Docs. In the 1st step of the second phase, 51 segments in the P-01, 51 segments in P-02, 36 segments in P-03, 32 segments in P-04 and 32 segments in P-04 were marked. The second step was linking each segment with the categories elaborated in the unconstrained matrix. 24 segments under the Promotes theme, 8 segments under the Hinders theme and 18 segments under the Improve theme were linked. The third step was the elaboration of three lists which contained all the quotations that were coded under the same theme (See Appendix 1 for the example list of all the coded quotations related to hinders theme). For the first step, all the quotations coded similarly under the same theme were listened to repeatedly and examples of the verbatim to be included in the data presentation were selected. The memo function of Atlas.Ti was used for this task.
The example below is a selected verbatim taken from the P-04 coded interview, from the time range between 00:10:28 and 00:11:59 from the response given to the question What do you think could jeopardize the inclusion process of cultural diverse children in this school's play context?.

4:10 P-04 10:28-11:59 VERBATIM (Selected)- Hinder Inclusion
Proceeding to step five we transcribed the selected verbatim.

"I think what helps for play to function is that, it would motivate them. It should be something that, in that moment, it gets their attention or something that they want to do in that moment. When they want to play with dolls and you give them a car they turn unhappy. Everything should motivate them."

"And perhaps what makes it fail sometimes is that. The play not being something they want or that you require is more than what the child can give in that moment. Many times we have to be very careful to adapt to what we can expect from the level of each one. I think it is what makes play fail."

This segment was listed under the "Play Hinder Inclusion" theme and under the sub-category of children not choosing their play and offering inadequate play options, which was extracted from the quotations under this sub-category.

Only the manifested content of the data was included in the analysis. When the results are presented on teachers' opinion, the quotations taken from the teachers' interviews were used as evidence, linking the data with the results. The common perspectives of five teachers will be presented under three main themes, and sub-categories which will be extracted from the selected verbatim (refer to Appendix 2 for verbatim in original version, Spanish) and presented under those three themes. These themes and their connections with the sub-categories will be discussed later, using details and prior research findings.

Validity and reliability are essential to take in account of in order to present a research with high quality standards. Eisner (1991, in Creswell 2007) suggested considering the credibility of qualitative research instead of ensuring its "validity". According to him, a qualitative researcher collects evidence in detail to construct a whole through discovering patterns in behaviors or actions, examines evidence to confirm or disconfirm the interpretations. Creswell (2007:206) defines interpretive research as "a chain of interpretations that must be documented for others to judge the trustworthiness of the meanings arrived at the end.". He suggests eight different strategies to fulfill the credibility requirement of a high standard trustworthy qualitative research. The following have been used in this case study:

a) Rather than just walking in the setting to conduct interviews with the teachers, the researcher was engaged in the context over a period of time and she observed children's play activities and she spent time to get to know the dynamics of the contexts. This enabled the researcher to construct reliance with the teachers who were interviewed, learning the culture present at the school. Spending more time in the setting also made it possible to discover any misinformation introduced by the interviewees.

b) By using field notes taken during the interviews and observations conducted in the setting data was collected using different methods. Also rather than treating each teacher as an individual case, formulating the case of the school as a school, provided five different perspectives (data sources)

about the chosen case. Collecting evidence from different sources made it possible to strengthen the themes discovered as patterns.

c) At the introduction of this research project the researcher's positioning has been presented. By commenting on her past experiences, biases and orientations she makes it clearer for the readers to understand her approach and the interpretation of the study.

d) Member checking was done through the participant P01, who was assigned to coordinate between the researcher and the school. The researcher sent a report and a powerpoint presentation to this teacher to solicit her and other teachers' views of the credibility of the results and interpretations.

Reliability can be ensured by recording the interviews and coding the content coherently. In this study, the content of the tape recordings were coded by using Atlas.Ti. Under all the verbatim presented in the results section, time frames pertaining to each coded excerpt of individual interviews are given. This is done in order to facilitate auditing if necessary.

3.3.2. Context of the Study

This study was conducted at a multi-cultural public preschool, offering education programs for the second cycle of early childhood education (P3, P4 and P5) in Sant Llorenç neighborhood located on the north-east of Terrassa. Terrassa is the co-capital of the Vallès Occidental region of Barcelona Metropolitan Area. Terrassa is known to be a satellite city of Barcelona. Like Barcelona, Terrassa has become home to many immigrants resulting from the immigration flow affecting all of Spain. The table below presents the immigration reality from a macro level (country) down to the micro level (the neighborhood) in 2011.

2011	SPAIN	CATALONIA	BARCELONA	TERRASSA	SANT LLORENÇ
TOTAL	46.815.916	7.519.843	5.522.565	213,697	4,594
Spanish	41.563.443	6.353.766	4.735.379	185,086	3,570
Foreigners	5.252.473	1.166.077	787.186	28,611	1,024
% Foreigners	11,2%	15,5%	14,25%	13,39%	22,29%

Table 4: Spanish and Foreign Populations in number including Sant Llorenç neighborhood as of January 1st, 2011
Source: INE, IDESCAT, Ajuntament de Terrassa (Anton, 2011)

Terrassa is the co-capital of Vallès Occidental county, which was home to 44.421 children attending early education centers (First and Second Cycle) in 2011 (Departament de Ensenyament, 2011a).

According to the statistics of Generalitat de Catalunya (2011b) Terrassa, (municipality with more than 20.000 inhabitants) the percentage of foreign students in preschool education was estimated around 11.9 %. The table X below presents the distribution of foreign students enrolled in public and private early childhood institutions offering second cycle education programs to children between the ages of three to five, in the 2010-2011 academic year.

These numbers clearly that the majority of immigrant children living in Vallès Occidental were from North Africa, mostly coming from Morocco while South and Central American immigrants followed next.

Terrassa had 14,402 children in its preschools in 2010-2011. The co-capital, (along with Sabadell), of the county only in 2010-2011, welcomed 83 newcomer foreign preschool aged children (P3 = 23; P4 = 33; P5 = 27) to its local preschools (Consell Escolar Municipal de Terrassa, 2011).

Region	European Union	The Rest of Europe	North Africa	The Rest Of Africa	North America	Central and South America	Asia and Oceania	Total
Vallès Occidental	277	50	1.344	239	12	434	211	2.567

Table 5: Distribution of preschool children, according to their nationalities, who were enrolled in both public and private institutions during their second cycle of preschool in Valles Occidental during 2011.
Source: Departament de Ensenyament (2011b).

The school selected for this study is located on the north-east of Terrassa in District VI. Sant Llorenç is home to many nationalities, the main four being Morocco, Senegal, Ecuador and Bolivia

(Ajuntament de Terrassa, 2011). The school serves medium-low and low socio-economic status families. Having a high percentage of immigrant students and being located in a rather marginalized area lead the school to have a bad reputation amongst the teachers who were seeking placement in a public school. Nevertheless, being located in an at-risk neighborhood enabled the administration to access extra funding and subvention for the school's functioning. In brief, at the time of this study, the school had enough economic resources but was deficient in the number of teachers able to attend to the needs of the culturally diverse students, about 70% being Moroccans.

This center serves children aged 3-5. At the time of the study, the facility was serving a total of 149 children who were attending two classes for each age group (P3, P4 and P5 levels). 70% of the children were coming from a different background (predominantly Moroccan) and native children included a gypsy minority group and children from unstructured and very low-income families. The children were assigned to their corresponding classes according to their family types, birth dates (maturity), ethnicity and special needs, always trying to assure a balanced distribution between two classes of same age groups. Children could enroll and drop out any time during the school year. Live enrollment was a phenomenon at this school and due to this reality, both the teachers and children were used to welcoming new students, as well as, making frequent farewells. This student flow required the school to be ready to receive a new student at any moment. Therefore, teachers constantly needed to be prepared to facilitate the inclusion of a new incomer into the class group in which the members had already become accustomed to each other. This school ranked 7th amongst 32 schools, receiving 153 interventions through two cultural mediators assigned by the Municipal Education Board in the 2010-2011 academic year. These cultural mediators were responsible for responding to the needs of Moroccan families by (a) facilitating the communication between the school and the family; (b) facilitating the integration of the newest families to their children's current situations at their schools; (c) facilitating the social cohesion between the local families and newcomer families; (d) facilitating newcomer families' approach to the center's academic reality; (e) promoting families' participation in school activities. (Consell Escolar Municipal de Terrassa, 2011). The number of culture related interventions realized in the academic year, during which our study was conducted, can be considered as evidence that cultural conflicts had occurred at this preschool. The effect of this cultural conflict not only included the school faculty but also rippled down to the support staffs who were involved with parents and children of different cultural backgrounds.

The school facility had a large playground, separated into two outdoors play areas; one for sand play and the other larger space for other kinds of play which also included two slides. This play area was used by 149 children with the presence of 3 teachers on duty during recess period on every school day between 10:15 and 10:45. During this recess period, children usually played with a ball (there was one ball per class), played with shovels or engaged in functional play. In some afternoons, depending on the each teacher's decision about the class schedule, children sometimes used the playground for outdoor play within their group. However, this kind of outdoor play possibility was very limited as there was no time period exclusively designated for each group in the weekly schedule and in the curriculum.

This particular school was chosen for this study because it was accessible and it had a scheduled play corner session (four play corners to choose from), one hour every week. During this play corner period, the class group was first divided into two groups. One group would stay with the classroom teacher and the other group would go to a spare classroom with another teacher. Once in their corresponding classrooms, the two groups would split into two groups again. In each classroom, the groups of children could play in one of the two play corners which they choose prior to the initiation of the play corner session. Approximately 6 or 7 children could play in one play corner. For each age group, the play corner options were different. Nevertheless, there were common characteristics among them: two of them were teacher-directed, structured and academic oriented (either focused on reading-writing or mathematics) whereas the two other options were semi-structured and children-directed. In each classroom, there was one teacher-directed play corner and one children-directed play corner. Teacher directed play corners included a story corner, a corner for word formation games with magnetic letters, domino corner, an ordering game with tweezers, a corner for tracing activities and a corner for the goose game. Children-directed play corners offered children a chance to explore and experiment. These corners offered experimentation play with tubes and rope, heuristic play, play of construction in volume, symbolic play (disguise corner) and puzzles.

A part from the two structured play periods, play occurred during free times depending on each teacher and the time children spent on their academic tasks. During these unscheduled play moments, children could choose from the play corners that each teacher offered to her students and some teachers also offered outdoor play opportunities to their students in the playground. These unscheduled play moments usually took place in the afternoon, after lunch break. The play corners

that teachers offered for free moments included playing with baby dolls, a home corner, kitchen corner, playing on the table with farm toys or savage animals, play dough, toy cars and other types of educational games. Some play corners were structured as a method for delivering curricular content.

This particular school was chosen for the case, because play was valued by its teachers and it was actively used in children's education. Additionally, at this school voluntarily accepted to participate in this study. Without the acceptance of the teachers, critical data would not have been so easy to attain and study.

3.3.3. Participants of the Study

For this study, five preschool teachers, teaching P4 and P5 (4 and 5 year-old groups) levels at a public preschool (CEIP) in 2010-211 shared their experiences and thoughts about the role of play and inclusion in early childhood settings and cultural diversity. P3 (3 year-old group) level teachers were deliberately left out of the scope of this research, assuming that peer exclusion resulting from cultural differences would not be very apparent, therefore, teachers teaching at this level would not have much experience about peer exclusion in play due to cultural differences.

Once the school was selected for this case study, it was to be based on purposeful sampling. The school fulfilled the following requirements for this study: having a culturally diverse student profile, and use of play corners as a pedagogical method on a weekly basis with a fixed schedule. The participants were also selected purposefully (Creswell, 2011) (only those teacher teaching four and five year-olds), and according to convenience. Only those teachers who fulfilled the selection criteria (teaching to a P-4 or P5 level class) and who accepted to participate voluntarily were included in the study. Prior to the study, the researchers had no acquaintance with the teachers. The table X below presents the characteristics of the participating teachers.

The school was contacted through, Isabel Guibourg, who was the advisor of the study at that moment. She worked as a professor at the department of Psychology in Autonomous University of Barcelona, and knew the coordinator of preschool section of the public infant and primary school (CEIP). The preschool coordinator referred the researcher to the special education support teacher as the main contact person, who was assigned the responsibility of coordinating the school schedule with this research. The participants of this study were recruited through her.

After explaining the aims of the research, and the criteria for teacher interviews, she contacted with the teachers and scheduled interview days with five of them. Of these five teachers, two were teaching P4, two were teaching P5 and one was a special education support teacher teaching all the groups at different times.

The common characteristics of these teachers were; a) all of them had been more than one year in that school; b) all of them spoke Catalan in the classrooms;(c)all of them had students coming from a diverse cultural background (dominantly, Moroccan children). This study included two teachers coming from Andalucía origins, (speaking only Spanish at home); one teacher was Valencian and another one had Spanish and Catalan background, these two teachers were using both Spanish and Catalan in domestic communication and the fifth teacher was Catalan and used only Catalan at home. The years of teaching experience varied between 4 years and 23 years. Only one teacher, the support teacher, had a graduate level degree, the other four had 3 years teaching

	P01	**P02**	**P03**	**P04**	**P05**
Interview Date	23.11.2010	01.12.2010	13.12.2010	14.12.2010	09.02.2011
Age	32	24	48	25	54
Nationality/ Cultural Background	Spanish Andalucía	Spanish Catalonia	Spanish Andalucía	Spanish Valencia	Catalan Catalonia
Dominant Language Spoken at Home	Spanish	Spanish and Catalan	Spanish	Spanish and Catalan	Catalan
Title at School	Special Education Support Teacher	Tutor (Classroom Teacher)	Tutor (Classroom Teacher)	Tutor (Classroom Teacher)	Tutor (Classroom Teacher)
Contract Type	Fixed Contract/Civil Servant	Fixed Contract/Civil Servant	Yearly Contract (Interina)	Fixed Contract/Civil Servant	Fixed Contract/Civil Servant

Professional Degree/Title	Pre-school Education Teaching Degree (3 years) Bachelor's in Psychology (5 years) Master's in Social Psychology Research (2 Years)	Pre-school Education Teaching Degree (3 years)	Diploma of General and Basic Education (3 years)	Teaching Degree in Music (3 years)	Teaching Degree in Social Sciences (3 years)
Years of Experience in Total	8 years	4 years	19 years	5 years	23 years
Years of Experience in CEIP	5 school years	2 school years	8 school years	3 school years	10 school years

Table 6: Characteristics of the teachers who participated in this study

degrees, only one being in early childhood education and the others in general and basic education, music and social sciences.

All the teachers stated that it was their decision, not a result of random assignment, to work in this predominantly immigrant school, with a high percentage of Moroccan students. Additionally, some teachers noted the presence of children with special educational needs who required their own individualized education program. The teachers were expected to relate to their current experience in that specific context. Therefore, they were not asked about their previous experiences in other contexts.

3.3.4. Data Collection Tools and Process

Semi-structured interviews are the frequently preferred interview type amongst the researchers who conduct case study research. Semi-structured interviews include open-ended questions whose formulation can be easily adaptable to issues or themes favored by the interviewee (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). In this study, semi-structured interviews were administered to five teachers who were actively working in the selected preschool during 2010-2011 school year.

The intention for conducting semi-structured interviews with five teachers was to get an access to teacher's perspectives and their opinion on the role of play when addressing the needs of culturally diverse children in this specific educational institution. Prior to the interviews, it was emphasized

that the researcher was not going after any specific information or knowledge, so there was no right or wrong answer. It was explained to the teachers that the aim was get to know their opinions on the topic.

An interview script was developed to be used as a guide through the interviews (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). It was structured under five topics: 1) information about their classes, 2) play occurring in play corners and in playgrounds and its importance in early childhood education, 3) inclusion from a cultural perspective, 4) inclusive play and skills and 5) abilities that an ideal teacher should have when attending culturally diverse children using play. Formulated open-ended questions were written in "complete the question" forms in case the main researcher of this study had language difficulties while speaking, since the interviews were conducted in Spanish and Spanish is the main researcher's foreign language. She used "how would you define…, what do you think about …, according to you, how-or-who should be …," question patterns to elicit teacher-participants' point of view. Some questions directly relevant to this study include:

* In your opinion, how should play context promote the inclusion of children coming from diverse cultural backgrounds?"

* Which factors affect the inclusion process of children coming from different cultures in a positive way during play in the play corners and on the playground?

* What do you think could jeopardize the inclusion process of cultural diverse children in this school's play contexts?

* What could be changed to make the play more effective in facilitating the inclusion process of the cultural diversity in this school?

The participants were given detailed explanations or relevant examples when they needed clarification. They also sometimes paraphrased the questions in order to assure their correct comprehension.

At the beginning of each interview, the confidentiality rule was emphasized by stating that it would be only the researchers who would listen to these interviews and the audio data would only be used for academic purposes. Additionally, the participants were assured that their anonymity would be respected. As a result, pseudonyms are used instead of their names. They were informed that the estimated length of the interview would be around 1 hour to 1 hour and 15 minutes. Before

proceeding to the interview, they were given an Interview Registration Form which included questions requiring personal information. The answers given on this form were presented on a table within the participants section. Upon completing this form, they were asked for permission for recording the interview with an audio-recording device. Recordings of each interview started just after getting their verbal approval. At the end of the interviews, five audio recordings in .wav format were obtained. The length of interviews varied between 40 minutes 16 seconds and 68 minutes 7 seconds. All the interviews were conducted in the teachers' own classrooms when the students were on lunch break (at 12:00).

The researcher also kept field notes in the form of short memos. These field notes supplement the data gathered through interviews and include additional information about the process (interruptions, teachers' attitude towards the interviewer, the feeling of the atmosphere, etc.) rather than the content of the interviews. These field notes were usually taken just after she had concluded the observations, in an empty classroom or on the bus. She used a small, pocket sized notebook and a pen to take notes in her native language, Turkish, in order to facilitate the accurate reflection of her thoughts and the speed of note taking to avoid omitting small but significant details.

3.3.5. Results

This study examined teachers' opinions about the role of play in the process of including culturally diverse children, inside a public early education center. The content of each interview was analyzed individually and initially were categorized under three themes (Refer to appendices 3, 4, 5 for coded items): 1) play promotes inclusion; 2) play hinders inclusion and, 3) suggested changes for improvement. Afterwards the content coded under the themes was then categorized under sub-categories extracted from the content itself. The research question was: What do the teachers think about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschool education?

The following sub-categories under three themes were identified by the participants:

1) <u>Play Promotes Inclusion</u>:

(a) Play facilitates attention to diversity. (b) Play offers a space for observation. (c) Play facilitates learning without pressure. (d) Variety of Motivating Play Choices. (e) Organization of playgroups influences interaction.

2) Factors of Play That Hinder Inclusion:

(a) Teacher-Directed Play (b) Focusing on academic objectives. (c) Presence of a dominant leader in the play group. (d) Children not choosing their play and offering inadequate play options. (e) High number of children, low number of adults and an expansive playground.

3) Suggested Changes for Improvement:

(a) Additional human resources. (b) Organizing the play corners as a free play space.
(c) Changes in the curriculum. (d) Changes in the role of the adult. (e) Teaching more games.

For each theme, examples chosen from participants' verbal statements will illustrate their opinion about the utility of play in their school's context and will provide supportive evidence for each subcategory.

1. Play Promotes Inclusion

Overall, all the five teachers expressed the importance of play in the early childhood education and they stated that play contributed to the children's learning.

(a) Play facilitates attention to diversity

In this school, where cultural diversity of children was obvious and present in every aspect, teachers valued play's power in the inclusion process, especially the play occurring in play corners, because *"in the play corners, it is easier to appraise inclusion because you see it. It is a smaller group, a more controlled setting."* **(P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:50 [Piloto 01.wav] (1:02:27.69 [0:01:42.87]).** Another teacher stated that, dividing the large group into smaller groups for the play corners facilitated the inclusion by saying *"working on all these things in half group, the splitting of the group in those situations favor all the work of diversity in every aspect."*

P 3: Piloto 03.wav - 3:35 [Piloto 03.wav] (1:03:32.61 [0:02:17.58])

One teacher expressed how structuring the play in the play corners as a smaller group activity had become essential over the last few years.

"I have been here for six academic years. Previously classrooms had 15-16 students. Now the classrooms are 25 students. Working in the corners facilitates our focus to be on diversity and on the approach and not to be on one specific boy to say so. ..... . It is the moment exclusively for

using verbal language, with an individualized attention. When they are 25, it is much harder to listen and to be heard. And there we are 5 in a corner, they have much more opportunities to listen and talk then when they are 25."

P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:13 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:15:46.81 [0:02:03.84])

The teachers thought that inclusion was possible by providing more individualized attention and facilitating play corners as a small group activity allowing up to 7 children in one corner.

(b) Play offers a space for observation

The majority of the teachers stated that both the play corners and playground provide invaluable information about the children when it is used as a context for observation. One teacher said *"It is interesting to know who wants to get together with whom***". (P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:15- [Piloto 05.wav] -20:06-21:02)**

Just by observing how children play, a teacher can detect what the children need to learn. One teacher said *"When they are both in the classroom and in the play corners they can play more freely and it is about observing them and continue teaching things. For example, if they are playing with the dolls and they do not know how to dress them up, you put yourself with them and teach them how to dress them up."* **(P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:7 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:06:11.45 [0:00:30.02])**

Another teacher added that during the play corner hours, even in a setting in which two play corners were located, one corner was for teacher-directed play and the other one was child-directed play whereby the teacher intervened only when the children needed assistance. Both of the play corners provided clues about peer relationships, "*In the first trimester we make four sessions. Although one is more directed, you play in one and in the other one they play more freely, you also observe them and evaluate what relations there exist, how they play and if they play solitarily or play with a partner*…"

P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:13 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:15:46.81 [0:02:03.84])

A teacher expressed that by observing the dynamics of children's interactions, she could make adjustments in the organization of the group, so that she can mitigate children's participation both in the play context and in the classroom context.

"Also it goes well for the adult because this way she observes that boy or girl, the real tendencies that she or he has, how and with whom gets connected. Then from here you learn also, you make your ... (laughs). Maybe you do not care at all times that she or he is just playing with cars and always with same peers. You learn here and then organize the group in another way. I from here I learn from them. There I observe, learn and see."

P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:17 [Piloto 05.wav] (0:23:04.42 [0:01:35.76])

The same teacher further explained how she learned through observing children's play.

"Gees! This child would always be with this another one and with nobody else because he changes games because the other also is gone; for example like this, or vice versa. Well look. This child is going because the other has commanded him to go, you know. And then those moments work for me fine to observe them, to see the dynamics and from there to try to have a different dynamic."

P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:18 [Piloto 05.wav] (0:24:42.47 [0:00:50.63])

A different teacher addressed the playground moments as sources of information for making subsequent decision about a particular child in the classroom. She said,

"*More than anything, they play we observe. From the playground we draw conclusions. Afterwards we say if the children have repetitive play, or if they disturb. Well, posteriorly the one who is monitoring passes the information to others. Passing the information to the class, later it affects how they play in the playground."*

P 3: Piloto 03.wav - 3:20 [Piloto 03.wav] (0:31:00.38 [0:02:21.31])

These teachers expressed how they used play contexts to gather information about children and their peer relations, as well as the group dynamics, by conducting observations both in the playground and in the play corners. Play contexts were seen as important sources for determining children's learning needs, children's play mate preferences and group cohesion. Teachers construct their knowledge about children by observing children's interactions in the playground, in the play corners and later they use this constructed knowledge to facilitate the culturally diverse children's inclusion both in play and academic settings.

(c) Play facilitates learning without pressure

Teachers commented that play helped children's knowledge construction by allowing children to enjoy learning while playing. One teacher said *"The strong point of play is that they usually learn while having a good time. They learn in a way that they learn without knowing that they learn."*

P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:27 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:29:52.15 [0:02:03.56])

Play, for the same teacher, was essential for learning to live as a group in harmony. She said,

"Above all it is very important for the cohesion of the group. We learn to play in P3 and you will continue in P4 and in P5. Playing in small groups, then the whole group also we can all play. How can we ask someone to play with us? It is very important for the cohesion of the group."

P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:27 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:29:52.15 [0:02:03.56])

Play, especially in the play corners, was very useful for inclusion, as it made the concept acquisition possible for children with different needs and as a result children become more successful learners. One teacher expressed that *"they reach success regardless of the activity because you can offer them the accompaniment they need to success." (P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:27 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:29:52.15 [0:02:03.56]).* The same teacher added, *"Initiation of the activities and developing them depend on the corner. The general objective is to have moment of work in small group in tranquility also because there is no pressure of having to any kind of worksheet. We are playing."*

P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:14 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:18:22.96 [0:02:09.25])

Another teacher agreed with this teacher by saying "*most of the time if you put a worksheet they become rivals. It is my worksheet. Nobody would see it. It would not be copied by someone and the other is going to copy. Well, clearly when you are playing, the way of copying is different. You copy a worksheet, you have not understood it but you have done it. But if in play you copy, you can learn a new way of playing or from now on, you say, he does this, I could also do the other thing. It is different way of relating and discovering themselves, with a less pressure. When they play, it is like you are not demanding too much, so they are exploring their possibilities in a different way."*

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:19 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:25:25.64 [0:01:38.64])

Play is flexible, adaptable to individual needs and offers a starting point. All the children can be successful because there is no pressure. A teacher explained that *"in general it is about gathering different levels together that with play they continue helping in another way and when they seem more integrated, this also helps them and then they do not have so much difficult in knowledge acquisition."*

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:19 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:25:25.64 [0:01:38.64])

One teacher summarized why children learn with success when playing;

"It is easier for everyone to become successful in a different way. There is no clear rule as to say if "vaca" starts with v. Here we do not do orthographical writing, but in primary school imagine yourself, if you write "vaca" with b or v. In a play since it is spoken it does not matter, does it? In writing there is a norm as 2 +2 is 4. If you say it is 5 while playing, you have success, right? Then play offers the possibility that the atmosphere is more relaxed; there is no right or wrong like concepts are, no? It is freer. There is more freedom, more flexibility."

P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:50 [Piloto 01.wav] (1:02:27.69 [0:01:42.87])

Teachers supported the general idea that through play, regardless of their different knowledge levels, different needs and different abilities, all children end up constructing new knowledge in a successful manner. According to the teachers, play permits flexibility, provides pressure free environment for learning, influences the group cohesion positively and minimizes the competitive nature of the academic tasks by allowing peer acceptance of modeling behaviors.

(d) Variety of motivating play choices

Children were free to choose their play partners in the playground, where free play was promoted. Children choosing their play mates frequently caused some children to be left out of the group. However, when there were attractive choices for play, children opted for choosing what to play with, instead of whom to play with.

Teachers defined free play in the playground, as a type of play in which adult presence was limited to punctual interventions when a disruption occurred in the play space. During free play, children got together according to their play preferences. One teacher explained how providing play options influenced children's preferences:

"In the playground they tend to form smaller groups more. Since here in the classroom they have another variety of games, they get together in a different way. Well, in the playground, maybe that group will run and play with a ball and the other group stays with the shovels. However in the classroom, there are dolls, farm animal toys, and other different things, they keep moving and yet they do not form groups that much. It depends a lot on the game."

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:1 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:00:55.77 [0:00:26.82])

In the playground, children seemed to form groups depending on their play choices. The groups formed during outdoor play hours were less flexible in admitting new group members. Nevertheless, the play occurring during the free moments in the classroom appeared to be more inclusive as children moved from one type of play to another, exploring the different play objects offered in the setting.

In the play corners, children tended to choose their corner, not their play mates. One teacher commented that choosing a play corner instead of a play mate facilitated inclusion through coincidental interactions that would not have occurred otherwise: *"Sometimes by chance you do not look at your friend's medal and you choose the corner you like. Then, by coincidence you arrive to a corner and you are going to relate to children that you would never relate to because they are not sharing your table or you never play with them. And look, by coincidence they start speaking and you see that they interact, they chat"* **P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:13 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:15:46.81 [0:02:03.84])**

The participants indicated the importance of the presence of a variety of motivating play options which enabled children to switch from one play to another and in between play groups. The flexibility of moving around the variety of motivating play possibilities increased the chance to meet with peers and construct a friendship by coincidence.

(e) Organization of playgroups influences interaction

Similar to the variety of motivating play options, the way the playgroups were organized during play corner sessions had an important influence on children's peer interactions. According the teachers, children randomly choosing a play corner promoted inclusive values like respecting others. In the playground, children basically only played with whom they wanted to play. However, the play groups for the play corners that were structured in a way that when children chose their corner to play in during that session, they sometimes had to forgo their favorite play partners. This

way of assigning playgroups often compelled children to interact with peers out of their choice. One teacher supported the idea behind the organization of these play corners in such a way:

"First of all, in the playground they do not have the obligation to play with anyone that they do not want to play. If they do not want to play with someone, then they go ahead and play with someone else. Here in the class, they choose the games that we play, but each one chooses his game and not the friend group which they want to play with. Here lays the difference, in the playground they choose the friend group that they want to play with but in the corners, they do not. They have to worry about what they want to play themselves. And when they have chosen what they want to play with they meet their playgroup. This is normal. Like an adult. There are people that he gets connected and there are people that he does not get connected. Same as a teacher, there are children that she gets connected and there are children with whom she does not get connected. Because you cannot get along well with everybody in the world. Well, they are the same. There are children that get connected and there are children that do not get connected. With others who they respect because they have to respect and this is a fundamental rule of the school and that's it. That simple!"

P 2: Piloto 02.wav - 2:16 [Piloto 02.wav] (0:14:16.16 [0:00:53.15])

Children learn what respect means and play corners help promote respect between children through exposing children to a playgroup created from children out of their own preferences.

2. Factors of Play That Hinder Inclusion

All the participants shared positive opinions about contributions of play in the inclusion process. However, they commented on some factors that may cause some difficulties when using play as a medium of inclusion in culturally diverse early childhood settings.

(a) Teacher-directed play

When play became solely teacher-directed, children's participation opportunities decreased in the play settings, especially in the play corners. One teacher expressed her concern about teachers not paying attention to play when it became teacher directed in the play corners*: "From my experience*

I like the way we have the corners. I program the corners that I carry out by myself and I like introducing improvements. In other words, when I see a corner that does not work either because they are just not having fun or it is like just one of my regular classes or when I am the center of the play corner, then I say that something is failing in this play corner. However, there are people that they do not consider it like this." **(P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:28 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:32:46.35 [0:01:35.15])**

According to the same teacher, when the daily classroom activities were carried out in a more teacher directed way, rather than in the form of play, the inclusion process of children might not have proceeded as positive. She said,

"Play is more open. It offers flexibility in the activity and adaptability. So to say, you can consciously make this boy or this girl, who has some characteristics or feel less included or such, come any closer to it. If the daily classroom activities are not like play, but are very directed by the teacher, if they are like lectures, it makes the inclusion harder because there are fewer opportunities. It is more closed. The activity is more closed."

P **1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:50 [Piloto 01.wav] (1:02:27.69 [0:01:42.87])**

When the play setting lost its flexibility and adaptability to the individual needs of children; when the teachers became the focus of children's play and the play activity turned into a class given by the teacher, rather than the teacher seeking the participation of children, the inclusion process became negatively affected.

(b) Focusing on academic objectives

Four participants expressed their worries about the play corners organized according to an excessively academic orientation. Even though the play corners in their schools were structured in a way to assist academic achievement, and to enhance children's speaking, reading and writing skills, they argued that it disregarded the social skills development which is indispensable for the inclusion process to be successful in an early childhood context.

Two teachers described the play corners as *"some corners are more academic*" **(P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:18 [Piloto 05.wav] (0:24:42.47 [0:00:50.63])** and *"they are directed by both a*

mathematical and a language focus and it is like a reinforcement of the activities that are done within the class." **(P 3: Piloto 03.wav - 3:13 [Piloto 03.wav] (0:20:33.38 [0:00:46.93]).**

Additionally, teachers' considering the play corners as an academic setting also referred to the activities occurring in the play corners as "work".

One teacher addressed the issue disfavoring the academic focus in the preschool education. She said,

"Much importance is given to the content, to the objectives you have to achieve and ultimately I always say; is that what you want?" She continued "I think that a way of learning social values is based on play. And since we have to do so many things and there we have to achieve so many goals, then sometimes the play remains in the second plan when it should not be that way, at least in P-5. We are talking about early childhood education."

P 2: Piloto 02.wav - 2:7 [Piloto 02.wav] (0:04:50.60 [0:01:04.68])

Another teacher supported this previous teacher's idea by saying *"it is great that they learn numbers and letters but they can develop these more in the primary school. Here it's about learning to live together and have those tools and social skills I think is very important."* **(P 4: Piloto 04.wav – 4:6 [Piloto 04.wav] - 05:13-05:50).**

Teachers mentioned that social skills development, learning to coexist and learning how to share a harmonious school life should be a priority in early childhood education. A teacher commented that it would not matter so much if her students did not finish preschool with a high academic level. She continued,

"They may finish school with certain (academic) levels. However, according to my point of view, in early childhood stage, above all I think it is more important that they leave with a social level, like a person rather than they know more numbers or more letter then the others. Because if they have learned to live together, have learned to relate and respect later it is easier for them, regardless of if a boy comes from another country or another one does not understand the language, that they learn more."

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:18 [Piloto 04.wav] 22:14-24:35

Four of the participants defended that play should contribute to children's social development and help them to become responsible individuals. They thought when play settings were organized with more academic concerns in mind, the play would lose its essence and instead of promoting inclusive values, such as respect, and facilitating children's inclusion, it would serve learning academic knowledge over social skills acquisition, hindering the inclusion process.

(c) Presence of a dominant leader in the play group

The culturally diverse children's inclusion process not only depends on the setting and the teacher but also on the dynamics in the peer group. One teacher commented that empowering the weak is important for the inclusion to happen. She said,

"The presence of a strong leader who always manipulates everything, directs everything and we would not be able to see this and cut this, and also make the others stronger. It does not help to get integrated when there is always one who always direct."

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:25 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:38:21.64 [0:00:46.32])

This statement emphasizes the importance of observation and intervention. The group dynamics may have negative or positive consequences on the inclusion process. It is important that every child gets the chance to be the protagonists of their own play. Allowing only one specific child to take the lead in play may keep the others out of the play interaction.

(d) Children not choosing their play and being offered inadequate play options

Another factor that teachers thought had negative consequences on children's inclusion process was not letting children participate in the decision making process related to the play corners and consequently offering them choices which did not reflect their interests and did not motivate them to get actively engaged. In this school, for the semester, the teachers decided to set up four play corners for the children to choose from.

A teacher described the selection routine: "*For playing symbolic play we have play corners. They choose from the four but we have chosen these four. Of these four they pass and they go ahead picking out what interests them."* **(P 3: Piloto 03.wav - 3:16 [Piloto 03.wav] (0:24:31.54 [0:01:31.67]).** Another teacher added to this description:

"We have some corners that are more academic and since everybody has to pass through, it is a cycle you know, everybody has to pass. Well, yes, they do choose, but it is not correct because if

there are four sessions, the first day you can choose. However, later when they have already passed from one, they have to choose the others."

P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:15 [Piloto 05.wav] (0:20:06.83 [0:55:61])

One teacher noted thought that it was normal for children to get tired of play in the play corners in which they actually did not choose. She said,

"They just choose the one they want but not that they have chosen those. From the four, they choose the one they want. And then they are boredom. I get bored. How are they not going to get bored? Well, anyway it is what we have to do. We must do so. We must do it like this."

P 2: Piloto 02.wav - 2:30 [Piloto 02.wav] (0:29:14.24 [0:00:24.53])

In order to make satisfactory use of play in children's inclusion process, it is vital to offer play that is adequate for their age, maturity level and most importantly, for their interests. A teacher gave us a concrete example on the importance of giving play opportunities that motivate children to play.

"I think what helps for play to function is that it would motivate them. It should be something that in that moment it gets their attention or something that they want to do in that moment. When they want to play with dolls and you give them a car they turn unhappy. Everything should motivate them. And perhaps what makes it fail sometimes is that. The play not being something they want or that you require more than what the child can give in that moment. Many times we have to be very careful to adapt to what we can expect from the level of each one. I think it is what makes play fail."

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:10 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:10:28.26 [0:01:31.71])

These teachers felt that the lack of democratic participation, by the children when determining which play corners were to be offered during the semester, would have a negative impact on the play quality. Instead of offering play choices that would interest them, play options that were chosen for them would become unappealing, boring and uninteresting and further disrupt the inclusion process leading to unsuccessful results on inclusion.

(e) High number of children, low number of adults and an extensive playground.

The last factor, which was set forth, was the ratio of children to adults in the large playground, where children engaged in outdoor play during their recess periods every day. This preschool had

149 children and all of them went out at the same time for the recess period. This meant 149 children shared an extensive playground which was structured in two areas: sand play area and a wide open space with two slides. Although the play area was considerably spacious, it got overcrowded when all the children actively engaged in outdoor play. One teacher gave voice to her concern about this issue: "*When it is the playground time in the morning, there are many boys and girls together in the same space. Clearly there are things that are not very viable*" **(P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:27 [Piloto 05.wav] (0:34:26.26 [0:00:12.61]).**

Divided in two overcrowded play areas, the playground presents several challenges and makes it difficult for teachers to observe, to participate and to address the needs of the many children. With only 3 teachers on duty, rotating every other day, 149 children freely moving through two different areas are left with limited supervision. This type of situation could affect the inclusion process.

3.Suggested Changes for Improvement

The teachers generally believed that they used play as best as they could have in accordance with the school's regulations and curriculum. However, they recommended some improvements for the future, in order to facilitate the inclusion of culturally diverse children more efficiently.

(a) Additional human resources

Teachers believed that with more teachers involved in play process, they could provide more guidance during the play sessions, in the playground, as well as in the play corners. Two of the teachers were in charge of four play corners distributed in two different settings, and three other teachers were in charge of observing 149 children distributed in the two areas of the spacious playground. One teacher related this issue to the lack of dedicated play hours in the play corners by commenting *"they play little, once a week, little. We could go twice a week but there is a lack of human resources, not materials."* **(P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:28 [Piloto 01.wav] (0:32:46.35 [0:01:35.15])**

Another teacher supported the idea that the school needed more professionals to be able to provide better individualized attention so that children who needed help to overcome the barriers caused by cultural differences could be better assimilated. She stated,

"We need more resources. In other words, we cannot work with that amount of students because it is impossible to be there for them. We try to split a lot, with the half of the group at best you are with 12-13 children and you can work better. But still, it is very difficult to be able to attend to

everybody and give each one what he or she needs. Either there should be fewer children in the group or more professionals."

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:20 Piloto 4 [Piloto 04.wav] 27:26-28:53

Both of these two teachers felt that the school needed to incorporate more professionals could provide additional attention to the children's needs. Additionally, availability of more teachers working within play corners would make it possible to offer more play hours in the play corners, providing more opportunity for children's active participation.

(b) Organizing the play corners as a free play space

Previously mentioned as a reason for play to fail, over emphasis on academics over free play hinders social interactions. As an extension of this idea, teacher stated that there should be more opportunities for free play, both in the play corners and in the playground. They thought that free play facilitated the inclusion process best.

One participant talked about the free play opportunities in two play corners, and mentioned that they were not encouraging children to play freely, that those play corners were semi-structured settings where the adult was not constantly present. She explained,

"We are two people and there are four play corners. Two and two. One of those two is teacher directed and the other one is free; and the other two are the same way. However, the other one is not free. It is not free. Free because I am not with them. They understand the rules at the beginning of play. They have to play with that in that way. And it is not free play. It is an academic corner without an adult figure over their heads."

P 2: Piloto 02.wav - 2:27 [Piloto 02.wav] (0:24:48.04 [0:01:42.52])

P 2: Piloto 02.wav - 2:28 [Piloto 02.wav] (0:26:37.33 [0:00:39.14])

P 2: Piloto 02.wav - 2:29 [Piloto 02.wav] (0:27:20.84 [0:01:20.00])

A different teacher agreed with the previous statement, explaining that the play in the play corners was generally guided and free play only appeared in the classroom during random moments when, and if, children were able to complete their task earlier than expected.

"The moment of the corners is the specific moment that when we play with something but more guided. However to say that, OK it is now time for free play, is that in the classroom each one chooses a corner of their preference. This is not scheduled. It is not stipulated. We try to cut and not to give them a lot of work. Doing only one worksheet or presenting only one explication so that later they have time, to be able to work separately, to choose a book, or play in the corner that they prefer. But it is difficult, oh. After all, they end up doing more work than we would like them to do."

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:12 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:12:55.00 [0:00:48.48])

The excessive amount of academic work required from the children was thought to steal their free play time. By organizing the play corners in a manner that promoted free play and by reducing the scheduled time for academic tasks, teachers thought that inclusion process would be favored.

(c) Changes in the curriculum

Suggested changes for improvement related to the curriculum included scheduling more time for play, especially for free play in the play corners. By incorporating more outdoor play during recess hour in the curriculum, children would have more opportunity to become more engaged adding to a better inclusion process.

"They must have more moment, more time to play in a symbolic way." **(P 3: Piloto 03.wav - 3:17 [Piloto 03.wav] (0:26:17.16 [0:00:36.86])** said one teacher. Almost all the teachers agreed with this statement. The children needed more time to play and introducing a change favoring play over academic activity would ensure its application. Another teacher agreed that she would give more time to children to play if it was possible. She explained,

"I would give more time. We have that one hour of corners, we do four corners. One is more guided and the others are freer. And the moment for the playground. And from the play perspective, they are very random moments. Play time starts without giving much time gap, when they end up doing what they are doing, they go to play; when they finish having lunch they would go to play but sometimes it gets complicated."

P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:11 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:12:08.49 [0:00:40.53])

As hard as it was complicated to find those random moments for free play, one teacher said it was not easy to assign more time periods for play because of the academic requirements of the present curriculum, *"we have this curriculum. You also have to place yourself to the curriculum because you have to get to do this and this and you have to cover everything in it. We would like to do more sessions, but actually the reality of playground time is not feasible. But we try, as much as we can"* **(P 3: Piloto 03.wav - 3:35 [Piloto 03.wav] (1:03:32.61 [0:02:17.58]).**

Teachers commented that playground time should be addressed in the curriculum in order to facilitate its organization in a way that teachers value the moments of outdoor play and include them in their evaluations about the children because, as one teacher stated, *"playground affect other moments because most of the time you return from the playground and you have to talk to them because they have been a been in a fight or there had been a discussion or things like that."* **(P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:32 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:47:20.17 [0:00:52.56])**

One teacher stated that they had considered organizing the outdoor play moments but they never had any time to seriously work on it to incorporate it to the curriculum. She said,

"We have taken sometime to see whether we can organize the playground plays as such, but the time to organize it never arrives. We let them play more freely. … We have talked about it many times as teachers; it is something pending to be organized."

P 3: Piloto 03.wav - 3:20 [Piloto 03.wav] (0:31:00.38 [0:02:21.31])

The common opinion that teachers presented was that children needed to play more frequently, play more freely and play in a playground which was more organized and more valued as a context of learning and evaluation, and only through introducing curricular changes would this be possible.

(d) Changes in the role of the adult

Teachers reported that they took on two different roles in two different settings. According to their descriptions, their main role in the playground was to keep an eye on the children and to intervene when an incident occurred. In the play corner which had an academic orientation, teachers acted as the directors of play, whereas in the other play corner, they only became available to children when needed assistance or when some kind of conflict occurred.

Two teachers distinguished between their roles in the playground and in the play corners. According to one of them "*in the classroom it is about observing, and redirecting in a positive way;*

in the playground the teacher is observing and redirecting when the conflicts do not get resolved" **(P3: Piloto 03. wav- 3:21 [Piloto 03.wav] (03 33:40-34:55).** The other teacher supported this teacher's explanation by adding that *"Maybe our role is to mediate when there is a conflict or approach a child when he is alone more so that he can play with others. It is true that the role is more like a vigilant at this time. Because we want to them to play freely and that they explore the playground. In play corners the role would be more like a guide, more like teaching."* **(P 4: Piloto 04. wav- 4:8 [Piloto 043.wav] (06.43-07.31).**

One teacher commented that the inclusion process required the teacher to become more involved in play, especially in the playground. She explained,

"In the playground if inclusion happens, we have to work for it. As teachers, we should stop being guards. … In P4 there are students who receive messages from home and they already understand them. Do not play with the moors, for example, and in the primary it is very obvious. It is true that there should be a more direct intervention because they really appear. Starting from P3 there exist a lot of differences related to not including, because my mom and my dad told me this or because of being from a different ethnicity or because those children hit."

P 1: Piloto 01.wav - 1:51 [Piloto 01.wav] (1:04:41.45 [0:01:24.55])

Nevertheless, assuming that a more active role in the playground was not very attractive to teachers because most of them thought of recess period not as a part of the educational process, but as free time for the teachers to get things done. One teacher agreed that having a duty as a watchman in the recess period in the playground was an unpleasant obligation for her, however she felt it was very important for children's education and teachers should get more involved in children's play in the outdoors.

"I always say that playground is an educational moment as well. The teachers must be in the playground watching children at present. I think that at schools when it is your turn in the playground, it is a burden because most of the times we take advantage of that half an hour for quickly finish work, not for a free time to have breakfast, absolutely not. We make use of that time to do things is equal to you not being in the playground. Well, you observe but most of the times you do not give importance to what children are doing. And I think we would have to get involved a lot more during play hours, playing with them. "What are you playing?" or "Are you enjoying your time?" "You, what are you now?" "Are you pretending to be a dog?" At least if not play

with them, you get involved by asking questions or showing an interest in their play, by paying attention to if they form groups."

P 2: Piloto 02.wav - 2:10 [Piloto 02.wav] (0:08:08.96 [0:01:04.31])

Teachers were aware of the different roles they took on in different settings. As the playground period was perceived as a free time, teachers did not get involved unless an unresolved conflict occurred. Two teachers mentioned that recess period should be more valued and that the teachers' role should change from being guards to becoming participants in children's play, so that the inclusion process could be successful. If teachers were active participants in the playgrounds, the exclusion of children coming from different cultural backgrounds would become less frequent since children would have teachers to encourage them to play with the culturally excluded children.

(e) Teaching more games

According to the teachers' logic, if children have a large repertoire of games and play, they would have more chances to engage in active play. Children who knew more games were thought to have fewer problems about getting included in the play setting. *"Obviously, you must first learn all about play, no?"* **(P 5: Piloto 05.wav 5:1- [Piloto 05.wav] – (01:04-02:01**), said one teacher. Another one agreed by saying *"we have to teach them different ways of playing so that later they know how to play when they are alone."* **(P 4: Piloto 04. wav- 4:7 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:06:11.45 [0:00:30:02]).**

Two teachers emphasized the importance of teaching children's games that could be played during recess period in the playground. *"We try to play when they go out to play in the playground and we intend to teach them games so that they do not always play with the ball or the shovels" (P 4: Piloto 04.wav - 4:31 [Piloto 04.wav] (0:46:35.03 [0:00:08.36]),* this statement indicated that the teachers wanted to provide a greater variety of games in the outdoors. *"I think we lack more work about those games that we say we could teach them."* **(P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:26 [Piloto 05.wav] (0:33:59.88 [0:00:25.27])** stated one teacher, believing that if the children learnt to play more games, they could play randomly choosing a game from their own repertoire during later playground periods. The same teacher explained that some of the children who came from different cultural backgrounds did not have the opportunities to learn how to play outside of school because they came from overprotective families. She said,

"In any case when we do this other type of play that more directed, but also in the playground it is for to teach them games which they probably do not know. Some of them know some games because their older siblings know or when they go to a square they play with other children. The other children, the older ones, teach them, but there are some children here who, before coming to school not open to the world, let's say some of them have not even gone to a nursery school. Their families, especially those who come from outside, have kept them at home. Until they come to school they have no relationship with the other children or with the other types of play and such. Well, it is a way of teaching those games that without having money, without the need to have money you can play. Because there are many games that you can play without someone having to buy you a doll you or a car you know. In other words, it is to teach them these games which are played as a team so that they can also get organized."

P 5: Piloto 05.wav - 5:25 [Piloto 05.wav] (0:32:43.07 [0:01:10.22])

All the teachers agreed on the need for teaching children more games in order to contribute to children's play repertoires. Children attending this school mostly came from immigrant families who had low socioeconomic status; they had limited access to playgrounds outside of school and limited access to fancy toys. Hence, they needed to expand their play skills and their knowledge about the games to play with their peers so that they had more chances to initiate play and get included in the play setting where children coming from native culture tended to dominate because they knew more games. Teachers believed that teaching those children, who were at risk of exclusion, new ways of play which did not require economic investment, would increase the likelihood to achieve equality between them and their native peers. Teaching the immigrant children the games the native children know, would make free play more interesting for the whole class.

3.3.6. Discussion

This study examines the teachers' opinions about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children's in the second cycle (P3-P4-P5) of early childhood education settings. All five participants through reflecting on their personal experience in the selected school concluded that play was an important means of getting children actively engaged in learning and facilitating their belongingness to the group. However, they identified some factors which might interfere with the inclusion process in this particular setting. Additionally, they suggested some

aspects consider for improvement of play practices in the setting in order to make a better use of play for removing the barriers to play, participation and learning caused by the diverse cultural characteristics that they bring along. Teachers' inputs were presented under three themes: Play promotes inclusion; Factors of play that hinder inclusion; and Suggested changes for improvement.

The first theme presents that play can be considered as an important means for inclusion. It promotes children's participation and learning, and provides opportunities for observation and more personalized attention. Teachers referred to play settings as spaces for observation. One teacher exemplified for how she made use of play for observing, "you play in one and in the other one they play more freely, you also observe them and evaluate what relations there exist, how they play" Smith (2012) makes a similar claim by stating that play helps teachers to assess their students skills, understand their behavioral patterns, learns about their interests and it is a helpful source for further educational planning.

"*In the playground they tend to form smaller groups more. Since here in the classroom they have another variety of games, they get together in a different way… It depends a lot on the game*." This statement suggests that indoors children choose what to play with instead of whom to play with. The variety and characteristics of play has an impact on children's inclusion because in inclusive settings play areas should be structured in a way which is appealing to children. Teachers must get to know the children's interest in order to refrain from structuring a boring play area and instead of motivating them to play with their peers, inhibit their desire to engage in any shared activity (Casey, 2007). Therefore in inclusive settings it is important to let children participate in structuring their own play setting. Furthermore, with this statement the teacher acknowledges children's tendency to form peer groups in the playgrounds. According to Perry (2001) acknowledging children's play partner choices and respecting their decisions should not prevent the teacher to provide help to those children who are less experienced and less successful in becoming a member of a peer play group. Therefore, in addition to capturing children's interests and structuring the play areas accordingly, teachers should assume an active role to support less experienced children's attempts to join a play group.

The second theme relates to the factors considered when using play successfully in culturally diverse children as some aspects of play may discourage its effectiveness. Subsequent themes include suggested changes for improving some aspects related to play in inclusive practices. Since these two themes are intertwined, the discussion of these two themes is presented as a whole.

According to the teachers, their school playground period was not very beneficial for the inclusion process because it was unstructured and unorganized. Teachers admitted that they did not make use of free play occurring in the playground for facilitating children's active participation because this period was seen as a break by the teachers and only then they assumed the role of a vigilant, only intervening when a disruption occurred. The socio-constructivist paradigm states that the nature of the constructed knowledge, as well as, the individual's knowledge construction process is influenced by the social environment. A context that provides scaffolding, e.g. teacher-guided play, can be counted as favorable for learning. In order to ensure that play turns into a learning experience, teachers should carefully organize the play area, time and resources appropriately. When planning the time, teachers must spare enough time for extended episodes of play, as children need time to plan, negotiate the roles, debate and act. Socio-constructivists expect early childhood educators to be active agents in children's learning process and they attribute a role to teachers which includes modeling, guiding and scaffolding in their students' knowledge construction (Perry and Dockett, 1998). Hewett (1999) found that teachers who facilitated the inclusion process of children during large group activities, such as the outdoor play appeared in the playground during recess period in our case, did not only focus on their own students but they became accessible to each child in the setting. This finding suggests that successful inclusion requires a teacher to become a guide for each child present in the setting and provide assistance and adequate personalized attention to those who immediately need them.

Teachers' expressed the need for more professionals in the school in order to be able to offer more hours of play in the play corners, "They play little, once a week, little. We could go twice a week but there is a lack of human resources, not materials." said one teacher. According to Leatherman (2007), success of inclusive education depends highly on the sufficient number of practitioners working in the setting. However, focusing solely on lacking human resources may lead to disregarding the organizational, methodological and curricular adaptation possibilities and as a consequence instead of attending to the real needs of children within their natural environment, they may be put at risk of getting their needs fulfilled, unintentionally, through being excluded from the setting and through alternative itineraries (Martínez Abellán, Haro Rodríguez and Escarbajal Frutos, 2010). In this particular school, there may exist a real need for additional professionals working exclusively for play hours. Nevertheless, it may prove pertinent to suggest to these teachers that revising the possibilities of organizational and curricular adaptations may be

more helpful than highlighting the lack of human resources as the main reason of the failure of inclusive practices.

In their narratives, teachers expressed that the curriculum limited the time spent on playing just for playing, and it required achieving academic objectives, by completely ignoring the educational value of the recess period in the playground, rather than developing connivance within their peer groups. “We have this curriculum. You also have to place yourself to the curriculum because you have to get to do this and this and you have to cover everything in it.” told us one teacher. Since curricular content is directly related to the objectives established by law, we revised the objectives of early childhood education only to find that they were oriented to young children’s personal development, instead of promoting social and cultural knowledge. In LOE 2006, the goal “*to get to know, to understand and to respect the different cultures and differences between the people, the equality of rights and opportunities of men and women and not discriminating the disabled people.”* (Article 17/d) is established for the primary education not of the early childhood education, although research indicates that discriminatory behavior may appear as young as three years old and onwards (Brown, 1998). Therefore, the operative legislation justifies the teachers’ concern for a change in curriculum by not establishing goals for developing col

lective vision and knowledge about cultural diversity and by only focusing on the individual child and its growth and development in predominantly cognitive level.

Teachers suggested increasing the number of hours dedicated to free play, revising the organization of the playground period and shifting the focus of play occurring in the play corners from academic achievement to social skills and re-structuring the corners accordingly in order to use play efficiently for culturally diverse children’s inclusion. Free play is the type of play which the child chooses without any influence or intervention of an adult. A child engages in free play when he gets the chance to explore and investigate the setting and the playthings, as well as the play situations (Romero and Gomez, 2003). In an inclusive play setting, adults should take on a role that is balancing children’s control over their own play with providing assistance to those who need support (Casey, 2007). Teachers stated that free play occurred in the playground but was not facilitated in the play corners, which was proposed as a change to be introduced. They believed that free play facilitated inclusion more than the other types of play; therefore they suggested that the play corners should be organized in such a way. Smith’s (2012) findings were in accordance

with what our participants thought. In her study she found that free play was seen as a good resource for developing children's social competence, as well as their ability to solve problems in an effective manner. However, what facilitates the play environments' inclusive features are flexibility (not having the right or wrong attitude, removing all the unneeded restrictions) and offering centers of interest (offering play space which attracts children to play with the environment without needing to initiate play with a child). Adults should take on a role that is balancing children's control over their own play with providing assistance to those who need support, instead of keeping distance from their play and assuming the role of an observer (Casey, 2007). Inclusion does not happen without teachers getting involved. Free play has some positive features for inclusion, as it enables the child to choose what to play and how to play and it should be available as it facilitates free peer interaction (Williams, 1991), but still this does not mean that it guarantees the inclusion process to be successful as one teacher emphasized "in the playground they do not have the obligation to play with anyone that they do not want to play *with"* and if a child becomes an unchosen peer mate because of cultural differences, he should be considered at risk of being excluded from the play interactions. Molins-Pueyo (2012) found that in Catalonia, teachers had limited knowledge about what school playgrounds had to offer for children's education and they were not very competent to provide effective educational intervention in this play context. In our study, we found that teachers valued the play opportunities that playground offered, but they lacked time to organize it and include it in the formal educational process the curriculum. Providing an adequate setting for pretend play would be a good start for promoting cultural awareness (Retting, 1995). A participant of this study commented that children "must have more moment, more time to play in a symbolic way." Lieber et al. (1998) supported this through their study in which they had found that teachers assisted and facilitated children's interplay through prolonging their pretend play.

After the analysis, the researcher remained curious about two issues that the teachers did not mention and we felt these two issues were strongly related to the inclusion process of culturally diverse children. The first one is about the teachers' competency about cultural knowledge. Williams (1991) argues that teachers tend to report having scarce information about the cultures that their students belong to. None of the participants of this study have mentioned any concerns about their knowledge level related to the cultural backgrounds of their students, neither expressed a need on this topic. They might not have addressed this as an issue, maybe because they already had felt competent and knowledgeable, or they might have considered their knowledge about

different cultures as relevant. Whatever shall the reason behind their in expression be, teachers' knowledge about their own culture, and the other cultures and their attitude towards them has direct consequences on their professional practices (Smith, 2012). Hence, it would not be inaccurate to think that children's play dynamics in the inclusion is subject to the teachers' cultural knowledge and attitudes.

Another topic that was not mentioned by the teachers was the quality and characteristics of the play material offered in the play settings. One teacher expressed that the quantity of material was enough; however she did not talk about the variety of play things present in the play settings. The cultural diversity of children should be reflected on the play things and teachers should encourage children to share their toys that they use at home. These toys reflect the peculiarities of their cultures and in the classroom with their peers raise cultural sensibility (Retting 1995; Hull, Capone and Goldhaber, 2002). We believe that in a culturally responsive inclusive setting, this detail on the types and aspects of play material is worth considering.

3.3.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

When conducting a research it is the researchers' responsibility to follow the ethical standards set in order to protect the participants from any possible harm. Although there was no formal bureaucratic process required, such as an ethical commission, to submit formal documents the researcher followed the Código Deontológico del Psicólogo (*Codes of Ethics of The Psychologists*), published by Consejo General de la Psicología de España (1993) (General Council of Psychology in Spain). In order to comply with these standards names of the participants and the name of the center are changed and instead of real names pseudonyms (P01-P02-P03-P04-P05) were used. These participants were recruited on a voluntary basis. They were verbally asked permission for the recording of the interviews. Audio recordings were initiated just after getting their verbal consent. The researcher explained the participants the aim of the research and they were told that instead of knowledge, the researcher was there to learn their opinion. It was added that the main purpose of conducting the research was purely academic and therefore the information to be gathered was going to be used as such.

Audio data was only listened and coded by the researcher herself, in order to avoid any risks to cause disclosure of the participants' anonymity. Issues of confidentiality, anonymity and privacy were emphasized and respected at all times.

Although the findings presented in this study contribute, to inclusive play practices in culturally diverse early childhood settings, it is important to consider a few limitations related to the study. First of all, the nature of qualitative studies does not seek for a generalization of a phenomenon. Instead, the aim of qualitative research is to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific situation in a specific context (Stake, 2010). Therefore, this study is not generalizable to other preschool contexts. A second limitation is that the data was collected through individual interviews. Therefore, this study only reflects the opinions of the interviewed teachers. In reality, their practices related to inclusive play may exhibit some variations. Further research could include participant observations of the play sessions and may combine interview data with observational data to see it there exists differences between what teachers have commented regarding the implementation of inclusive play and everyday play practices in this setting. A third limitation is that it only includes the teachers who teach to P4 and P5 classes were interviewed. Additional staff, e.g. early childhood center coordinator, the school's principle and other specialist teachers could have been included in the study in order to have richer data. Furthermore, in order to establish a continuum between the children's home culture and school's culture it is important to involve parents in their children's inclusion process (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006). This study did not include what the families' thought of play's role in their children's inclusion process. A future study may be conducted to examine their perspectives. Lastly, the researcher believes that conducting a comparative study about inclusive early childhood settings in which the play is structured in different way would be of much avail for implementation of play as a means of including culturally diverse preschool children.

Lastly, and as relevant to the third study, due to time restrictions and as it had been sometime since the school had been open, it was not possible to observe children's play interactions and their inclusion process within this context. The little groups were already established between children. There was only one child who was thought to be at risk of inclusion by his peers due to a cultural difference (he had a Portuguese Gipsy background). His absenteeism at school made it difficult to observe his play interactions further in detail for the continuity of this study. Hence, a third study was conducted in another school that presented itself as an inclusive institution, where cultural diversity was present and play was valued.

3.3.8. Conclusions

This study has analyzed the opinions of teachers about the role of play in the inclusion process of children coming from culturally diverse backgrounds. For this study 5 teachers who were teaching P4 and P5 in a public preschool which had more than 70% of its student body coming from different cultures were interviewed. Each individual perceives the world through a different stance. Analyzing teachers' perceptions provided the researcher a wide angle to view the role of play in the children's inclusion process in a multicultural preschool. It has been concluded that teachers highly valued play and recognized its contribution to the inclusion process, while still acknowledging that some changes have to be introduced in the setting to make use of play in a more efficient way for facilitating the inclusion of culturally diverse children in the future. They acknowledged that academic emphasis in the curriculum negatively affected play time and their role as a "guardian" in the playground, when children engaged in outdoor free play in recess was an issue that needed further attention. At this point it is important to emphasize that inclusion in play contexts would not give successful results unless the teachers get actively involved in every aspect of the process. Inclusive practices of play in culturally diverse settings should not only be structured by emphasizing the removal of barriers to participation resulting from cultural differences, but also include the concepts of having teachers employing culturally responsive pedagogy in all its sense and by accompanying the children to make them feel "at home", help them feel as a member of their peer group and enhance their sense of belongingness to both their home culture and school culture.

Additionally, it is essential to be aware of children's play behaviors during which they employ different strategies to include themselves or their peers in a play moment and to exclude their peers from participating in their play. During this study, along with the researcher's previous research experience presented in the first study, another conclusion made is that culturally diverse children, who had recently incorporated suffered from either direct exclusion or exclusion through becoming invisible, especially during free play, when children chose their play mates. Departing from this conclusion (and also considering the last limitation mentioned above), in the following study children's the outdoor free play behaviors during recess were studied. This third study aims at describing these strategies in order to provide adequate suggestions for intervention, if needed, in the future.

3.4. STUDY 3: INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION STRATEGIES IN OUTDOOR PLAY

This third study proposes to analyze how children include and exclude their peers in the play settings in a culturally diverse kindergarten located in Terrassa, Catalonia, and define the inclusion and exclusion strategies that children use during their play interactions.

Play contributes to children's learning and to their cognitive, social and emotional development (Vygotsky, 1978; Ortega and Fernandez, 1997; Ashiabi, 2007). In the 1990s, thanks to the UNESCO initiative (UNESCO, 2000) and researchers' contributions (Nutbrown and Clough, 2004; Booth, Ainscow and Kingston, 2004) "Inclusion" in early child education became a very significant topic. This research follows these two research trends and combines them with today's reality of cultural diversity existing in our communities. This qualitative study employs a two-case study design to answer the following research question: *How do 5 year old children include or exclude their peers during their play in a multicultural preschool?*

The two cases of this study were selected through sociometric interviews conducted with children, informal talks with the teachers and non-participant preliminary observations. The primary data source was the video-taped observations of focal children's play interactions in the playground. The data was analyzed qualitatively and four broad themes, derived from the research sub-questions were used to gather the descriptions of strategies that children used during their outdoor play: Self-inclusion, inclusion by others, excluding others and excluded by others. The descriptions of the strategies indicated that the popular child coming from the local culture tended to use verbal and non-verbal strategies to include his peers in his play. However, the unpopular child, who had a different cultural background used on-looking behavior as the main strategy to get included and she waited for to be included by others rather than taking an initiative to get engaged into play with her peers. Culturally different child did not use any verbal strategy to get included and she did not employ any strategies to include other children to her play activities, whereas, the child who belonged to the local culture, was exposed to an excluding strategy by another child only once. Role attributions were identified as key strategies used for both inclusion and exclusion.

The results presented in this study would promote teacher awareness on children's play behaviors in terms of culturally diverse children. It would also provide a knowledge base for preparing intervention programs to those children who suffer from peer exclusion due to their cultural differences through reinforcing the positive inclusion strategies that children have in their repertoire or through introducing new ones.

3.4.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative methodology to gain insight into culturally diverse children's play behaviors and to describe the strategies they use to include and exclude their peers during their play activities in a multicultural kindergarten located in Terrassa, Catalonia, Spain. It focuses on the play experiences of children in the playground in a multicultural kindergarten drawing primarily on interpretive research methods (Hedegaard et al., 2008; Stake, 2010; Wolfberg et al., 1999).

Qualitative design was chosen for this study since instead of testing something that was already studied before, I aim at trying to learn something new (Richards, 2005) about the children's play activity and their play behaviors and I intend to understand a phenomena (the strategies that children use during their play activity a multicultural kindergarten context) in detail and with this study I aim to describing these strategies in detail (Stake, 2010).

Following a socio-cultural tradition, a researcher, who decides on a qualitative research design, accepts that there exist multiple realities, tries to stay in the field as long as possible to get the best close up of the research participants, she "positions" herself in the study, and reports the findings in personal forms of writing, using "I" instead of using passive voice (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative studies are interpretive, experience based, situational and personalistic (Stake, 2010). The experience based and empathetic aspects of this research not only are obvious in the interpretations of the data, but also, are reflected in the introductory chapter of this research project where the researcher's professional experience related to the chosen research topic is explained.

Following a combination of interpretivist and the socio-constructivist worldview (Hedegaard et al., 2008), this study is context specific; it aims at examining children's play behaviors in great detail situating it in a culturally diverse kindergarten context, where five year-old children spend five hours a day, five days a week. Another reason why a qualitative design with a socio-constructivist worldview is appropriate for this study is that the research question posed for this study requires an assumption that the reality is constructed through interactions in children's daily lives, where they lead their lives; and that socially constructed reality is not fixed and single, but it is subject to alterations over time (Creswell, 2007). This decision was further supported by Hedegaard (2008), who stated that the qualitative methodology enables the researchers to explore children's motives, intentional actions and facilitates interpretation.

“Experiences of individuals can be examined in relation to the group, with an understanding of the group’s culture as a necessary component to a fuller interpretation of a social behavior.” (Kantor, Elgas and Fernie, 1998:137). I have focused this research on the play activities of two children, and accordingly I have chosen the two-case study design, each child being a case. According to Yin (2003:7), “"how" and "why" questions are likely to favor the use of case studies, experiments, or histories”. Since these kinds of questions intend to explain something that needs to be traced over time, employing case study as a method would be accurate for my study which is leaded by the following question: How do 5 year old children include or exclude their peers during their play in a multicultural kindergarten? Creswell (2007:73) views case study as a methodology and defines it as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case)* or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case *description* and case-based themes”. In this study, I am exploring the play behaviors of two children who were class mates in a multicultural public kindergarten, over a specific time period (the third trimester of the 2010-2011 academic year) through detailed data collection, mainly in a recorded audio-visual format. As the nature of case study requires, the presentation of the study involves rich descriptions of the play moments and children’s play behaviors. Strategies used by the children to include or to exclude their peers in their play activity are described within each case presentation.

Following Yin’s (2003) advice I decided to use a two-case design in order to provide a stronger base for the research problem and to be able to reach stronger conclusions: the case of the popular, Jaume, who was assumed to be a positive figure who tended to included other children in his play, who tended to take initiative in starting play episodes and who was a positive example to his peers; and the case of the new comer, Fatima, who was assumed to have difficulties in initiating play episodes with her peers due to being a recent member in her group and due to coming from a different culture and having communicational problems as her mother tongue was Arabic and she lacked speaking skills in Catalan and Spanish. Examining these two cases, my aim was to complement the findings of the previous two studies adding information on inclusion and exclusion strategies that children use during their play activities. Throughout the extensive literature review, no other similar studies were discovered investigating culturally diverse kindergartners’ inclusion and exclusion strategies during outdoor free play periods in Catalan context, which makes the research unique.

The guiding question of this study is *"How do 5 year old children include or exclude their peers during their play in a multicultural kindergarten?"*

The following sub-questions are addressed using a two-case study design:

1) What strategies do children use to include a peer in their in free play occurring in the playground during recess?

2) What strategies does a child use to include herself/himself in free play occurring in the playground during recess?

3) What strategies do children use to exclude a peer from their free play occurring in the playground during recess?

4) Which strategies used by a peer or a peer group cause a child to get excluded from free play occurring in the playground during recess?

Ultimately, this study is an *instrumental case study* not because of a personal interest in the specific cases, as in an intrinsic case study design, but because I wished to understand how children interacted during play as to include or exclude their peers from their learning contexts. Stake (1995) stated that instrumental case study is adequate when the research problem requires a general understanding and studying a specific case would provide a better insight for the topic that is the focus of interest. The two cases I selected for this study, although having interesting features in themselves, are not the main focus of the research, but are instruments to gain a deeper understanding on how children included and excluded their peers in culturally diverse playgrounds during their free play. The case selection process is further explained under the participants section.

Data obtained throughout this study was analyzed in two phases. First phase was the analysis of data collected for determining the selected cases, and second phase was the data analysis for the descriptions of strategies children used during their play interactions. The first phase is explained under section "3.1.4.4.1. Data Collection Tools", title "1. Sociometric Interviews with Children and Sociometric Status Classification".

Data analysis for the second phase was conducted in two steps: Step 1: Content analysis of the recorded observations; Step 2: Content analysis of field notes, staff interviews and documentary data.

Step 1: Content analysis of the recorded observations

For the guiding research question *"How do 5 year old children include or exclude their peers during their play in a multicultural kindergarten?"* the main dataset was derived from the videos recorded during naturalistic observations conducted in the playgrounds. Analyzed data set included 4 outdoor play sequences of the focus child who was identified as unpopular and at risk of exclusion, 4 play corner play sequences (one sequence was recorded and analyzed as two separate videos) of the focus child who was identified as popular child and positive leader. For data analysis I applied the steps followed by Miles and Huberman (1994) as Hedegaard (2008) suggested for qualitative studies conducted from a socio-cultural stance. Primary data to describe the children's inclusion and exclusion strategies was the recorded observations. Content analysis of the data derived from these observations was conducted directly from recorded videos by using a computer assisting analysis tool, Atlas.Ti version 6.0.1. (2009), since it allowed working directly from video files while coding the data recorded during the observations.

a) Preparation

Raw data, recorded by a regular compact camera was transferred to a regular lap top in .avi format. As the recording capacity of the camera was limited (max. 28 minutes at a time), each observation session was recorded in two or three videos, losing only a few seconds in between each recording. After transferring the videos to the lap top computer, each video corresponding to the same session was joined together following the correct sequence by using Boil Soft Video Joiner. At the end of this procedure, I had 4 complete sessions of Fatima and 4 complete sessions of Jaume in total of 9 videos (details of the length of each session is given on Table 12: Details of Recorded Observations). These videos were filed under two folders: 4 videos in Fatima-Patio folder and 5 videos (first two videos correspond to only one observation session. Due to technical difficulties, these videos of the same session could not be joined together, therefore were introduced as two separate videos) in Jaume-Patio folder. Each video in these two folders were given a name: A-27052011FatimaPatio, B-30052011FatimaPatio, C-31052011FatimaPatio, and D-03062011FatimaPatio; 1-06062011JaumePatio1, 1-06062011 JaumePatio2, 2-08062011JaumePatio, 3-14062011JaumePatio, and 4-15062011JaumePatio. Preparation of raw data finalized when each video was given a name and was ready to be introduced as a Primary Document (P-Doc) in the computer assisting analysis tool, namely Atlas.Ti version 6.0.1 (2009).

b) Selecting Data

Initially process of selecting data started at the beginning when the data collection process started. Keeping in mind the sub-questions and aim of the study, I decided to collect data at the playgrounds when children had recess period for free play. Focusing on one child at a time, I was able to observe his or her play interactions closely. Raw observational data included children not only engaging in play with their peers but also with younger or older children who shared the playgrounds with them. Furthermore, during recess, children did not always engage in play interactions. There were moments of taking a break, hiding, or moments of no interaction. Solitary play moments also appeared in the raw data. Raw data was processed following the lead of sub-questions to attain the aim of the study. Hence, I only coded the focus children's interactions with same-age peers, excluding any interaction with children from other age groups. Additionally, moments of solitary play, non-play behaviors were disregarded during analysis. Finally, teachers' interactions were included only when the focal child was part of those interactions.

c) Condensing, and Transforming Data

This step involved: i) watching the videos several times and filling out a video log sheet, ii) creating themes and codes, iii) check-coding with experts, iv) describing the themes and codes, v) code revision with experts, vi) coding the videos using Atlas.ti version 6.0.1 (2009), vii) selecting the excerpts to be presented and viii) transcribing the video scenes into text as narratives.

<u>i) Watching the videos several times and filling out a video log sheet.</u>

Prior to creating codes and coding the data, I prepared a video log sheet in order to summarize the content of each video. The log sheet included basic information (site, date and duration of the recording, video code, description of the physical space and material used, name of the focal child, name of the children that interacted with the focal child), types of play occurring in the video, which was worth examining, summary of interesting interactions between children.

I watched each video several times and filled out a log sheet separately for each one. I referred to these logs as memos during the coding process. Example video log sheet can be found as Appendix 6. Video log sheets for each video are given as Appendix 7.

<u>ii) Creating themes, dimensions and categories</u>

Before analyzing the data that had already been collected, I had reviewed the relevant literature in order to form an idea about what to look for and how to organize everything so that it would make better sense. I formulated some questions to lead me throughout category creation. Initially, the categories for the main dataset were elaborated mainly according to the relevant literature (Wolfberg et. al, 1999; Casey, 2005) and the questions I had formulated. Appendix 8 Creating Categories 1st Draft presents the 1st draft of the initial theme and category creation. This first draft had four different themes: Inclusion Strategies, Exclusion Strategies, Children's Roles and Children's abilities. Inclusion Strategies theme had two dimensions: Verbal and Non-verbal. Exclusion strategies had four dimensions: Apathy and indifference, Misinterpreting and overlooking social cues, Conflict over space and property, Tattle-tales, gossip, cliques.

iii) Checking with experts

After creating the first draft of the categories, presented as Appendix 8, in a tutoring meeting I discussed the first draft with two professors (Prof. Carme Ángel and Prof. Marta Fuentes Agustí). They gave me feedback about the formulation of themes, dimensions and categories. According to their feedback, I reviewed the themes, the dimensions and the categories and merging some categories under different dimensions I structured the 2nd draft as presented in Appendix 9 Creating Categories 2nd Draft. I defined the two themes (Inclusion and Exclusion), and 4 dimensions under each theme:

Inclusion Strategies - 1st dimension, the verbal inclusion strategies

2nd dimension, the non-verbal inclusion strategies

3rd dimension, object of communication

4th dimension, the role assumed by the interacting children

Exclusion Strategies- 1st dimension, apathy and indifference

2nd dimension, social cues

3rddimension, conflicts that appear during a play episode

4th dimension, child perceived as a violator of social norms

Categories corresponding to these dimensions are presented in table form in Appendix 10 Inclusion Categories 2nd Draft and Appendix 11 Exclusion Categories 2nd Draft.

iv) Describing the themes and categories

In order to determine the final categories that the dataset corresponded, initially a 10 minute section of two videos (one of Fatima and one of Jaume) were selected and watched repeatedly pausing in every two minutes to interpret and group together the significant scenes. While watching the videos, initially formulated two themes did not prove to be adequate as a play interaction involving at least two children. Therefore themes for the strategies were expanded to *Self-Inclusion, Inclusion by Others, Including Others, Excluding Others and Excluded by Others.*

Since the aim of this study was not detecting the frequency of the strategies, but rather describing their varieties, instead of using a pre-prepared categories check-list, I decided to describe the strategies used by the children basing them on common sense interpretation (Hedegaard, 2008).

Accordingly, as the following step, I described these themes and using categories created in the second draft, I defined indicators corresponding to each theme. Table 7 below presents the final theme creation, their definitions and indicators. Indicators at this point include the dimensions previously created.

I used the information presented in this table to identify the themes, to gather similar video excerpts under the same theme. Later during the coding, the indicators were expanded according to the tactics, methods, techniques and behaviors resulting in inclusion and exclusion.

Themes (Strategies)	**Definitions**	**Indicators (Categories)**
Self-Inclusion	Tactics, methods, techniques and behaviors of **focal child's own initiation or action**, with the intention of establishing a	Taking initiative, obeying orders, accepting the attributed role, directly asking, spontaneously entering in play

	play interaction, joining in a play group or participating in a play episode, which was already started by other children.	
Inclusion by Others	Tactics, methods, techniques and behaviors used by **others to facilitate the focal child's joining** in a play group or getting engaged in a play episodes, which were already started by other children.	Directly inviting to join, giving orders, attributing roles
Including Others	Tactics, methods, techniques and behaviors **used by the focal child to facilitate a peer's engagement** in a play episode.	Directly inviting to join, giving orders, attributing roles, responding a request
Excluding Others	Tactics, methods, techniques and behaviors of **focal child's own** that impede a child join in a play group or putting barriers to his/her active participation during an already initiated play episode.	Verbally rejecting, physically pushing away, physically getting away, complaining to the teacher
Excluded by Other	Tactics, methods, techniques and behaviors **of others** that are used for impeding t**he focal child** to join in a play group or to participate in an already established play episode.	Being deliberately left out, being exposed to physical or verbal rejection

Table 7: Final Draft Themes, Their Definitions and Indicators

v) Theme and category revision with an expert

I discussed the final draft presented in table 7 with an expert (Prof. Pepi Soto), to ensure the clarity and understandability of each theme and the adequacy of their corresponding indicators presenting

examples from the observed play interactions. Prof. Soto emphasized the importance of defining what inclusion and exclusion meant in the context of this study. When we went over some examples, we detected some moments neither qualified as inclusion nor exclusion. For example, when the focal child at risk of exclusion stared at the group, but nobody from the group acknowledged her presence, this strategy did not qualify as the focal child was deliberately excluded because it was impossible to determine whether the group really saw her and ignored her or they were so involved in their play that they did not realize the focal child's presence. Therefore another theme, *Invisible* was added. This theme was added to coding. However, during the selection of excerpts to be presented, the play scenes coded under this theme were left out, as my main focus was identifying and describing the strategies of inclusion and deliberate exclusion.

vi) Coding the videos using Atlas.ti version 6.0.1 (2009)

According to Miles and Huberman (1994:56) "coding is analysis". In this step, using the formulated sub-questions and previously created themes, dimensions and categories the dataset are grouped together depending on the similarities, forming meaningful information.

In Atlas.ti version 6.0.1. (2009) I started the analysis process by opening a "New Hermeneutic Unit". I assigned the videos (previously named as A-27052011FatimaPatio, B-30052011FatimaPatio, C-31052011FatimaPatio, D-03062011FatimaPatio; 1-06062011JaumePatio1, 1-06062011JaumePatio2, 2-08062011JaumePatio, 3-14062011JaumePatio, 4-15062011JaumePatio) as Primary Documents (P-Docs). I introduced the themes (*Self-Inclusion, Inclusion by Others, Including Others, Excluding Others, Excluded by Others), Repetitive Play Behavior,* and disregarded categories (*Solitary Play, Invisible, Voluntary No Participation)* as free codes. Once I had this structure, I watched each video, one by one, several times looking for the indicators corresponding to the attributed theme. I marked the beginning and the end of the play scene where an indicator appeared on the videos. I watched the videos continuously. I applied the same procedure for all videos. At the end of this process, I obtained a list of all quotations marked on all videos. My next step was to select the quotations to be included in the dissertation.

vii) Selecting the excerpts to be presented

I left out the disregarded categories (*Solitary Play, Invisible, Repetitive Behavior and Voluntary No Participation)* automatically, since they did not provide information corresponding to my aim in this study. Instead of determining the frequency of each strategy, the main purpose of this study was to describe a variety of children's strategies, from the play scenes coded as repetitive play behavior the most obvious example was selected and transcribed into text to be included in reporting of the results.

viii) Transcribing the video scenes into text as narratives.

In a research that employs naturalistic inquiry it is essential that thick descriptions of situated behavior are included (Geertz, 2003). Thick descriptions are used when the studied event cannot be reduced to simplistic interpretation. Geertz (2003:165) argue that *"the essential task of theory building in here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description as possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them"*.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985; in) generalizability translates into transferability in qualitative research, therefore, naturalistic researchers should present results derived from the data in rich descriptions so that the reader has the option to decide whether the study is transferable or not. In this study after selecting the most significant scenes where children used strategies, I transcribed the selected visual data into text narratives in thick description form, so that the strategies described were contextualized and gained more significance within the context. Thick descriptions of each strategy include children's exact speech acts (those who could be heard on the video), non-verbal communications (gestures and face expressions), time range and quotation number of the scene as obtained from Atlas.ti. Additionally, my interpretations are included into the presentation of categories as part of the results.

Presenting the results as narratives in form of thick description would enable the future researchers conducting studies in a similar field to make decisions on the transferability of this study. Hence, the strategies are described within case displays include detailed description of the context and children's play episode.

Step 2: Content analysis of field notes, staff interviews and documentary data

Field notes, staff interviews and documentary data were collected as complimentary to video observation. The data derived from these data sources were mainly used for contextualization of the study, as well as for triangulation.

Field notes were read through and phrases reflecting content of a significant play episode were underlined with colored pen. Later these phrases were copied to the video logs in order to serve as memos while formulating the thick descriptions of the inclusion and exclusion strategies used by children. Staff interviews were conducted in two forms: informal talks with the teachers and a formative interview with the school principle. Data derived from informal talks were included in the analysis as if they were field notes, since I had noted down teachers' significant expressions related to focal children and the context. Formative interview with the school's principle was recorded as audio file. I listened to the content of this recording and paused when I needed to note down specific information about the context and the focal children. After I finished taking the notes, I cross-checked the principal's statements with documentary data (in written forms) and validated the information to be included in the contextualization. Afterwards, I transformed the information either as a narrative or numerical form (percentages, etc.). Documentary data in visual forms (photos) were filed in separate folders, each of which corresponded to one playground. I examined the content of the photos carefully to be able to use the ones that were clearer and gave a wide view of the settings, as well as to ensure not using photos which could risk the anonymity of participants of this study.

d) Data Display and Reporting

According to), reporting style depends on the targeted readers and expected effect type. As this study's targeted readers are the members of the dissertation committee and the wider academic world, it is expected that the report has a scientific impact. *"Qualitative research written from a scientific stance heightens insight, illuminate, deepen understanding; add to existing information on topic, expand or revise existing concepts, theory, explanations; convince the reader of the report's worth, truth and value; and advance the methodological craft of research."* (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 300). This study, reports two cases in a non-sequenced structure in the form of narrative report (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

Each case report within case displays include quotations chosen from the video excerpts in narrative form. Instead of just presenting the strategy used, the play episode is described for

contextualization of the play behavior and its consequence (either inclusion or exclusion) as it might have been possible to describe the same strategy resulting in inclusion or exclusion. At the end of two case reports, cross-case results are presented in the form of matrix tables in order to provide a quick overview.

In qualitative research, researchers are not expected to be completely objective as the main aim is to uncover different perspectives on the chosen topic. It would be perfectionist to expect a qualitative researcher to be 100% valid. In naturalistic research the researcher is the key research instrument. Therefore, the researcher should strive for maximizing validity and minimizing invalidity. Qualitative research does not intend to generalize, replicate or control its findings. It would be erroneous to claim that a research is invalid if it does not meet these criteria, unless its methodological design strongly requires it. (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

According to Winter (2000, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:133) *"in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of data achieved, the participants approached, the extend of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher."* Maxwell (1992, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007) proposes that instead of 'validity', using the term 'understanding' is more appropriate. Lincoln and Guba (1985, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), on the other hand, suggest the term 'credibility'. A researcher can attain her research to be credible, through longer engagement in the field, persistent observation, triangulation, and peer debriefing.

Validity of the sociometric interviews was assured through triangulating the results with the recorded observations, which enabled the researcher to ensure the accuracy of children's play partner choices. Furthermore, adding the teachers opinions to the analysis of sociometric interviews for the case selection supported the results obtained after the analysis of children's nominations.

After the case selection, second step of data analysis included data obtained from naturalistic observations, the primary data source of this study. Together with visual data and data derived from the interviews adding documentary data to analysis allows for triangulation, which, according to Stake (2010), means that confirming and validating the study by using evidence from multiple data sources so that the researchers become more confident about the results that they present.

Through the usage of technological devices for recoding the children's play episodes the internal validity is addressed. This enables the verification of children's play interactions and the recorded play episodes; meanwhile the data remains available for re-interpretation and checking through other perspectives.

Informal conversations with the teachers, formative interview with the principal and unrecorded preliminary classroom observations served to access to more detailed information, for verification and comprehensibility.

Peer debriefing was realized through category checking discussions with expert professors, feedback meetings after the written evaluation reports (seguimientos y informes de evaluación anual) and through a presentation given in EECERA 2013 conference in Tallinn, Estonia. Additionally, my discussions with supervisors, co-students and experts working in the field provided valuable feedback and opportunity for self-reflection

External validity of a research refers to generalizability of its results to other populations and samples. However, in naturalistic research, comparability and transferability substitutes the notion of generalizability (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Researchers who conduct naturalistic studies do not seek for generalizability of the results, as they thrive for discovering the uniqueness and particularities of the studied context or situation. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, this is not weakness but strength of naturalistic research and the researcher's responsibility is not to assure the generalizability of the results, but to provide opportunity for others to decide its scope. In this study, in order to let other researchers to have an idea about the scope of the generalizability of the results presented, I have provided in-depth and detailed descriptions of the play episodes included in the report.

Reliability means the accuracy between the data recorded by the researcher during field work and what actually was happening in the context where the research is being conducted. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that "*in qualitative methodologies reliability includes fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondent (p. 149)"*. During the field work of this study no intervention was introduced in the setting in order not to distort the daily flow of children interaction. The results are presented within the specific context. Using video recordings also enhanced the honesty of the analysis and their detailed description. It would be possible for the

researchers to audit the results by using the given codes at the end of each quotation and comparing it with the recorded data of the genuine play episode.

3.4.2. Context of the Study

The school chosen for this study is located in Terrassa (please refer to the context of study 2 to review information on Terrasa), the co-capital of of Vallès Occidental County, which was home to 44,421 children attending early education centers (First and Second Cycle) in 2011 (Departament de Ensenyament, 2011a). According to statistics of Generalitat de Catalunya (2011b) Terrassa, was a municipality with more than 20.000 inhabitants and the percentage of foreign students in preschool education was estimated around 11.9 %. The neighborhood which the school belongs to, Torre-Sana, became an urbanized area after the construction boom due to internal immigration originated from Southern Spain. Before its urbanization, this area was located at the outskirts of Terrassa, almost touching the other co-capital Sabadell. It was a rural area composed of isolated houses. In 2002-2003, the urbanization was commenced by the Town Hall as they started providing services in this neighborhood. The first public service was a CAP (Primary Attention Center); followed by a nursery, a preschool and elementary school (CEIP). When the local administration started to build more buildings for housing the local CEIP located in the neighborhood became insufficient as the number of school-age children increased. By that time that school already had its 50-60% of student body coming from a different culture. However, this newly urbanized Torre-Sana neighborhood had inhabitants mainly from Spain. In 2005-2006 locals demanded a new school to be opened. In its first two years, this new CEIP functioned in a corner located within the borders of the first CEIP. In its first academic year it had two teachers and twelve 3 years-old students. The following year it had a few more teachers, 30 new incorporations to the P3 level and the first twelve students continued to P4. After two academic years, the current building started to serve neighborhood. At the time of this study it included P3, P4, P5 and two elementary levels (only 1st and 2nd grades). In 2010-2011 it served to 240 pupils including elementary levels. 175 of those children were attending the preschool section, and there were 51 students enrolled in two classes of P5 (5 year old group).

This school had a particular location in a sense that it was surrounded by marginalized neighborhoods. One CEIP located only a few minutes' walk away was serving to immigrant community (90% Arabs). Another school which was located a little further away was known as

being the school of Gipsy (90%) community. Whereas, this newly built school was located in the peripheries of the immigration and marginalized zone.

2011	SPAIN	CATALONIA	BARCELONA	TERRASSA	TORRE-SANA
TOTAL	46.815.916	7.519.843	5.522.565	213.697	4.367
Spanish	41.563.443	6.353.766	4.735.379	185.086	3.821
Foreigners	5.252.473	1.166.077	787.186	28.611	546
% Foreigners	11,2%	15,5%	14,25%	13,39%	12.50%

Table 8**:** Spanish and Foreign Populations in number including Torre-Sana neighborhood as of January 1st, 2011
Source: INE, IDESCAT, Ajuntament de Terrassa (Anton, 2011)

The table 8 above demonstrates the distribution of foreign and local population including Torre-Sana neighborhood according to Informe de Població de Terrassa 2011 (Anton, 2011). The families whose children were to get enrolled in this school were 80% locals, who worked in the construction sector or in technical jobs. Before the crisis those families had enough money to spare for their children's education. However, instead of sending them to a private school located far away, they chose to enroll their children to this school.

The principle described the school as of having very few immigrant children. He indicated that only 18% of the student body had a different cultural back ground: from Morocco, Eastern Europe, South America and China. He added that there were also a few families that belonged to gypsy community. The languages spoken by the students at home included Catalan, Spanish, Russian, Romanian, Chinese and Arabic. This school ranked 22nd (together with three other schools) amongst 32 schools (six schools did not receive any intervention whereas three schools only received one), receiving only 6 interventions through two cultural mediators assigned by the Municipal Education Board in the 2010-2011 academic year. These cultural mediators were responsible for responding to the needs of Moroccan families, whose children attended this school, by (a) facilitating the communication between the school and the family; (b) facilitating the integration of the newest families and informing them about their children's current situations at their schools; (c) facilitating the social cohesion between the local families and new coming families; (d) facilitating new coming families' approach to the center's academic position; (e) promoting families' participation in school activities (Consell Escolar Municipal de Terrassa, 2011). From the statistics it is possible to conclude that this school did not have frequent cultural

conflicts, as the percentage of children coming from a family with a different background was rather low. However, the principle emphasized that Moroccan families lived with a sense of distance, meaning that they felt remote, displaced and at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The school intended to share the common culture with the families, preparing celebrations and cultural activities inviting all the parents to participate. Moroccan families were known not to participate in those activities. Nevertheless, the school was willing to provide additional services (such as Catalan language classes) to help those families to feel more belonging. Overall, the school principle described the cultural setting surrounding to school as: *"There are a few from everywhere, but not excessively. There is no excluding difference."*

This school offered a very singular pedagogical proposal to its students. As the time passed, it gained a very good reputation. In the last couple of years, even families living at the center of Terrassa wanted to enroll their children in this school. This resulted in high demand and not enough quotas. Since its establishment, it is known as an innovative school which functions without books and works with alternative methods such as project based learning, workshops, symbolic play corners, a garden with different kinds of plants to take care, psycho-motor development techniques and experimentation environments. The working language of the school is Catalan. However, in the document given to the parents it is mentioned that the school takes account of all the languages that form part of the local community. In schools written curriculum the school environment is described as "Open and Inclusive". "*We endeavor with the utmost interest and effort to open our school to those with whom it is possible to integrate, to collaborate and with those who do not have school's framework as an action which has a priority. The interest is to make our school a reflection of social diversity of men and women of our world. Hence, we will intend to establish agreements with the institutions to contemplate the realities of educational space as much as possible, so that the enrichment is as high as possible."* (Projecte Educatiu De L'Escola, aprovat pel El Consell Escolar el 20 d'octubre del 2011, p.17)

The school had four different playgrounds used by different age groups during recess period and there was another playground that children had access, belonging to the neighboring nursery. However, the observations recorded for this study took place in all of them as the students were allowed to play in each one depending on their availability at that moment.

Photo 1: The playground for three-year old groups
Source: Billur Çakırer

The playground for three-year old groups, which has a sandy ground, provides opportunities for sand play, functional play, and socio-dramatic play and offers a variety of play object including plastic crates, car tires, plastic miniature house, gardening tools, baby tricycles and bicycles, tree trunks cut in pieces, a slide with rope climbing frame, and there are several short trees in the playground.

Photo 2: The playground for three-year old groups
Source: Billur Çakırer

The 4-5 year-olds' playground has a sandy ground and many little trees within. Play object available in this area included a wigwam, giant plastic hoses, plastic crates, another slide, bigger than the one in other playground with rope climbing frame, three little plastic houses, a plastic tower-house, a native American style tent, a pair of plastic skates, many shovels, buckets and sieves for sand play.

Photo 3: The playground for four and five year-old groups
Source: Billur Çakırer

Photo 4: The playground for four and five year-old groups
Source: Billur Çakırer

The third playground was used mainly by the elementary level students and offered an entwined basketball court and soccer field with a cement ground.

Photo 5: The playground for elementary level students
Source: Billur Çakırer

Photo 7: Semi-Closed Playground
Source: Billur Çakırer

The last playground was a semi-closed one, only used during rainy weather. This area included, plastic crates and car tires as well as floor games, painted on the cement ground, providing play opportunities such as hopscotch and puss in the corner.

Photo 6: Semi-Closed Playground
Source: Billur Çakırer

Once in a while preschool children had access to the playground of the neighboring nursery. It had a simple maze made of bush, a wooden house with benches and a table in it, three sets of benches connected with a table and an empty space limited by a wooden fence around it.

Photo 8: Playground of the Neighboring Nursery
Source: Billur Çakırer

Photo 9: Simple Maze Made of Bush in the Neighboring Nursery
Source: Billur Çakırer

The participants of this study include the students who were attending kindergarten (P-5) classes in a public preschool (CEIP) located in Torre-Sana neighborhood, Terrassa, Catalunya, between April 12, 2011 and June 16, 2011. The focal children who were selected as cases attended to the same class. The academic year had started as normal. The classroom teacher was implementing strategies to facilitate the feeling of belonging of the new comer, Fatima. On the classroom wall there was a poster saying "Today … accompanies Fatima" and photos of Fatima and the child chosen to be her fixed play mate for that day. However, just one month after the school had started, the classroom teacher lost her son in an accident and due to this unfortunate occasion she got a permission to go through her grief during six months. She had returned back to her work just recently when I entered to the setting to collect data. During an informal talk she explained that there had been a substitute teacher and she had not used the same strategy that the poster was for and therefore, Fatima's inclusion period had been interrupted.

The classroom schedule is presented below. The recess sessions during which the outdoor free play observations were realized took place every day between 10:45-11:15 (approximately). More detail about data collection process and schedule is presented in the following section.

Photo 10: Weekly Classroom Schedule of The Selected P-5 Class
Source: Billur Çakırer

3.4.3. Participants of the Study

3.4.3.1. Case Selection Process

In qualitative studies, researchers intend to examine in detail only a few situational experiences in order to gain insight about the phenomena that they are interested. They attain this goal through deliberately choosing contexts and situations that would provide fruitful information (Stake, 2010).

Creswell (2011) summarizes the qualitative data collection process in five steps which are not necessarily sequential, but rather correlative:

a) Purposefully choosing the best context and identifying the participants that would be most helpful for understanding our focus of interest.

b) Getting the necessary permissions to access the research site and getting the consents of participants or in the case of children of their legal guardians for the recording of the observations and interviews.

c) Using data collection tools, such as research protocols and open-ended questions for semi-structured interviews, designed especially for the present research purposes always taking in the account the opinions of the participants.

d) Recording the data collected from the participants on self-devised protocols or log sheets which would help us to organize what is collected and prepare them for the analysis.

e) Taking account of the ethical challenges of collecting data as conducting a research in people's confidential settings and administering person-to-person data collection procedures which requires more sensitivity.

Following Creswell's pathway, my research process started with purposeful sampling. Before choosing the two cases to be studied, I had to find a preschool that would be fruitful for my research, therefore it had to fulfill some requirements of this study: (1) Having a multicultural student body, (2) offering concrete play hours in the playground on a daily basis, (3) having play corners that function in a structured manner at least on a weekly basis, (4) willing to collaborate with an academic research and (4) most importantly willing to give consent to me as the researcher to interact with children, to record my observations, to provide adequate space when necessary and to access to children's files in order to gather demographic information.

Particularly because of recording permissions, finding a preschool which fulfilled other requirements to conduct my research proved to be rather difficult. I gained access to CEIP R. C. (CEIP) in Terrassa, Catalunya through the personal contacts of my previous thesis advisor, Isabel Guibourg. CEIP began its existence in 2006-2007 academic year when only it had 12 children and 2 teachers, and did not have its own building. Only after 3 years, in 2009-2010 academic year its buildings were completed which included a preschool (3 to 5 year-olds) and an elementary school. Being a new school and having an innovative faculty, it opted for implementing an innovative curriculum for the early childhood education level and was supposed to be providing personalized attention for the children in need. It was also a school of "alive enrollment" *(matrícula viva)* meaning that children enroll or could drop out throughout the year. This fact was a reflection of the immigration flow present in school's neighborhood, Torre-Sana, Terrasa, which had a clear impact on the school's dynamics. The school had newcomers, originating from different countries, as well as local children. Having students who had come from different cultures, and having students with different enrollment dates leaded school to implement an inclusive approach so that it could address the personal needs of the diverse student body. As a part of the innovative curriculum they were applying at the school, the play had special importance in the preschool education program. All the levels, P3-P4-P5, had recess time in the playground everyday (Monday to Friday), rain or shine, between 10:45-11:15, approximately during half an hour. Four afternoons a week (Monday

to Thursday), from 15:00 until 16:30, both the preschoolers and 1st and 2nd year elementary school students joined together in "els ambients", which were 13 different corners including dramatic play corners (restaurant, castle, hospital, hairdresser's and car racing, house), constructive play corners (construction), experimentation corners (water, sounds and movements), creativity, arts and crafts corners (inventions, painting and clay), psycho-motor development corners (touch and stir and pool of balls).

Since it was a rather new school with enthusiastic staff, after explaining to the school's principal, Mr. B., that my research was about understanding role of play in inclusive, culturally diverse kindergartens in order to facilitate the children's active participation in their learning, he stated that at the school there were some newcomers with a different culture of origin and the school had personalized plans to address their needs as well as the school offered freedom for children to participate in their own learning process in the way they wanted. Both to the school's principle and to me the school seemed to be an adequate setting, fulfilling the requirements to attain my research goals. I was given full permission to interact with children during their play hours, to access any kind of information related to the selected cases of my study and to record any situation relevant to my research as long as I guaranteed not to use anything confidential, including the visual data, for reasons other than my dissertation. All the permissions and consents were given verbally by the school's principal.

After choosing the early childhood education center, I had to choose the age group that I wanted to focus on. I make my decision after an exhaustive literature review. Brown (1998) identifies the age range 3 to 6 as an age period during which the children are curious about diversity and it is when the children tend to use prevailing negative stereotypes about people to express their opinions and to guide their actions. P-5 level has been chosen as the object of this study. P-5 level is the last year in the second cycle and the year before the primary school. Therefore, it is a particularly important year as it is assumed that this stage prepares the young students to the high demands of the formal education system, which is more academically oriented.

In the school where I chose to conduct my research there were two kindergarten classes: P5-A and P5-B. Before deciding which class would provide a better opportunity for reaching the goals of the study, I spent one week in each class, observing the class dynamics, children's interactions in and outside the classroom, teachers' attitudes and the way they interacted with children. During my presence in each class, I engaged into casual talks with the teachers to ask about what they thought

about their group. For me it was also important to study cases which would also provide a new perspective and new ideas to teachers so that they could use the findings of my study to improve their teaching practices while attending to a culturally diverse student body. Therefore, I asked the teachers their opinions about who should be studied in their classes. Tutors of the each class had a specific child on their minds. Two children coming from a different cultural background, who shared the same destiny, enrolled to the school at the beginning of the academic year. They were cousins, a boy named Youssef, and a girl named Fatima. Fatima was attending P5-A and Youssef was attending P5-B. Not only they shared the same school, but also their families were sharing the same home. I spent my first week in Youssef's class, because Fatima's tutor got recently back from a grief leave after being away for almost 6 months, whereas Youssef's tutor got recently substituted by another teacher, who was Fatima's teacher after her real tutor took a sick leave. After observing each candidate and talking to their teachers I decided to choose to conduct my observations in P5-A, because the class had suffered from the absence of their tutors, the children seemed to be more dispersed during play, there appeared to be little groups which only played within their members, and Fatima seemed to be less participative in the dynamics of the classroom, whereas her cousin, Youssef was an active child, and he already had a fixed play partner. Ultimately, I had more sources of information, the tutor teacher of P5-A, and the substitute classroom teacher of P5-B, both of whom had experience of teaching to P5-A and Fatima. I believed that choosing my cases in this class would be more efficient for my study.

The last step was to decide which children to choose as the two cases and to observe in order to have the most accurate picture regarding the issue. I wanted to observe inclusion (and/or exclusion if it was the case) during play sessions, and how play facilitated the children to engage in active learning experiences. Since play usually involves very active and dynamic participation, it was impossible for me to observe every play moment occurred within the P5-A boundaries, including the physical space of the play corners and the playgrounds. "*The choice of particular children is strategic as it enables to trace the participation of children with differing levels of engagement in the play and involvement in the learning process of the group (*Kantor, Elgas, and Fernie, 1998:139*)"* Choosing the children to be observed meant choosing the case to be studied. Since I was going to record my observations, I had to employ a sampling strategy that would facilitate my observations. (Conducting a research about inclusion and being a researcher who believes in inclusive values, I wanted to include the children to my research not only through my observations, but also I wanted them to be active participants of my study, allowing them to talk and express

their point of view. Giving them this opportunity and letting them get involved in my study is part of a participative culture (Casey, 2005), which I am strongly in favor of. Hence, I decided to choose the cases not only by considering what the teachers thought and what I had already observed, but also by including children's opinions about their preferences while playing. Creswell (2007) suggested choosing cases through "purposeful maximal sampling" means that the cases of the study would provide a variety of viewpoints on the process. Following his suggestion and taking into consideration the limited human resources (I collected data on my own) on data collection I employed *Maximal Variation Sampling* (Creswell, 2011) in order to choose two children who had opposite personal traits and behavioral patterns during play: A case of a popular and a case of an unpopular child who was at-risk of exclusion. The first case I wanted to select would be of a popular, who would have positive characteristics, would be valued and followed by the majority of his/her classmates, would have effective communication skills, would dominate the languages used at the school, would take initiative and actively engage in play, would be an example model for their peers by including other children. The second case I was aiming would be of an unpopular child who would be excluded or at-risk of exclusion during play sessions. The potential candidate for the second case would have a cultural background different than Spanish or Catalan cultures, would have difficulty in initiating play, would have poor communicative skills, would have difficulties trying to join a peer group that has already engaged in a play sequence, would be either neglected or in danger of getting rejected by his/her peer groups. After two weeks of in-class observations, I already knew the nominations of the teachers. I decided to use the *Sociometry* method to get each child's point of view (Jennings, 1973) on their preferred popular and least preferred play mate. Several authors determined the peer acceptance successfully by using the sociometric status of preschool children (McCandless and Marshall, 1957; Peery, 1979; Walker, 2009). The details of the sociometric interview process are given under *Data Collection Tools and Process* section below. The analysis and results related to this process are explained under title related to the findings of the study. Combining the teachers' nominations, children's nominations and my observations I reached to two names as my final cases to be studied: Jaume, with a mixture of Catalan and Spanish background as the positive popular of the group and Fatima, a recent newcomer from Morocco who had difficulty in understanding Spanish and Catalan, accessing and contributing to cultural knowledge as being the least preferred play mate who was at-risk of being excluded during the play sessions. More details about the selected children are given in the each case presentation in *Results* section below.

In addition to the selected children, teachers who were present in the settings during the recording of the observations, two teachers who were teaching P-5 level during 2011-2012 school year and school principal Mr. B. are the other indirect participants of this study. Details about these indirect participants are presented under *Data Collection Tools and Process* section below.

3.4.3.2. Description of Participants

Two classroom teachers who were teaching P5-A and P5-B were included in the study as a part of the case selection process. Although the observations were conducted according to focal child sampling (Pellegrini, 1995), play behaviors of their classmates who interacted with the focal children during their play activity were also included in the analysis. Children who shared play activities with the focal children were mainly their classmates. However, during playground hours, they shared the playground with other P-4, P-5 students and elementary level students. Despite the mixed age groups present during the play sessions, only the focal children's interactions only with their same-age peers were included in the analysis.

The focal children, Jaume and Fatima were attending P5-A in the selected public preschool. There were 24 students in P5-A, 11 girls and 13 boys. 19 of those children had Catalan/Spanish background; four of them used both Spanish and Catalan, whereas the rest spoke only Spanish at home. 4 students came from culturally mixed families: two of them had one Brazilian and one Catalan parent; one child had one Romanian parent and the other one was Catalan; the last child although coming from a Latin American culture one of his parents was from Ecuador and the other one was Colombian. Two children came from single-nation families, being one from Morocco (home language being Arabic) and the other one from Argentina (home language being Spanish). Table 9 below provides a summary of the children who shared the same class with the focal children.

Child	Age	Level first enrollment	Gender	Parents' cultural background	Language used at home	Details
(1)N.1	*5.5 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan	Catalan and Spanish	
(2)F.	*5.5 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Spanish	
(3)P.1	*5.8 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan	Spanish	
(4)J.	*5.8 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Catalan	
(5)E.1	*6 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Catalan	
(6)R.1	***5.4 years***	**P-4**	**Male**	**Brazilian and Catalan**	**Portuguese and Spanish**	**Mother BR Father CAT**
(7)A.1	*6.2 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan	Spanish	
(8)L.	*5.6 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Spanish	
(9)M.	*5.9 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan	Spanish	
(10)N.2	*5.9 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan	Catalan and Spanish	
(11)P.2	*6.1 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan	Spanish	
(12)Y.	***6.2 years***	**P-3**	**Female**	**Romanian and Catalan**	**Romanian and Spanish**	**Mother ROM Father CAT**
(13)S.1	***6.2 years***	**P-3**	**Female**	**Catalan and Brazilian**	**Spanish and Portuguese**	**Mother CAT Father BR**
(14)P.	*6.3 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Spanish	
(15)Jaume*	*5.6 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan and Spanish	Spanish Spanish	
(16)G.	*6.4 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan		
(17)A.2	*5.8 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Spanish	
(18)A.3	*5.5 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan and Spanish	Catalan and Spanish	
(19)E.2	***5.8 years***	**P-3**	**Male**	**Argentinian**	**Spanish**	
(20)Fatima*	***5.8 years***	**P-5**	**Female**	**Moroccan**	**Arabic**	
(21)I.	*6.4 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Spanish	
(22)S. 2	*6.3 years*	P-3	Female	Catalan and Spanish	Catalan and Spanish	
(23)R. 2	*5.6 years*	P-3	Male	Catalan	Spanish	
(24)B.	***5.8 years***	**P-3**	**Male**	**Ecuadorian and Colombian**	**Spanish**	**Mother EC Father COL**

Table 9: Characteristics of Children who shared the Same Class with Focal Children of This Study
* Focal Children

In this selected class 75% (n=18) were coming from families who were locals and were members of the dominant culture (Catalan and Spanish), 8% (n= 2) came from a multi-cultural background (Catalan and Brazilian), 8% (n=2) had families who came from a Latin American Culture (Argentina, Ecuador and Colombia), although one of these children had parents who had different nationalities. Eight children were bilingual (four of them spoke Catalan and Spanish, two of them spoke Spanish and Portuguese, and one of them spoke Spanish and Romanian). The 67% of the children (n=16) spoke only Spanish at home. Lastly, one child, who got selected to be one of the two focal children of this study, came from a unique culture very different from the dominant local culture. Her family was Moroccan. They used Arabic as the principal language at home and they were practicing Muslims. More detailed information about the two chosen focal children will be given in the case presentations. In some play episodes the focal children engaged in direct or indirect interaction with same-age peers who attend P5-B. In the results section these girls are named GP5, G1P5, etc.; whereas these boys are named as BP5, B1P5, etc. All the children mentioned in the results section with GP5 and BP5 acronyms had Catalan/Spanish cultural background.

3.4.4. Data Collection Tools and Process

3.4.4.1. Data Collection Tools

According to Scott and Usher (2011), interpretivist research takes its resources from daily life and ordinary interactions occurring within the social world. Thus, researchers with an interpretivist orientation seek to answer their questions through understanding and interpreting social situations and their meanings by examining the socially constructed human action. Since the main purpose of this study was to understand and interpret the role of play in culturally diverse children's daily lives in the school context, I needed to capture children's ordinary play actions during their daily interactions with their peers and teachers in their natural worlds. Recorded naturalistic observations conducted in the playgrounds were used as the primary sources of data, as interpretation is an integral part of observations and frequently chosen by qualitative researchers. Sociometric interviews with children, field notes, visual and documentary data, a formative interview with the school's principal and interviews in the form of informal conversations with the

teachers were used as secondary sources of data in order to provide perspective richness and to strengthen the foundations of the case study design, which requires comprehensive data collected from multiple-sources (Creswell, 2007). The next section describes the processes of collecting and documenting data.

1. Sociometric Interviews with Children and Sociometric Status Classification

Sociometry has been used for studying personal choices related to specific criteria in groups (Treadwell et al., 1997). In educational contexts sociometric status of children was used for determining the most appropriate placement of each individual child into a peer group through his point of view, for getting better educational outcomes (Jennings, 1973) as well as a method for deciding the most adequate intervention program for those children who suffered from peer exclusion (Asher and Dodge, 1986). In early childhood contexts sociometry was also used as a method to determine children's friendship preferences, popularity in peer groups, play mate choices (McCandless and Marshall, 1957; Peery, 1979; Kantor, Elgas and Fernie, 1998; Walker, 2009). During the search of a way to include children's perspectives in the process of case selection, sociometry appeared to be a convenient method to gather children's choices about play partners. The main reason why I chose to use sociometry as a method for case selection was because previous studies promoted the usage of this peer rating strategy as a reliable method for identifying popular and unpopular preschool children in their peer groups (McCandless and Marshall, 1957; Walker, 2009). In her study of preschool children's behavioral associations of peer acceptance Walker (2009) suggested that there existed a significant relation between children's popularity and their play behavior. According to her findings, popular children more often chose to engage in social play, whereas unpopular children were found to frequently play less socially, showing a tendency to solitary or parallel play patterns. This case study examines the play behaviors of children in culturally diverse play settings from an inclusive education perspective. Choosing a popular and an unpopular child as the cases of study was the decision I made following Walker's (2009) path, as the popular child would enable me to observe play episodes of fully included individual, whereas the unpopular child would demonstrate play behaviors of a child who would have difficulty in engaging in social play with his or her peers. These two cases having extreme characteristics were believed to provide rich information for in-depth analysis.

Sociometric interviews were conducted with 24 children who were attending the same class, P5-A in 2010-2011 academic year. The children interviews took place in the hall on which their

classroom was located and they were completed in four separate sessions, each of which lasted approximately one hour. The length of the interviews ranged between 2 minutes 49 seconds and 6 minutes 44 seconds. The table below presents the details of interview session.

1st session	19.05.2011	11:30-12:30	6 children
2nd session	20.05.2011	11:35-12:20	6 children
3rd session	23.05.2011	11:22-12:30	7 children
4th session	24.05.2011	11:40-12:30	5 children

Table 10: Sociometric Interview Sessions with Children

The sociometric interviews were group centered (Treadwell et al., 1997), meaning that children were asked to nominate their preferred play partners within their classmates. Children were asked to nominate their preferred play partners without negative votes or ranking. Although previous studies did not indicate an obvious negative consequence of asking for negative votes of preschool children (e.g. whom do you not like to play with? whom do you like to play with the least?) (Peery, 1979; Asher and Dodge, 1986), after a long discussion with my previous advisor Isabel Guibourg and past coordinator of the research group GREI Carme Angel, and due to ethical concerns and the minor risk of implicitly attributing negative characteristics, we decided to discard the option of asking for negative votes or rankings for "the least" preferred in order to avoid possible negative views of children on their peers. Final decision was to follow Odom's (2000) suggestion of using low rankings on mean peer rating scores to determine the socially rejected (unpopular) child of the chosen group.

Sociometric questions were formulated using Kumar and Treadwell's (1985, in Treadwell et al., 1997) suggestions.

a) Children were asked questions seeking an answer about their personal choices of an explicit criterion (preferred play partner).

b) The criterion used was concrete and explicit (choosing the preferred play partner from the shown photographs of their class mates).

c) The questions emphasized that they could only choose their preferred play partner from the photographs given.

Sociometric Procedures:

Peer nominations were gathered by using a picture sociometric technique similar to McCandless and Marshall (1957), and Walker (2009) as an age-appropriate method to get more accurate answers from the interviewed five year-olds. Sociometric interviews of 24 children were conducted in the hallway where a table and two chairs were located exclusively for the interviews and these interviews were completed in four sessions.

Prior to conducting interviews I asked for standard id photographs of each child attending P-5 A in CEIP. Upon my request the school's administrative secretary printed the photographs of each child which were used for school registration documents. The days and the time for the interviews were decided with the classroom teacher, Ms. P. All the interviews were conducted between the playground time and lunch break (11:20-12:30), the time period during which all the students were together as a group working in their classrooms. Children had already gotten acquainted with me as I had already spent two weeks, one of which was exclusively spent with P5-A, getting to know the school and the children. The sociometric interviews were conducted individually with each child by me, as I was the only person responsible for gathering data from the field.

I followed the order of the attendance list of the class for the sequence of the interviews. According to the established procedures I would go in the classroom and would call out a name. The child whose name I had called would come towards me and I would lead him or her to the hallway where the interview was to be conducted. If the child on the list would be missing on that day, the next session would start with that missing child. In four sessions, interviews with all the children on the attendance list, except from one girl who was already dropped out of the school prior to my arrival, were completed.

All the interviews started with an introduction about me: "Hello. Do you know who I am? What is my name? ... My name is Billur. Nice to meet you." were the phrases I used as a standard introduction. Before proceeding with children's peer nominations, the reason of the interview was explained to each child. I explained each child that I was there to get to know them and their friends and I wanted to learn how they played and I justified my interest by telling that since I was a grown up, it had been a while without playing and that was the reason why I forgot how to play.

I told them that I needed their help and asked them if they could help me about how to play. After getting the "yes" answer, I proceeded with the interviews by using the photographs. Each interview was audio taped after getting the "yes" answer and starting from the identification of each photograph.

In the each interview, the photographs of each child who were attending P5-A were laid on the table in no particular order that alternating randomly after each interview. These photographs were placed in five rows of five (25 photographs including the photograph of the girl who had already dropped out) on a table that children used regularly in their classrooms. The interviewed child was seated in a chair directly looking at the photographs. In this picture sociometric technique, each child initially was asked to point to each photograph one by one and name the boy or girl on the photograph. Although it was not very common, still when the child seemed hesitant to name the child on the photograph, additional help was given so that they could identify their peers correctly. The wording of sociometric choice question, "Can you tell me whom do you like to play with?" was the same in all the interviews (Transcription of sociometric interviews of the selected children can be seen as Appendix 12). However, in some interviews this question was expanded to "Who do you like to play with in the playground and in the classroom?" for further clarification when the child seemed uncertain about what the question was asking. These questions did not intend to get separate responses for playmates in the playground and in the classroom, as I assumed that the popular child would be the one who got the most nominations and the unpopular child would be the least voted regardless of the context of play. The intention of the sociometric interview was to get three nominations from each child. After the interviewed child mentioned one name, I went ahead and asked "who else?" until three names were obtained. In some cases the children nominated less than three and in a few cases they nominated more. In all cases each nomination was noted down, but only the first three nominations were included in the analysis. Answers of all children were noted on a scoring template as shown below in Figure 1.

After getting all the nominations from the interviewed child the interview continued with further questions "What do you play with (the names voted by the child)?" and "Why do you play with (the names voted by the child)?" These two questions were asked in order to get to know each child better and to get a glimpse of their plays from their point of view. Before the next step, at this moment of the interview, voice recording of the interviews was stopped.

Registration form:					
Date and Hour:					
Chooser	**Chosen 1**	**Chosen 2**	**Chosen 3**	**Chosen 4**	**Games Played**

Figure 1: Scoring template for sociometric interviews

The final part of the interview was dedicated to a distractor task with the intention of reducing the possibility of children discussing their answers to the sociometric questions after rejoining their classmates (Poteat, Ironsmith and Bullock, 1986). Each child was shown a children's book by Rachel Elliot (2009) called "Qui Sóc?" and they were asked to name the animal on each page, and then we talked about whether they had pets at home or would like to have one. The sociometric interviews were concluded by asking them whether they would like to ask any question to me. After answering their question, if they had any, I thanked each of the children for their help and leaded them back to their classroom where they continued their daily activity.

The sociometric data collected from the interviews were coded to an excel spreadsheet giving 1 to each nomination, giving zero to not voted children and finally leaving the chooser child's name blank. The coded data was analyzed using CIVSoc 2.0 (Barrasa and Gil, 2004). The findings of this sociometric analysis are presented under *Results* section within the case presentations.

2. Naturalistic Observations

Interpretive research depends strongly on researcher's perceptions and her making sense of what is seen and heard in the studied context. Observation is the most preferred data collection method by the interpretative researchers because it enables them to directly see, hear and experience the information in its natural context (Stake, 2010). In qualitative studies, the quality of findings depends very much on the personal experience of the researcher. Therefore, the essence of my research, being a qualitative study with an interpretivist approach is the field experience enriched by on-site observations.

Following the qualitative methodology, I opted for using observation as the primary data collection instrument in this study. Selected children's play behaviors were observed in the playground, where the play had an unstructured and free nature. Observation was chosen as the main instrument fundamentally because observations in preschool settings provide richer information as the children at that age group have limitations to express their thoughts and perspective through verbal language (Creswell, 2011); because the nature of interpretive studies in the early years settings required capturing children's everyday lives in their natural worlds (Hedegaard et al., 2008); and because observational methods facilitated the explication of everyday situations (Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch, 2004). Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch (2004), emphasize that observational method is crucial especially for those studies conducted about the education of children living in culturally diverse societies, for being an important means of understanding their realities and for enabling the construction of accurate portrayal of their ordinary lives. Hence, through observing children in a free play, and by analyzing children's play behaviors, I aimed at analyzing the role of play over inclusive education in a culturally diverse context. The observations were naturalistic (non-participant) and were conducted in two periods: exploratory observations, which were not recorded visually; and video-recorded main observations.

Although participant observation being a favorable technique frequently used by interpretivist researchers (Gaskins, Miller and Corsaro, 1992; O'Kane, 2008; Hedegaard et al., 2008), I chose to follow Stake's (2010) advice and designated naturalistic observation as the most proper observation technique to gain insight and knowledge about children's play behavior in their educational contexts.

According to Stake (2010:32), (qualitative researchers)

"Other than positioning themselves, they avoid creating situations "to test their hypotheses." They try to observe the ordinary, and they try to observe it long enough to comprehend what, for this thing, "ordinary" means. For them, naturalistic observation has been their primary medium of acquaintance. When they cannot see for themselves, they ask others who have seen. When there are formal records kept, they search for the documents. But they favor a personal capture of the experience, so they can interpret it, recognize its contexts, puzzle the many meanings even while still there, and pass along an experiential, naturalistic account so that readers can participate in some of the same reflection".

Furthermore, the previous studies included in this dissertation indicates that children, particularly those who belonged to different classes, would identify me as a new person in the setting and would invite me to join their play; would try to involve me in their play by asking for help or by directing their complaints about their peers to me; or would try to communicate with me just because of their curiosity about my camera, causing me to get distracted and to distance me away from the subjects of my study. Therefore, in order to position myself as a researcher in the field, I preferred to be unobtrusive as much as possible rather than being considered as an adult ready to join them in their play, or as an adult from whom they could seek help or assistance. This decision I made is supported by Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch (2004), who state that it is essential to minimize any kind of interference when the main goal of the observation is to examine the everyday lives of children.

Naturalistic observation is mainly used in descriptive studies (Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch, 2004). A researcher employing naturalistic observation as a data collection technique in childhood research seeks to obtain a portrait of the studied behavior within the social and cultural context without manipulating anything or intervening in the process (Dunn, 2005). During observations, researchers have to be aware of the repercussions caused by their presence. Although in naturalistic observations, researchers only record what is occurring naturally in the setting, it is important for them to realize that their presence may influence the natural course of children's behaviors, as by being physically situated in children's natural worlds while collecting first-hand data, they end up becoming part of the context (Degotardi, 2011). In this research I recorded children's plays by a camera through naturalistic observations, assuming a non-participant role (Creswell, 2011). In the playgrounds, I followed children with a camera in my hand at a varying distance (sometimes I recorded their play behaviors from a distance because they were running all around, at other times I got as close as possible to be able to record their verbal interactions). From Pellegrini's and Bjorklund's (1998) suggestions, I decided to employ *focal sampling* during my observations, which enabled me as a researcher to focalize my observations on one individual child for a determined time (which varied according to the length of the time designated for each play session). This sampling strategy facilitated the shadowing the play behaviors of the targeted child, leading to more accurate descriptions of the interaction occurred between the focal child and the other children who engaged into play activity with him/her. Focusing each observation on one specific child, made it easier to determine who initiated play and who used what kind of strategies to facilitate or to obstruct the play activity of the selected child. In line with these authors,

continuous recording strategy was chosen, meaning that the observations throughout the play sessions were video-taped without pausing in order to catch the every detail of the play behaviors and play patterns.

Prior to the recorded observation sessions, I constructed a question form based on the suggestions of Casey (2007) (see Appendix 13) which guided me through the sessions and helped me to focus on the objectives of conducting observations. The recorded observations started from the moment that the focal child entered in the play setting until he or she left the setting physically when the play period finished.

Observations were conducted in two phases: *Exploratory Observations* and *Recorded Observations.*

Exploratory observations phase was a period of familiarization. Since I was going to record my observations with the camera, in order to reduce the risk of children acting in a socially desirable way when the recording is on, time was needed for children to get used to my presence with a camera on my hand (Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch, 2004). This phase included unrecorded preliminary observations in the classroom and exploratory observations in indoor and outdoor play settings. I felt the need to include classroom observations not only to facilitate children's familiarization with my presence and with my role as a researcher but also to understand the dynamics of the relationship between peers, between children and the adults, the dynamics of children being observed by a previously unknown adult and to understand the functioning of the setting. By spending time in the classroom, I learned about children's daily routines, classroom rules, classroom teacher's general attitude and I got to know the working schedule of the classroom. I had to adjust my projected data collection schedule with the class's weekly time table, which resulted in frequent interruptions due to local festivals, celebrations or school's activities based on a chosen theme (such as the cultural week, which took place during the first week of my presence). With the guidance of the classroom teacher I scheduled the preliminary classroom observations in three days. The children already knew who I was before I entered into their classroom because I had already spent three days with the neighboring kindergarten class (P5-B). During my preliminary observations I observed children's plays occurring in several different settings at varying times: in the classroom in the form of a prompt play to keep children engaged when they finish the class work before the others; in the sports hall or outdoors in the form of a teacher directed-games with rules; in the playground in the form of free play; and in the play

corners in the form of semi-structured play. I used these preliminary observations to consider the settings which would provide richness in behaviors of my interest: inclusive and exclusionary play behaviors. Assuming that children would behave in accordance within the strict rules and limits of teacher-directed games with rules and seeing that this kind of play did not facilitated the children's free-will to play as they wished, I opted out including this setting in my research. Furthermore, I decided not to include the prompt play occurring during indeterminate hours because it would complicate to construct a functioning observation schedule. Engaging in this kind of play was only possible for quick-finishers and one of the selected children had characteristics of a slow-pacer. Including this kind of play setting in my research might have meant not observing the selected child in any occasion. Due to the reasons set forth and reasons previously mentioned at the end of study two, in this research I only included free play in playgrounds. The play in the playground was scheduled to occur every school day during a determined time period in the morning. Exploratory observations were conducted after completing the preliminary observation period in the classroom. Only one exploratory observation in the selected play setting was included in my data collection schedule mainly because children adapted to my presence very quickly and I wanted to avoid any time restrictions that might have occurred later during the data collection process due to unforeseen factors. The following table presents the details of the data collected during the preliminary classroom observations.

Date	Time Range	Preliminary Observation Focus	Main Data Source
09.05.2011	11:10-12:30	Observation of the group dynamics in the classroom (P5-A)	Field notes 2 A5 pages
12.05.2011	11:15-12:30 15:00-16:30	Observation in the playground focusing on Fatima. Observation of Fatima in the play corner (Sound and Movement)	Field notes 1,5 A5 pages
20.05.2011	11:00-11:30	Observation of Fatima in the playground	Field notes 1,5 A5 pages
23.05.2011	10:10-11:30	Observation in the classroom (Fruit hour/Snack time) Observation of Fatima in the playground	Field notes 1 A5 page

Table 11: Preliminary Classroom Observations

Recorded observation phase started after two weeks of my presence with the selected group of children. I started to use my recording device, which was a small compact digital camera, in the setting only when I was certain of my acceptance as a researcher and observer in the research setting by the children and the adults (Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch, 2004). Video recordings are sources of exact registrations of spontaneous interplays used for gaining insight about the dynamic and complex processes behind those interplays (Flewitt, 2006). I collected visual data to understand the process behind children's play behaviors. With this intention, I recorded observational data between May 23th, 2011 and June 20th, 2011. Recorded observations were focused on two children who were selected as the cases of this study. They were observed during outdoor free play hours in the playgrounds (on selected days between 10:45-11:20). Details on the length and recording type of the observations are given in the following Table 12.

Date	Time Range	Recorded Observation Focus	Main Data Source
27.05.2011	Recorded Observation	Fatima @ Playground	Video (A1P) 31:57 minutes + Field Notes
30.05.2011	Recorded Observation	Fatima @ Playground	Video (A2P) 28:57 minutes + Field Notes
31.05.2011	Recorded Observation	Fatima @ Playground	Video (A3P) 46:35 minutes
03.06.2011	Recorded Observation	Fatima @ Playground	Video (A4P) 31:44 minutes + Field Notes
06.06.2011	Recorded Observation	Jaume @ Playground	Video (M1P) 57:00 minutes + Field Notes
08.06.2011	Recorded Observation	Jaume @ Playground	Video (M2P) 23:39 minutes + Field Notes
14.06.2011	Recorded Observation	Jaume @ Playground	Video (M3P) 37:40 minutes + Field Notes
15.06.2011	Recorded Observation	Jaume @ Playground	Video (M3P) 37:24 minutes + Field Notes

Table 12: Details of Recorded Observations

The total length of recorded observations (raw data) is 4 hours 54 minutes and 56 seconds, in 8 sessions. As can be seen above, the video-taped data is accompanied by field notes. Although the

field notes will be explained later in this chapter, it is timely to mention here that those field notes taken just after the observation sessions served as memos and included details (such as exact wordings of children, etc.) of the significant scenes as well as my thoughts about what I had observed and how they could be significant for my study. Observations of children's play were outdoors including the nursery playground, P3 playground, P4-P5 playground, elementary school playground and finally a semi-covered playground. All of these settings have been described in detail in the *Context of the Study* section.

Recording the observations facilitates the data analysis, and this was the main reason why I decided to use video recordings as the main data sources of this study. However, video-taping comes along with some disadvantages.

First of all, presence of a video camera risks being noticed (Pellegrini, et al. 2004). My main goal while conducting naturalistic observations was to be invisible to children in order to capture their most natural playground behaviors. Using a camera, surely took a lot of attention at first. Surprisingly, the children who were not member of the selected children's class group but who still shared the playgrounds paid more attention to the camera than the children who were actually the focus of the study. The selected popular child almost never showed any particular behavior indicating that he was aware of being recorded. He carried out his play interactions with his peers in a natural way. Meanwhile, the selected unpopular child showed awareness and some discomfort about being recorded by setting her eyes on me and my camera as well as by turning her head over to see if I was following her while she was running all around the playground in order to hinder the recording. During those moments I used the strategy of stopping and moving my camera and my head towards other children and seem to be busy with other children's plays for a while, until she returned back to her neutral state. Her discomfort got reduced after a short time and she did not show any uneasiness during the recorded observations in the play corners. Some teachers also seemed to be hesitant about the presence of the camera in the setting. In the playgrounds some teachers tried to avoid entering to the recording field of the camera. Probably the biggest issues in recording videos in a school context are getting the consent of the participants (the children as well as the teachers) for the recording and the keeping their anonymity (Branen et al., 2010). The consent forms for any possible visual recordings were signed by each parent when they enrolled their child to the school. No other consent forms were sent to parents to be signed exclusively for this study. The school principle facilitated the verbal permission for a full access to recording of

the children, the teachers, the spaces and the material under two conditions: I assured him that I would only record moments directly related to my research and I could use the recorded data only for my doctoral research and for other academic purposes related to my research. This study assumed voluntary participation of the selected participants. When they did not want to be recorded at some specific moments, I respected their stances and did not use my camera when I was asked to stop recording.

Second difficulty I encountered during video recording of my observation was related to the technical limitations. I had a small compact camera (Nikon Coolpix S5100 2 MP Digital Camera with 5x Optical Vibration Reduction (VR) Zoom and 2.7-Inch LCD), which was mainly used for shooting photos. I had no access to a tripod or magnetic microphones. These facts meant varying quality of videos depending on the situations. In the playgrounds, due to the active nature of the play sequences appeared in the context, from time to time I had to decide between walking fast, running and zooming in the scene to capture a play scene. Walking fast and running meant shaky footages, whereas zooming in the scene meant capturing no verbal interaction.

In spite of the mentioned facts, video recordings have provided invaluable data for this study. This study, positioning itself on the premises of Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory (1967), seeks to discover the dynamics of children's social interaction during free play periods outdoors. According to Vygotsky (1980), children construct meaning through tools in socio-cultural contexts, verbal language being the most important one. However, non-verbal communication also carries culturally significant meaning facilitating the social interaction. Citing from Flewitt (2006:30), "In addition to provide unique, situated insights into the dynamics of classroom interaction on the micro level of individual children and individual classrooms, video data reflect broader institutional and socio-culturally situated discursive and ideological practices as embodied in classroom layouts, furnishing and fittings, wall displays, staff and child movements". Since my study analyses play situations from the inclusion perspective, I needed data which would enable me to get a wider perspective including every possible detail about the context related to children's play and peer interactions. Video recordings provide data on children's both verbal and non-verbal communication revealing the differences between communicative modes used by the children while constructing their symbolic worlds (Flewitt, 2006). This was particularly important for answering the sub-questions of this study. My assumption was to encounter inclusion and exclusion strategies ranging from verbal strategies to non-verbal strategies. I needed to "see" what

children were doing as well as to "hear" what they were saying. Video recordings provided a combination of both visual and audial data, enabling a detailed analysis of both dimensions.

Ultimately, recorded data allowed a more detailed and insightful data analysis process. Watching the videos repeatedly allowed me to decide on about key scenes, to consider the different perspectives in the same situations; included vs. including, excluded vs. excluding, the same child in different situations; included vs. excluded; including vs. excluding. Video recordings are the most real version of the interactions occurred in a setting. Although the categories derived from the data will always be subjective up to some degree, the data will always be available for those experts who want to review them and to revise the adequacy of the coding (Pirie, 1996).

3. Interviews with the Staff

Qualitative researchers prefer conducting interviews to get different perspectives from the participants of the study, to enrich the data by involving as many persons as possible, to get in-depth information about the research topic or to discover something about the context that the researcher is not able to observe (Stake, 2010). Interviews can take different forms varying from semi-structured individual or group interviews to informal talks (Flewitt, 2006).

In this study interviews took two different forms. The first interviews took the form of informal conversations with the participant teachers in the playground and in the classroom. These informal talks sought additional information about the children, the functioning of the groups, the structure and general routine of the play occurring in the play corners and in the playgrounds. Additionally through these informal talks, I intended to elicit the participant teachers' (who were present during the playground periods and the classroom teacher/tutor of the group) perspectives about the phenomenon of play in facilitating culturally diverse children's inclusion and active participation in their peer group. I registered the significant parts of these informal talks as field notes. Therefore, the data derived from these informal talks were included in the analysis as excerpts taken from the field notes. More details about the field notes are explained in the following section.

The second interview form was a formative interview conducted with the school's principal. The main goal of this formative interview was to gather detailed information about the historical background, geographical location, demographics and the socio-cultural context of the school, school policy, the curriculum and retrospective information about Jaume and Fatima. I prepared a meeting agenda (See Appendix 14) and followed it as a guide during this formative session with

the school's principle Mr. B. This formative interview took place on January 23rd, 2013, two academic years after the primary data collection, at 12:30, in the office of the administrative staff. I recorded this formative meeting with my audio-recording device. The data gathered from this formative interview had been very helpful for the contextualization of the study as well as the case formulations. Furthermore, this formative interview facilitated the collection of written documentary data.

4. Field Notes

Field notes are memo-like, short notes which are taken by the researcher to record the details of critical, punctual incidents relevant to the research topic occurring during field observations; and they usually supplement audio and video data and reflect the thoughts and comments of the researcher on the observed phenomena (Flewitt, 2006).

The field notes I recorded, mainly supplement the observational data (both video-taped and un-recorded), the details about these field notes are presented in Table 11: Preliminary Classroom Observations and Table 12: Details of the Recorded Observation Sessions. I recorded short descriptions of the daily activities that I observed during class hours and of significant incidences of inclusion and exclusion during play episodes, children's verbal interaction, which could pass unheard due to poor recording conditions, that convey messages of including and excluding behavior, the important points relevant to children's participation in play periods that the teachers' emphasized during our informal talks and my personal opinions and comments about what I had already experienced as part of the context. These field notes were taken usually just after I concluded the observations, in an empty classroom or on the bus. I used a small, pocket size notebook and a pen to take notes in my native language, Turkish, in order to facilitate the accurate reflection of my thoughts and the speed of note taking to avoid omitting small but significant details. An example of the field notes (translated to English) I kept can be seen in Appendix 15.

5. Documentary Data (Written and Visual)

I collected documentary data to supplement the primary sources of data (observations) and to gather more detailed information on the context, as well as to facilitate the triangulation of the data. Documents provide a wider perspective of the context of the study through providing background information and details of the curriculum and other key documents related to school policy and

functioning (Flewitt, 2006). Written documentary data I collected include *"projecte educatiu de l'escola"* (curriculum of the school), *"projecte de direcció per a l'escola Roser Capdevila de Terrassa"* (project of the administration of the CEIP), strategic planning of 2011-2015 school year period, demographic information on all the P-5 level children attending the CEIP, Qualifications evaluation reports of the two selected participants, Jaume (P3-P4 level evaluations) and Fatima (P5 level evaluations), a explicative and organizational document about *"els ambients d'experimentació i joc simbòlic"* (experimentation and symbolic play environments, meaning the play corners), a document about the work corners, a document about the reading-writing process in the early childhood education section and the primary school section, another document about working by projects (project based learning) and a manual which explains school's functioning to the parents. Visual documentary data include photos of the classroom, playgrounds, play objects, and other photos related to children's daily activities.

3.4.4.2. Data Collection Process

Upon deciding on the cases to be studied in depth, since the nature of the case studies required, I aimed at collecting data from multiple sources. As a qualitative researcher, following Stake's path (2010), I intended to collect data that represented personal experiences of the research participants in specific play episodes in the playground. Although the observational data being the main data resource for this study, the complementary data of other kinds such as children socio-metric interviews, visual (photographs), field notes, documentary data were added to the analysis in order to increase the credibility of the study.

Seeking to uncover the dynamics of children's play and its role as a medium of inclusion in an early childhood education setting meant that qualitative data had to be collected in the real-world situations (Scot and Usher, 2011). Hedegaard et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of studying children's daily activities within the institutions where they socialize, interact and develop. My previous experience as an intern researcher in GREI research group (Cakirer et al., 2011) provided me guidance about collecting data in early childhood settings. Nevertheless, the final plan for collecting data was concluded together with my previous thesis advisor, Isabel Guibourg.

The data collection period, initially foreseen in the first trimester of 2010-2011 academic year, was postponed to the last trimester between mid-April and mid-June, due to busy schedule of school's daily life. The initial meeting with the school's principal took place in mid-April, 2011. The first

contact with the teachers and the children was realized in the beginning of May, just after the Easter break. The final schedule that I followed is summarized below.

February, 2011: Identification of the school: CEIP R.C., Terrassa

April 12th, 2011: First meeting with the school principal Mr. B.

May 2nd-May 5th, 2011: Introduction to the school context, meeting with the teachers, getting to know P5-B, observations in the classroom and in the playground without video recording.

May 9th- May 12th, 2011: Getting to know P5-A, observations in the classroom and in the playground without video recording.

May 16th- May 20th, 2011: Gathering demographic information about all the kindergarten children and getting their photographs, observing the play corner selection process and Fatima's play in the hospital play corner without video recording, two sessions of sociometric interviews with children.

May 23rd- May 27th, 2011: Two sessions of sociometric interviews with children, determination of the unpopular child who is at-risk of exclusion, observations of Fatima in the playground one session without video recording and one session with recording, determination of the popular of the group, recorded observations of Jaume in the play corner (Hairdresser's and Car corner),

May 30th- June 3rd, 2011: Recorded observations of Fatima in the playground.

June 6th- June 8th, 2011: Recorded observations of Jaume in the playground.

June 14th- June 16th, 2011: Recorded observations of Jaume in the playground.

January 23rd, 2013: Meeting with the school principal Mr. B. for complementary data.

As seen in the data collection calendar, the data was collected in several phases. These phases, although being sequential, are intertwined, meaning that data collection of a new phase started before the previous phase ended in most of the cases. These phases are explained below.

Phase 1: Determining the Focal Children and Getting Familiar with the Context

Prior to this phase, an introductory meeting with the school principal was realized and all the necessary permissions and consents were received.

Step: 1.1.) Getting to know the setting, familiarizing with teachers and children and understanding the daily functioning of the classes. Conducting classroom observations in order to choose the target class.

Step: 1.2.) Informal talks with the teacher during the observation session in order to collect information about the children and their general behavior patterns in the classroom.

Step: 1.3.) Conducting sociometric interviews with children and classifying their sociometric status. Each student was given the photographs of his/her classmates and was asked to order three pictures of his/her peers that she/he liked to play with the most to the one that he/she liked to play with the least.

Step: 1.4.) Combining my classroom observations, informal talks with the teachers with sociometric status findings derived from the children interviews, two children were assigned as the cases to be studied.

Phase 2: Playground Observations:

Step: 2.1.) Observing without recording. Adjusting to the dynamics of children's play and the physical space of school's playgrounds. Spending some time in the setting so that children get used to my presence as the researcher in the field.

Step: 2.2.) Recorded observations of the popular child's, Jaume, play in the playground.

Step: 2.3.) Recorded observations of the child at-risk of exclusion, Fatima's play in the playground.

Phase 3: Collecting Complementary Data:

Step: 3.1) Interviewing the school's principal, Mr. B.

Step: 3.2.) Collecting documentary data about the school's social and cultural context, internal functioning, implemented curriculum and the development reports of the selected children.

Following these steps in the corresponding phases, data was collected from different sources as presented above.

3.1.4.5. Results

3.1.4.5.1. Sociometric Results: Popularity vs. Unpopularity

This section presents the results obtained after the analysis of sociometric interviews conducted with the children attending the selected P-5. As previously explained in the case selection, purposeful sampling was employed. In order to obtain a great variety of strategies my intention was to choose two cases from the two extreme: a popular and an unpopular. Establishing my assumption on Walker's (2009) suggestion, I assumed that choosing a popular child would enable me to observe both strategies for including and excluding peers, whereas choosing an unpopular child would provide more examples of strategies of self-inclusion and being excluded by others.

The data coded which is coded by giving 1 to nominations and 0 to not voted children, was analyzed using CIVSoc 2.0 (Barrasa and Gil, 2004). According to the analysis results, Jaume scored 0.35 points for popularity with 8 nominations, and Fatima scored 0 points for popularity with no vote received. (Please refer to Barrasa and Gill, 2004 for further information on the calculations realized by the analysis software CIVSoc. 2.0). According to these results Jaume was one of the two most popular children (together with P.). The reason why Jaume is selected as focal rather than P. was that the teacher described Jaume as a positive leader figure whereas P. was considered as a negative influence on others. In this study, I assumed that being popular was a quality of a positive leader figure, expecting to observe inclusion strategies more than excluding ones. The results indicated that Fatima was one of the two least popular children in that class, by receiving no nominations. The other child who also received no nomination was of Catalan origin. Since the aim of this study is focused on cultural diversity and inclusion process of children coming from a different cultural background, this unpopular Catalan boy was not chosen as the focal child who was considered at risk of inclusion. However, his play interactions were included in analysis when he engaged in a play interaction with either of the two focal children. Figure 2, presented below shows the nominations given and received regarding all the participating children.

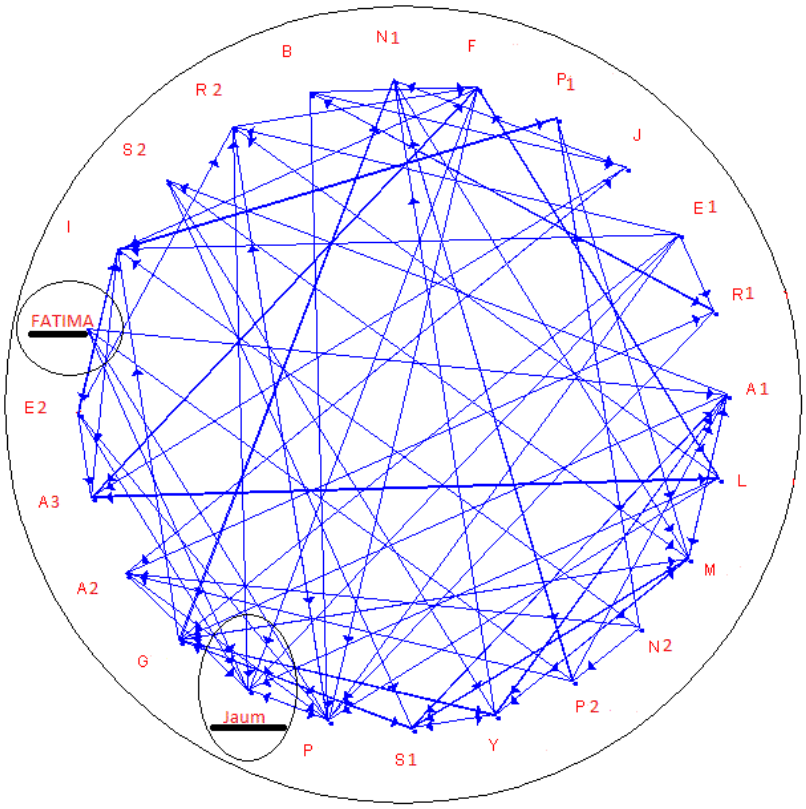

Figure 2: The nominations given and received within all the participating children

3.4.5.2. Two Cases: An Unpopular Child and A Popular Child

Following the analysis procedures previously explained, four broad themes were used to answer the sub-questions of the study. The descriptions of strategies that children used during their outdoor play are presented under five themes: Self-inclusion, inclusion by others, including others, excluding others and excluded by others.

The strategies gathered under *self-inclusion* theme refer to children's own actions and behaviors that facilitate their joining in a play group or getting engaged in a play activity, which was already started by other children.

Inclusion by others theme includes those strategies used by a peer to facilitate another child's joining in a play group or getting engaged in play episodes, which either was already initiated or was about to start.

Including others theme includes those tactics, methods, techniques and behaviors used by the focal child to facilitate a peer's engagement in a play episode.

Excluding others theme includes those actions and behaviors impeding another child to join in a play activity of a play group or putting barriers to their active participation during a play interaction.

Strategies under *excluded by others* theme refers to those excluding actions or behaviors a child faces when trying to join in a play group.

Furthermore, during the coding, the quotations were also coded through *verbal* and *non-verbal* categories. However, these two categories are presented within the five main themes.

These strategies the children employed are presented within each case. The results presented are not intended for a comparison. Instead, the aim is to describe a large variety of strategies used by the selected children.

3.4.5.2 1. CASE 1: Fatima, Unpopular Moroccan Girl in the Playground

Fatima arrived to Terrassa at the beginning of that school year (2010-2011). She was a late incorporation at her new school. She had no prior experience of formal schooling before moving to Terrassa. She was the only one joining to her new class in which the other children had already established friendships since P-3. During an informal talk Miss P. expressed her feelings of pity by saying that "poor girl, she did not go to school in Morocco. She could not even hold a pencil correctly when she arrived." Her teacher further explained that during the first days of her new school, she was constantly crying and trying to run away. She stopped acting this way after her mother came into the classroom and said something in Arabic. The teacher did not know what the mother told her, but she assumed it was something very angry and serious.

Coming from a family of a low socioeconomic status, her family shared their home with another family who were close relatives. She was the only child of her parents. She shared the same house with her five year old cousin, who was attending the other P-5 class in the same school, and his parents. As everybody living in the household came from Morocco, they spoke only Arabic at home. She had weak fine and gross motor skills and her ability to communicate with others highly depended on her non-verbal behaviors (staring, gestures, and facial expressions). She was not diagnosed with a speech disorder, therefore she did not qualify for a special educational program and she did not have an individualized education plan. However, every Friday her cousin and she took supplementary language classes during one hour in which she was learning to communicate

in Catalan. She understood when others spoke and she could speak Spanish when she was obliged to. In some situations I observed her moving her lips to say something but she could not vocalize the words coming out of her lips. However, during the sociometric interview she understood my questions and replied them adequately. She knew all the names of her classmates and she had already known with whom she enjoyed playing. Her three nominations included P.2., A1, and Jaume, the second case of this study. Furthermore, she was not nominated by any of her classmates as a preferred play mate. In general she presented a shy and a diffident nature. Nevertheless, she seemed to have the ability to defend herself physically when disturbed by a peer.

In her final evaluation report, her classroom teacher described her relation with the others as:

1- When faced with a conflict, she lacked taking an initiative and lacks security to find solutions.

2- She had difficulty in sharing experience and materials with the rest of the group.

3- She had difficulty to concretize the norms in order to favor the coexistence at the school.

4- She had tendency to accept the games with rules to a rather good degree.

5- She had difficulty in expressing her feelings and emotions.

6- She demonstrated very little initiative to make proposals and share her experiences with the rest of the group.

7- She had difficulty in putting herself in others' shoes.

During the play based learning hours, in other words during "Ambients" sessions, she did not seem very collaborative or participative. During selection process of the play corners, the teacher called out the children one by one according to the sequence that evaluation charts were ordered. She did not call Fatima's name until she was the last one to choose a corner, because her evaluation chart got lost a while ago and it was never replaced. When Fatima made her choice, she was asked to choose another corner because the first two corners she had chosen were already at full capacity. That week she ended up playing in a corner which was not her actual choice, but the only available one: sounds and movements. According to my observations during that play corner hour, she tended to stay close to her peers, but she did not communicate verbally with anyone.

Her classroom teacher Miss P. described her verbal language competence in her final evaluation report as she used strategies to understand the others when they express themselves verbally with a

positive attitude. Although she started to use verbal language to explain her ideas, emotions and desires, she still needed more help to acquire more strategies for a better use of Catalan language.

In her final evaluation report at the end of the school year, her classroom teacher Miss P. stated that she had integrated in the classroom. However, she still had more difficulty during play moments, adding that she could understand everything but she had difficulty when speaking Catalan.

During recess period, Fatima relied on her body language to get access to a play group. She lacked social skills to initiate a play. She usually engaged in solitary play or used parallel play as a strategy to get included in a peer group which had already been in the course of play. She never interacted with her cousin, who often shared the same playground with her. Despite the fact her play partner nominations included two boys, P.2 and Jaume, she never engaged in an interaction with them. She always preferred to stay close to girl groups that were formed by her classmates. In line with her nomination, she played with A.1 quite often, although she got excluded from a game with rules by her in one occasion.

She took action to enter in a peer play group when she spotted an available physical spot for one more person during games with rules, or when she found a play object that would be useful for her during a socio-dramatic play or sand play. Overall, she was observed during functional play, sand play, socio-dramatic play and games with rules. She lacked role negotiation skills when included in a socio-dramatic play episode. Hence, she either accepted the role she was given to join her peers and become a member of the play group; or in some cases, she opted for not playing and carried on her on-looking behavior. Since she lacked initiative skills to develop a play episode, she did not employ any strategies for including others to her play. Similarly, she did not use any strategies to exclude any peer as she was the one who strived for acceptance in the playground. Her peers tended to employ both verbal and non-verbal behavior at the same time to include her to their playgroup. She suffered from exclusion more than once, because she was accused of not knowing how to play the game, or just because her peer wanted so. Following sections present these strategies with an example taken from the recorded observations. For each strategy, first the play scene is described. After its assigned scene code taken from Atlas.ti, a short interpretation of the strategy that was employed is given. Unless indicated with (CAT), children talked in Spanish and here in text, their words are directly translated from Spanish to English. If the original version

of the expression was in Catalan, they are indicated with (CAT). Catalan expressions in this texts are presented here as their English translations.

(a) Self-Inclusion Strategies

Fatima had an obvious communication difficulty. During the recorded observations she was always mute in the playground. Therefore, her self-inclusion strategies included only non-verbal behavior. To get included in a play, her key self-inclusion strategies included getting physically as close as possible to the group that she wanted to join, staring at them constantly until someone responded, running, moving around with the group or chasing them, and remaining as close as possible to her peer group.

Data analysis revealed 15 play moments where Fatima used self-inclusion strategies:

In the P4-P5 playground, just a few seconds after getting out of their classroom, S1 and A1 start gathering plastic crates at one side of the playground. With those crates they are constructing their own shops. Fatima, at this moment, is holding two shovels and watching these two girls and their construction of the play area very closely. When both S1 and A1 goes nearby the wooden crate to get more play material Fatima turns her head towards them and she follows them with her eyes. While S1 is searching for something in the wooden crate, Fatima gets near the wooden crate and she also looks inside it very carefully. When S1 moves towards her shop with one more plastic crate holding in her hand, Fatima turns towards her and follows her until she gets to her shop. There S1 and A1 start having a conversation about how to build the shops:

S1: This one is to put the money inside.

Fatima follows their conversation with her eyes. Then, once more, S1 walks away to look for more play material. Again Fatima follows her but this time she waits for her at a distance near the plastic play houses until she gets back to the shop area. Then S1 arrives to her shop, however, she does not acknowledge Fatima's presence. At the end Fatima walks away.

1:1 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (00:30-01:10)

This play moment presents an example of how Fatima intends to include herself in this socio-dramatic play of shopping. Although watching every move of both girls very closely and following them to where they go, her presence was invisible to the girls. At the end she did not get included during the development of the play episode. However, she did not get excluded deliberately, either.

Fatima follows J. towards the plastic house located in the P4-P5 playground. J. gets closer to open its window but moves away without doing it. On the other hand, Fatima opens and closes the window, and then she looks back at J. But he has already turned his back and is walking away without noticing Fatima's action. However, Fatima enjoys this very short moment and shows her feeling with a big smile on her face.

1:2 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (11:46-12:02)

Here, on this scene, Fatima's self-inclusion strategy is following her peer and doing the action that she assumed he was going to do, but did not do. Fatima included herself by complementing J.'s play behavior.

In P4-P5 playground, while A.1 and S.1 are sitting in their shops, F., A.2 and P.2 are sitting on the crates around the shops and are having a conversation with A.1 and S.1. At this moment, Fatima leans over the plastic crate to reach A.1 to give her what she has collected with her shovel. A.1 realizes Fatima's presence when she tries to stand up but touches Fatima's shovel. As soon as A.1 sees the shovel, she turns her shovel towards Fatima's and receives its content which Fatima wants to pass her.

1:5 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (19:38-19:53)

Fatima includes herself in this socio-dramatic play scene by contributing to A.1's shop as she passes sand and stones (as money in the play). She did not use any verbal exclamation to get A.1's attention. Instead, she leaned forward and tried to extend her arm so that it entered in A.1's sight.

When S.1 and A.1 are engaged in a conversation, they are not aware of Fatima who is touching the plastic crate which serves as side wall for A.1's shop. She, then, takes another plastic crate and puts it on the side wall and tries to keep it on balance. She sees that she can't manage it. So, she throws that crate away and inclines her head towards the ground and cleans her shirt.

1:7 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (22:21-11:36)

On this play scene, Fatima intends to include herself to the play by experimenting to balance an additional crate to shop's construction. She ends up being invisible as none of the other players say something about her action. She gives up when she can't accomplish what she wanted to do.

In the P4-P5 playground, S.2 and A.1 are sitting inside A.1's shop and BP5 is sitting on the ground, while A.1 is filling her shovel with sand and pouring it to S.1's shovel on the ground

within the shop's premises. Fatima is standing in front of the shop and hits the plastic crate with her shovel and makes noise. Again nobody in the playgroup pays attention to Fatima.

1:8 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (31:11-31:58)

Fatima on this play moment is making noise to get the playing children's attention but remains as an outsider as she is invisible to her peers.

Just before heading back to the classroom, children gather together in the P4-P5 playground. While waiting for the teacher's call, G., S.1 and A.1 form a small circle. N.1 also joins them. G. pours sand on S.1's hand and wipes it. Fatima gets as close as possible to the group trying to position herself in this small circle. She puts her hand in the circle, but her hand remains under S.1's and A.1's hands. Then the teacher calls everybody to form a line.

*1***:11 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (40:07-40:36)***

Although seeming hesitant, Fatima intends to include herself in her peers' short play with sand by getting as close as possible and putting her hand in the circle. She is again treated as invisible by her peers.

In P4-P5 playground, S.1 and A.1 are sitting inside their shops. S.2 is carrying plastic crates to construct her own shop. Fatima, on the other hand, is crouched and is wiping the sand to find stones and to fill her shovel with sand. Then, she takes her shovel filled with sand to A.1 and pours the content in A.1's hand.

1:17 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (07:16-08:41])

Fatima, instead of constructing her shop like S.2, includes herself in the play by continuing voluntarily to collect sand and stones (as money), fulfilling her submissive role which has been assigned to her by A.1 and S.1.

In P-3 playground, Y. and G. are on a frame made of rope which is divided into 12 equal squares. They play rolling over the rope and moving to a lower square. Fatima is on the right next to G. When G. leaves that play area, Fatima moves to the next square covering the spot G. has left and comes next to Y. Fatima watches her very carefully. After Y. gets down, A.1 replaces her and rolls over the rope to get to the square below.

3:1 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (01:02-02:23)

Being as close as possible to her peers is a self-inclusion strategy that Fatima employs very frequently. Although she does not repeat the girls' movements of rolling over the rope (probably she was afraid to do so), she includes herself in the group, being physically present and close to her peers.

In P-3 playground, A.1 and Y. are playing chase and catch with younger boys. They have caught a boy, so they both hold on to him holding his arms. A.1 leans forward and tries to catch another younger boy who stands a bit further away. Fatima looks at A.1's gestures and includes herself in this chase and catch game by running after him and accomplishes to get him.

3:4 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (12.38-13:00)

Fatima includes herself in this play scene, by assuming an assisting role and since A.1 has her hands full with another boy, Fatima chases the boy and gets him at the end.

In P-3 playground Y. and G. are playing on the plastic play house. Y. is at its roof top, G. is trying to climb up to the top. Fatima gets next to G. and puts her foot to the window opening where G. uses as a support to climb up. G. and Y. open the roof top and they shout "Hello" towards inside the play house. Fatima takes a look at inside without making any sound. She gets down following Y. and G.

3:5 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (13:42-14:34)

On this scene, Fatima includes herself by imitating Y.'s and G.'s movements. However, since she lacks verbal communication skills, she does not repeat saying "Hello" towards the playhouse.

In P-3 playground S.1 and P.1 are playing with sand and they try to catch ants. Fatima gets as close as possible and starts to watch them closely and very interested. Then, she moves towards an empty spot and continues to watch the two girls from there. Suddenly she kneels down, uses her shovel to catch ants and while doing so, she points at some ants, giving a cue to S.1 to facilitate her play with ants.

3:7 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (21:41- 22:30)

Here, Fatima engages in interaction with S.1 using her body language, indicating where she sees some ants with the intention to help her catch more. Again, she uses physical proximity and constant gaze to make her peers pay attention to her presence and she looks for the right moment to contribute to S.1's play with ants.

In P-3 playground, when S.1 is pouring the content of her shovel in a red container, Fatima walks towards her and stops by her side, with a shovel in her hand. She shows the content of her shovel to S.1. S.1 says: "Here, Fatima, here." pointing at the container, commanding her to pour the content of her shovel in it. Fatima fulfills her request and pours it in the container.

3:11 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (30:46-31:02)

In P-3 playground Y asks the researcher for help to carry a plastic roof top of the play house.
Y. "Would you help me?"
As the researcher is recording the observation she does not respond to Y. Then Y. turns to Fatima, G. and M. and repeats her request to the girls. "Would you help me?" Fatima hears her call and responds positively by holding one corner of the plastic roof top and carries it with Y.

3:18 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (15:10-15:29)

Fatima's self-inclusion strategy in this scene is responding to peer's help call. She volunteers to carry the plastic roof top with Y. and therefore she becomes involved in Y. play episode.

In P4-P5 playground as soon as Fatima arrives in the playground, she runs towards the wooden crate which holds sand play objects to look for something. She finds what she is looking for, a shovel, on the ground. She picks it up and runs towards S.2 and kneels down right next to her and she starts imitating the way S.2 piles up sand using her shovel.

4:3 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (00:53-01:14)

In order to join in a play interaction, she looks for a key play object that would facilitate her access to a peer group. In this case, it is the shovel. She joins to a peer and starts imitating her and initiates parallel play to become included in her peer's play.

In the semi-covered playground Fatima sees G., Y., S.1, M. and A.1on the puss-in-the-corner play runs and jumps on the empty corner spot. She waits for others to start moving around and to play the game.

4:6 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (07:56-08:09)

Photo 11: Puss-in-the-corner play area
Source: Billur Çakırer

She uses the strategy of finding an available spot and positioning herself here to facilitate her engagement in a play episode, especially when playing games with rules. Although she does not communicate verbally, by placing herself within a playing group, she demonstrates her will to become part of it and get included in the play.

(b) Inclusion by Others

When using inclusion strategies to facilitate her participation in their play groups, Fatima's peers employed both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. Since Fatima never gave verbal response, her peers used pointing a finger, showing the material they wanted her to get, and indicating a place in order to make their message stronger so that Fatima could understand what had been told her more clearly and easily.

Data analysis revealed 16 play moments where her peers used for including Fatima in their play.

In P4-P5 playground, while A.1 and S.1 are sitting in their shops, Fatima is walking in front of their shops with a shovel in her hand. A.1 calls her name and makes a request:

A.1- "Fatima, give me money, stones." (she reaches to ground and picks a stone and shows it to Fatima) "Give me this." "Fatima! Give me this."

1:3 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (13:06-13:34)

In this play moment, A.1 includes Fatima to their socio-dramatic play by assigning her a role as "money finder". She shows an example of what she expects Fatima to bring, making her request (message) clear to understand.

In P4-P5 playground, F. and P.2 are sitting in front of A.1's shop while A.1 is sitting inside. Fatima extends her arm holding her shovel towards A.1 and she receives its content with her shovel and asks Fatima to go and bring more.
A.1- "More, huh, more. Go and look for more for me."
Fatima does not give a reply and stays where she is. A.1 repeats her request one more time, this time making it stronger with an arm movement.
A.1- "More, more" (She pushes Fatima with one arm to make her move).
Fatima continues to remain in her place. A.1 employs another strategy to make her go and look for money. She complains to S.1 about Fatima and tells her that she does not do what she is asked for.
A.1- "S.1! Fatima does not give me more!" *(with a disappointed expression on her face, looking forward towards the F. and P2, who sit in front of her shop.)*

1:4 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (15:32-16:55)

A.1, on this scene employs three strategies: two verbal, and one both verbal and non-verbal. First, her verbal strategy is giving a short and clear command. Then she combines both verbal and non-verbal behavior by repeating her command and pushing Fatima with one arm to make her move. Lastly, as a more powerful solution, she complains to another play mate, who is assumed to be the leader of that play group, about her inaction. Fatima's unresponsiveness leads A.1 to try different strategies so that Fatima takes action and contributes to their play.

In P4-P5 playground, S.1 is standing on a plastic crate behind her shop's counter, F. and A.2 are standing in front of A.1's shop. A.2 is handing A.1 a plastic crate. Fatima is standing at the right hand side her back on the wall. A.1 notices her, points at a plastic crate by Fatima's side and says "give me this one" to Fatima.

1:6 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (21:41-21:53)

On this scene, A.1 uses a combination of a clear commanding phrase and a visual cue (pointing at an object) to include Fatima to her play episode.

In P4-P5 playground, while A.1 and S.1 are sitting in their shops and having a conversation Fatima is collecting stones from the ground. After she fills her shovel, she stands up and walks

towards S.1 to hand her the stones she has collected. S.1 doesn't pay her attention. Suddenly A.1 realizes that Fatima has a shovel full of stones. She extends her arm holding a shovel and says "to me! To me!" Fatima turns her had towards S.1. S.1 hesitates a moment and then (pointing at A.1) tells Fatima "Yes, to A.1, to A.1" and Fatima pours the stones to A.1's shovel.

1:15 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (02:40-05:27)

This scene presents an example of silent agreement between S.1 and A.1. S.1 at first does not pay attention to Fatima's presence. Later, she hears A.1's request from Fatima, and silently approves her request. She includes Fatima in their play episode by redirecting her to A.1 to do what she has requested.

In P4-P5 playground, S.1 and A.1 are sitting inside their shops. S.2 is carrying plastic crates to construct her own shop. Fatima, on the other hand, is crouched and is wiping the sand to find stones and to fill her shovel with sand. Then, she takes her shovel filled with sand to A.1 and pours the content in A.1's hand. A1 looks at her hand full of sand and looks for a place to put the sand. Then, A.1 tells Fatima "Give me a box that is over there!" (pointing at the wooden crate). Fatima hesitates for a moment. Then, she goes near the wooden crate and starts collecting the stones in it.

1:17 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (07:16-08:41])

Instead of standing up and looking for a box herself, A.1 asks for what she needs from Fatima to keep her engaged in the play. Again she uses verbal command as well as non-verbal language (pointing at a direction, giving a cue to facilitate Fatima's comprehension of her request).

In P4-P5 playground, P2 and Fatima are staying next to the water fountain. They are watching G2P5, who is hitting the button to get the water running. When water starts running, G2P5 splashes water to Fatima.

2:1 [B-30052011FatimaPatio.avi] (25:30-25:44)

Here, G2P5 splashes water as a way of initiating play with water. However, her inclusion strategy is not very clear, as both P2 and Fatima get disturbed from her action and instead of joining her to play with water they move away.

In P-3 playground P.1 gets on her feet, turns to the drain on the plastic roof top and she points at a spot where she asks Fatima to put the ants that are in her shovel. Fatima complies with her command. P.1 also says something to Fatima, but her exact words are not clear in the recording.

3:7 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (21:41- 22:30)

This scene presents an example of combining non-verbal and verbal communication. Although what P.1 tells Fatima is not audible on the video, it is possible to say that she tells Fatima to put her ants and indicates the place where she should put them (in the drain).

In P-3 playground, S.1 and Fatima are crouched. They each hold a shovel. S.1 looks inside Fatima's shovel and tells her (the exact wording is not audible on the video) to pour its content into hers and she also points at her shovel to further clarify what she is asking for.

3:8 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (22:54-23:08)

Telling Fatima to do something and using a gesture to clarify what she was expected to do was a frequent strategy that Fatima's peers used for facilitating her engagement in play. Another example is presented in the following scene:

In P-3 playground, when S.1 is pouring the content of her shovel in a red container, Fatima walks towards her and stops by her side, with a shovel in her hand. She shows the content of her shovel to S.1. S.1 says: "Here, Fatima, here." pointing at the container, commanding her to pour the content of her shovel in it. Fatima fulfills her request and pours it in the container.

3:11 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (30:46-31:02)

Fatima is crouched next to A.1. They are both catching ants. A.1 doesn't have shovel. When she catches an ant she puts it in Fatima's shovel.

3:12 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (32:10-32:36)

On this scene, A.1 interacts with Fatima through sharing a key play object. If A.1 had a shovel, probably they would engage in parallel play. Nevertheless, sharing a shovel facilitated collaborative play.

In P4-P5 playground, S.2 takes a shovel full of sand to teacher Ms. P. and says "Look! Touch!" Fatima stays behind S.2 keeping occupied with her own shovel. Teacher Ms. P. says "Oh, so soft. It would stain your clothes, ah!" and she looks at Fatima and asks S.2.

Ms. P. -"Do you play with Fatima?"(CAT)

S.2 replies - "It is raining" (CAT)

Ms. P. - "Tell this to Fatima." (CAT)

S.2 turns to Fatima and says "Rain! Rain!" (CAT) with excitement. Fatima nods as a response.

4:1 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (02:06-02:24)

Here, it is the teacher who uses a strategy to include Fatima. Although, this scene is not an example of a play episode, the teacher's way of initiating the conversation can be regarded as an intention to encourage S.2 to play with Fatima. The teacher chooses to use a direct question as an inclusion strategy.

In the semi-covered playground, Ms. P. joins in the group that is in the puss-in-the-corner area and says "I am joining in". She looks at Fatima and points at the circle in the middle and says "You (meaning Fatima), here. I am on the half. And now what?"

N.1 replies "You jump" (exact wording is not audible on the video).

Ms. P. says "Let's go!" and the whole group starts playing the game.

4:2 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (10:18-10:49)

Another strategy used by others to facilitate Fatima's play is the direct teacher engagement. The teacher joins in the group and directs children's play and pays extra attention to Fatima, indicating her spot where she should be when the game starts.

In the semi-covered playground, during the puss-in-the-corner game, everybody starts to run on the lines to move from one corner to another. When G. gets to the point where Fatima is standing motionless, she pushes her forward so that she moves to the next corner.

4:7 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (08:08-08:10)

Here, G. uses physical contact as a strategy to engage Fatima in the game. Rather than telling her to move, she pushes her forward so that she takes action and gets to the next point.

In the semi-covered playground, during the puss-in-the-corner game, N.1 intervenes when A.1 pushes Fatima out of the play zone. N.1 holds Fatima's hand and hugs her with one arm. She leads her back to her initial corner. Leaving Fatima there, she goes near A.1 and tells her something (exact wording is not audible on the video) and return backs to where she has left Fatima. She

holds her hand again and moves with her while explaining how the game is played. N.1 says "Like this you move. OK?" And then, the game continues where it has been left.

4:11 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (16:20-16:44)

The strategy that N.1 employs here is simulating the game's phases while explaining the rules. Here, in this example N.1 assumes a teaching role, and teaches Fatima how to play the game correctly.

In the semi-covered playground, in the puss-in-the-corner play zone N.1, A.1 and S.2 are standing at the center on a red circle while Fatima is staring at them from a spot at one corner. S. 2 leans forward and she extends her arm to get Fatima's arm as a way of inviting her to join them on the circle.

4:12 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (16:51-17:03)

Here, S.2 employs a gesture, extending her arm, as an invitation to Fatima to join them in their play group.

In the semi-covered playground, in the puss-in-the-corner play zone S.1, S.2 and G take their position on the corners and in the center. Fatima stares at them from the outside of the zone. A.1 gets closer to her and holds her arm and leads her to the closest available corner and she returns back to her spot to start playing.

4:13 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (23:33-23:43)

A.1 again uses physical contact as a strategy to include Fatima in their group. Instead of calling her name or telling her to take her place, she assists her to position correctly on the play zone.

(c) Including Others

Data analysis did not reveal any strategies Fatima used for including others in her play. This result is compatible with the fact that Fatima lacked necessary social and communicative skills to initiate a play episode and invite her peers to join her.

(d) Excluding Others

Data analysis did not reveal any strategy that Fatima employed to exclude her peers from her play. This result is in line with the fact that she received zero nomination from her peers as a preferred play mate and she did not have an established playgroup and she did not have the skills to take

initiative to form one. Additionally, since she never initiated a play to play as a group, she did not have the leader power to exclude anyone from a play episode that was under her control.

(e) Excluded by Others

Fatima frequently was subject to invisibility in the playground as she was mute; that is, she did not use words to get her peers' attention. In this study "invisibility" is not treated as inclusion or exclusion, since it would be difficult to be sure whether the children really ignored her, or she was really out of their sight. Therefore, under this section, only the deliberate intentions of leaving Fatima out of the playgroup or play area is presented as strategies used by other for excluding Fatima.

Data analysis revealed 9 play moments where her peers used for excluding Fatima from their play.

In P4-P5 playground, F. and P.2 are sitting in front of A.1's shop while A.1 is sitting inside. Fatima extends her arm holding her shovel towards A.1 and she receives its content with her shovel and asks Fatima to go and bring more.
A.1- "More, huh, more. Go and look for more for me."
Fatima does not give a reply and stays where she is. A.1 repeats her request one more time, this time making it stronger with an arm movement.
A.1- "More, more" (She pushes Fatima with one arm to make her move).
Fatima continues to remain in her place. A.1 employs another strategy to make her go and look for money. She complains to S.1 about Fatima and tells her that she does not do what she is asked for.
A.1- "S.1! Fatima does not give me more!" (with a disappointed expression on her face, looking forward towards the F. and P2, who sit in front of her shop.)
Fatima doesn't respond to A.1's request. A.1 gives up on her and calls BP5 and asks him to bring her stones.
A.1- "BP5, I have something to tell you. Come over here." He comes.
S.1- "Can you give us stones."
A.1- "I want stones."
He goes to look for some stones.

1:4 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (15:32-16:55)

In this scene, A.1 excludes Fatima because of not getting a response from her. She employs an exclusion strategy (replacing a player with another peer) when she calls another peer to get the role she has tried to assign to Fatima.

In P4-P5 playground, F. is preparing a play area for himself and P.2. He gets a plastic crate. Fatima is standing right where F. wants to put the crate to close the limits of their play area. He says "Look! Look!" and pushes Fatima away from where she stands. After pushing her away, F. places the crate in the gap between two other plastic crates, closes the limits of their play area and sits on the newly placed crate.

1:12 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (18:09-18:18)

F. excludes Fatima from their play by pushing her away from the area that he needs to place a new crate. He closes the area and sits on the crate turning his back to Fatima. Physical contact (pushing) is the main exclusion strategy that F. uses in this scene.

In P4-P5 playground, A.2, F. and P.2 are sitting in front of A.1's shop while A.1 is sitting inside. S.2 on the other hand, is standing on a crate located inside her shop. Fatima stands out of A.1's shop on the right. S.2 sees her and tells her (with an angry voice tone) "Fatima! Don't bring more sand. I say No!" and she excludes her from the play by not telling her what she should do next.

1:13 [A-27052011FatimaPatio.avi] (20:54-21:14)

In this scene, S.2 uses a voice tone showing anger and warning. By not telling Fatima what she is expected to do next, she does not intend to include her in the rest of play scene. So Fatima is left out of the play scenario, when she is no longer needed for collecting sand.

In P-3 playground, Y. and Fatima are holding a plastic roof top and following Y.'s lead, Fatima is helping her to place it on plastic crates, which are being used by S.1. S.1 gets angry and yells at Fatima: "What are you doing Fatima?" and looks at her expressing her anger with a face expression. S. 1 steps off the plastic crate that she has been standing on and gets on the ground and she pushes the plastic roof top away.

3:6 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (15:33-15:42)

This is actually an interesting example, since Fatima is the one who is yelled at, whereas placing the roof top on S.1's plastic crate is Y.'s idea. S.1 doesn't say anything to Y. but scares Fatima away by not approving her action and yelling at her. Consequently, getting such an unexpected reaction from S.1 makes Fatima to move away the play area.

In P-3 playground, Fatima is on the slide and she is trying to walk upwards to reach the top. B. shouts her name "Fatima!!" and pushes her away from the slide so that he can walk upwards and reach the top.

3:14 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (05:14-05:21)

In this play scene, B. does not give Fatima chance to reach to the top and demonstrates his impatience and excludes her from the area by screaming her name and by physical contact.

In P-3 playground, Fatima walks G. She tries to squeeze in small space between playground's surrounding wall and the plastic crate where G. is crouched. As Fatima gets too close to G. she pushes her away and she doesn't let Fatima look for ants on the ground.

3:16 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (31:47-31:53)

In this play moment, G. excludes her from what they are playing by pushing her away. Her exclusion strategy involves physical contact and using force not to let her join them.

In P-3 playground, N.1 walks near Fatima and she asks for her shovel. Fatima hides her shovel at her back. N.1 throws sand at her and moves away with an angry expression on her face.

3:17 [C-31052011FatimaPatio.avi] (33:39-33:51)

N.1 intends to exclude Fatima by trying to get her play object, which has a key function in her play, without her permission and reflects her anger by throwing a material (sand) to offend her as revenge when she can't accomplish her intention.

In the semi-covered playground, Fatima jumps on the empty spot while N.1 and P1 are playing on the 9-spot-puss-in-the corner play zone. N.1 gets next to Fatima and yells at her: "No! You don't play." She leans on her and pushes her out of the play zone. Fatima, then, moves to the next available spot. N.1 follows her and repeats yelling at Fatima in the same way: "No! You are not playing!" and she firmly steps on the ground to make a sound. She insists that Fatima don't join in their play. She pushes her away out of the play zone again. Fatima moves towards another empty spot once more and she waits on that spot.

4:15 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (12:03-12:33)

Photo 12: Spot puss-in-the-corner play area
Source: Billur Çakırer

In this example N. uses several strategies that employ non-verbal communication to scare Fatima away and to make her realize that she is the leader of that play group. She expresses her anger by shouting, expressing her feelings of anger through gestures and mimics, by physical contact (pushing out of the zone) and making an unpleasant sound with her foot.

In the semi-covered playground, S.2, P.1, N.1 and A.1 are playing in the puss-in-the-corner play zone. A.1 walks away where she stands and tells Fatima "You don't play, Fatima" (CAT). A.1 looks at Fatima directly into her eyes, emphasizing with a gesture (pointing her index finger at Fatima) she says "You don't know how to play" and she pushes out of the play zone.

4:16 [D-03062011FatimaPatio.avi] (16:11-16:21)

In this scene, A.1 uses the fact that Fatima doesn't know how to play the game correctly as an excuse to exclude her from their play. She strengthens her message by using gestures and physical contact.

These examples present verbal and non-verbal strategies to include and exclude Fatima in different playgrounds during a variety of play episodes. After the following Jaume's case presentation, these strategies are summarized and gathered together with the results of Jaume's case analysis in the summary section and are presented as a different table for each theme appeared during the analysis.

3.4.5.2.2. <u>CASE 2: Jaume, Popular Spanish-Catalan Boy in the Playground</u>

Jaume was born in Torre-Sana, the school's neighborhood. His family belonged to the local dominant culture. He lived with his mother and father. His parents were Spanish (father) and Catalan (mother) and the language spoken at home was Spanish. At the time of study, he did not

have any siblings. Later, his mother gave birth to his younger brother. His family belonged to middle-class community.

His formal schooling started when he was three years old. He attended the same school P-3 and onwards. By the time this study was conducted, he already knew all his peers and had established mutual friendships. He only mentioned two names as preferred play partners during sociometric interview, which were R2 and P., both of whom had similar cultural background. He seemed easy-going and friendly during the observations. As soon as he got to the playground in recess period, he usually started to play with his two preferred friends P. and R2. Nevertheless, he frequently joined others when there was a team play (e.g. soccer) and he tended to accept any suggestions of his other peers when they wanted to play with him.

His classroom teacher nominated him as a positive leader of the group. During the sociometric interviews, he was selected eight times as a preferred playmate (the highest nomination frequency of the group), two of whom were reciprocated by him. He was very well accepted within the group and his teacher stated that he was an exemplary child who got along well with everyone.

In his final evaluation report, his classroom teacher Miss P. described him as:

1- He had started to build relationship and want to play and share games with others.

2- He was used to take initiative during play periods.

3- His play repertoire was very diverse.

4- He was getting better at problem resolution using dialogue.

5- In the play corners he could cooperate with other to carry out a common project.

6- He showed respect to his social surrounding.

7- He had adequate language skills. His vocabulary was adequate for his age. He spoke using correct grammatical structures to express himself verbally.

As a general comment at the end of this report Miss P. expressed that he had a fixed group of friends with whom he would play and share his play objects.

The school's principle Mr. B. described Jaume as a happy boy who tended to collaborate with his peers and teachers, who was hardworking, very active, participative, and observant. His academic

performance, according to Mr. B., was between normal and good. Like Miss P., Mr. B. also mentioned that Jaume liked having intimate friendships and tended to conserve his friendship with his close friends.

During recess period Jaume demonstrated flexibility in switching playgroups. He was not expected to ask for permission to enter in a readily established playgroup. It was enough for him to get engaged in a play episode by just showing up where the group was playing. His peers looked up to him as the natural leader of the group, to whom they addressed for role negotiation or fulfilled his requests and applied his decisions. He sustained longer in a play episode. Hence, in his case, the data analysis yielded a lesser number of strategies.

(a) Self-Inclusion Strategies

Jaume was very flexible adapting to his peer group and their play. He had adequate communicative skills and he was very active. He frequently used both verbal and non-verbal communication skills to include himself in an already established play group. He showed easiness to get engaged in play when there was a ball in the setting. Spontaneous running while calling a friend's name was usually enough for him to get engaged in a play activity. His ability to initiate a play activity and being a popular playmate facilitated his self-inclusion in a peer group. Initiating a play episode and distributing the roles to each player was also counted as a self-inclusion strategy as nobody questioned his role distribution.

Data analysis revealed 10 play moments where Jaume used self-inclusion strategies:

In the neighboring nursery's playground Jaume stands by the wooden playhouse where toddlers are spending their recess. P. is on the wooden playhouse and R.2 is trying to climb up. Then, P. gets down on the ground and says "I am going up." Jaume accompanies him "Me, too." R.2 also jumps down and runs after them to join the group.

5:2 [1-06062011JaumePatio1.avi] (17:40-17:45)

He was not always the one who leaded his peers. Following a peer was his first strategy to include himself in a peer group.

In the neighboring nursery's playground while Jaume is walking towards the maze made of bush with next to P. He suddenly looks at P. to get his attention and starts running at the same time he

says "I am…" (the exact wording is unclear on the video). P. and R.2 join him and they all run into the maze. While running he giggles. After running the first lap, he says "I am returning back one more time."

5:3 [1-06062011JaumePatio1.avi] (17:48-18:07)

Here in this scene he initiates a play by taking action and looking at his peer to get him to participate. Throughout his play interaction she shows positive affection by giggling. He also informs his peers about his next step so that they continue playing.

In the elementary level playground, he sees his best friend R.2 holding a basketball. R.2 starts running and Jaume follows him. A few seconds later Jaume positions himself in front of R.2 and he shouts "Hey!! Pass!!" and R.2 passes him the ball and when they start playing basketball two more peers join them.

6:6 [1-06062011JaumePatio2.avi] (16:10-16:22)

In this example Jaume is using the strategy of positioning himself in front of a peer and giving a short command to include himself in play with his peers.

In the elementary level playground, P. is holding a basketball and is walking towards the basketball hoop. Jaume sees P. and walks closer to him. Once he is just next to him, he hits the ball that P. is holding and steals it from him. As soon as he gets the ball, he shoots a free throw. Immediately P. and B. join him and they start playing together.

6:7 [1-06062011JaumePatio2.avi] (20:54-21:54)

This play moment demonstrates Jaume's ability to take initiative in engaging a play interaction. Simply, stealing a play object (ball) is enough for peer group to start playing. Losing the ball does not annoy P., since Jaume is one of his closest friends.

In the elementary level playground, P.1 and N.1 are playing with scrap paper sitting on the ground. Jaume is sitting at a short distance facing them. He throws a plastic material that he holds to get the girls' attention.

6:9 [1-06062011JaumePatio2.avi] (22:30-22:42)

Here Jaume uses a non-verbal strategy which is throwing a plastic material to get the two playing girls attention. Although he has very good communicative skills, he does not make use of a verbal strategy to interact with the girls.

As soon as Jaume arrives in the elementary level playground, looks for his best friend R.2, who is already playing soccer with a peer group. When he finds R.2, he gives him a hug and says "I have arrived back from the swimming pool." After this salutation he takes his position on the soccer field and gets ready to receive the ball from his peers.

7:1 [2-08062011JaumePatio.avi] (00:29-00:45)

In this scene, the key to Jaume's inclusion is finding his best friend who is already playing with a peer group. He does not need any initiation to join in the group. Once he starts moving together with the group, his peers get the cue that he is now playing with them.

In the elementary level playground, while playing ball with F. he decides to switch groups. Suddenly he starts running and at the same time he shouts "to play with other!" and he joins in the larger peer group's soccer game, taking his position on the field and running after the ball.

7:3 [2-08062011JaumePatio.avi] (02:09-02:21)

Here Jaume's strategy is to give notice both to the peer group he is leaving and the peer group that he is joining. By shouting that he is switching groups, he gives possibility to his new group to get prepared for him.

In the elementary level playground, Jaume is watching P.2 playing penalty shoots with B2P5. B2P5 who is the goalkeeper in the game, walks away and leaves his role. Jaume joins in and he volunteers to be the goal keeper to resume the game. He says "Me" and runs towards the goal. When he takes his position as the goal keeper, P.2 shoots a penalty.

7:7 [2-08062011JaumePatio.avi] (13:57-14:09)

Jaume's strategy here is taking on voluntarily a goal keeper role for the play's sake. Unless he volunteered to be the goal keeper in that situation, the game would be over as soon as other boy walked away and there would be no peer group to be joined for playing *"shoot a penalty"*.

In the side playground, just near by the school's main entrance door, Jaume, R.2 and P are playing ball. All of a sudden, another ball comes towards him from another peer group. Jaume

catches the ball E.2 comes to get his ball back, but instead of directly handing it back to E.2 Jaume kicks it up in the air while E.2 is watching it rise up in the air.

9:2 [4-15062011JaumePatio.avi] (01:21-01:30)

In this excerpt, Jaume uses a play object that belongs to another peer to get engaged in play.

(b) Inclusion by Others

The frequent strategies used by others to include Jaume in their playgroup included responding to his commands (e.g. when he said "pass me the ball", children did so), calling out his name, inviting directly him to participate in an active play and proposing a game to play.

Data analysis revealed 8 play moments where his peers employed strategies to include Jaume in their play:

In the neighboring nursery's playground, R.2 calls out his name and says "Jaume, come over here!" and asks him to come over the wooden house where R.2 and P. are trying to climb on it. R.2 proposes a challenge and Jaume accepts it. He tries to climb on it, along with P.

5:4 [1-06062011JaumePatio1.AVI] (15:16-15:51)

First strategy, calling out Jaume's name, intends to get his attention to initiate a play interaction. Second strategy that R.2 employs here to start playing with Jaume is to propose him a challenge. When Jaume accepted it, they automatically start playing.

Jaume is running around P4-P5 playground. R.2 is running behind him. He says "Jaume, let's go to the court." R.2 starts to run faster and he overtakes Jaume. Before overtaking him, R.2 touches Jaume's arm and he continues to run towards the basketball court.

6:1 [1-06062011JaumePatio2.AVI] (03:11-03:23)

R.2 here uses a full sentence as a strategy to initiate play interaction with Jaume, suggesting him to go to another playground. Touching Jaume's arm is the second strategy that R.2 uses to accelerate Jaume's participation.

In the P4-P5 playground, P4 and P5 children are in line to shoot a free throw. While Jaume is waiting for his turn to come in line, GP5 take her place behind Jaume. While waiting in line, she touches Jaume's arm and invites him to play with her using her gestures. They play fist clink.

6:2 [1-06062011JaumePatio2.AVI] (05:04-05:17)

In this play episode, the strategy to include Jaume is non-verbal. Touching his arm and gesturing (showing her fist and clink it with Jaume's) initiates their play interaction.

In the P4-P5 playground, R.2 gets in line, while Jaume is playing fist clink with GP5. R.2 watches them playing for a minute and then he suggests playing "Pikachu" by saying "Let's play Pikachu" and Jaume says "OK" and they start to play.

6:3 [1-06062011JaumePatio2.AVI] (05:16-05:34)

Proposing to play a specific game is another strategy that Jaume's peer used to initiate a play interaction with him.

At the very corner of P4-P5 playground, F. holding his ball, takes a position across from Jaume, and to initiate the ball play he tell Jaume: "I am going to pass the ball to you, OK?"

7:2 [2-08062011JaumePatio.AVI] (01:27-01:56)

Here, F. after physically positioning himself across from Jaume, uses a complex speech (full sentence) as an inclusion strategy to let him know what he is going to do next and seeks his confirmation, so that the play interaction initiates.

In the elementary level playground, he takes his position to shoot a penalty. However, there are more candidates who want to shoot. The owner of the ball, E.2 decides that Jaume is the one to shoot the penalty. He says "Jaume, Jaume" and points at him, indicating that he is the one to shoot. E.1 brings the ball in front of Jaume and prepares it for Jaume to shoot.

7:4 [2-08062011JaumePatio.avi] (04:58-05:28)

In this scene, E.2 employs a combination of verbal and non-verbal strategies. He repeats Jaume's name and at the same time, he points at him in order to emphasize that it is Jaume who he chooses.

In the P4-P5 playground, Jaume, R.2 and P. are waiting in line to get ready to return back to their classroom. Suddenly, P. grabs Jaume's hand and extends it to put one of his fingers in to his own nose to start a pretend play of "eating mucus".

8:2 [3-14062011JaumePatio.avi] (35:59-37:01)

Here the strategy of including Jaume in a play interaction involves physical contact and making the first movement on his behalf.

In the side playground, just near by the school's main entrance door, while R.2 is holding his right ear and crying because he has just hurt it after bumping Jaume's head, Jaume and P. are having a conversation. P. has a football in his hand. During their conversation, Jaume takes the ball from P.'s hands. As they continue with their conversation, R.2 makes use of their distraction and steals the ball from Jaume and starts to run. While he is running away, he also is laughing very hard. Jaume runs behind him to catch and get the ball back. When they come side by side R.2 throws the ball to Jaume and initiates a ball game.

9:1 [4-15062011JaumePatio.avi] (00:52-01:03)

In this scene, taking a play object and laughing out loud while doing so, there are the two strategies combined to initiate a play interaction with Jaume.

(c) Including Others

As Jaume was the most popular child in his class and as he demonstrated leadership skills and ability to initiate play interaction, he had the competence to include (accept) the other children in his play groups. Data analysis revealed three scenes where he used his competence employing different strategies.

In the elementary level playground, just at the beginning of the recess period teacher intervenes in the readily established play group and asks them who the leader of the group is to facilitate the entrance of B. in the soccer game that the group is playing.
Teacher Ms. P.: "Who is the one who leads here?" (CAT)
The group identifies Jaume as the leader.
I. and R.2: (pointing at) "Jaume"
Teacher Ms. P.: "What's up Jaume. Can he (B.) play? … (turns to B. and tells him directly). Now you can ask Jaume, Can I play?" (CAT)
B. : "Jaume, Can I play?" (CAT)
Marco nods. He accepts to include B in the play group.
Teacher Ms. P.: "and now what do you tell Jaume?"
B.: "Thank you Jaume.
They start playing soccer together.

5:1 [1-06062011JaumePatio1.AVI] (00:22-00:37)

Jaume employs responding affirmatively to a direct question asked by B. after the teacher's intervention. This scene is a unique example of including others, as the teacher speaks in Catalan, two children (Jaume and B.) who speak Spanish in the playground, engage in verbal interaction in Catalan (which is B.s foreign language as his family comes from a Latin American background and Catalan is not spoken at home).

In the P4-P5 playground, Jaume fills his mouth with tap water and he empties his mouth full of water to the sand area where he intends to make a small muddy area to make a Power Rangers cake. He starts doing this alone. Then, E.1 sees him and imitates him. He, too, empties his mouth to where Jaume has wet. When Jaume stands up to get more water from the water fountain, he tells E.1 to go with him: "run!" as he runs towards the fountain.

8:1 [3-14062011JaumePatio.avi] (14:49-15:41)

This example demonstrates a strategy used by Jaume to include another peer in his sand play in the form of a simple command: "run!" By telling E.1 to run, Jaume confirms that E.1 is now in and that they are engaged in collaborative play (making the cake together).

In the elementary level playground, when P., R.2 and Jaume decide to play with the football, F. promptly joins them. Although P., who is positioned further away (cannot be seen in the video) shouts at Jaume to pass him the ball saying "Jaume! Jaume! Pass to me!" he does not do what P. asks for. Instead, he passes the ball to F. to include him in their playgroup.

9:3 [4-15062011JaumePatio.avi] (19:08-19:39)

On this scene, Jaume interprets that F. wants to join in the game with them when he positions himself just across him. He endorses F.'s desire to play ball with them when passing the ball to him instead of fulfilling P.'s request.

(d) Excluding Others

In spite of Jaume being a positive leader figure, data analysis revealed 2 play moments where Jaume used strategies to exclude peers from his play.

In the elementary level playground, P. runs towards N.2 and gets closer to her. Jaume runs behind him. P. tries to hit the ball to make it fall off N.2's hands, however, he misses it. Then he gets behind N.2 and holds her so that she remains motionless. Jaume gets the ball from her hands runs away to start playing with P., R.2 and A.2.

6:10 [1-06062011JaumePatio2.avi] (15:25-15:38)

The main strategy that Jaume uses here is to gang up on the girl and stealing her play object when she is kept motionless by Jaume's friend P.

Just as the recess period starts, in the elementary level playground, boys start playing Power Rangers. E.1 wants to join them.
P. says to E.1in an angry voice tone: "What are you doing?" Jaume hears P. and stops where he is. P., E.1 and R.2 walks towards Jaume.
E.1 (facing P.): "I want to play, eh!"
Just when Jaume is about to say something P. stops him and shouts at Jaume: "No, no, no! Don't tell him what we are playing!"
R.2: "We are playing Power Rangers."
P: "Yes, and you are not playing" and he walks away.
Jaume: "E.1, it has to be a boy." (and P. returns back to where the boys are.)
E.1: "What?"
Jaume: "It has to be a boy." "or the green…" "oh wait!" "Which one do you want to be?"
R.2: "What color?"
E.1: "Green."
Jaume: "Green, no!"
E.1: "Why?"
Jaume: "Because it can't be."
E.1: "Is there a Red?"
Jaume: "Red, I am the Red."
P: "I am the Blue and he (pointing at R.2) is the Black."
R.2: "I am the Red and M. is the Pink."
E.1: "Is there more?"
R.2: "There is the Yellow and the Green."
Jaume: "The Green can't be him."

E.1: "OK, then. I am the Yellow."

Jaume: "It is a girl."

R.2: "It is a girl."

R.2 and P. walk away. Jaume remains near E.1 and E.2 approaches to Jaume and E.2.

E.2: "I want to play, too."

E.1: "And why can we be the Samurai?"

Jaume: (moves his one arm round and round and shows E.1 a special movement) I don't know how to do this (and he starts walking away while E.1is trying to replicate Jaume's Samurai movement.)

E.1: "I do it like this."(showing Jaume his arm movement)

Jaume (shows him another movement): "he does like this."

Jaume then, while he is walking towards R.2 and P., E.1 and E.2 follow him, E.2 repeats his previous request: "I want to play, too."

Jaume: "Man! (Tío!) I don't know.

E.1: "I know another movement. (He shows another movement with his arm.)

Jaume: (he looks at E.1 and imitates his movement) "Well…" (and he runs away to join P. and R.2.

8:3 [3-14062011JaumePatio.avi] (00:29-02:25)

Although in this scene, it is P. who directly rejects including E.1 in the Power Rangers play, Jaume backs him up by not assigning him a role and by making excuses not to accept the alternative roles that E.1 suggests. The main strategy that Jaume uses for excluding E.1 is, hence, not assigning a role to his peer. Not being agreeable during role negotiation can be regarded as an extension of this strategy.

(e) Excluded by Others

Being the most popular amongst the peer group and being accepted as a positive leader did not save Jaume from getting excluded from play. Although the girl who excluded him was not his classmate, this scene was included in analysis as the girl was a same-age peer and she was playing with F. (Jaume's classmate) when this exclusion scene occurred.

In the elementary level playground, Jaume waits F. and G2P5 to get closer to him. G2P5 is holding a ball. When they come near Jaume, G2P5 tells Jaume "I am the captain Jaume. ...

Because I say so!" and she runs away with the ball. After chasing her for a few second, R.2 shoots another ball towards Jaume. When it hits him, he turns around and instantly joins in R.2's playgroup, leaving G2P5, and not insisting her to let him in her play.

7:8 [2-08062011JaumePatio.AVI] (06:57-07:25)

In this scene, it is possible to conclude that G2P5 is aware of Jaume's position as a leader within his peer group and as a way of her disagreement, she engages in a power struggle, manifesting itself as a role conflict, by claiming herself as the captain of the soccer game and not letting Jaume participate in their game.

3.1.4.5.3. Summary of Inclusion and Exclusion Strategies

This section presents an overview of all the strategies described above with concrete examples of excerpts taken from the recorded observations of children's free play which were conducted during recess period. The table below displays the frequency of each code corresponding to each video.

In this table, Primary Docs 1, 2, 3, 4 are video recordings of Fatima's free play episodes, whereas Primary Docs 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are video recordings of Jaume's. The most striking of all these frequencies is the number of scenes coded as "Non-Verbal". Another result that can be drawn from this table is that, in Fatima's case there are more coded items in total. This fact may be attributed to the fact that Fatima's duration of sustaining in a play episode was rather short. She was in and out more frequently and therefore, more number of strategies was described in the analysis. However, Jaume had a rather stable peer group with whom he engaged in play interaction and he sustained in a play episode for a longer time period.

CODES-PRIMARY-DOCUMENTS-TABLE (CELL=Q-FREQ)
Report created by Super - 29.08.14 04:30:25
"HU: [C:\Users\Owner\Desktop\CapDeVila2014Analysis.hpr6]"

Code-Filter: All [12]
PD-Filter: All [9]
Quotation-Filter: All [76]

	PRIMARY DOCS									
CODES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Totals
Disregard	4	0	4	5	0	3	1	0	0	13
Excluded By Others	3	0	4	3	0	0	1	0	0	11
Excluding Others	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Including Others	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
Inclusion By Others	7	1	6	6	0	5	3	1	1	30
Invisible	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Non-Verbal	14	1	15	14	1	7	3	2	3	60
Repetitive Behavior	1	0	3	4	0	3	1	0	0	12
Self-Inclusion	9	0	8	6	2	4	3	0	1	34
Solitary Play	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Verbal	7	0	5	6	4	6	7	1	0	36
Voluntary No Partici	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Totals	48	3	46	45	8	29	19	6	6	207

Table 13: Frequency of Codes and number of quotations per video

All the strategies described within each case under their corresponding example scenes extracted from recorded observations are summarized in the following five tables, each table presenting a different strategy type in accordance with the themes created for data analysis. This study does not aim at comparing the strategies appeared within two cases. However, by studying these five tables it is possible to detect some obvious differences at a glance.

Strategies	Fatima	Jaume
Self-Inclusion Strategies	-All non-verbal -Physically approaching / physical proximity -Watching closely / Gazing / Staring -Following -Complementing a peer's play behavior -Leaning forward -Extending arms, hands -Experimenting the play scene material -Making noise with play objects -Fulfilling the assigned role -Assuming an assisting role -Imitating -Providing visual cues (e.g. pointing at a play object) -Responding to a help call -Finding a key play object -Finding an available spot and taking a position on it.	-Non-Verbal, Verbal - Following -Taking action while looking at a peer and giggling -Giving simple commands (e.g. pass) -Stealing a play object from a peer's hands -Throwing a play material at a peer group who are engaged in play -Looking for his best friend in the playground -Moving along together with a peer group -Notifying the peers about his next action -Volunteering to take on a role -Using a peer's play object

Table 14: Self-Inclusion Strategies

Strategies	Fatima	Jaume
Strategies of Inclusion Used by Others	-Non-Verbal, Verbal -Assigning a submissive role -Showing a physical example of the requested play material -Giving simple commands -Repeating a command -Physical contact (e.g. pushing forward) -Complaining to group leader about her inaction -Combining a clear commanding phrase with a visual cue (e.g. pointing at an object) -Redirecting to a peer who requests something from her -Splashing water -Providing visual cues to direct her behavior (pointing at a specific place) -Gesturing / Extending Arms -Sharing a key play object -Using a direct question -Teacher joining in a group and directing play -Simulating the game while explaining how it is played	-Non-Verbal, Verbal -Calling out his name -Proposing a challenge -Using complex speech (a full sentence) -Physical contact (e.g. touching his arm) -Gesturing -Proposing to play a specific game -Repeating his name and providing a visual cue (e.g. pointing at him) -Making the first movement of the play interaction with his hand on his behalf -Taking a friend's key play object and giggling

Table 15: Strategies of Inclusion Used by Others

Strategies	Fatima	Jaume
Strategies of Including Others	None	-Non-verbal, verbal -Responding affirmatively to a direct question -Giving simple commands (e.g. run!) -Interpreting physical cues and acting accordingly

Table 16: Strategies of Including Others

Strategies	Fatima	Jaume
Strategies of Excluding Others	None	-Ganging up on a child and stealing her key play object -Not assigning a role -Making up excuses not to accept the suggested alternative roles

Table 17: Strategies of Excluding Others

Strategies	Fatima	Jaume
Strategies that Others Use to Exclude	-Calling another peer as her replacement -Physical contact (pushing away) -Giving simple warning (e.g. look, look) -Expressing anger with voice tone, facial expression and gestures -Yelling at her and criticizing her action -Shouting her name -Struggling over a key play object -Making an unpleasant sound with a foot -Telling her that she doesn't know how to play	-Engaging in a power struggle in the form of a role conflict

Table 18: Strategies that Others Use to Exclude

3.4.6. Discussion

In the previous section of this third study, results of the data analysis were presented. These findings were grounded on data obtained from the two focal children's play interactions in different playgrounds during recess period, field notes, informal talks with teachers, an informative interview with the director and documents. Guided by the four research questions, the results provided answers to:

1) What strategies do children use to include a peer in their in free play occurring in the playground during recess?

2) What strategies does a child use to include herself/himself in free play occurring in the playground during recess?

3) What strategies do children use to exclude a peer from their free play occurring in the playground during recess?

4) Which strategies used by a peer or a peer group cause a child to get excluded from free play occurring in the playground during recess?

This section addresses and discusses previously described strategies and compares and contrasts with recent literature related to play, inclusion and cultural diversity. Furthermore, it provides possible explanations to the results of this study.

The results on how children include and exclude their peers during outdoor play in recess in culturally diverse preschool settings described above suggest that popular child coming from a dominant cultural background uses verbal strategies more effectively to include himself whereas unpopular child frequently uses on looking behavior, staring, gazing, approaching physically among other non-verbal strategies as her main self-inclusion strategies. This finding is supported by Kim (2003), who states popular children have verbal skills to show self-confidence through which they gain peer acceptance during a play activity.

Broadhead (2001) suggests that five year-old children need to be able to engage in verbal interactions, and use non-verbal communication skills to both to launch an activity and to respond to a peer who wants to start playing. She also states that role attribution during play affects the level of engagement. Our results show that the popular child from the local culture, Jaume, is the one who tend to have power on deciding who will play what in a play, whereas the unpopular child, Fatima, who is culturally different and who lacks verbal skills has no choice for role negotiation but to accept the role given to her or she is out.

Craig-Unkefer and Kaiser (2002) proposes that an intervention may result successful when children who are at risk because of their communicational problems learn how to plan their play in advance, acquire conversational skills to engage in social interaction and can appraise their own play activity. My findings indicate that Fatima could benefit from such an intervention to become an active participant in her peer group.

Agreeing with Casey (2005), these findings indicate that adults should not only be present as someone who intervenes only when a conflict occurs, but also assume a role that provides assistance to those who need support to become a more engaged player in the peer group. After the data analysis, results indicated that teacher Ms. P. appeared three times employing strategies to

include children in a peer group. In one example, where she asked S.2 if she plays with Fatima, she was not quite successful. Instead of replying teacher's question, S.2 got distracted with the rain. Nevertheless, she did get engaged in play interaction with Fatima for a while, later during that observation session, after moving to semi-closed playground. In another example, Ms. P. joined in a peer group and directed children's play facilitating Fatima's inclusion, until her participation got interrupted by a boy who came to Ms. P. crying to complain about another peer. In the third example, she approached Jaume, as he was the leader of the peer group, and acted as a mediator to facilitate B.'s inclusion in a readily established peer group. These three examples support Casey's (2005) argument.

Although free play during recess has some positive features for inclusion as it enables the child to choose what to play and how to play and it should be available as it facilitates free peer interaction (Williams, 1991), its free nature does not guarantee the inclusion process to be successful because in the playground children do not have the obligation to play with anyone that they do not want to play. When there is a child who may become an unfavorable peer playmate because of cultural differences, he/she should be considered as at risk of being excluded from the play interactions, and teachers should be more alert during recess. After all, inclusion does not happen without teachers getting involved and assuming responsibility during the process.

Corsaro (2003) identified several strategies that successful players used to access to play. His finding that indicates the children rarely make use of direct question "Can I play?" is coherent with the results presented in two cases. Fatima had an obvious communication difficulty. Jaume, on the other hand, did not feel the urge for asking to join in. He either promptly initiated play with his actions or others included him before he needed to ask. Only in one example, B. used direct question to enter a playgroup and that was because the teacher had intervened and she told him to ask this question. According to him, successful strategies were being physically close to the play zone, watching the playing peers carefully and imitating behaviors. In Fatima's case, these strategies frequently failed her intention to join a peer group since she was treated as invisible unless she did something additional, or unless the playing children needed something from her. Furthermore, in some scenes, she was invited to join in a group by a peer but she rejected the invitation. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that being physically close to the playing group and watching them closely is necessary but not sufficient for a child's inclusion in peer play.

In her doctoral dissertation research on children's culture in playgrounds of in three Catalan early childhood education centers (P3, P4, P5). Serra (2012), identifies 9 excuses why children don't get included in a playgroup: being very young to play with, being from a different class, excessive number of players and no enough space for everybody, being from the opposite sex, nothing to play at that moment, not having an adequate play object, having things that are considered as inadequate, demonstrating disruptive behavior, the play being already in progress. In this study, however, the reasons to exclude peers were different. Fatima got excluded because she did not know how to play the game; she just did not respond to requests; or her peers just did not want to play with her without giving a concrete reason. Jaume, on the other hand, got excluded only once because of a power struggle and the girl who excluded him was not his classmate, but a same-age peer attending the other P-5 class.

According to Serra i Garcia (2012), children's self-inclusion strategies includes, asking continuously and insisting on playing, telling the advantages if they let him/her to play, looking for an adequate object so that the other would let him in the play, showing them a valued object, and threatening the group to complain to the teacher about them not letting him/her in their play. She also adds that children does not frequently ask verbally for a permission to enter the game. The non-verbal strategy, looking for an adequate object so that the other would let him in the play, also appeared when analyzing Fatima's play interactions. She was aware that she would gain access if she had a shovel. She would look for it as soon as she arrived in the playground. In one example, she was thrown sand at because she did not give her shovel to a peer. The results of this study support Serra i Garcia' (2012) finding about not directly asking for permission to join in a play. Fatima, as she had a language difficulty relied only on her non-verbal communication skills. Whereas, Jaume, did not need a permission to enter, as he was already accepted by his peer group under any circumstance. It was just enough for him to show up near the group and move along with them.

3.4.7. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Conducting a valid research means not only following the methodological steps in a correct manner, but also being sensitive to moral code and paying extra attention to ensuring the well-being of the participants of the study and avoiding any kind of risk that would cause harm to the objects of the study (Aubrey, et. al., 2000). Studies conducted in early childhood contexts usually involve data collection processes which require personal interactions, leading to subjective

perspectives or biases inevitably affecting the process. In such cases, as Aubrey et al. (2000) state, "Being able to show that one has done one's best to consider and attend to all potential sources of grievance, followed by sensitivity to people involved as well as to the research process, acting 'in good faith' at all times, are all indications of research expertise" (p.157).

Although there was no official, formal requirement of passing through an ethical committee evaluation, neither existed a document-based permission system to conduct a study prior to initiation of the study, I assumed all ethical requirements of conducting a research as a novice researcher and I followed Código Deontológico del Psicólogo (*Codes of Ethics of The Psychologists*), published by Consejo General de la Psicología de España (1993) (General Council of Psychology in Spain) while conducting this study. The ethical codes relevant to investigation and teaching can be seen in Appendix 16. Of these ethical codes, article 34 and article 37 addressed in the fourth section of the document, is directly related to my research. Article 34 indicates that consent from each participant should be received prior to their participation in the study. Accordingly, I got the consent of each children (since they were minors, their parents' authorization was valid in this case), teacher, and administrative staff through the school Principal Mr. B. He informed me that the parents had signed consent forms about any kind of research, including photo-video-audio recordings, when they enrolled their children to the school, and all children were authorized to be included in the study. The parents who visited the setting during my presence were aware of my position as a researcher and they knew that I was collecting data for my study.

Teachers' were informed about the research through an introductory meeting and I asked for their voluntary participation in my study. Children as well as teachers were free not to participate in the study. In spite of their young age and limited capacity of understanding what research meant, some researchers believe that children should be given clarification about the presence of the researcher and the reasons for his or her presence should be stated to avoid any possible side effects of an unbeknown adult watching and/or recording their behaviors (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). I made use of the individual interview sessions, conducted with each child individually for sociometric ratings, to give information about my presence and to get their volition to participate in my research. At the beginning of each sociometric interview, I introduced myself to the interviewed child and explained him or her that I was in his or her class to get to know him or her and his or her friends because I wanted to learn how they played while watching their interaction

with his or her peers. I justified my interest by saying that since I was a grown up, it had been a while without playing and that was the reason why I forgot how to play. I stated that I needed their help and asked for their cooperation to show me the ways that they played so that I could learn how to play again. All the interviewed children showed enthusiasm to help me teach about their play, including Fatima, who in daily routine almost never talked, but in the interview she answered the questions I posed. I took this as a positive sign for voluntary participation. Following the sociometric interviews, especially during play moments occurred in the class in between school tasks, children started inviting me to join in their play and they manifested great enthusiasm when explaining what they played and how they played.

My observations were focused on the participants in the playground, when a play episode occurred. Selected children took breaks once in a while to go to the restroom during the playground hours. Additionally, in some occasions teachers took some time to intervene in the conflicts of other children present in the setting. Respecting their intimacy and privacy, such moments were neither recorded nor included in the analysis. Throughout the study an ethical concern about teachers' participation arouse. Most of the teachers were not enthusiastic to be seen in the observation recordings. In the beginning of the study, the aim of the observations was stated as to discover the strategies that children used to include or exclude their peers. So according to this explanation, the focus was the children's behavior, not the teachers'. During the observations, I tried to do my best to record the video without causing any discomfort and I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible. There were some moments when the teachers felt uncomfortable about being recorded in the video and they moved away from the play scene. In such situations, when teachers showed indisposition as mentioned, I respected their sense of being uncomfortable and I either turned my camera off or I turned the focus to the children in the context.

Following the strict ethical code, I only recorded videos of the play moments relevant to my research. When recording in the playground, the selected unpopular child showed discontent about being followed by a camera by setting her eyes on me and my camera as well as by turning her head over to see if I was following her while she was running all around the playground in order to hinder the recording. In order to win her confidence, I spent more time with her in the classroom, assisting her with the class work. This undoubtedly facilitated that she trusts me and decreased her level of anxiety caused by the presence of a camera focused directly on her. Respecting the ethical regulations, in order not to cause any further disturbance or harm, during the moments of distress, I

used the strategy of stopping and moving my camera and my head towards other children and seem to be busy with other children's plays for a while, until she returned back to her neutral state. After spending a short period of time with her in the classroom as well as in the other play settings, she got comfortable with the presence of a camera focusing on her behavior, and that was when I continued with my recordings.

Article 37 calls for respect to participants' privacy, intimacy and dignity and emphasizes that the researcher must pay special attention to any delicate situation that may occur through the research process. At all times all participants' privacy was respected. In order not to take any risk of causing harm or any other kind of inconvenience to research participants in the future, the children's names were changed; and a letter from the alphabet was used as a pseudonym for the adult participants of the study. This way, I ensured the confidentiality of all the participants in the written text in order to fulfill the requirements of the code of ethics regarding to the dissemination of the research (Aubrey, et. al., 2000). However, using videos as data sources leads to another dilemma. Regardless of using pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants, in the visual data all the participants are easily identifiable. The solution I applied for this problem was to limit access to the videos (Flewitt, 2006). Therefore, the videos were only accessed by me and they were shared only with selected experts during the analysis process. It is very likely that some significant scenes will be presented at the oral defense session, always ensuring the usage of the videos exclusively for academic purposes.

Ultimately, respecting the school Principal's particular petition, the collected written documents' confidentiality (especially of those three: *"projecte educatiu de l'escola"* (educational project of the school), *"projecte de direcció per a l'escola Roser Capdevila de Terrassa"* (project of the administration of the CEIP), strategic planning of 2011-2015 school year period) was ensured by not sharing any excerpts with the public.

Qualitative studies have an evolving nature, meaning that it is subject to change in the course including the data collection plan and agenda, which has to be adapted to the realities of the setting. The first limitation to mention is the fact that it employs a qualitative methodology; it does not seek for a generalization of a phenomenon. Instead, by using a two-case design, it aims at gaining an in-depth understanding of a specific situation in a specific context (Stake, 2010).

The limitations of data collection can be presented under two factors: *School related limitations, technical limitations*.

1. School Related Limitations

During the whole period of data collection process, communication and coordination between the contact person at the school (in the main study it was the school Principal, Mr. B.) and me as the researcher proved to be a problem. I believe that those communication problems resulted from the fact that I, as the investigator, was seen as an external agent, and my presence was rather ignored and I was informed about the changes of the usual schedule only when I asked about the change of the routine. A few times, teachers forgot to inform me about the changes they had made for that day, which led me to travel for 1.5 hours and observe nothing related to my investigation as the play corners period was cancelled.

Other factor that caused limitation in the data collection process was the amount of holidays: trying to adjust the research calendar with the school's academic calendar was a challenge. In between the local celebrations (such as La Castanyada), Christmas holiday, La Semana Blanca, Easter Holiday, parent-teacher meeting periods and evaluation periods, it was hard to schedule an observation of the natural flow of the selected class and the selected children.

Another limitation appeared about teacher interviews. I wanted to conduct semi-structured interviews to get teachers' perspective about children's play behaviors and the strategies they used. However, it was not possible. The classroom teacher of the two selected children had gone through a long grief period and she had returned back to her job after six months. Her special condition influenced her participation in the study. Due to her work overload, she could not spare time for an interview. The next school year, when I returned back to the kindergarten to complete missing data, I discovered that she had been assigned to another school in a different city. Unfortunately, I could not get additional information about her, including the length of her professional experience, her studies and her professional title. This study does not focus on the teachers' professional competences while analyzing children's play. What was important for the study was teachers' point of view. Hence, the missing information about teacher's professional life would not have a negative consequence on the results of this study.

2. Technical Limitations

Due to active nature of children, they tended to run around in the playground, resulting to be very difficult to follow them with a low capacity digital compact camera. In his feedback, Prof. Artin Göncü emphasized the necessity of a discourse device stating that inclusion was not a process that could be shown only through interviews with children. While examining the play behaviors of the children, it is necessary to look over how the children communicate, how they construct a dialog with each other, what they say and what kind of gestures they use. After all, most of the time inclusion/exclusion is hidden in details. The technological device I had used for this research was not very efficient in this sense. In the literature review regarding data inquiry methods, I read about using magnetic microphones to record children's verbal communication (Pellegrini, Symons and Hoch, 2008). Unfortunately, I did not have the economic resources or technical support to use such a technology in my study. Therefore, this limitation has affected the quality of the data collected. The only solution I had found was to get as close as possible to children when a significant incident happened, however my close presence could have had an impact on observed children's play behaviors in some occasions.

Probably the most unfortunate technical problem occurred during the recording of the classroom activity carried out with the children in order to include their perspective to the study. The activity consisted of watching two videos, which were about 3-minute long and discussing issues about being from a different culture. The classroom teacher thought it would be better if I facilitated the discussion. She got in charge of video-taping the activity. After 30 minutes, I checked to see the recording and found out that she was not recording. So, instead of a video, from which I could analyze the body language and gestures, all I had was a voice recording of the activity. When I listened to the recording, I found it hard to distinguish the children's voices as most of the time they spoke either all at once, or in a low tone. I could not find another way of replacing this activity afterwards. Hence, the data derived from this activity was not included in the data body. It would have been interesting to add this activity in the analysis as it would provide insight on the children's perspective. They gave some clues about how inclusion was hindered because of unmatched inclusion strategies during the classroom discussion. As a result of this technical difficulty, sociometric rating interviews ended up being the only data source for including children's perspectives in this study.

If I had not been the only researcher collecting data for this study in the field, participant observation would have let me access their world from their perspective and enable me to experience and explore their play cultures as a fully engaged participant as one them. However, being the sole observer in such a dynamic setting obligated me to observe, to take notes and to record the observations with a video camera at the same time. This triple responsibility restricted my participation in children's play settings. My previous experience during the exploratory study proved that, especially in the playgrounds, participating in children's play meant jeopardizing the quality of the recorded visual data.

Despite all these inconveniences resulting in limitations of data collection, I am strongly convinced that the video-taped observations, being the primary data sources, provide very rich data sufficient to fulfill the objectives of this study.

Another limitation of this study is that only the children's outdoor free play during recess hours was included; outdoor play which was organized or guided by the teacher, play activities in play corners and in the classrooms, as well as the teacher-directed play occurring during the psycho-motor education period were left out of the scope of this study.

Ultimately, it is essential to include the parents in a study about early childhood inclusion (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006). This study left the parents out of its scope, as it was not possible to communicate with the parents. Information on focal children's family background was obtained through official documents accessed through the school. A future study on the same topic should include the parents in order to gain deeper understanding about children's play behaviors occurring in their home settings and how cultural differences affect their play behaviors in general.

3.4.8. Conclusions

By describing the strategies that children use for including and excluding their peers during their play activity, this study contributes to understanding about inclusive and excluding play behaviors in kindergartners' peer culture which in the future may be referred as a source of information for designing an adequate intervention program to promote inclusive play behaviors among culturally diverse kindergartners. However, more research is needed on the inclusive play behaviors of culturally diverse children, as the majority of the studies from inclusive perspective tend to focus on children with disabilities or special needs (Odom, 2000). Future investigators might conduct a

longitudinal study to analyze the inclusion process of same children to find out whether their strategy repertoire changes or not during their play activities in different play settings (free play, semi-constructed play, teacher centered play, etc.). Since teachers tend to assume a rather passive role during recess, it might be interesting to conduct a study about teachers' awareness about children's inclusive and excluding play behaviors and how those behaviors are related to cultural differences. Furthermore, a comparative study focusing on two Moroccan children, one is a new arrival and the other one was born in the local community may be conducted to analyze their use of strategies in order to determine the possible differences and their consequences on their play activity.

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS

"You can't play" suddenly seems too overbearing and harsh,
resounding like a slap from wall to wall.
How casually one child determines the fate of another.
(Paley, 1992, p. 3)

4.1 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Prior to this chapter, discussions and limitations specific to each one of the three studies have been presented under corresponding sections. This chapter integrates the results presented in the empirical framework chapter by grouping them under the corresponding objective. It also states the general limitations, discusses the implications of the findings, explains how this research contributes to ECE and suggests future paths for other researchers to follow.

OBJECTIVE 1. - To analyze the inclusion process of a Turkish five year-old boy in a trilingual preschool located in Catalonia, Spain.

Inclusion process of a child, who is not only a late incorporation to his class, but also who has a different cultural background, needs special attention in order to ensure the continuity between the child's cultural background, previos learning experiences and the new social context in which he arrives with many reasons to be anxious about.

First objective this study intends to achieve is to analyze the inclusion proces of a Turkish five year-old boy, who was a late incorporation in a private trilingual preschool located in Catalonia, Spain. Although there existed some positive examples of inclusive practices implemented by some teachers, the one of the questions posed, *What are the challenges encountered during the inclusion process of preschoolers coming from a different culture?,* leaded the researcher to focus on the challenges encountered during the inclusion process.

The results of the data analysis indicated that Mehmet did not qualify as a child with SENs. Hence he was not provided with a concrete individualized educational program facilitating his inclusion in his new school and in his new class. Lack of coordination between teachers, administration and family found to cause discontinuties, which made it difficult to implement an inclusion plan. As Mogharreban and Bruns (2009) suggest the administrators, teaching staff and the parents have to share the responsibility and their common priority must be the success of all children regardless of their individual differences. In Mehmet's case, he only received punctual support from his support teacher, who was the researcher, herself.

High academic expectations of the parents found to have an indirect impact on children's inclusion process. The nature of inclusion requires dedication, determination, patience and application of developmentally appropriate practices which must provide enough time for peer interaction and play. The results of the analysis pointed that teachers were more preoccupied with delivering a very dense academic curriculum, mainly using paper-based activities done individually, without permiting the children to engage in peer interaction. Teachers' priority was to fulfill the parents' high expectations on children's academic achievement in the early years than providing developmentally appropriate learning. These results contradict with what Hewett (1999) and Petriewskyj (2010) suggest. According to these authors, teachers should include flexible and collaborative activities to promote communication and interaction between children.

In Catalonia the main focus when including children coming from different cultural background is the acquision of Catalan language. As support to this language acquisition some schools receive the newcomers in receptions classes before they continue with their regular studies with their peers. However, this is not a very common practice in the ECE context. Frequently young children are though to have a natural predisposition to learn a new language (Essomba, 2003) and therefore they join in their normal classroom and are expected to learn the language in this normalized context. This was also the case in Mehmet's experience. However he was encountered with the challenge to learn three foreing languages, rather than just Catalan, at the same time. Furthermore, his academic performance was assessed with the same assesment tools created for the rest of children who had previous learning experiences with all those three languages. The results of this study indicated that Mehmet preferred to communicate in Spanish since it was the common language used in the peer culture when interacting in the classroom and in the playground. This fact contradicted with his classroom teacher's expectations as English was the dominant language

in the school. As a result, language proved to be a challenge in Mehmet's inclusion, causing communication difficulties resulted from discontinutiy between the culture of the school, the peer culture and his original cultural background.

Mehmet's encountered with additional challenges during inclusion process in outdoor freeplay period. He lacked social and communicational skills to join in socio-dramatic play interactions. Constant absence of an adult facilitation leaded him to engage in mainly functional play, as it was easier for him to access. Mehmet probably could have used the teacher's facilitation to get engaged in socio-dramatic play with his peer group. According to Tovey (2007) children with less experience with free play outdoors can suffer from side effects of this freedom, especially when children engage in socio-dramatic play. Socio-dramatic play requires children to agree on the play script, roles and should take turns. Children who do not have enough joint pretense experience in that specific context would need an adult guidance in order not to be left out. Mehmet, obviously needed adult support during free play periods, which rarely appeared through out the data collection process, except when his teachers wanted to protect him from a possible threat or when he was causing discomfort to his peers.

To summarize, the evidence presented in empirical framework chapter suggests that the challenges to inclusion occur due to economic concerns, time limitations, parents' unrealistic expectations, teachers' attitudes and personal qualities and the competitiveness caused by the instable working conditions. In this highly academic oriented kindergarten, indoors free play did not appear as frequent as it should have in order to foster a common peer culture where children could learn about the popular culture and discover their common interests.

OBJECTIVE 2. - To analyzing the preschool teachers' opinions about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children.

Second study corresponds to achieve this second objective of the research. The main intention is to understand the role attibuted to play by teachers who work in a culturally diverse preschool. This objective provides an answer to following question: What do the teachers think about the role of play in the inclusion process of culturally diverse children in preschools?

All five teachers agreed that play was an important means of including young children in their learning experiences and peer groups. Teachers referred to play settings as spaces for observation

and opportunities for more personalized attention. This result supports Smith's (2012) claim that play helps teachers to assess their students skills, understand their behavioral patterns, learns about their interests and it is a helpful source for further educational planning. Teachers called attention to the fact that the variety and characteristics of play has a repercussion on children's inclusion process. Teachers' this remark aggrees with Casey's (2007) suggestion that teachers must get to know the children's interest in order to refrain from structuring a boring play area and instead of motivating them to play with their peers, inhibit their desire to engage in any shared activity. Teachers also acknowledged that children choose specific peers to play with, over a specific game to play with a random peer during free play periods, especiall in outdoors. This result calss for a special attention to what Perry (2001) suggests: children's play partner choices and respecting their decisions should not prevent the teacher to provide help to those children who are less experienced and less successful in becoming a member of a peer play group. Hence, teachers should assume active roles when a child is at risk of geting excluded because they are not preferred as playmates.

Teachers identified some factors which might hinder culturally diverse children's inclusion process in this particular setting. Teachers admitted that freeplay outdoors period was not very beneficial for the inclusion process because it was unstructured and unorganized and teachers saw this time period as a break during which they primarily assumed the role of a vigilant, only intervening when a conflict occurred between children. This finding contradicts with what Perry (2001) suggests. According to her teachers have an important the role in detecting and understanding children's play routines and using functional strategies to teach them with the routines that their peers use. Additionally academic requirements are seen as a barrier for play to be used as a medium of inclusion as play is regarded as fun and recreation, where academic requirements were frequently fulfilled through formal, paper-based activities. This finding supports what is encountered in the first study about high academic expectations and emphasizes the fact that academic orientation negatively influences the role of play as a medium of inclusion.

They also suggested some aspects consider for improvement of play practices in the setting in order to make a better use of play for removing the barriers to play, participation and learning caused by the diverse cultural characteristics that they bring along. They stated the need for more professionals available to offer more play hours in the play corners and for more time so that they can plan for and implement inclusive play during free play periods. Although the success of inclusive education depends highly on the sufficient number of practitioners working in the setting

(Leatherman, 2007), focusing solely on lacking human resources may lead to disregarding the organizational, methodological and curricular adaptation possibilities and as a consequence instead of attending to the real needs of children within their natural environment, they may be put at risk of getting their needs fulfilled, unintentionally, through being excluded from the setting and through alternative itineraries (Martínez Abellán, Haro Rodríguez and Escarbajal Frutos, 2010).

According to Leatherman (2007), success of inclusive education depends highly on the sufficient number of practitioners working in the setting. However, focusing solely on lacking human resources may lead to disregarding the organizational, methodological and curricular adaptation possibilities and as a consequence instead of attending to the real needs of children within their natural environment, they may be put at risk of getting their needs fulfilled, unintentionally, through being excluded from the setting and through alternative itineraries (Martínez Abellán, Haro Rodríguez and Escarbajal Frutos, 2010). In this particular school, there may exist a real need for additional professionals working exclusively for play hours. Nevertheless, it may prove pertinent to suggest to these teachers that revising the possibilities of organizational and curricular adaptations may be more helpful than highlighting the lack of human resources as the main reason of the failure of inclusive practices.

Teachers suggested increasing the number of hours dedicated to free play, revising the organization of the playground period and shifting the focus of play occurring in the play corners from academic achievement to social skills and re-structuring the corners accordingly in order to use play efficiently for culturally diverse children's inclusion. Free play is the type of play which the child chooses without any influence or intervention of an adult. A child engages in free play when he gets the chance to explore and investigate the setting and the playthings, as well as the play situations (Romero and Gomez, 2003). In an inclusive play setting, adults should take on a role that is balancing children's control over their own play with providing assistance to those who need support (Casey, 2007). Teachers stated that free play occurred in the playground but was not facilitated in the play corners, which was proposed as a change to be introduced. They believed that free play facilitated inclusion more than the other types of play; therefore they suggested that the play corners should be organized in such a way. Smith's (2012) findings were in accordance with what our participants thought. In her study she found that free play was seen as a good resource for developing children's social competence, as well as their ability to solve problems in an effective manner. However, what facilitates the play environments' inclusive features are

flexibility (not having the right or wrong attitude, removing all the unneeded restrictions) and offering centers of interest (offering play space which attracts children to play with the environment without needing to initiate play with a child). Adults should take on a role that is balancing children's control over their own play with providing assistance to those who need support, instead of keeping distance from their play and assuming the role of an observer (Casey, 2007). Inclusion does not happen without teachers getting involved. Free play has some positive features for inclusion, as it enables the child to choose what to play and how to play and it should be available as it facilitates free peer interaction (Williams, 1991), but still this does not mean that it guarantees the inclusion process to be successful as one teacher emphasized "*in the playground they do not have the obligation to play with anyone that they do not want to play with' '* and if a child becomes an unchosen peer mate because of cultural differences, he should be considered at risk of being excluded from the play interactions. Molins-Pueyo (2012) found that in Catalonia, teachers had limited knowledge about what school playgrounds had to offer for children's education and they were not very competent to provide effective educational intervention in this play context. In our study, we found that teachers valued the play opportunities that playground offered, but they lacked time to organize it and include it in the formal educational process the curriculum. Providing an adequate setting for pretend play would be a good start for promoting cultural awareness (Retting, 1995). A participant of this study commented that children "*must have more moment, more time to play in a symbolic way*." Lieber et al. (1998) supported this through their study in which they had found that teachers assisted and facilitated children's interplay through prolonging their pretend play.

After the analysis, the researcher remained curious about two issues that the teachers did not mention and these two issues were strongly related to the inclusion process of culturally diverse children. The first one is about the teachers' competency about cultural knowledge. None of the participants of this study have mentioned any concerns about their knowledge level related to the cultural backgrounds of their students, neither expressed a need on this topic. Williams (1991) emphasizes the fact that teachers report having scarce information about the cultures that their students belong to. In this research, the teachers might not have addressed this as an issue, maybe because they already had felt competent and knowledgeable, or they might have considered their knowledge about different cultures as relevant. Whatever shall the reason behind their inexpression be, teachers' knowledge about their own culture, and the other cultures and their attitude towards them has direct consequences on their professional practices (Smith, 2012).

Furthermore, the teachers did not mention any opinion about the quality and characteristics of the play material offered in the play settings. One teacher expressed that the quantity of material was enough; however she did not talk about the variety of play things present in the play settings. The cultural diversity of children should be reflected on the play things and teachers should encourage children to share their toys that they use at home. These toys reflect the peculiarities of their cultures and in the classroom with their peers raise cultural sensibility (Retting 1995; Hull, Capone and Goldhaber, 2002). The researcher believes that in a culturally responsive inclusive setting, this detail on the types and aspects of play material is worth considering.

OBJECTIVE 3. - To describe the inclusion and exclusion strategies that children use in their outdoor free play activities during recess in a culturally diverse preschool.

The results on how children include and exclude their peers during outdoor play in outdoor free play periods in culturally diverse preschool settings described above suggest that popular child coming from a dominant cultural background uses verbal strategies more effectively to include himself whereas unpopular child frequently uses onlooking behavior, staring, gazing, approaching physically among other non-verbal strategies as her main self-inclusion strategies. This finding is supported by Kim (2003), who states popular children have verbal skills to show self-confidence through which they gain peer acceptance during a play activity.

Broadhead (2001) suggests that five year-old children need to be able to engage in verbal interactions, and use non-verbal communication skills to both to launch an activity and to respond to a peer who wants to start playing. She also states that role attribution during play affects the level of engagement. The resutls indicated that the popular child from the local culture, who employed both verbal and non-verbal strategies, was the one who tended to have power on deciding who would play what role, whereas the unpopular child, who was culturally different and who lacked verbal skills had no choice for role negotiation but to accept the role given to her or she was left out.

The unpopular child with a different background employed several non-verbal self-inclusion strategies as keys to her inclusion in a playing peer group. These were getting physically as close as possible to the group that she wanted to join, staring at them constantly until someone responded, running, moving around with the group or chasing them, and remaining as close as

possible to her peer group. Her peers employed some other inclusion strategies to facilitate her participation in their play groups. They used verbal and non-verbal communication skills. The most frequent strategy found was pointing a finger, showing the material her peers wanted Fatima to get, and indicating a place in order to make their message stronger so that she could understand what had been told her more clearly and easily. Data analysis did not reveal any strategies Fatima used for including others in her play due to lack of necessary social and communicative skills to initiate a play episode and to invite her peers to join her. Likewise, no strategies employed by Fatima to exclude her peers from her play were defined that Fatima. This result is supported by the fact that as an unnominated play mate, she did not have an established playgroup and she did not have the skills to take initiative to form one. Consequently, since she had never initiated a play to play as a group, she did not have the leader power to exclude anyone from a play episode that was under her control. Fatima frequently was subject to invisibility in the playground as she was mute; that is, she did not use words to get her peers' attention. In this study "invisibility" is not treated as deliberate exclusion, since it was difficult to be sure whether the children really ignored her, or she was really out of their sight. Her peers employed both verbal and non-verbal strategies to leave her out of their play group by trying to scare her away or using the excuse that she did not know how to play.

The popular child coming from the dominant local culture used both verbal and non-verbal communication skills to include himself in an already established play group. He showed easiness to get engaged in play when there was a ball in the setting. Spontaneous running while calling a friend's name was usually enough for him to get engaged in a play activity. His ability to initiate a play activity and being a popular playmate facilitated his self-inclusion in a peer group. Initiating a play episode and distributing the roles to each player was also counted as a self-inclusion strategy as nobody questioned his role distribution. Frequent strategies used by his peers to include Jaume in their playgroup included responding to his commands (e.g. when he said "pass me the ball", children did so), calling out his name, inviting directly him to participate in an active play and proposing a game to play. Although being a positive leader, in two moments Jaume excluded his peers by ganging up on a girl and stealing her play object when she is kept motionless by Jaume's friend and through not assigning a role to his peer and rejecting to reach an agreement during role negotiation can be regarded as an extension of this strategy. Being the most popular amongst the peer group and being accepted as a positive leader did not save Jaume from getting excluded from play. Jaume's position as a leader within his peer group leaded to a power struggle with a girl,

manifesting itself as a role conflict, in which the girl claimed herself as the captain of the soccer game and did not let Jaume participate in the game.

These results indicate that children's verbal skills, their ability to interpret social cues and act accordingly their interpretations influence the strategies that children employ to engage in play.

From the strategies defined below, agreeing with Casey (2005), it is possible to conclude that adults should not only be present as someone who intervenes only when a conflict occurs, but also must assume a role that provides assistance to those who lacks adequate self-inclusion skills, or who suffers from deliberately used exclusion strategies and need support to become a more engaged player in the peer group.

In conclusion, although children coming from diverse cultural backgrounds do not qualify as children with special educational needs in early their early years, an intervention addressing their needs arising from cultural discontinuities should be implemented in order to improve their social skills in play, through which they make friends, become part of the peer culture and develop feelings of belonging to their community.

4.2. LIMITATIONS OF THIS DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Limitations regarding to each study are detailed under their corresponding sections. This section presents three general limitations of this dissertation research. The first limitation to mention is the restrictions appeared when accessing to parents to require their participation. Except from the first study, the parents of the children could not be accessed. As a result this research does not include data on children's family cultures, the importance of play and their play experiences in their home contexts. In early childhood inclusion, it is fundamental to analyze the continuity between children's home culture and school culture in order to provide accurate results. A section on parents' opinions about the role of play as a medium of their children's inclusion would have yielded important information about the cultural continuties and discontinuties manifested in children's play.

Second limitation was the lack of adequate technical equipment and scarcity of human resources during data collection. The dynamic nature of children's free play, if recorded with proper

equipment and from different angles, could be analyzed more in detail, yielding richer descriptions of play descriptions.

Lastly lack of motivation to participate in this research limited the possibilty of triangulation of the results. Collecting data from teachers, parents and administrative staff through surveys derived from the Index for Inclusion (Booth, Ainscow, and Kingston, 2004) would strengthen the validity of the conclusions reached after the analysis of the recorded data.

4.3. CONTRIBUTIONS and IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PRACTICES

This present research proposes a pathway future investigations which propose to find alternative ways to repair the discontinuties between children's home cultures and schools' and its community's culture, through implementing intervention based on children's play.

Following, Craig-Unkefer and Kaiser's (2002) proposal, when planning an intervention to facilitate children's inclusion, not only the language skills, but social skills as a general is suggested to be addressed and taught. Otherwise, children who are at risk of inclusion because of their communicational problems may not learn how to plan their play in advance, and may lack negotiation skills or the ability to interpret social cues to engage in social interaction and can appraise their own play activity.

The results of this research promotes the awareness about cultural diversity in early childhood and its repercussions over their play experiences. When teachers become conscious of the strategies children use when playing with peers, they can intervene more promptly and effectively against exclusion.

The evidence provided in the results indicates that peer rejection due to cultural differences is not a fiction, but a fact that can have long-term influences on children's identity formation, self-esteem and future school success. Since peer interaction involves more than one child, intervention targeting the inclusion of culturally diverse young children, should also include the children belonging to the dominant local culture.

Intervention targeting the inclusion of young children coming from different cultural backgrounds in their schools should:

- present alternative ways for appropriate communication

- develop children's perspective taking skills

- provide individualized guidance to children especially during outdoor free play periods.

- be adapted to the individual needs and characteristics of each child.

- include families in their children's inclusion process.

It is also important to emphazise that along with Catalan language, children's mother tongues and original cultural backgrounds shoul be valued. Young children should not be expected to acquire all the necessary skills and abilities to be competent in their peer culture on their on own. Teachers must assume active roles.

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Especially in Catalan context, inclusion of culturally diverse children in preschools through play, is a rather untouched topic. This study has focused on mainly the outdoor free play activities. A research on other play contexts (indoor play, semi-structured play in play corners, play appearing during psychomotor development classes) would provide a wider perspective about the role of play.

It would be opportune to conduct a longitudinal study, to observe the same children and evaluate whether through time they acquire a wider strategy repertoire, and to determine the level of their inclusion.

Another interesting topic to study would be the teachers' awareness level about children's inclusion and exclusion strategies during play.

A comparative study, comparing two Moroccan children, one of which would be a new arrival and the other would be born in and raised according to the dominant local culture, would provide opportunity define cultural influences.

A future research including the familiy perspective is also essential to understand young children's play contents and their extension to their cultures.

Conducting a research to analyzing different play contexts, where cultural diversity is present, by using Index for Inclusion may yield rich evidence for future inclusive practices.

CHAPTER V. REFERENCES

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