THOMPSON RIVERS UNIVERSITY

Play Pedagogy in Children's ESL Learning: Parents and Teachers' Perspectives

by

Wei Mao

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Education

KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2020

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Laura K. Doan

Co-supervisor: Dr. Victoria Handford

PLAY PEDAGOGY IN CHILDREN'S ESL ACQUISITION

Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

Abstract

This study investigates teachers' and parents' conceptions of play-based learning in young children's English acquisition. A total of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents in both the interior of British Columbia and China, as well as Chinese teachers and foreign teachers who teach English as a Second Language for young children in China. Findings indicate that parental beliefs in the effectiveness and importance of play determine the implementation of play-based learning. Within preschool parents, they consider play as an ideal approach to cultivate preschoolers' interests in English and motivation to learn English, so they welcome the use of play in English program. However, when children get older, and enter the zone of primary school age, parents expect more academic performance. An emphasis on scores supercedes other priorities and they are likely to reject play-based learning. Interview data detected high parental involvement in young children's English learning. Findings also identify teachers' enactment and concerns in relation to play pedagogy. Consequently, the researcher suggests implications from a multi-dimensional lens, including parents, teachers, school leaders and policy makers.

Key Words: Play-based Learning, ESL, Early Learning, Parent Attitude, Teacher Attitude

Acknowledgments

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

"不要让你的孩子输在起跑线" translated means "Don't let your child lose at the starting line" and "让你的孩子赢在起跑线" means "Let your child win at the starting line". Parents in China often use the above expressions in reference to learning and their newborn or infant children. These parents believe that the earlier children learn the better. Parents try to accelerate children's learning in order to give children an advantage from a very young age. They also work at discovering their children's interests and enroll their children in additional programs as early as possible.

According to a study conducted by the Shanghai Customer Evaluation Center (SCEC) in 2017, which focuses on extra-curricular programs for children from 0-6 years old, 40% of parents send their 0-3 years old children to extra-curricular programs. This increases significantly among parents of children who are 4-6 years old, where enrollment in extra-curricular programs increases to 74%. On average, 59% of children between 0-6 years of age, attend at least two extra-curricular programs. Additionally, it is notable that 42% of 3-6 years old children take academic-based programs, such as Pinyin (Romanized spelling for transliterating Chinese), English, and Mathematical Olympiad tutorial courses (SCEC, 2017). In China, parents believe elite schooling is an important ticket to their children's success. Therefore, Chinese parents prepare their toddlers and preschoolers to "win" the academic race as very young children, because parents are afraid their children will be left behind.

Primary school students aged 7-12 years old experience an academic burden that is even more severe. According to the survey conducted by the China Youth And Children Research Center (CYCRC) in 2015 (Zhang, Sun, & Zhao, 2017), students spend 8.1 hours every day in school. In addition, they spend 1.7 hours on schoolwork after school hours, and an additional 0.8 hours on extracurricular study programs during weekdays. In total, most primary school students spend 10.6 hours a day on study on weekdays. Fifty percent of the primary school students are identified as having less than one hour of play every day. Among this population, 12% of students do not have play time on weekdays. Even on weekends, 25% of this student population have less than an

hour of leisure time. Seven percent of this student population are identified as having no leisure time (Zhang et al., 2017).

It seems self-evident that parents are pushing their children too hard too early. This issue is not exclusive to China; it occurs in other Asian cultures, and also is apparent in western countries who witness the increase of demand for academics and the decline of children's play time. By analyzing the ongoing national-wide longitudinal survey of 1981/1997/2003 Child Development Supplement (CDS) to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), which includes a large and representative sample of parents and children throughout the United States, researchers identified a decline in the amount of play time for 6-8 years old children from 1981 to 1997, and 1997 to 2003 (Hofferth, 2009; Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001). The study found children spent less time in play and more time in school and schoolwork. In summary, the time children aged 6-8 years spent on play decreased 23% from 1981 to 1997 and 5% from 1997 to 2003. However, a dramatic increase of time spending on doing schoolwork at home was found, respectively 146% increase from 1981 to 1997 and 22% increase from 1997 to 2003. Similarly, children spent more time on reading with an increase of 17% between 1981 and 1997, 32% between 1997 and 2003. From 1981 to 2003, a steady upward trend of spending more time on study-related activities was detected.

Meanwhile, play pedagogy has been attacked by both educators and policymakers. In particular, in the 1990s in the United States, the Back to Basics Movement blamed play for its poor to mediocre academic performance in relation to standardized tests used with North American students (Shipley, 2008). This Back to Basics Movement called for teacher-centered and academic-oriented curriculum to dominate in preschool and kindergarten programs. Along with the Back to Basics Movement, the "high-stakes testing" and "accountability" movements were launched in 1983 by President Reagan. Standardized assessment of all four-year-old children in Head Start programs was announced in 2003 (Olfman, 2003). As a consequence, American education is now guided by the principle of "standards, accountability, testing, and technology", and teaching methodology has become "scripted teaching, desk work, computer-based learning, and a paucity of play" (Olfman, 2003, p.1). From the teachers'

perspective, the decline of play in classrooms is more severe than we could imagine. As Olfman (2003) noted:

> Kindergarten teachers in Pennsylvania told me that in their school district, the kindergarten curriculum had been prescribed by the state legislature. Every morning, children were to spend twenty minutes each on reading, writing, arithmetic, social studies, science, and so on. One teacher looked nervously over her shoulder and whispered, "I break the law every day and let my children play for fifteen minutes." The other kindergarten teacher sadly admitted that she only managed to bring in play twice a week for short periods (p.26).

Taking Hofferth's (2009) and Olfman's (2003) study together, children's play time declined both in school and at home in the United States. In contrast, time spent on learning rose by a considerable rate. It seems that both parents and schools separate play from learning. As for parents, play's importance in children's social and emotional development is visible and understandable because parents can find evidence of this by observing their children's happy faces, collaborative behaviors, and self-regulation skills. But as for children's cognitive learning, such as literacy, mathematics, and science skills, whether play benefits cognitive development is often questioned by parents. First, from terminology meaning, play and learning seem standing at the opposite sides. In the Oxford dictionary, "Learn" means "Gain or acquire knowledge of or skill in (something) by study, experience, or being taught" ("Learn", n.d.). In this sense, learning is an activity with clear and specific intention and purpose. However, play is an activity freely chosen and designed by children (Gray, 2011); play is spontaneous and enjoyable. Additionally, parents, especially Chinese parents in the survey conducted by SCEC (2017) and CYCRC (2015), learned by traditional teaching methodologies which relied on teachers' instructions and students' memorization. They could not make a linkage between play and children's learning.

Educators and researchers have shown that play positively influences children's academic learning progress. Play represents an excellent method to enhance children's literacy development (Korat, Bahar, & Snapir, 2002). For example, in symbolic and pretend play, talking and listening to peers and acting out stories invites children to engage in ways that promote their vocabulary acquisition and language skill

development. Play also contributes to cultivating children's critical thinking which is needed in mathematics, engineering and architecture (Bergen, 2009). When children play with different shapes of geometric materials, they learn the basic conceptions of shape and size, and explore concepts of numbers and sequences. When they construct and deconstruct these objects, they observe how every part connects with each other and children gradually grasp the idea of whole-part relationships.

If educators explain how learning occurs in and around play to parents, will parents believe them? How do parents understand and value the role of play in children's learning? I want to explore the answers to these questions. In this thesis, I specifically place my attention on examining play-literacy relationships. The reason I am focusing specifically on children's English as a Second Language (ESL) acquisition is the growing awareness of globalization and immigration trends. For parents in China, the importance of learning English is paramount to the culture's understanding of potential opportunities for their children. English is a mandatory subject in China for all children, beginning in primary school. Parents in China believe fluency in English will enhance the opportunities for study abroad and for other economically desirable activities in their children's future. For parents from China who immigrate to Canada, they arrive in the country bringing with them this priority of extensive learning through formal programs at a very young age.

The Researcher's Interest

I came to be interested in this topic through my personal employment and volunteer work in play-based programs, which gave me the opportunity to observe Chinese children learning English and Canadian children learning Chinese. My previous work was with an English training company serving 3-18 year old Chinese children and young adults. In August 2015, we filmed a 3-year-old boy's whole learning process, this video was intentional to show how our young kids' English was like. At the very beginning, this little boy was scared and cried, he even grabbed the door trying not to enter the classroom. We had to have his mother accompany him and then sit at the back of the classroom. As time went by, the child started to join play activities, such as fishing for words, spelling bees, and charades. The playful environment and activities reduce this little boy's fear about an unknown language. Another example is my Chinese teaching

experience for grade one to grade three Canadian children. I found that when teaching, if I talked more, children were less involved and more easily distracted. If I used play as an instructional strategy, this engaged the children, and they understood the meaning of words more fully. These observations and my own experience of English learning sparked my interest in how play pedagogy relates to literacy acquisition and helps children's foreign or second language learning. I realize that play may help children's literacy learning, even unfamiliar second language learning.

The comparison of my past English learning experiences in China and my current learning experiences and observations in Canada also pushed me to pay attention to play pedagogy. As I remember it, I started to learn English in Grade 4 in 1998. Every day we were asked to write new words, phrases and sentences three times. The next day we were asked to recite this material. Additionally, we also needed to remember various grammar rules. At that time, English was taught through memorization and recitation. However, my current study in Canada and my observation of Canadian young children's learning has shown me learning in Canada is approached differently. As I have experienced both traditional didactic (send/receive) passive teaching and play-based inquiry teaching, I sincerely want to know whether it is possible to apply play-based learning in China, and explore what parents' and teacher's attitudes towards play-based learning is.

Significance of the Study

Today, in many countries, English is viewed as a global language and tool, so that English becomes a compulsory curriculum even early in preschool or primary school programs. For example, in Europe and Japan, English was introduced to pre-schools or primary schools in the early 21st (Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006). In China, teaching ESL to young learners is not only a compulsory course in public schools but also develops into a huge market in the private sector. Furthermore, English as a mandatory subject now starts earlier and lasts longer. For example, in Shanghai, China, English as a compulsory course begins in grade one and continues until the end of university.

The increasing trend of immigration is another reason that ESL is considered so important. The 2016 Canadian Census (updated on Feb 13, 2018) identified that over 1.98 million children between 0 and 14 years old speak another language other than English at home (Statistics Canada, 2016). Numerous research studies show the

dramatically increasing populations of young ESL learners. Therefore, examining the relationships and implementation of play and children's ESL learning may help teachers and parents construct pleasing and healthy learning environments and provide valuable information on effective strategies that include those that are most appropriate for young children in relation to early ESL learning.

Additionally, although there are many studies examining the relationships between play and children's literacy learning, there are few studies focusing on the use of play in children's ESL learning. There is an urgent need to expand the study of play and children's ESL acquisition. I seek to understand play and children's ESL learning in depth by focusing on teachers' beliefs and practices, and parents' attitudes and concerns.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to describe parents' and teachers' understandings of play in young children's ESL acquisition, as well as to explore their attitudes and concerns related to play and ESL learning. Therefore, this study will be guided by the following questions:

1. How do parents and teachers understand the role of play in children's ESL learning?

2. How do teachers use play in their classroom practices?

3. What are the general constraints regarding the use of play from teachers' perspective?

4. What are parents' concerns about using play?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the phenomenon that Chinese young children are experiencing intensive learning burdens. This is the initial reason for considering whether play pedagogy can enhance children's academic learning and, if so, how. Then I described my own experiences with both Chinese children who learn English and Canadian children who learn Chinese. These experiences compel me to specifically focus on children's second language learning. Finally, I explained the worldwide prevalence of English and the enormous demand for English language learning and fluency, beginning with learners who are as young as three years old. Studying this phenomenon is significant and urgent. After elaborating my reasons for choosing this topic, the purpose of this study and the research questions were described.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Recognizing Play

Definition of play. Early childhood theorists, including Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, and Vygotsky posited that children are active learners, and the best teaching methodologies are those that permit children to have their own ideas and allow children to be responsible for their own learning (Duckworth, 2006; Gutek, 2011; Piaget, Gattegno, & Hodgson, 1962; Shipley, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). Theoretically, play is an activity freely chosen and designed by children (Gray, 2011). According to Garvey (1990), to understand play, we first should clarify what is 'not play'. The significant distinction between 'play' and 'not play' is the purpose behind the activities. Children play because they enjoy the process, and they do not aim for any achievements or any external goals. Even though play has been defined as spontaneous, enjoyable, and valued for play itself (Gray, 2011), others, like Piaget and Vygotsky, have proposed that there are rules imbedded in play serving to ensure play process.

Piaget classified play into three categories: practice games, symbolic games, and games with rules (Piaget et al., 1962; Pulaski, 1980). Piaget specifically identified that rules develop along with the formation of social relationships. An isolated child does not need rules when playing. A child playing with others, however, will discover that rules assist in these relationships, which in turn develops the give and take of social skills (Piaget et al., 1962). However, these rules are not top town given by adults, rather they are invisible rules aligned by children themselves sometimes even without words. Vygotsky regarded the freedom in children's play as "illusory freedom" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.103). As Vygotsky explained, although children can freely choose what they want to play, they could not freely decide how they play as their actions are subordinated by the meanings and results. In other words, if the children want to achieve a specific goal, for instance, building a tower as tall as possible, they must comply with the law of balance.

The significance of play. Whole-child educators state that play positively influences children's academic learning process. Compared to traditional memorization and recitation learning approaches, play is quite simple but has significant effects. In particular, play represents an excellent method to enhance children's literacy

development (Korat et al., 2002). For example, in symbolic and pretend play, by interacting with peers, children increase their vocabulary and develop language skills. Play also contributes to cultivating children's critical thinking needed in mathematics, engineering, and architecture (Bergen, 2009). Some architects state that in Froebel's kindergarten play materials cultivate children's primary sense of architecture (Gutek, 2011). When children try to create the tallest skyscraper, they must solve balance issues, and some children may take aesthetics into consideration. As play shows its strong advantage in children's cognitive learning, specific play approaches for each subject are designed, such as science play, math center, reading nook, art center, etc. Children have chances to practice academic knowledge separately in ways that feel independent and spontaneous.

Ciolan (2013) discussed the incorporation of play into early childhood education from a more holistic perspective, including social function, development function, education function, care function, adaptive function and imaginative function. Ciolan explained each of these functions:

(a) Social function: including in early education programs the new social development and the social requirements towards early education, as well as the skills to function in social groups (socialization);

(b) Development function: taking into account the pace and style of development specific to every child, as well as the complex articulation of personality at individual level;

(c) Education function: creating disposition for learning and reflection, building a sense of responsibility and cultivating the global development of the child;

(d) Care function: maintain nutrition and care at required parameters, stimulating healthy development of the body and promoting care for own and others wellbeing;

(e) Adaptive function: understanding, valuing and adapting to changing and often challenging physical, social and cultural environments.

(f) Imaginative function: nurturing taste for trying, experimenting and innovating, for being creative as an asset in a knowledge based and learning based society (pp.188-189).

Play helps children build social competence and self-confidence when interacting with peers (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006; Doan, Patten, & Piwowar, 2009). Play provides a safe environment where children are willing to challenge their limits and stretch beyond their age or competence. Play is also important for children when learning self-regulation and self-discipline (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006). Through play children experience and observe what happens when someone is out-of-control, then children can reflect on their own behaviors and empathize with others' feelings. All of the above theorize what play is and why play matters from adults' perspectives. Burke (2000) used children's words to summarize the importance of play:

> Play is important because children need to go for a walk and get some fresh air.
> There might as well be no color if you can't play!
> It means being able to shout without getting told off!
> If you learn too much and stuff and it's all in your head, you won't have time to be free and stuff.
> When you play, you can let your imagination unfold.
> Play makes me feel happy. (p.18)

Theoretical Framework of Piaget and Vygotsky

Among the scholars investigating the role of play in children's literacy acquisition, Piaget and Vygotsky are the two prominent researchers. It is no exaggeration to say that many recent studies are built on Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories. Therefore, I will review Piaget's and Vygotsky's frameworks and theories regarding when children's literacy emerges and develops, and how play supports children's literacy acquisition.

Piaget's theory of play and literacy. According to the American Psychological Association, Jean Piaget was the second most influential psychologist of the 20th century, surpassed only by B. F. Skinner ("Eminent psychologists of the 20th century," 2002). Jean Piaget was a prolific author who wrote about "100 books and 600 published papers" (Müller, Carpendale, & Smith, 2009, p. 26). Piaget displayed an exceptional interest in children's cognitive construction, knowledge and language acquisition. In this section, I will illustrate Piaget's model of intellectual development and his theory of play and children's development.

Intellectual development model. As a constructivist, Piaget rejected rationalism's belief of inborn knowledge and inborn knower. In addition, he rejected empiricism's theory that knowledge was obtained through sensory experience (Müller et al., 2009; Wadsworth, 1971). According to his own observations, he concluded that knowledge was gradually constructed by the knower through interactions between subject and object, between substructures, and between the total system and subsystems (Müller et al., 2009). In these interactions, disequilibrium happens when children fail to adapt their old schema to the new situation. In order to reach a new equilibrium, children need to reorganize and adapt their existing knowledge, Piaget viewed this process as an adaptation which would promote children's intellectual development (Wadsworth, 1971). To better understand the process of adaptation, we need to examine four fundamental concepts (as shown below in Figure 1): schema, assimilation, accommodation and equilibrium (Evans & Piaget, 1973; Müller et al., 2009; Wadsworth, 1971).

Figure 1. Intellectual Development Model.
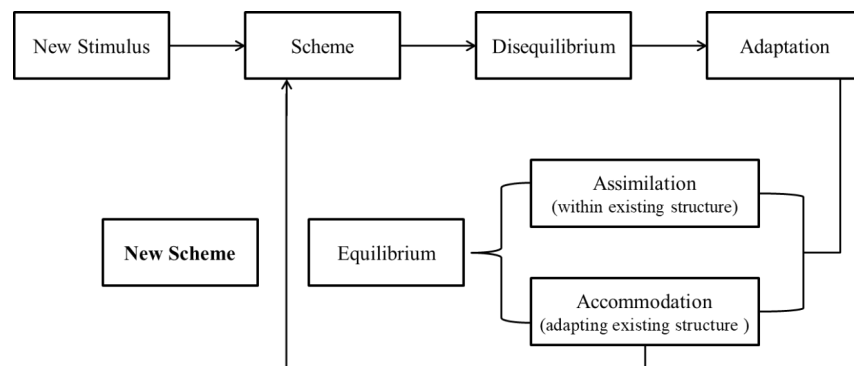
Note. Adapted from "The child and reality: Problems of genetic psychology," by J. Piaget, 1976, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, pp.69-91.

When children encounter a new stimulus or object, they will try to assimilate this new stimulus into their existing schema; if this new stimulus fits in the existing system, they achieve equilibrium. If they fail to reach equilibrium, they will either adapt the old schema or create a new schema in a process called accommodation. As a result of progressive assimilation and accommodation, young children will establish more schemas. As Piaget concluded, "Every behavior then has two poles: assimilation to

earlier schemas and accommodation of these schemas to new situations" (Piaget et al., 1962, p.83). Children will repeat the process of assimilation and accommodation until they find the equilibrium and turn it into their new schema, in other words, until they truly understand how something works (Evans & Piaget, 1973; Müller et al., 2009; Wadsworth, 1971).

Imitation and play. In the book Play, Dreams and Imitation in Children (1962), Piaget concluded that an infant's imitative and playful behaviors begin when the child is born. This conclusion was based on his observations of his own three children, Lucienne, Jacqueline and Laurent. As discussed above, in the process of knowing the world, children will keep assimilating and accommodating to achieve equilibrium. Play and imitation are the two determining components which help children to fulfill the goal of equilibrium. As Piaget stated: "[I]ntelligence, imitation and play are considered, all three, exclusively as sensory-motor, imitation is a continuation of accommodation, play a continuation of assimilation, and intelligence a harmonious combination of the two" (Piaget et al., 1962, p.104). Normally, imitation is a positive replica of the external stimulus with several stages, beginning from neonatal reflexes with no awareness of self and outer reality. Gradually systematic imitations of visible movements or invisible behaviors around children are incorporated. Eventually, deferred imitation, which shows children's ability to recall past behavior and act it out (Piaget et al., 1962; Piaget, 1976), is evidenced. Imitation is regarded as a process of accommodation, which shows children's strong desire to establish new schemas, based on the interactions with surroundings. In this process, children gradually learn to differentiate self and others, and build images of the past.

Children's initial representation of past experiences, which is featured by deferred imitation, leads to children's practice play transferring to symbolic play. In symbolic play, by connecting the "signifier" (e.g., stick) with the "signified" (e.g., horse), children's own feelings and thoughts predominate over reality. In the process of "signified", play allows children to refer to their past experiences and satisfy those experiences to the self. In the process of "signifier" which is featured by symbolism, a child is able to use " live, dynamic, individual language indispensable for the expression of his subjective feelings, for which collective language alone is inadequate" (Piaget et

al., 1962, p. 167). In conclusion, play is the child's active behaviors of assimilation and internalization which supports them to positively internalize knowledge and construct their own schemas.

Language and symbolic processes. Piaget believed that language, thought and symbolical representation develop simultaneously. There is no causal relationship between them, for the three are bound together, they contribute to and reinforce each other (as shown below in Figure 2). As Piaget (1976)said:

> The formation of thought as conceptual representation is assuredly corrective, in the child, with the acquisition of language, but in the first of these operations we cannot see a simple causal result of the second, for both are bound up with a still more general operation which is the constitution of the symbolical function. Indeed, language appears at the same level of development as symbolical play, deferred imitation, and doubtless, mental image as interiorized imitation. (p.117)

Figure 2. Language and Symbolic Processes.
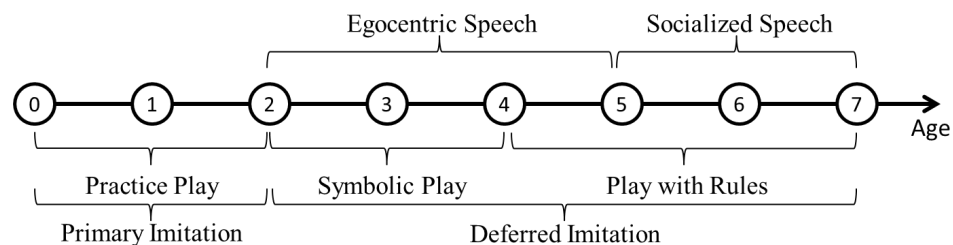
Note. Adapted from "Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood," by J. Piaget, C. Gattegno, and F. M. Hodgson, 1962, London, UK: Routledge, pp.87-169.

Piaget classified children's language into two stages: egocentric speech from ages 2-4 or -5 years old, and socialized speech from ages 5-7 years old (Müller et al., 2009; Piaget et al., 1962; Piaget, 1976; Pulaski, 1980; Singer & Revenson, 1996; Wadsworth, 1971). It does not mean before the egocentric speech, children's behaviors do not involve language practice. There are signals that children develop language through vocal contagion and phonic imitation.

At the beginning of the imitation period, children connect themselves with the world by sensing, touching, feeling, smelling, and listening. For example, an infant will

cry in response to other infants' crying and make other sounds that other infants make. Piaget called this phenomenon "vocal contagion" (Piaget et al., 1962; Piaget, 1976; Pulaski, 1980). According to Piaget, vocal contagion will naturally develop into phonic imitation. For example, Piaget observed that his six-month-old daughter Jacqueline imitated her mother's sound of "pfs" and repeated it in the next three weeks. In practice play, although the child could not build relationships between sound and meaning, she tried to imitate the phonemes around her.

At the symbolic play stage, children mostly display egocentric speech, in which children are speaking to self when playing with self. Even when children play with others, they talk to self with no desire to influence their partners. A child "echoes words and phrases, just for the pleasure of talking, of mastering new sounds" (Pulaski, 1980, p.98). When children develop representational skills, it means children can connect objects and actions with meaning and formulate the schemas of categories and relations. At this time, children also learn to master conceptual schemas, like implication, causality, and inference, etc. For example, when children play with Lego, they are able to observe that if they add one more Lego piece, the tower will fall. When this becomes "known" for children, they progress one language structure—to implication (if … then). Another example is from Piaget's daughter Jacqueline, we can find how she inferred the relationships between two things:

> At 3;2(20) we passed a man: *"Is that man a daddy?"*—What is a daddy?—*It's a man. He has lots of Luciennes and lots of Jacquelines.*—What are Luciennes?—*They're little girls and Jacquelines are big girls.* (Piaget et al., 1962, p.225)

In play, as children assimilate and accommodate, they update their old schemas or build new schemas of language. Through this process, children's cognitive development, conceptual development and language acquisition are mutually influenced.

Vygotsky's theory of play and literacy. In many ways, Piaget and Vygotsky shared similarities, for instance, both of them valued the importance of play in children's literacy development. They encouraged providing a rich play-based environment for children. However, they had some fundamental differences in their theories. From Piaget's perspective, egocentric speech in children's early years is useless and "a symptom of weakness and immaturity in child's thinking" (Vygotsky & Kozulin, 1986,

p.29); however, from Vygotsky's perspective, egocentric speech, which is viewed as 'thinking aloud', plays a vital role in helping children to solve problems. Egocentric speech is an essential intermediate stage in children's cognitive and language development. Additionally, Vygotsky valued the active roles of teachers as facilitators and participants, as well as the roles of peer partners in helping children's development (Vygotsky, 1978). This section will specifically focus on Vygotsky's studies of the Zone of Proximal Development, and his perspectives on children's language development and the role of play in children's language acquisition.

The zone of proximal development. One of the biggest contributions that Vygotsky made is his theory of The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1986) stated that to understand a child's inner mental processes, it is important to attend to and follow the developmental stages, including the child's current development. He further explained that children are born with elementary mental functions, however by interacting with others, children obtain more complex cognitive abilities and eventually reach the stage of higher mental functions. Examples of elementary mental functions are pre-linguistic thought, pre-intellectual speech, sensation, spontaneous or associative memory, and basic forms of attention, perception, and volition. Higher mental functions include linguistic thought, intellectual speech, deliberate memory, voluntary attention, conceptual perception, and logical thinking (Cohen & Waite-Stupiansky, 2017; Wertsch, Daniels, & Cole, 2007).

The transition of the two stages only occurs with the use of "mediational means", also known as "psychological tools". Psychological tools are artificial instruments that equip humans with the necessary skills and knowledge to master their own mental functions. For example, Chinese characters used to communicate information, are mediational instruments. Therefore, to achieve the development of the higher mental functions, children need to first learn how to use such mediational tools, then internalize these skills, and eventually turn the knowledge into voluntary attention, conceptual perception, logical thinking, and deliberate memory.

Among various symbolic tools, Vygotsky regarded language as the "tool of mind", a bridge between elementary mental functions and higher mental functions, and a decisive factor to support children's cognitive development (Berk & Winsler, 1997).

However, children's development has a sequence, which means that children cannot behave beyond their age and life experience. In Vygotsky's words, "a child could not experience in a full sense of the term until she possesses them" (Wertsch et al., 2007, p. 67). Vygotsky termed this developmental law as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):

> The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but currently in an embryonic state. These functions could be termed the "buds" or "flowers" of development rather than the "fruits" of development. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86)

Children's speech development follows the law of ZPD. Accumulating vocabulary and speech ability is a process where children interact with their surroundings, generalize the relationships between their internal action with external reaction, and establish language schema (Vygotsky, 1987b). In the process of language development, Vygotsky (1987a) valued the role of children's life experience and surrounding input, such as interactions with other people. As Vygotsky explained, the more frequently words are exposed to children, the more quickly and easily children acquire the words. Therefore, adults can observe that children can quickly and easily master the words and language which are frequently used by people around them. As for written skills, Vygotsky viewed drawing as an elementary written stage, initiated by children, representing and signifying the meanings of objects in written form. In Vygotsky's several experiments, he confirmed that drawing encourages children's written language and strengthens children's oral language development:

> A sentence such as, "I don't see the sheep, but they are there," was written in the following way: a figure of a person ("I"), the same figure with a blindfold ("don't see"), two sheep ("sheeps"), a pointing finger and several trees behind which the same sheep can be seen ("but they are there"). The sentence "I respect you," was rendered as follows: a head ("I"), another head ("you"), two human figures one of which is holding a hat in his hands ("respect"). (Vygotsky, 1987a, p.140)

Similarly, Montessori also maintained that children learn to write not from writing, but from drawing and making lines (Vygotsky, 1987a). According to her theory,

drawing is an intermediate stage where children suddenly and spontaneously master writing (Wertsch et al., 2007). On one hand, when drawing, children develop fine motor skills such as finger dexterity that needed for writing. On the other hand, starting from drawing children use lines or shapes to represent the world symbolically. Children's drawings will become more realistic. Children's speech or writing development does not happen naturally, it grows stage by stage.

__The role of play in children's literacy development__. Children develop elementary mental functions (e.g., pre-linguistic stage) to higher mental functions (e.g., linguistic stage) through two forms of mediation: (a) mediation through another human being, and (b) mediation in a form of organized learning activity (Kozulin, 2003). Vygotsky maintained that children's development "essentially depend[s] on the child's mastery of symbolic mediators, their appropriation and internalization in the form of inner psychological tools" (Kozulin, 1998, p.24). Play where children acquire the symbolic relationships naturally and progressively, is valued as a vital psychological tool by Vygotsky, and he wrote that, "a child's greatest achievements are possible in play" (Vygotsky, 1978, p.100). In play, children have opportunities to pay attention, remember what happened, as well as the results, and internalize and create patterns in their minds. When children engage in play, they hear words or language along with actions, which helps to make language understandable. For example:

> Three-year-old Joe is baking pizza with the teacher but can't roll out the dough, so Mr. Sanchez says, "Roll the pin to you and away, to... and away..."… He is helping Joe feel the rolling pin moving back and forth. With this aid, Joe is immediately able to roll out the dough. As Mr. Sanchez moves away to help another child, he hears Joe sing "To...away...to...away..." (Bodrova & Leong, 2007, p. 65)

Play gives children clues so that Joe could guess what "to" and "away" mean, and when he whispered to himself again and again, he connected the "name" of the action with its meaning, and gradually completed the process of internalization.

McLoyd, Warren, and Thomas (1984) thought that make-believe challenges children to build more complex vocabularies and language beyond their age. For example, in the study conducted by McLoyd et al. (1984), they provided both realistic

(e.g., trucks, dolls, and tea sets) and less realistic materials (e.g., pipe cleaners, cardboard cylinders, and paper bags). They found that with realistic materials, children acted out everyday roles (e.g., mother, baby, teacher), while with less realistic play tools, they came up more fantastic and non-daily roles (e.g., pirate, aliens). As children have shared understandings of roles like mother, father and teacher, they may not need to talk more to explain these roles. Children just mimic what their parents or teachers do. However, when engaging in fantastic roles like pretending to be aliens, children need to spend more time to explain the alien's characters, such as where this alien is from, what superpower this alien has, what mission this alien has on earth, and so on. In this process, children talk more and have opportunities to use more complex and non-daily words. Additionally, as children may not share the same understanding of these fantastic roles, during play, they also need to negotiate with each other. Therefore, compared to realistic materials, less realistic play will encourage children's language competency to blossom rapidly.

It is also worth noting that humans (e.g., adults and peers), as mediations are also important. As Kozulin (2003) stated: "Symbolic tools have a rich educational potential, but they remain ineffective if there is no human mediator to facilitate their appropriation by the learner" (p.35). This is consistent with ZPD in which Vygotsky paid special attention to both the teacher-child and child-child interactions. As Vygotsky asserted, children complete interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions "under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p,86). It is worthy to involve a teacher or an adult as a guide and an active participant, as well as other children as partners in play.

In summary, Vygotsky believed that children's development neither is inborn in their mind nor grows along with their physical body, it grows gradually with the help of mediators. Play, as an influential symbolic tool, supports children to build language competency and develop higher mental functions.

Play and Literacy

How play supports literacy development. Beginning with and after Piaget and Vygotsky, many educators reflected on the relationships between children's cognitive functions, play and literacy. In 2001, Roskos and Christie did a critical review of recent

studies on play and literacy; they classified these research studies into three different phases. In the late 1970s and 1980s, researchers, such as Piaget and Vygotsky, mainly placed their emphasis on examining the cognitive connections between play and literacy. In particular, researchers tried to identify the relationships between children's participation in dramatic play and general measures of early reading achievement. In the mid-1980s, researchers started to explore play and emergent literacy. They found children could gain literacy skills through participation in routine activities. During the late 1980s and 1990s, literacy-related props and play settings were investigated. Educators concluded that print-enriched play settings would significantly improve children's emergent literacy (Hall, 1991; Morrow, 1990; Neuman & Roskos, 1991). After reviewing the last thirty years of studies, Roskos and Christie (2001) concluded that play supported literacy development by "(a) providing settings that promote literacy activity, skills, and strategies; (b) serving as a language experience that can build connections between oral and written modes of expression; and (c) providing opportunities to teach and learn literacy" (p. 59).

Pellegrini and Galda (1991) looked specifically at how metalinguistic verbs and symbolic play influence preschool children's emergent writing and reading skills. Pellegrini and Galda first concluded that symbolic play positively predicted children's emergent writing ability. This result is consistent with Vygotsky's theory of early writing. Although Pellegrini and Galda failed to identify a direct causal relationship between symbolic play and emergent reading, they found that the use of metalinguistic verbs predicted children's reading competency. However, children's ability of using metalinguistic verbs was generated in free play and practiced in symbolic play.

Bessell-Browne (1985) identified ten types of literacy that children frequently use when observing children's sociodramatic play:

1. An oral language substitute (e.g., mark-making followed by an explanation of the message);

2. A source of information (e.g., using the cook book for ideas);

3. A tool for extending and exploring personal relationships (e.g., sharing feelings about animals while looking at a book on pets);

4. A tool for self-expression (e.g., to express sorrow at a death in the family);

5. A way to confirm identity (e.g., writing their names on everything and anything);

6. A means of presenting information (e.g., writing captions);

7. A tool for supporting memory (e.g., list-making);

8. A way to meet economic and business needs in their play (e.g., ordering from catalogs);

9. Models (e.g., copying names from labels);

10. A reflection of the official status of an activity (e.g., writing carefully because it was "important work"). (Bessell-Browne, 1985, as cited in Hall, 1991, p.13)

Educators also try to illustrate how play settings influence children's literacy awareness and acquisition. Morrow (1990) examined whether environmental changes and teacher's guidance would influence the frequency of children's literacy behaviors. Morrow found that when children were offered rich literacy related resources and materials, like paper, writing utensils, books, and play props, children initiated more literacy activities and were engaged in these activities (Morrow, 1990; Morrow & Rand, 1991). Similarly, Hall's (1991) meta-analysis review also supported the idea that when children were immersed in a literacy-rich play environment, children were more willing to respond in ways of speaking, drawing or writing. As Hall explained: "give children contextualized play situations where they can demonstrate what they know about the what, why, when, where and how of literacy" (p.11). Neuman and Roskos (1991) noted that when classrooms were organized with clearly defined play centers, including labeling each key item and displaying literacy props, literacy learning became more effective, situation-based, and interactive.

Teachers' role in play. Vygotsky (1978) valued the active role of social interactions with teachers and peers in children's development. Many other prominent educators, such as Froebel and Dewey, also believed that social interaction promotes learning (Gutek, 2011). Early learning is a process of self-discovery and social construction of knowledge, rather than passive transmission of knowledge. Rogers and Brown (2014) considered learning and knowledge acquisition as a result of "co-constructed activity where children work with adults or more knowledgeable peers to reach a shared understanding" (p. 152). When considering the teacher's role in play, it

can be divided into three levels (as shown below in Figure 3): (a) parallel play in which the teacher plays beside children as a role model without interrupting play; (b) co-playing in which the teacher is a participant; the teacher plays with children, while children control the play; and (c) play tutoring in which the teacher guides play and co-controls play with children (Dietze, 2006). Having an adult observing, participating and guiding play ensures play process and learning results, and help to challenge and deepen children's thinking and learning. As Kitson (2014) stated: "The significant factor is the active engagement of adults in encouraging children to struggle with ideas, concepts and morality" (p.269).

Figure 3. Teacher's Involvement in Play
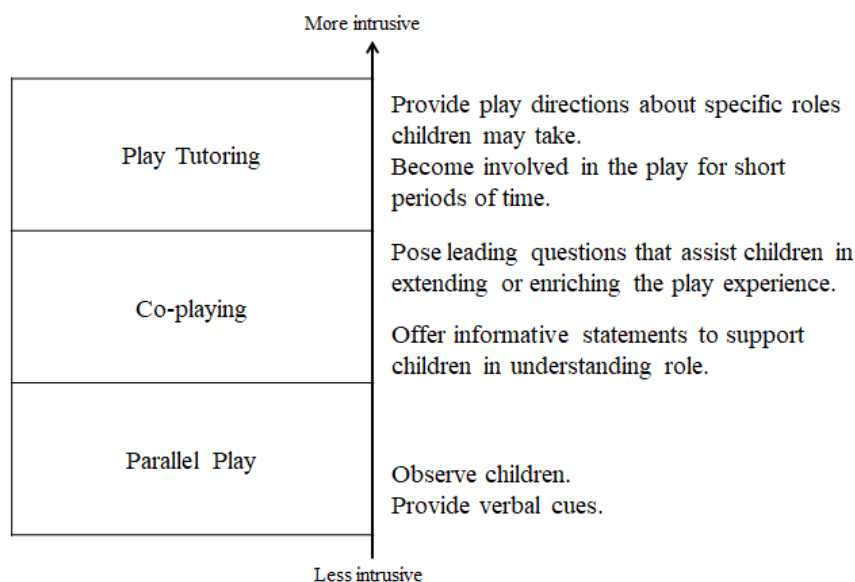
Note. Adapted from "Foundations of early childhood education: Learning environments and childcare in Canada," by B. Dietze, 2006, York, ON: Pearson Canada, p.135.

Studies also find that without teachers' explanations, children's literacy development grows slowly or may not happen (Gabas, Marante, & Cabell, 2019; Justice, Jiang, & Strasser, 2018; Lesley & Rand, 1991; Morrow, 1990b; Nielsen & Monson, 1996). Justice et al. (2018) identified nine teacher linguistic responsive behaviors. Three of these behaviors, such as "facilitating peer-to-peer communication", "repeating and/or expanding", and "using comments and questions to expand", significantly improve students' language competency. Specifically, they found teachers' talk significantly

predicted children's vocabulary growth. Although they failed to find the relationships between teachers' linguistic responsibility and grammar inquiry, they found that teachers' talk "serve[s] to provide children with advanced linguistic models" (p.89).

Parents' Understanding of Play

Play is widely discussed and advocated by scholars and educators, however many researchers also identified different or even conflicting interpretations about play held by teachers and parents (Badzis, 2003; Christmas, 2005). In Christmas's study (2005), teachers believed that play would contribute to cognitive and non-cognitive development regarding "learning skills, developing imagination and skill for life" (p.146). Although parents valued play's contributions in children's learning from perspective of fun, mental and physical health, and "letting off steam" (p.146). Similarly, Badzis (2003) found that parents agreed that play would promote children's joyfulness, socialization and physical health, but questioned play's significance in children's academic study, especially when children get older.

Various studies also showed that parents' attitudes and understandings of play also presented their educational background and socioeconomic status (Pirpir, Er, & Koçak, 2009; Singer, Singer, F., D'Agostino, & DeLong, 2009). Parents with a higher educational background showed a more positive attitude toward play than less well-educated parents (Pirpir, et al., 2009). In addition, Singer's et al., study (2009) which covered sixteen nations showed that parents with different levels of economic status presented different conceptions about outdoor play. For example, families coming from developing countries were inclined to refuse to believe that the dirt and germs gained from outdoor play were good for children.

Furthermore, there are also cultural differences in parents' play beliefs and play practices among different nations. In Roopnarine's study (2010), European American parents spoke for play's benefits in children's scholastic development. Fogle and Mendez (2006) found that African Americans and Latina parents believed play is more significant for children's non-academic development. Parmar, Harkness, and Super's (2004) research compared Asian and Euro-American parents' value about play and learning. The findings showed Asian parents attached less value to the use of play in children's development and strongly believed in early academic training.

Examining Chinese parents' and teachers' attitudes, a paradox about play and children's learning is widely observed. Cheng's study (2001) was conducted in Hong Kong which has been westernized for more than a century. Teachers in Hong Kong referred to play as an effective and engaging way to support children's development and learning, however, they failed to implement play and acquiesced to parents' concern about play's fewer contributions in academic achievement. Wu, Faas, and Geiger (2018) concluded that Chinese parents were more willing to view play as the opposite of learning which is consistent with their thousand-year-belief that play and diligence cannot coexist. Tracing back to Chinese tradition, play and learning were always put at two extremes among which, one should be discarded and the other one should be propagated. The saying: "勤有功，戏无益。戒之哉，宜勉力。Diligence has merit; play has no advantage. Guard against it; exert your strength", which is from Three Character Classic (n.d.), a prevalent Chinese children book, could represent Chinese parents' typical stance toward play.

Some articles explored immigrant parents' perceptions of play. Yahya's study (2016), which was conducted in Canada, explored immigrant parents' understandings or concerns about play-based learning. When asking parents' preference on play-based learning or rote-learning, fourteen of them voted for play-based learning, however, two of them indicated a mixed preference for both and three mothers preferred rote-learning. In particular, the three mothers who preferred rote-learning critiqued play-based learning for its failure in maximizing children's potential, ineffectiveness in preparing children for higher education, and the lack strong evidence in promoting academic performance. Immigrant parents would bring in their cultural traditions and their perspectives on learning which may consequently influence their attitudes toward the current education system and teaching methodologies.

So far, I included several studies on children's cognitive development, language growth, and the role of play in children's language learning. I also reviewed research studies about parents' perceptions of play and learning. As I specifically pay attention to English as a Second Language (ESL) in my study, in the next section, I will review previous studies of ESL learning in general, and specifically illustrate the context of early ESL education in China.

Early English as a Second Language Education

       English language learning in the world. There are many terms in the English Language Learning (ELL) field, among them, English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are the two most frequently used ones. However, the two terms are too close to distinguish, they both refer learners who come from non-English speaking countries and start to learn English. One way to clarify them is to examine where students learn English, as Klein (1986) stated:

       "[F]oreign language" is used to denote a language acquired in a milieu where it is normally not in use … A "second language" on the other hand, is one that becomes another tool of communication alongside the first language; it is typically acquired in a social environment in which it is actually spoken. (p. 19)

       According to Klein's explanation, where learners learn English matters. For example, if a Chinese student learns English in Canada, it is ESL. However, if a Chinese student learns English in China, it is EFL. In the North American context, scholars have a very different definition of the two terms (Cook, 2011; De Groot & Van Hell, 2005; Stern, 1983). They no longer use a location dimension to define foreign language and second language. As Stern stated: "'foreign language' can be subjectively 'a language which is not my L1' or objectively 'a language which has no legal status within the national boundaries'" (p.10). Scholars tend to use communicative purpose to distinguish foreign and second language. For example, if English is only used and practiced in the classroom, then English learning is called EFL.

       Today, English is used and learned by Chinese children in their English as a Second Language classroom. From both the policymakers' and parents' perspectives, English is viewed as one of the most important communicative tools. Additionally, as this study will be conducted both in China and Canada, for better understanding, this study will define Chinese young English learners as ESL learners.

       English is viewed as a global language and tool; accordingly, English has become a compulsory curriculum in many countries. For example, ten European countries launched early foreign language programs through pilot projects in pre-primary or primary schools in the 2002/2003 academic year (Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006). More than 90% of public elementary schools in Japan offered English language activities in

2004. In China, teaching English to young learners not only is a compulsory course in public schools but also has developed into a huge market in the private sector (Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006). Furthermore, compulsory English education starts earlier and lasts longer. For example, the Ministry of Education of China announced that "English classes would begin in grade three of primary school with a view to starting classes from grade one in the future" (Gil & Adamson, 2011, p.12).

Even in English speaking countries, ESL learners have increased dramatically because of immigration trends. According to the 2016 Canadian Census produced by Statistics Canada (updated on Feb 13, 2018), over 1.98 million children between 0 and 14 years old do not speak English (Statistics Canada, 2016) as their first language. In other words, nearly one out every three young children in Canada is identified as someone who does not speak English as their first language. In the United States, official data shows that the number of students with "limited English skills" has doubled and reached to five million in the last decade (Hawkins, 2005), which means one out of every twelve students has limited English skills (Crawford, 2000, as cited in Hawkins, 2005).

Early English as a second language in China. To understand the status and future of ESL education in China, we need to know what happens and is going to happen from the national policy level. English is promoted by the Chinese government as a tool to support China's modernization and enhance China's economic, social, and political status (Hu, 2007; Nunan, 2017; Zhang, 2012). In China, English as a significant and compulsory subject has been required in grade three (Gil & Adamson, 2011; Zhang, 2012), and in some cities such as Shanghai, students start learning English at grade one. English is as important as Chinese and Mathematics requiring 400 class hours in all three-year junior secondary schools and 530 hours in four-year junior secondary schools (Adamson & Morris, 1997).

In the Table below, data presented is to help the reader understand the context of English in a variety of settings in China. As there is no nation or provincial-wide exam in primary school, data from Senior High School Entrance Examination and National College Entrance Examination will be illustrated as an example to demonstrate how the Chinese Ministry of Education values English. From the perspective of data that collected nationally and provincially, English represents 16% of the whole curriculum time in

junior secondary school (Gil & Adamson, 2011), and counts 150 scores representing more than 20% of total scores in both Provincial Senior High School Entrance Examination and National College Entrance Examination (as shown in Table 1 and 2). This makes English learning equal in importance to Chinese and Mathematics.

Table 1 *English Scores in Provincial Senior High School Entrance Examination*

Subject / Score / City	Chinese	Math	**English**	Phys. & Chem.	Phys. Ed.	Total Scores
Shanghai	150	150	**150**	150	30	630
% of Total Scores	23.8%	23.8%	**23.8%**	23.8%	4.8%	100%

Note. Adapted from "2019 年本市中等学校高中阶段考试招生工作的若干意见 [Guildlines of 2019 Senior High School Entrance Examination] (No. AA4307005-2019-001)," by Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2019b, pp.2-3.

Table 2 *English Scores in National College Entrance Examination*

Subject / Score / City	Chinese	Math	**English**	Any Three of Phys., Chem., Bio., Hist., Poli., and Geog.	Science Test/ Liberal Arts Test [b]	Total Scores
Shanghai[a]	150	150	**150**	210	n/a	660
% of Total Scores	22.3%	22.3%	**22.3%**	31.8%	n/a	100%
Most Provinces	150	150	**150**	n/a	300	750
% of Total Scores	20%	20%	**20%**	n/a	40%	100%

Note. Adapted from "2019 年上海市普通高等学校秋季统一考试招生工作办法[Guidelines of 2019 Shanghai College Entrance Examination] (No. AA4307003-2019-006)," by Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, 2019a, p.4. Adapted from "教育部关于做好 2019 年普通高校招生工作的通知 [guidelines of 2019 National College Entrance Examination] (No. 360A15-07-2019-0005-1)," by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2019, pp.5-8.
[a] Cities like Shanghai and Beijing have different standards of College Entrance Examination. For example, Shanghai students can choose any three subjects from physics, chemistry, biology, history, politics and geography.
[b] In most other provinces, students need to choose either science based or liberal arts based subjects in Grade 11. Science Test includes physics, chemistry and biology, and scores of each subject are equal; liberal arts test includes history, politics and geography, and scores of each subject are equal.

Recent data also identifies the marked increase of Chinese-English bilingual education. In Shanghai, the Education Commission announced the expansion of bilingual programs in 2001. As a result, about 100 schools including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools started bilingual programs in 2001 (Lin, 2001), and the number increased to 260 schools in 2003 (Su, 2003) and aimed to increase to 500 schools by 2010 (Shen, 2004). In other provinces or cities, the governments also invested effort and resources to introduce bilingual programs. For example, in Guangdong, Liaoning, and Shandong, the provincial Ministry of Education launched the "100 bilingual education schools" project (Song & Yan, 2004). In the private sector, bilingual or ESL programs developed at incredible speed throughout China as well. For example, in Shanghai alone, more than 3,000 English Language training centers opened (Zhang, 2003).

From parents' perspectives, they believe that mastering English will bring a comparative advantage to their children's future education and employment (Gil & Adamson, 2011; Hu, 2007; Nunan, 2017). Therefore, parents are willing to pay higher tuition fees to enroll their children in bilingual schools and private English training centers. Additionally, parents also believe that the earlier children learn English the better. The media promotes the belief that the golden age to learn English is three years old. As a result, young children start to learn English as early as three years old, and sometimes even earlier. For example, one of my friends considered sending her 17-month-old daughter to learn English. In order to meet parents' demands, many preschools, kindergartens and other private English training companies introduce English in early childhood education (Zhang, 2003). Using my last job as an example, my company provided English training programs for 3-18 years old students, but its biggest market share is the programs aimed at 3-6 years old children.

English teaching methodology in China. English teaching in China is more like a teacher-centered, grammar-based and test-focused methodology (Cheng, 2011; Huang, 2005), which leads to the phenomenon of high-scores in the test but low-competence in use. The need for high scores often determines what English programs are like, what students learn and how teachers teach. English teachers in China emphasize vocabulary, grammar and other linguistic related details. As Cheng (2011) described, in the typical classroom in China:

Teachers devote almost all their effort to explaining texts in detail, analyzing grammar, paraphrasing sentences, asking detailed questions about the texts and making students practice patterns, read aloud and retell the text until they very nearly, if not literally, learn every word of the texts by heart. (p.135)

In addition, parental attitudes toward English learning also influences teaching approaches. Parents want their young children to learn vocabulary, sentences and dialogues, and to demonstrate this learning in as many ways as possible, and at as advanced a level as possible. As a copywriter in an English company, the researcher also witnessed the phenomenon that when the topics pertained to how to effectively recite vocabulary or remember grammar rules, the articles would go viral among parents.

The role of play in early English as a second language acquisition. The role of play in young children's ESL acquisition also can find its rationale from Piaget and Vygotsky. In symbolic play, interactive and scaffolding play settings, children have chances to use and learn a new language through interactions with peers and teachers (Choi, 2016; Piker, 2013). Additionally, jointly-selected play by children also creates safe places where children feel confident and less anxious (Cho & Kim, 2018; Choi, 2016). Specifically, Piker (2013) observed how peer interactions in play help preschool-aged children foster English language skills. She concluded that play motivates children to develop their oral English and to use English more. In play, social interactions are unavoidable; therefore, to collaborate with their English-speaking peers and to continue playing, children have to use English.

Datta (2004) regarded peer interactions in literacy acquisition as "friendship literacy". In Datta's study, interactions among four ESL children and one native English-speaking child were observed. Friendship and acceptance within the group allowed non-English-speaking students to talk freely without being afraid of mistakes. Additionally, five children with different cultural backgrounds formed a sociocultural context in which children fluidly interchanged the roles of expert and apprentice and co-created knowledge. In play settings, the scaffolding role of the teacher that helps students learn a second language is discussed by many educators (Chappell, 2014, 2016; Forman, 2008; Mei-Ju & Ching-Chi, 2014). Chappell (2014, 2016) especially emphasized the

importance of examining how verbal scaffolding, also described as inquiry dialogue, engages and motivates students to use English.

Parental Involvement in Children's Language Learning

There is robust evidence to support the call for parental involvement in children's learning, including "parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community" (Epstein & Salinas, 2004, p.13). Parents' involvement and engagement in children's education, and connection with schools and teachers are crucial to both children's academic performance and non-cognitive development. Parental involvement contributes to improving children's social and emotional functioning, including enhancing their self-esteem, self-management, and social awareness (Christenson, 2004), and increasing their positive attitudes toward schools and teachers (Albright & Weissberg, 2009). From an academic performance perspective, constructive parental involvement is associated with children's high academic performance (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012), high parent-oriented motivation and self-regulated learning (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012), lower grade retention and drop-out rates (Barnard, 2004), and reduction in challenging behaviors (Stormshak, Dishion, & Falkenstein, 2009). Especially for preschool learners, parental engagement is considered crucial for children's school achievement, as it helps children to adapt into the school system and encourages children's awareness of their role as learners which predicts children's future outcomes (Pelletier & Brent, 2002).

Considering children's language, and specifically English language learning, studies also confirmed the positive relationships between parental involvement and children's English learning motivation and achievement (Butler, 2014), and the significant predictor role of parental involvement in children's readiness for school (Lau, Li, & Rao, 2011). Lau et al. identified two major features regarding Chinese parental involvement and children's readiness: (a) more home-based involvement (e.g. parent instruction, homework checking, language and cognitive activities, etc.) than school-based involvement (e.g. parent-teacher conference), and (b) home-based involvement predicting children's readiness. In terms of ESL learning, research focusing on home practices for children's ESL learning found a significant positive correlation between home English practices and children's English attainment (Kwok, 2015). In Kwok's

study, five parental practices were identified: the use of multi-media materials, English written materials, shared reading, executing English study plans or activities, and speaking English with children. Kwok concluded the more frequently parents involved themselves in children's ESL learning using the above five home practices, the better their children would be in English.

Given the home learning environment, Dearing and Tang (2009) provided a conceptual framework, describing both the inside and outside elements that influence children's achievement, to support the significance of home learning environment. According to Dearing and Tang's explanation, the home learning environment is one of the determining factors of children's learning, and it is influenced by parents and children. From the left to right side, the influences on children's achievement change from indirect to direct. If viewing children and families as inside elements that are much closer to children, school systems (childcare, preschool, and school), policies, neighborhood, and social relationships are outside elements that may directly (schools) or indirectly (friend support) influence children's achievement.

Figure 4. Conceptual model of the home learning environment
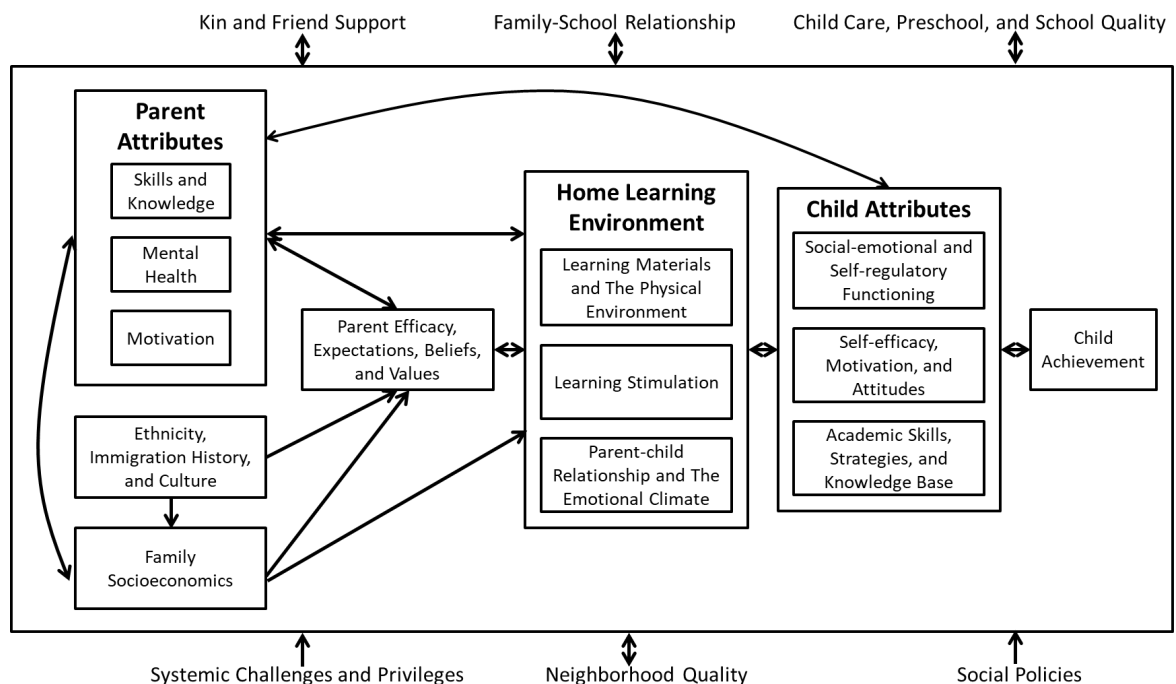
Note. Conceptual model of the home learning environment and its connection to more general family systems, child achievement, and development contexts outside the family, from "The home learning environment and achievement during childhood", by E. Dearing & S. Tang, 2009, York, NY: Routledge, p.132.

Looking at the pathway of the home learning environment, parents' personal characteristics influence and are influenced by parental efficacy, expectations, beliefs and values which determine what the home learning environment looks like. Reflecting on the study conducted by Cheung and Pomerantz (2012), within the home environment, children internalized parents' expectations and beliefs about learning and achievement. High parent-oriented learning motivation predicted children's self-regulatory learning and ultimate school engagement and attainment, as children strived to meet parents' expectations.

Constraints of Implementing Play into Classroom

The biggest barrier to play-based learning could be concerns and disagreements from parents. Today globalization and intense competition lead to a tendency to evaluate individuals using standardized test scores. From the parents' point of view, whether and how their children can be prepared for the current societal demand is their first consideration. The anxiety of preparing children to satisfy society's requirements urges parents to turn to traditional education which focuses on academic performance (Shipley, 2008). Parents do not necessarily consider the rich learning and engagement that can occur in play; additionally, they think children should play at home and learn at school. The whole society also plays a significant role in shaping parents' dismal views on play, like the 1990s Back to Basics Movement (Shipley, 2008). The direct outcome is the increased demands on the academically-oriented curriculum in primary schools, and even in preschools. The pressure of academic requirements from parents, school administration and other teachers became a must-consider factor for teachers when integrating play into classroom (Lynch, 2015). Besides academic demands, parents also care about potential dangers and injuries caused by play, especially in risky play (Gray, 2011).

Teachers are vital to ensure play-based learning implementation. However, some teachers admitted that they misused play in learning and separated play from actual learning (Cheng & Stimpson, 2004) and, instead, play was mostly used in specific circumstances and objects. Cheng and Stimpson found although all the teachers claimed

their intention was applying play, their practices failed to represent the child-centered and constructivist perspectives of play. Play was considered as a teaching instrument. As a result, pictures and stories, because of their strong influence in motivating students, were referred to as play. Teachers' misunderstanding of play and their role contributes to the lack of cohesion between play and learning. As discussed by Fesseha and Pyle (2016), other challenges were also faced by teachers, including limited class time, inappropriate class size, lack of play materials, and the absence of teaching assistants. In summary, teachers always encounter various barriers to the integration of play, including parental factors, school administration and colleague factors and the complex classroom dynamic reasons.

Mapping Chinese K12 Schooling Path

After reviewing recent studies, in China there seems a phenomenon of anxious parents and busy children, as children are enrolled in various academic-oriented and interest-focused extracurricular programs young as 3 years old. It might be difficult for westerners to understand such a phenomenon since in western system schools and parents do not place an academic burden on preschoolers. In order to better understand why Chinese parents plan ahead for their children's learning in accordance with the unique Chinese education system and path, this chapter ends with a general description of what the Chinese Kindergarten to Grade 12 schooling path looks like and an interpretation of key concepts of different entrance examinations. Chinese education systems and Kindergarten to Grade 12 schooling paths are quite different from western systems.

Many Chinese families have a shared understanding and definition of success and the path to success: top primary school, top junior high school, top senior high school, and a top university is the ideal. This all leads, eventually, to a decent job in a top company, and this pathway becomes the meaning of success. Education is viewed as a ticket to success and an important approach to change one's destiny and social class. An old Chinese saying, "Impoverished families can nurture rich sons" represents a Chinese belief in meritocracy which persuades Chinese parents to prepare their children for the top school in each stage of life.

In the last twenty years, both the Chinese education system and parents' decisions related to their children's education have dramatically changed, as evidenced by the

phenomenon of of private schools. Taking primary school as an example, the number of private primary schools increased from 1,806 in 1997 to 6,197 in 2017, an increase of 238% (Ministry of Education, 2017, 1997). Considering the decrease of the total number of primary schools from 628,840 in 1997 to 167,009 in 2017, which decreased 277%, the increase of private primary schools seems significant. Reflecting on parents' comments from the interviews, private schools are characterized as having a teaching methodology that focuses on all areas of development, less testing pressure, low teacher-student ratio, and bilingual education.

However, public schools and private schools have completely different enrollment policies. According to the Education Administration Department, the policy of nearby enrollment is used in public kindergartens, primary and junior secondary schools. It means within the designated geographical area, students can enter the designated public school without examinations. Private schools' enrollment is not regulated by the nearby enrollment policy, they recruit students by holding their own examination or interview without geographical area limit. As private schools are becoming prevalent among Chinese parents, Primary School Entrance Examinations (individual private school examination) and Junior High School Entrance Examinations (individual private school examination) become the major concerns of Chinese parents of preschool and primary school students. Along with Senior High School Entrance Examinations (province-wide examination), National College Entrance Examinations (national wide examination), there are four key milestones in Chinese students' education path as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Chinese K12 Schooling Path.
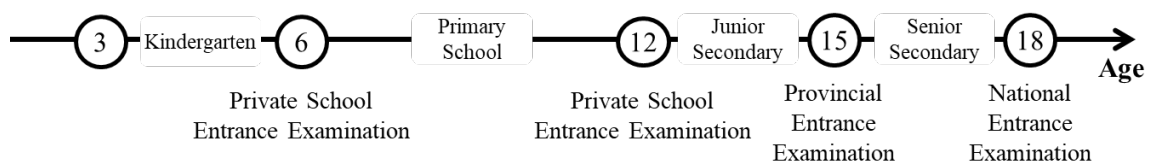
In order to enroll their children in top private schools, parents tend to prepare their children in both academic and non-academic programs. In particular, for preschool parents, even when they are not sure whether they will enroll their children in public primary schools or private ones, they tend to prepare for the private primary school

entrance examination to obtain one more future option, and the preparation usually starts at least one year prior to the actual examination. In the study reported here, the preparation for entrance examinations that parents and teachers repeatedly mention is situated within this context.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, first, I reviewed studies and theories of what play is and what the role of play is in children's development. I found that play turns learning into an interesting process in which children spontaneously and naturally develop physical, cognitive and academic skills.

Then I moved on to look specifically at the relationship between play and children's literacy acquisition. Piaget and Vygotsky are two of the most influential scholars in the field of play and children's development. Both of them advocated respecting children's developmental processes. They valued the importance of play in children's literacy development and encouraged providing a rich play-based environment for children. Vygotsky, in particular, emphasized the teacher's role in scaffolding and peer interactions as a means of enabling children to develop mental functions and acquire language skills. I also reviewed recent studies on how dramatic play and a literacy-rich play environment influence children's language learning. Furthermore, parents' understandings and perceptions about play were discussed from multi-dimensions in terms of parents' socioeconomic status and cultural origins.

Then I reviewed studies on ESL learning. I differentiated ESL and EFL, presented a world-wide prevalence of ESL education, and specifically illustrated the major issues and concerns of ESL education in China. In the last two sections, the benefits of parental involvement in children's development, the constraints of implementing play, and Chinese K12 schooling path were thoroughly explored.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews, and compared perceptions of parents and teachers in China and Canada. This study focused on exploring parents' and teachers' understandings of play in children's ESL learning, teachers' practices of play, and concerns of play from parents and teachers. In this chapter, I will explain semi-structured interview procedures, introduce target participants, elaborate on the data collection and analysis procedures, as well as explore the trustworthiness and validity issues of this research.

Design of the Study

Qualitative research is often used to explore a detailed understanding, perception and attitude of a complex phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). In qualitative research, the researchers collect data either through observation or through conversation with the participants (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2012). Additionally, according to Elliott (2005), qualitative research studies, are also tools of producing data through back and forth conversations. While being actively involved in qualitative research, researchers need to maintain neutrality and avoid intervention in the whole qualitative research process. The research approach is qualitative, but more specifically it is based on narrative research, as narrative research allows for describing individual beliefs, values and life experiences. According to Creswell (2013), "Telling stories is a natural part of life, and individuals all have stories about their experiences to tell others. In this way, narrative research captures an everyday, normal form of data that is familiar to individuals" (p.502). In this research, the major research questions focused on asking parents and teachers to share their beliefs and values about children's English learning, as well as their parental practices or teaching practices.

As one of the qualitative data collection tools, the interview approach provides a narrative environment where an individual participant can "externalize his or her feelings and indicate which elements of those experiences are most significant" (Elliott, 2005, p.4). If quantitative research intends to verify an existing hypothesis, then qualitative research is a way to explore and uncover the perceptions and values of people. There is no prepared manual to guide the researcher to conduct qualitative research, according to Creswell (2014), "The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent" (p.186).

Following Creswell's guidelines of qualitative research, to fully represent the subjects' perception of the central phenomenon, changes of research or interview questions may be unavoidable. Especially during the interview, when participants share an unexpected answer or a new angle which is important to the study, instead of relying on a fixed structure, interviewers need to explore new insights through guiding and probing questions and conversation.

After reviewing many theories of research methods, I chose interview as the main tool to explore parents' and teachers' inner perceptions and concerns regarding play and children's ESL learning. Specifically, an open-ended, semi-structured interview approach was used. I interviewed seven parents and eight teachers, and guided them to express their understandings, practices, and concerns in relation to the role of play in children's literacy acquisition. Additionally, I used the interview questions in a more fluid way.

Settings and Participants

According to the unique feature of qualitative approaches, which focus on a small population to deeply explore a central phenomenon, the sampling strategy of qualitative research is more theoretical or purposeful (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). So, this study intentionally and purposefully involved a small number of parents and teachers.

In the beginning, I planned to recruit four different groups of participants: (a) parents who live in China, (b) teachers of young children who teach English in China, (c) immigrant Chinese parents who live in Canada, and (d) teachers of young children who teach English in Canada. However, when recruiting the participants, it was difficult to reach teachers satisfying all the criteria of teaching ESL to children aged 3-8 years old, and having teaching experience in China before but living and teaching in Canada now. According to Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, and Namey (2005), due to qualitative research's feature of emerging process, researchers can develop a new recruitment strategy or criteria if the initial plan failed to approach certain participants, as long as it fits in research purpose. As the initial intention to recruit the teachers with the above features was to examine whether teachers' attitudes toward play and their play practices would change along with their social location changes. After discussing with my supervisors, I gave up on recruiting the above targeted teachers. However, this study did not discard my intention to compare whether teachers' attitudes change if their location

changes. Therefore, the researcher's supervisors approved the recruitment of foreign teachers who teach ESL to 3-8 years old children in China instead.

Eventually, sixteen subjects were recruited in total, however one parent dropped out prior to the interview. The fifteen participants can be divided into four groups as well: (a) parents who live in China, (b) Chinese teachers of young children who teach English in China (referred as Chinese teachers in the later sections), (c) immigrant Chinese parents who live in Canada, and (d) foreign teachers of young children who teach English in China (referred as foreign teachers in the later sections). As the study's focus is about parents' and teachers' perspectives on play pedagogy in children's ESL learning, especially children aged 3-8 years, all the participants satisfied the following criteria:

Parent: (a) has a child aged 3-8 years old, (b) is the decision-maker in the child's education, and (c) his/ her child has learned English within the last calendar year

Teacher: (a) teaches a child aged 3-8 years old, and (b) teaches ESL

To recruit the participants, an invitation to participate in the study was posted on social media, such as a WeChat parent group, and forwarded to individuals who were likely to be interested. After the interviews with the first two participants, I asked them to recommend potential subjects for the study. In this sense, it was primarily a snowball method of identifying participants. The snowball sampling technique is a participant referral method that participants distribute to potential participants with similar backgrounds and who satisfy the recruitment criteria (Creswell, 2013). I also used my own networking and connections to recruit the subjects. I previously worked in an English training company in China, so I forwarded the research post to teachers and asked them to circulate this research study to those who might be interested. The method can also be viewed as convenience sampling in which the participants are close in proximity to the researchers (Creswell, 2013). To recruit immigrant Chinese parents, I also contacted an employee in Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association (KCCA) to help send out recruitment letters to teachers and parents. To minimize the bias that can be part of snowball sampling, the parent participants were recruited from the same income background (middle-class) in four different cities in China and Canada, and teachers were from three different cities in China. Participants' demographic information is listed in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3 *Demographic Data of Parents*

Pseudonym	Current City	Nationality	Education Background	Relationship to Child	Child's Age	Year of English Learning	Learning Approach
Cathy	Shanghai	China	Master's Degree	Mother	3.5	1 Year at Home, 0.5 Year at Private Institution	Play-Based
Adele	Bengbu	China	College	Mother	5	3 Years at Home, 1 Year at Private Institution	Both
Jenny	Shanghai	China	Master's Degree	Mother	8	3 Years at Private Institution	Both
Shirley	Shanghai	China	Master's Degree	Mother	4.5	1 Year at Private Institution	Both
Leah[a]	Shanghai	China	Doctoral Degree	Mother	5	3 Years at home, 3 years at private daycare and kindergarten	Play-Based
Kevin[a]	Shanghai	China	Bachelor's Degree	Father	3	2 Years at home	Play-Based
Lara[b]	Kamloops	China	Master's Degree	Mother	8	5 Years at Home, 2 Years at Private Institution	Play-Based
Tracy[c]	Vancouver	Canada	Bachelor's Degree	Mother	8, 4	Daughter: 4 Years in China, 2 Years in Canada Son: 1 year in Canada	Both
Norah[c]	Vancouver	Canada	Bachelor's Degree	Mother	9, 4	Daughter: 2 Years in China, 3 Years in Canada Son: 1 year in Canada	Both

Note. [a] Leah and Kevin participated in this research in both the role of teacher and parent, however their understanding of play and young children's ESL acquisition from teachers' perspectives are mainly focused and discovered.
[b] Lara just moved to Canada with her family, but has not got Canadian citizenship.
[c] Tracy and Norah immigrated to Canada many years ago and have got Canadian citizenship.

Table 4 *Demographic Data of Teachers*

Pseudonym	Gender	Current City	Nationality	Education Background	Program	Teaching Years	Teaching Approach[1]
Becky	Female	Shanghai	China	Master's Degree/ Foreign University	TESOL	13	Play-Based
Debra	Female	Tianjin	China	Bachelor's Degree	English	5	Play-Based
Kevin	Male	Shanghai	China	Bachelor's Degree	English	7	Both
Leah	Female	Shanghai	China	Doctoral Degree / Foreign University	TESOL; Curriculum Study	8	Play-Based
Kristin	Female	Shanghai	U.S.	Bachelor's Degree	Business, TEFL	4	Play-Based
Justin	Male	Shanghai	U.S.	Bachelor's Degree	Politics, Euro History, TEFL	4	Play-Based
Andrew	Male	Hefei	U.K.	Bachelor's Degree	English, TEFL & DELTA certificate	10	Play-Based
Angelina	Female	Changsha	South Africa	Bachelor's Degree	Psychology, TEFL	8	Play-Based

Note. The teaching approach is defined by the teachers themselves. In the finding section, there will be an elaborate discussion about what their teaching approaches look like and how to define their teaching approaches.

In reviewing the participants' demographic data, most of them are from a first-tier city, Shanghai. China varies greatly when comparing first, second and third-tier cities in terms of socio-economic status, education level and other factors. In China, first-tier cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, represent the most developed areas of politics, commerce, education and more. They are considered to have huge political influence, economical advantage, and educational attraction in China. Given the participants' educational background, all but one have a bachelor's degree or above. Five participants have master's degree and one has a doctoral degree. Therefore, in terms of participants' socio-economic status, although I did not intentionally collect information on their socio-economic status, we can see that most participants are from the middle-class group.

My Personality as a Researcher

Social identity defines a person from biological structures (e.g. sex, sexual orientation, body type, etc.) and culturally or socially structured characteristics (e.g. gender, race, economic status) (Gopaldas, 2013). Social location is where we are now and whom we are going to be in the future. Social location may evolve over time based on "the dynamic positions we occupy in society" (Daynes, 2007, p.5). Compared to social location which defines a person's current cultural and social characteristics, social identity is relatively stable, it more reflects who we were and why we were such "we".

I am a Chinese female from a middle-class family. I lived in Shanghai for more than ten years, during which time I completed my undergraduate studies. I worked in an English training company for three years. The major responsibility of my job was to provide fun English materials for children aged 3-12 years, to suggest playful home English activities, and to introduce western educational theory to parents. My working experiences and observations led to my preliminary interest in conducting interviews to learn more about Chinese young children's English acquisition. Being educated in a traditional Chinese banking education model and believing in the Chinese style of "meritocracy" myth or "hard study" myth, my participants and I shared certain patterns of behavior, notion and beliefs. I expected that my position as a Chinese person would aid me in connecting with my participants and understanding their perceptions. According to Greene (2014), if the researcher shares the same social structure, cultural characteristics,

economic status or other social identities, then the study can be defined as insider research. Therefore, as an insider, my positionality and identity empowered me "profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field" (Chavez, 2008, p.481). However, my positionality also may lead to a lack of objectivity, because the knowledge which benefits me may also place me in the risk of making assumptions.

However, insider and outsider status do not always stand at two opposite extremes, at times they are fluid. As Naples (1996) explained, "Insiderness and outsiderness are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed by community members" (p.373). As a graduate student studying in Canada for one and a half years, my identity, especially my mindset is shaped by current location. I update my knowledge of curriculum, teaching methodology, teacher-student relationships, etc. In this sense, I situate myself in an outsider position which allows me to examine the research topic and questions at a certain distance. In addition, as I'm not a parent, it also makes me humbly listen to parents' sharing and keeps me objective.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection. This study explored parents' and teachers' understanding of the role of play in young children ESL acquisition from both an insider and outsider perspective. I collected data from summer to fall in 2019. Data were collected through interviews with parents and teachers focusing on their perspectives on play and children's ESL learning. The use of semi-structured interviews not only ensured insights related to major issues but also allowed the researcher to be flexible to emergent changes. For example, after completing the first interview, I heard an interesting phenomenon where parents' attitudes change depending on the age of the child. So, I decided to add one question to try to verify if this change is an individual case or a common trend.

Participants' words about their feelings and experiences are the major components of interview data. Interviews were the primary data source for this study, accordingly, being an effective interviewer is extremely crucial. I followed Merriam's (1998) guidelines to conduct the fifteen interviews. The first principle is to ask good questions to collect meaningful data. I did the pilot interviews to get practice and to revise interview

questions as well. In particular, I avoided the following types of questions: "multiple questions", "leading questions", and "yes-or-no questions" (Merriam, 1998, p.79).

As the recruitment poster already set the criteria of participants, I did not design a background questionnaire. I collected demographic data during the interviews. The interview questions were designed based on the research questions and focused on exploring parents' and teachers' interpretations of play and young children's ESL development. This research involved both Chinese and foreign participants (e.g. U.S. teachers who teach ESL in China). Interviews were conducted either in Chinese or in English depending on participants' first language. All telephone interviews were audio-taped for later transcription and translation.

Many researchers encourage collecting and analyzing data simultaneously (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 1998). As Merriam (1998) put: "Without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitive, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed. Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating" (p.162). Therefore, I completed the transcription, translation and coding after each interview. I also considered this method, analyzing the data soon after data collection, as a way to eliminate misunderstanding and misinterpretation of participants' perceptions. Whenever something was confusing, I directly asked for explanations when the participants still remembered what they had said. For example, when I finished an interview with one teacher who shared her observations in the Montessori kindergarten, I felt confused about the differences between the Montessori schools in China and Canada; then I immediately asked clarifications from her. Additionally, data analysis directly after data collection is also beneficial as it means there is time to adjust the interview questions, interview procedure and interview method. For example, after talking with the first participant and realizing the phenomena of Chinese parents' attitude change about play-based learning, I added one question to verify if it is an individual case or a trend as mentioned previously.

Data analysis. The researcher utilized Creswell's (2014) data analysis pattern as shown below in Figure 4 to analyze the data step by step. First, all the interviews were transcribed after each interview. Then the researcher sorted and arranged all the materials into different types for later reading and analysis. The next step was to code all data.

Coding is a process to narrow many pages of raw data into five to seven typical themes. It involves five steps: "initially read through text data; divide the text into segments of information; label the segments with codes; reduce overlap and redundancy of codes; collapse codes into themes" (Creswell, 2013, p.244).

Figure 6. Data Analysis Process
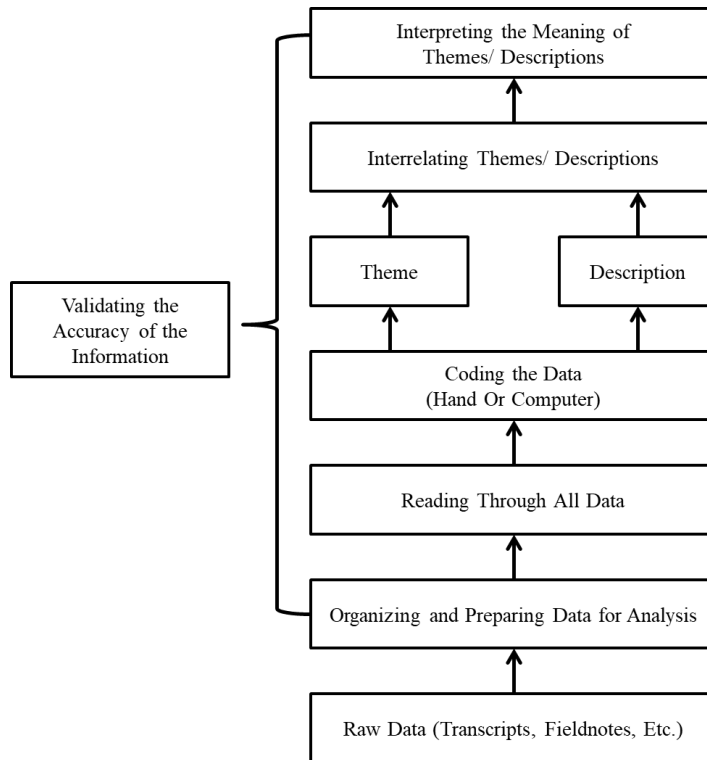
Note. Adapted from "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.)," by J. W. Creswell, 2014, Thousand Oaks, US: SAGE Publications, p.197.

Specifically, I followed Saldaña's (2009) two cycles of coding methods. In the first cycle coding process, the descriptive coding method was applied to summarize the interview transcripts to basic topics. An example of first-round coding is displayed below in Table 5. In the second cycle coding process, I rearranged, reanalyzed and related data with one another based on the first-round coding. To develop the categories and themes, a pattern coding method was applied in this study. According to Saldana (2009), pattern coding is an approach of labeling similar codes and grouping them into themes or categories, an example of second cycle coding is presented in Table 6. After the two rounds of coding, findings were formulated based on the coded themes.

Table 5 *First Cycle Coding Example*

Interview Data	1st Cycle Coding
我觉得游戏的话也不是说让孩子随便玩 [s1]，它其实还是一定会有一个大的课题目标 [s2]，然后有组织循序渐进的带着孩子在里面玩 [s3]。在玩的过程中让孩子他学到相应的知识 [s4]，让他比较开心的去学。我觉得特别早期的学习一定不是枯燥的，不是让孩子觉得很难过的那种形式 [s5]。所以应试的东西我会引入，但是不会这么早引入。学到后期，孩子肯定是要自己花心思，需要努力的 [s6]，所以应试东西我其实也没有那么排斥，但是只是什么时间引入的问题而已 [s7]。 I think play doesn't mean freely play[s1], and play always has its purpose and structure[s2]. Within its structure, the adult systematically and incrementally[s3] leads child to play and meanwhile learn specific knowledge[s4] in playful way. I think in early years, learning can't be boring and make child feel tough[s5]. Eventually, I will go with test focused programs, but never at the very beginning. I think when children are enough old, they definitely should put great effort into learning[s6]. So I don't reject test-focused learning, it is just about when is the right timing[s7]. (Shirley, Mother of boy, aged 4 ½ years)	[s1]not free play [s2]play objective [s3]structured and systematic [s4]learn knowledge through play [s5]learning being happy [s6]learning needs efforts [s7]timing of introducing test-focused learning

Table 6 *Second Cycle Coding Example*

Interview Data	1st Cycle	2nd Cycle	Themes
他们是有书有绘本的 [s1]，我们会把绘本借回来，然后我会跟他念会跟他讲 [s2]，他自己也会把一些他比较关注比较喜欢的那几页，说给我听，讲的很明白 [s3]。 I will borrow the picture book[s1] from his school and read along with him at home[s2]. In the meantime, he will show me the pages and contents he likes, tell me the story and explain it[s3]. (Shirley mother of boy, aged 4 ½ years)	[s1]picture books [s2]shared reading [s3]willingness to speak	s1, a1 → s2, a2 → s3, a4 →	Family literacy Parental involvement Benefits of play-based learning: Confidence in speaking
当时放的是有一个早教叫巴塔木儿歌 [a1,a2]，音乐还挺嗨的，她就跟着很兴奋 [a3]，他会跟着里面的单词念 [a4]。 The first rhythm series I played for her was Badanamu[a1, a2]. The music and rhythm were really high and excited which made her excited as well[a3], so she sang and read the word in the song together[a4]. (Adele, mother of girl aged five years old)	[a1]rhythm [a2]mother played rhythm for child [a3]child's interest and engagement [a4]willingness to speak	a3 →	Benefits of play-based learning: Interest and motivation

Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness

In the education field, the reliability and validity of the research are important. As Merriam (1995) stated: "In applied fields like education, social work, counseling, and administration, the question of the trustworthiness of research findings looms large; after all, much research is designed to understand and improve practice" (p. 51). Therefore, reflecting on Merriam's (1995, 1998) theory, I utilized the following strategies to ensure the reliability and validity of this study.

Peer debriefing. An extended discussion with peers on the research design, data collection and analysis, and findings helped the researcher identify the underlying problems and keep an open mind to improve their study. Additionally, asking peers to examine the data and findings was a way to make sure of the plausibility of this study (Merriam, 1995).

At the beginning of this study, I thoroughly discussed the research purpose, method design, interview protocol, data collection, and analysis process and schedule with my supervisors, to obtain professional and constructive feedback. During the study, I asked my supervisors and other graduate students in the education program to listen to data collection and analysis procedures to make sure the procedures are concrete and convincing. In particular, many of the interviews were conducted in Chinese, and those interviews were transcribed in Chinese. After discussion with supervisors, I selected one interview to translate it into English, line by line and word by word. I invited two peers who are also Chinese to verify the accuracy of the translation. This process ensured the research committee that I have the ability to correctly translate the interviews into English. For all of the other Chinese interviews, I coded them in English and translated the quotes, and had two Chinese peers to verify the accuracy.

Member checks. As one of the methods of credibility, member checks involve inviting participants back to check whether the data and interpretations of the data are correct (Merriam, 1995). In this study, I shared the interview transcripts and a one-page summary of final findings with the participants to make sure that their words and ideas had been thoroughly and correctly understood. Additionally, in this process, all the participants were encouraged to comment on their transcripts and the final report.

Triangulation. This is a process to ensure trustworthiness through multiple data sources, multiple investigators, multiple theoretical frameworks and multiple methodologies. According to Merriam's explanation, if a specific phenomenon can be viewed in an interview, an observation, and in theory or other sources, this phenomenon can be perceived as "truthfully" (Merriam, 1995). In this study, I interviewed different types of participants to obtain general insights and perceptions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described research methods, data collection procedures, and the data analysis process. A semi-structured interview format was used to explore the research questions of this study. As I wanted to examine whether parents' and teachers' attitudes will change according to their location, a comparative study was conducted. Parents and teachers who are living in China and Canada were interviewed. As to data collection, interviews, recording and transcripts were included. In addition, data analysis followed Creswell's (2014) process. In order to establish trustworthiness, I used peer debriefing, member check and triangulation.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

I will present findings based on data analysis of fifteen semi-structured interviews with both parents and teachers. The findings will cover the following research questions, but will not be limited to the research questions:

1. How do parents and teachers understand the role of play in children's ESL learning?

2. How do teachers use play in their classroom practices?

3. What are the general constraints regarding the use of play from teachers' perspectives?

4. What are parents' concerns about using play?

Parents Beliefs in Children's Development and Learning

The comprehensive description of parents' culturally-shaped understanding of child's development and English learning will help to understand Chinese parents' interpretations of play, their practices of play at home, their considerations about choosing English programs, and their concerns about play.

Parents' expectations of child's development. According to the interview data, parents' expectations of development can be described from two categories: the holistic sense of development and specific learning or English learning development. When asking, "What do you think is most important for the development of your child?", parents were encouraged to share their thoughts from a broad lens without any fixed definition of child's development. Very few parents specifically limited their answers to this question to learning or English. Most parents shared their expectations about rearing a healthy and happy child who is able to find his or her own interest, maintain it and turn that interest into a specialty, and develop some soft skills like critical thinking, independent thinking, and problem-solving. For example, as Shirley stated:

> I hope he can develop his own interests and hobbies, eventually become a happy person who enjoys life and is content with himself. So at this moment, I will provide him more new things, and help him find his interest, focus on this interest and eventually turn this interest into his specialty (Shirley, mother of boy aged 4 ½ years).

In particular, immigrant parents had high expectations of raising a healthy and happy child, so they rejected the notion of pushing children's learning too much. It is also the parents' main reason for choosing to immigrate to Canada. As one immigrant mother Tracy answered the question pertaining to, whether they took their child's education into consideration when deciding to immigrate:

> For sure, giving children a better and relaxing education is my priority, otherwise, I won't come to Canada. Like me, I'm old enough, coming to Canada means I need to start over again. So, parents are sacrificing (Tracy, immigrant mother of girl aged 8 years and boy aged 4 years).

Overall, many parents valued children's developmental pace and individual developmental differences. For example, Adele and Cathy asserted that they hoped their daughters would learn age-appropriate knowledge, and they did not expect planning to push their daughters' development ahead. Only one parent particularly linked child's development to learning performance and habit. Jenny said,

> From my perspective, children are always lazy and need a push. So, parents should keep children in a tight schedule and don't lose the learning pace. Because, if children study in the same way and pace all along, then they will be familiar with the schedule and expect new things and knowledge, and they won't feel tired or consider such intense study pace as a burden (Jenny, mother of girl aged 8 years).

Parents' expectations for their child's development highly influence their consideration and decisions to discover children's interests as early as possible. Many parents in this research study also enrolled their children in other interest-based courses, such as sports (Shirley, Cathy, Lara, Jenny), logic (Shirley), playing an instrument (Lara, Tracy, Leah, Norah, Jenny), dancing (Adele, Cathy, Lara), drawing (Adele, Shirley), Go or chess (Lara), and others. Besides academic-based programs, parents in this study enrolled their children in more than three interest-focused programs, showing parents' desires to raise a whole child.

Parents' expectations of English learning. When narrowing down child's development into English learning, in China, parents' expectations on their children's English development changed which was hugely influenced by the child's age. Before

entering primary school, parents' major goal of sending their children to extra-curriculum English programs is to ignite children's interest in English. Parents of preschool children expressed they did not have a specific goal of how many English words and sentence structures their children could learn. Shirley said,

> I don't have any academic expectations for his English. For now, my only purpose is to maintain his interest in English. My mother in law asked me before: "Since he learned English quite long, how many words has he learned?" I replied: "I send him to learn English is not for test, is for communication." I hope he has courage to speak. Because I take the disadvantage of being shy to communicate, I know learning English is not to calculate how many alphabets or words you remember (Shirley, mother of boy aged 4 ½ years).

As shown in Shirley's statement, the development of children's English communication skills is the parents' major wish. However, the parents in this study do not set goals for communication skills. They are fine if children do not show obvious improvement in speaking. In Cathy's words, "As long as she wants to use English and is not afraid to speak English, that's enough."

As discussed before in the section of Mapping Chinese K12 Schooling Path, parents who are planning to enroll their children in private schools will start to prepare for the entrance examination in advance. In this case, preschool parents also expect their children to accumulate vocabulary and test skills. For example, Shirley planned to enroll her son in a private primary school, so besides the English picture book reading program which focuses on a playful teaching approach, she also sent her son to another more academic-based English program. One reason she chose this program is that the teachers there are familiar with the policy of private primary school entrance examinations and they know what kind of skills private primary school are going to test.

In addition, in China, the age of three is advertised as the golden time for children to learn another language by private English training companies and this is firmly believed by Chinese parents. According to SmartStudy and Sina's survey (2018), 49% of parents believe children should start to learn English as early as 3-6 years old. The trend of learning English in the early years is also represented in the findings of this study.

Parents believed learning English as early as three years old is beneficial to cultivate their interests in English and develop more standard pronunciation and intonation. Jenny said:

> Comparing to my generation, today children's speaking is better, especially in pronunciation and intonation. Probably, her sentence or grammar is not authentic, but the language flow is beautiful. It's the benefit of learning English early (Jenny, mother of girl aged 8 years).

The need for authentic pronunciation even led to Lara, an English teacher in junior secondary school, to decide to send her daughter for an online English program which only recruits teachers from North America rather than teach herself because she thought her English pronunciation is not standard.

However, once children reach primary school age, parents have a specific and high expectation of English achievement in vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar. As a result, parents reject play behaviors, instead preferring more exercises or other academically driven practices. Furthermore, as for immigrant parents and children, they tend to bring their beliefs and practice in learning English to Canada. Outside public school time, immigrant Chinese parents in this study gave extra practices or enrolled their children in extra English programs focusing on vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. For example, Lara asked her eight year old daughter to recite vocabulary for 20 minutes every day. Norah enrolled her daughter in an English program which is run by Koreans and focuses on test skills and reading skills. In Norah's words:

> This program is even much more intensive than Chinese institutions. Teachers there assign several books a week for students to read, in addition, students need to memorize words and complete assignments (Norah, immigrant mother of girl aged 9 years and boy aged 4 years).

The different expectations of children's English learning varying according to children's age are also observed and described by teachers, as teacher Kevin said:

> Parents of preschool students expect more on play. They send their children to English programs to expect children to play under teachers' guidance. What and how much the children learn does not matter. After the class, parents may review what the teacher has taught, or may not. Parents care little about results. However, starting from primary school age, parents' focus and only concern turn to scores.

So when teaching primary school students, private institutions should pay attention to how to align their teaching target and objective with public school (Kevin, Chinese teacher, father of girl aged 3 years).

The change in parents' attitude is also represented in the change of institutions' market share. Teacher Andrew, a teacher training director, shared his observations about the change of market share from the management perspective. He pointed out:

So we lose a lot of students to centers like the New Oriental (新东方, one of the biggest and most famous test-oriented training schools) which is more to getting students through tests really. So we find that we're a lot more successful with kids aged three to eleven years old. And then we lose a lot of students when they become teenagers because parents become so obsessed with tests (Andrew, foreign teacher).

Immigrant parents' anxiety. The Canadian social environment and education system is more relaxed, which is parents' initial motivation for immigrating. However, immigrant Chinese parents in this study showed their anxiety because they brought in their understandings and practices of learning from China and compared it with Canadian system. The two education systems are described by interviewed parents as being on the two opposite extremes, one is too pushy, and the other one is too loose. Parents questioned the effectiveness of Canadian teaching. Therefore, after experiencing a certain period of time with the Canadian education system and teaching approaches, immigrant parents tended to question their decision of moving to Canada. For example, Norah clearly explicated she felt some regret as she thought the Canadian education is too loose and is failing to provide foundational knowledge, whereas China covers this. Therefore, parents have to provide extra lessons for their children which becomes pressure for immigrant parents. Lara shared:

At least I hope she can catch up with the Chinese education pace, especially in basic knowledge. I'm not meaning Canadian system should keep a match with Chinese one. I mean the total amount of knowledge I provide for her should be no less than Chinese school, at least in mathematics. As to Chinese, I can't give her lessons, but at least, I hope she knows Chinese vocabularies (Lara, immigrant mother of girl aged 8 years).

In Lara's case, her daughter is asked to spend 20 minutes on oral arithmetic practices and one hour on Chinese regarding handwriting and reading. Other immigrant parents showed a similar trend of enrolling their children into extra academic-based curriculum programs.

Table 7 *Immigrant Children Extra Academic-based Programs*

Pseudonym	Age	Extra curriculum programs	Time (hour)
Tracy's daughter	8	Chinese, Mathematics	Not mention
Norah's daughter	9	Chinese, Mathematics, English (reading and writing)	1
Lara's daughter	8	Chinese, Mathematics, English (vocabulary)	1.5

Immigrant parents' anxiety may be due to the unknowns related to Canadian education, which is extremely different from Chinese system, as Tracy shared:

I feel like, comparing China and Canada, both are not relaxing. I thought it would be easier and more relaxing in Canada, however it's not. Parents are anxious because of their unknown about the Canadian system and the future. Parents in China feel anxious because of the scores and rankings. However, parents here are anxious as they don't know what will happen in the future and parents haven't experienced it before…Immigrant parents haven't studied in Canada and don't know how primary school teachers teach. So compared what teachers do in China, they tend to question whether teachers are taking their responsibility (Tracy, immigrant mother of girl aged 8 years and boy aged 4 years).

It is also worth noting that, as to immigrant parents, English learning is no more their big concern; rather, Chinese becomes their priority. All three immigrant parents expect their children to master Chinese both in speaking and writing. However, as Chinese is no longer for communication or testing, children lose their meaning and motivation to learn it. In addition, parents do not have a systematic teaching approach, and they worry that their children will lose their Chinese in the future.

What Parents Value of Play in Children's ESL Acquisition

This section answers research question one "How do parents and teachers understand the role of play in children's ESL learning". In order to uncover parents

values and beliefs about play-based learning, Chinese parents and immigrant parents were interviewed. With respect to parents who live in China now, their perceptions about play focused on their children's learning experiences at private English training programs and home learning experiences. However, immigrant parents shared their understanding by comparing the two educational systems of China and Canada.

Parents' understanding of the value of children's play. Parents' understanding of and value for the use of play in children's development and cognitive learning is paradoxical. On one hand, all parents in this study agreed that play is beneficial for young children's development in terms of social skills, emotional intelligence, logical thinking, interest and motivation, concentration, etc. On the other hand, especially for parents who are preparing their children for primary school entrance examination or junior secondary school entrance examination, although they admitted that play-based learning is beneficial for children's learning, they questioned the effectiveness. As a result, they tended to reject a play-based approach and chose more academic-focused and examination-oriented teaching approaches.

As preschool children's parents do not have an urgent need for test scores and their expectations of English are more likely to ignite interest, they valued the contributions of play in building a solid foundation of English, providing a situated language environment, and promoting cognitive and non-cognitive achievement. As Cathy stated:

> Play is a child's inborn ability, and it's also a socialized activity. As to children, before entering the real socialized "adult" world, they can learn rules and norms through play. They also can interact with others which is also a learning process. And I don't think play should always have some purposes. Sometimes, play is spontaneous and is just for fun, however, children will learn something during this process (Cathy, mother of girl aged 3 ½ years).

Parents' understanding of free play and structured play varies. Unlike Cathy who thought that play could have no specific purpose, Jenny and Shirley posited that play should be conducted in a specific structure and for a specific purpose. In their understanding, free play is useless and meaningless.

If it is just free play without any educational purpose, it's meaningless. To get children excited, concentrated or participated in learning, some institutions introduce play into classroom, but I think this kind of play is useless. Play-based learning is more than play, besides enhancing children's interest, it helps children to remember target knowledge through play (Jenny, mother of girl aged 8 years). I think play doesn't mean freely play, and play always has its purpose and structure. Within its structure, the adult systematically and incrementally leads child to play and meanwhile learn specific knowledge in a playful way (Shirley, mother of boy aged 4 ½ years).

Examining Jenny and Shirley's children's current stages, it is easy to conclude that parents' expectations and focus on English will eventually influence their understanding and attitude towards play. Both Jenny and Shirley are planning to enroll their children in private schools. Jenny's daughter is in grade three and is nearing junior secondary school entrance examination, while Shirley's son is in kindergarten level two and is nearing the primary school entrance examination. As a result, they perceive a need for improving their children's English scores and mastering testing skills. Parents like Jenny and Shirley questioned the effectiveness of play in promoting children's academic performance. They admitted that play helps improve academic performance regarding scores, but it tends to be a long process. So once their children reach a specific age, when test scores are needed, parents will give in to academic-based and examination-oriented programs. When asking preschool parents to imagine their choice of academic-focused or play-based programs at children's primary school age, they indicated they would expect more of specific English knowledge, like vocabulary, sentence, and grammar. In Adele's words, "In primary school, I hope she can learn more vocabularies, after all, she has to attend various tests hold by her primary school". There is a conflict between the ideal of the play approach and the reality of public school test system. As Jenny said:

If you have enough time and a suitable environment to accumulate, it definitely improves scores. However, the fact is child's time is limited. In this case, parents are inclined to choose the program that will improve children's learning effectively in a short period of time. Who doesn't want their child to be happy and learn through play? However, play has its cost, when the children are left behind,

do you think they are happy? Language learning starts from learning the foundation of vocabulary, if you don't know enough words, you can' make sentences. So before building a house, she should lay a solid foundation. However, the process of building the foundation must be tough and painful (Jenny, mother of girl aged 8 years).

Furthermore, parents' preference for academic-focused programs is also derived from the fear of their children being left behind, if all the other children are enrolled in extra-curricular programs. This quote from Cathy explains most parents' dilemma:

When reaching primary school age, parents becoming push is understandable, although I know most parents don't want to become such anxious parents. I read a vivid description of anxious parents' dilemmas. Imagine you're in the theater, if the people in front of you stand up, you have no choice, but to stand up as well (Cathy, mother of girl aged 3 ½ years).

Parents' dilemma is also recognized by both Chinese teachers and foreign teachers (referring to foreign teacher who teaches English in China). All teachers described the phenomenon of parents' anxiety increasing beginning when their children are of primary school age or even younger. According to Debra's observations, there are three points of change: the first one is at three years old, the transition from daycare to preschool, the second one is at five years of age, the year before primary school, and the third one is at grade three, the period of preparing for junior secondary school. The high drop-out rate from the play-based approach, starting from grade three is described by teachers Justin, Andrew, and Angelina, representing the change of parents' attitudes towards play and play-based teaching.

In addition, it is interesting to note that when discussing play and play-based learning, some parents like Jenny and Norah, and teachers like Debra shared their understandings of the relationship between joyfulness and feeling self-fulfilled. From these parents' and teachers' perspectives, if children have a high level of sense of self-fulfillment they also can obtain the joyfulness that young children get from the playful learning approach. Furthermore, this sense of self-fulfillment is drawn from children's outstanding academic achievement, as well as from teachers' and peers' compliments.

I also want my daughter happy. But people have different understandings about happy, for me, I feel like if she has a strong sense of self-fulfilling, she will be happier. And I can feel she is happy when she achieves a good score and gets other people's compliments. I think the happiness drew from self-fulfilling is what she needs now. Unlike preschool children, primary school students' happiness comes from friends. She can make lots of good friends because she is outstanding so that other children would like to play with her (Jenny, mother of girl aged 8 years).

Primary school students' interest in English is maintained by achievement and self-fulfilling. If they learn English from a very young age, English will become their strength. The feeling of pride in themselves turns learning into a joyful thing because teachers will praise them for good marks (Debra, Chinese teacher).

In this sense, students' feelings of self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment is based on their school performance and other's comments.

Parents' descriptions about the institution's play approach. When asking what kind of program their children are taking, parents such as Cathy, Adele, Shirley, and Lara define their children's English program as a play-based approach, according to their understandings and the institutions' advertisements. Parents thoroughly described what their children's English classes look like:

First, teachers will go through today's target language and learning outcomes through flashcards and animated videos. Then, teachers will teach vocabulary, usually four new words every lesson. Pronunciation is teacher's focus, so that teachers, especially foreign teachers will ask children to read every word after teachers. For example, when learning apple, the foreign teacher reads first, then children take turns to read. During each child's turn, the foreign teacher will correct each child's pronunciation until it is clear and right. This correcting process is a very traditional teacher-centered approach by which I learned at my school time, rather than designing a situated English environment and leading children to learn and practice words in sentences. After practicing words and pronunciation, there will be some interactive games which are mostly based on computer. For example, when teaching fruits, on the computer, children will see

an apple on the tree, which indicates children should match the flashcard and apple (Adele, mother of girl aged 5 years).

In the demo class, I saw teachers incorporating lots of flashcards and multi-media technology into classroom… Each unit follows the structure of vocabulary, sentence structure, song, value and phonics. Value is a section to teach children some social skills and norms, like politeness. From my perspective, this curriculum design is more diverse and all-around (Cathy, mother of girl aged 3 ½ years).

I enrolled him in the English program which focuses on picture book reading. In this program, teachers will lead them to tell stories and sing songs, lots of fun (Shirley, mother of boy aged 4 ½ years).

Vip Kid is definitely an approach of learning through play. For example, if the targeted learning outcome is a specific grammar in this module, teachers will integrate games to facilitate grammar learning. Although there are also repetitive and tedious drilling practices, teachers will engage students by practicing through games, such as role-play or tournament online game. Students can choose their favorite character and complete each tournament to get points or rewards and learn grammar or vocabulary (Lara, immigrant mother of girl aged 8 years).

Parents' descriptions about institutions' practices of play-based learning used in the classroom includes flashcards, animated videos, songs, multi-media, and digital games. In addition, the above practices, which serve for promoting children's engagement and motivation, are defined as play-based teaching approaches by the institutions. However, one parent, Adele doubted whether the above practices are truly play-based approaches, as she said:

I don't think the use of multi-media technology counts for play-based learning. With the flashcards, even without direct teaching, children can guess the meaning. And it's very ineffective because children can't remember the words in this way (Adele, mother of girl aged 5 years).

Parents' playful involvement in children's English learning. Culturally, many Chinese parents value a number of time-honored traditions. Many are strongly influenced by the traditional virtue of "feeding without teaching is the father's fault" (Three Character Classic, n.d.). Chinese parents view themselves as key teachers of their children and are highly involved in the informal teaching of language and math. Chinese parents' high involvement in young children's learning is also represented in the interview data. Participants highly valued the parents' role in facilitating children's English learning. In particular, regarding early English learning, Cathy referred to whether or not parents are involved and how parents plan and execute the learning schedule as the key to whether children can master English because she thought children lack the ability to guide their own learning. In her words:

> I think, private English program just provides a framework of teaching and teaching materials, most importantly, parents should lead and supervise children's learning at home. In addition, every class is only 45 minutes and the target language is not enough, so I don't think children can master English skills in class. I will take her to review what she has learned from teachers at home (Cathy, mother of girl aged 3 ½ years).

The importance of parental involvement was also explained by teachers, and teachers observed how children do better if they receive support from parents. As Andrew stated:

> We see students maybe once a week. The students who do best inevitably are the ones that parents who practice with them more at home. You can't learn a language based on two hours of studies every seven days. It's just not possible. So the students who receive a lot of help and support from their parents tend to do much better. I think parents have a lot more support now in terms of what they do with their children at home. They have a lot of guidance from us, and like you said, their English is better. So they're able to help a little bit more. I do think there's a huge advantage in households with parents who can speak English. You know because it just makes that practice at home much more valuable, much more useful (Andrew, foreign teacher).

As an English teacher and a father of a three year old child, Kevin discussed the importance of parental involvement in terms of how parents can expand play-based learning into a more natural and living environment. When teaching his daughter English, he used more interactive play and field trips than he did in his classroom. For example, he will take his daughter to the zoo to learn about animals and teach vocabulary or sentences when eating, shopping or other daily practices. From his perspective, it is impossible to bring the above activities into the classroom. However, he suggested parents can expand play approaches such as these at home.

Parental involvement in children's English learning and practice was identified by the parent participants. How parents interact with children regarding English and how much time they spend is expressed in the table below.

Table 8 *Parental Involvement in Children's English Learning and Time*

Pseudonym	Child's Age	Family literacy activities	Time/ Daily
Cathy	3.5	Songs, animated videos, picture book, reviewing school knowledge	20-30 minutes
Adele	5	Songs, animated videos, picture book	1 hour
Jenny	8	Recite and dictation of vocabularies and paragraphs in the textbook, test	1 hour
Shirley	4.5	Songs, animated videos, picture book	1 hour
Leah	5	Songs, animated videos, picture book, daily conversations	Not Mentioned
Kevin	3	Songs, animated videos, picture book, memorization of vocabularies, situated learning such as zoo	1 hour
Lara	8	Songs, animated videos, memorization of vocabularies	1 hour

Note. The types of parental involvement and time are concluded from interviewed parents' words.

In terms of family literacy practices, parents show some similarities in choosing songs, animated videos and picture books to engage their children in English learning. Parents themselves consider these practices as play-based approaches, and they do find their children having fun while learning some English through these practices. Most of the parents interviewed started English as a family activity when the children were two or three years old. However, at the very beginning, parents did not set any learning purpose or learning outcomes for their children.

At the very beginning, I didn't have any purpose, I freely played the music, serving as kind of background. However, I found she liked English and liked to learn English in this way. So I furtherly searched more English materials for her. So to speak, I firstly identified her interest in English(Adele, mother of girl aged 5 years).

Parents deliberately chose the materials according to the criteria of age-appropriate content and native speaker recordings. And many of the animated videos and songs are time-proven classics, even in English speaking countries for young English speakers to learn English, for example, Heinemann (picture book series), Raz Kids (digital reading), Badanamu (rhythm series), and Alphablocks and Peppa Pig (animated videos). Reflecting on my last job back in China, one of the major responsibilities was to introduce books, songs, animated videos and apps to Chinese parents to encourage family English learning. Such recommendations were always welcomed by parents which also demonstrated the trend of high parental involvement in English in China.

Parents' considerations on choosing an English program. No matter what parents' expectations of English learning are, they agreed on the importance of English and spent lots of time choosing a suitable program and guiding children's English learning at home. When deciding which English training institution is suitable, parents' considerations showed similarities.

Normally preschool parents who do not have a strong and high expectation of English language achievement tend to choose a program according to (a) whether it has foreign teachers, (b) whether the teacher's pronunciation and intonation is authentic, (c) whether it provides a relaxing and playful learning environment, and (d) the reputation based on the opinions of other people. As to primary school students' parents, their considerations are mainly focusing on: (a) teachers' skills and reputation, (b) teaching methodology, (c) whether the institution understands the curriculum framework of public or private schools. Parents can learn about the institution by talking with the salesperson and attending free demo classes.

Reflecting on parents' expectations and considerations regarding choosing an English program, Adele, mother of five years old girl, shared her reasons for dropping

her daughter from an academic-based program, while Jenny, mother of eight years old girl, described her motivations when dropping her daughter from a play-based program.

> Many institutions in our city are using an exam-oriented teaching approach. I'm looking for an institution where is relaxing and not pushing. I have a high expectation of oral English and communication, and I hope she can communicate with people in English later on. So I let my daughter drop from that private English training program, and want to find another program that meets my expectation of relaxing environment, standard pronunciation, and communication (Adele, mother of girl aged 5 years).

> EF (an English training company) is taking play-based teaching which children are okay and happy with. Although EF's curriculum is theme-based and does lots of expansion regarding vocabulary, for example, ocean pollution, ocean creature, Tesla, etc, it doesn't cover too much about grammar and sentence. EF is more like a play-based approach, so it's hard to tell how much English knowledge my daughter has obtained and see her gradual progress. I'm not saying EF approach is bad, but in Chinese education system, I will worry about the over flexibility (Jenny, mother of girl aged 8 years).

Regardless of the different focus on accumulating vocabularies and mastering grammar, both preschool students and primary school parents emphasize English communication skills and authentic pronunciation and intonation. For many years, "dumb English" or "mute English" was referred to as a phenomenon that Chinese students can read and understand English but can't speak English. The parents in this study were born in the 1980s and are all 'dumb English' learners. They have a strong desire to give their children a better English communicative experience, therefore whether the institution provides foreign teachers and whether the foreign teachers are from English speaking countries are the major factors to evaluate. For example, Adele dropped her daughter from a more playful English program that her daughter's kindergarten provided because the teacher's pronunciation did not meet her expectations. In Adele's words:

> Comparing the private English program we took before, I feel like my daughter prefers the English classes that her kindergarten provides. Because the atmosphere there is relaxing and playful, teachers tend to lead them bouncing and

dancing. However, I quit this program this semester. On one hand, learning and homework pressure is heavy this semester, on the other hand, teachers there are not professional, especially their pronunciation is not standard. (Adele, mother of girl aged 5 years).

The need for authentic English is articulated by many parents in this study. In addition, this need also determines the policy of private English training companies recruiting foreign teachers. For example, Education First only recruits foreign teachers who are from the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and South Africa. Vipkid, a popular online English training company, only recruits foreign teachers who come from the United States and Canada.

What Teachers Value About Play in Children's ESL Acquisition

This section covers how teachers, including Chinese and foreign teachers, define play and play-based learning, how they value the role of play in early year ESL teaching, and what constraints they experienced when implementing play in classroom.

Teachers' understanding of the value of children's play. Both Chinese teachers and foreign teachers were interviewed regarding how they interpreted play and how play may promote children's English learning.

Teachers' understanding of play. Compared to parents, teachers had a relatively in-depth understanding of play and play-based learning. Speaking about terminology, teachers referred to play as child's free play and described it as part of a child. As to play-based learning, most teachers considered it a more structured type of play. In particular, free play is to allow children to do the activities on their own and for their own fun without any embedded learning purpose. Justin helped to describe free play by recalling his childhood play experiences:

> But from what I recall, there was a lot of time where it was we were basically solely dedicated to playing and kind of developing skills. Right? So it wasn't so much focusing on specific things, like I said, in our case, a specific language or anything that we had to learn. It was just how do you pick up and move things around, how do you share, how do you do things for yourself (Justin, foreign teacher).

However, similar to parents, some teachers, like Andrew, criticized free play. In his words:

> But I don't like activities where students are just playing for playing. So right away they're just I'm throwing a ball into a hoop or flowing and pumped to something else (Andrew, foreign teacher).

Free play is used less in the Chinese school system; among eight interviewed teachers, only two teachers use completely free play in their classroom. They are Leah who previously worked in a Montessori kindergarten and Kristin who is teaching in the international division of a public kindergarten. Leah's classroom is completely based around free play, similar to the Montessori kindergarten in Canada, however, Leah questioned the outdated play materials and the lack of high-quality teachers in the Chinese Montessori kindergarten. Kristin's classroom combines direct instruction, structured play and free play, as Kristin described:

> Each day, they have a thirty-minute lesson, that class time can be structured play or writing worksheets. And then they have forty-five minutes of the independent working time. So that's in our Montessori room. So that's very similar to play that's very, very structured in general... And thirty minutes of game room play, so that's very unstructured play within the environmental stations and an hour of outdoor play. Actually, an hour to an hour and a half...So there's more unstructured playtime than structured playtime. But the whole day is very regimented at school. So overall, you know, it's a school, the day is still quite structured (Kristin, foreign teacher).

Besides free play, most teachers mentioned structured play which has a specific learning objective and is set in a structured framework. According to the teachers' interpretations, they consider parents' expectations on children's English learning, when discussing ESL learning in early years. The curriculum design always sets learning outcomes and targeted language goals. Consequently, structured play is viewed as more effective to achieve teaching aims. Kristin explained:

> Play-based learning is much more structured. In our school, we do different kinds of play-based learning, some of the games we do are play-based learning, but those are all obviously very structured and formal games. And teachers set the

environment, set the right materials out so they can play in and play with…The design is really direct and can point to a particular lesson objective (Kristin, foreign teacher).

In terms of younger children's ESL learning, children play within the environment and context that the teachers set for them. Unlike free play, teachers need to interact with children to encourage language production. Furthermore, Leah expanded the definition of play to digital play which she valued as an effective supplement for young children's ESL learning.

There is one more play, digital play which I think western educators do not support. From my perspective, digital play becomes an inevitable trend, if you can effectively manage it, it will be beneficial for children's English language development...For example, when I teach my son English, I use lots of animated videos. Of course, the use of animation is not a play, but he likes watching animated videos. After watching, we will do the role play. In addition, many animated videos have picture books and apps, so it allows children to learn English multi-dimensionally (Leah, Chinese teacher, mother of boy aged 5 years).

Under the category of structured play, themed play or themed projects are also mentioned by teacher Leah. Reflecting on her son's kindergarten's teaching practices which provide various themed projects for children, she valued it and considered it to be the most ideal play-based approach. She said:

In his kindergarten, teachers assign various projects, I think project-based learning is also one kind of play in children's world. For example, when teaching food and nutrition…teacher will ask children to explore and build their own food pyramid…So the lessons will focus on a specific topic, and teachers will design various crafts, activities or discussions, so it is the most ideal approach (Leah, Chinese teacher, mother of boy aged 5 years).

Teachers' perceptions about play in ESL acquisition. Similar to the parents, teachers, both Chinese and foreign, agreed on the importance of play in children's development, because they believe that learning is natural and spontaneous when children play. As to the relationships between play and children's ESL acquisition, teachers value the use of play in helping enhance children's interest in English and concentration in

learning. In particular, promoting younger children's interest in English is significant because younger children do not have a specific purpose and motivation to learn English. In addition, tracing back to the sharing from the interviewed parents of preschool children, they showed little expectations for their children's English language skills or other quantitative English results. In this sense, the use of play to improve and maintain children's interest in English is crucial. In Debra's words:

> Unlike adults who learn English for a specific strong purpose like work or getting a certificate, young children, especially preschool children, don't have a purpose and motivation to learn English, so they don't understand why they should learn English. They even don't have a sense of score, they don't know they're expected to gain a high score in future primary school. So interest and fun is crucially important and play is one effective approach to ignite their interest in English (Debra, Chinese teacher).

Play also provides an immersive and natural learning environment where children are able to use language spontaneously and naturally. However, teachers like Kevin and Leah, who both are parents as well, questioned the limited efforts that teachers can put in school regarding setting an immersive and natural language environment, comparing with their teaching practices with their children at home. This is why Kevin called for more family involvement in English learning. Furthermore, play also promotes peer interactions and encourages children to become each other's instructor and to learn from each other. According to Kristin's observations, young children's peer mentoring looks like this:

> I think other children often become instructors, because they are all [from] different families. So at home with mom and dad, they talk about different things and they bring them to school and teach them amongst each other. So there still learning happens. Even when it's completely unstructured and non-directed, but you don't know what they're learning (Kristin, foreign teacher).

Teachers' roles in the play associated with ESL learning. As in the Chinese context, play is often considered to be structured play. All of the interviewed teachers agreed that the teachers' role will change depending on the purpose of play. In the beginning, most playful activities serve as a means of facilitating children's

understanding of a new concept or knowledge, so teachers are more active and usually act in a leading role. As students gradually grasp the targeted language and learning objectives, teachers will step back and pass the leading role to students themselves. Teachers are more observing and monitoring the process, as Debra stated:

> My role is always changing. At the very beginning, as students know little about today's knowledge, I will lead and teach them to learn. However, once children gradually master the targeted knowledge after practices I lead before, I will change my role from a leader to a participant. So during practicing words and pronunciations, I will first ask them to read after me, then I will lower my voice, eventually I won't read, even without any mouth movement demonstration…I will step back gradually (Debra, Chinese teacher).

Teachers' practices of using play in classroom. In Chinese ESL classrooms, structured play is mostly used by teachers, either foreign or Chinese. In particular, prior to play or activities, teachers always have an initial introduction which relies on teachers' direct introduction and focuses on instructing children the targeted language. Otherwise children cannot understand how to play due to a lack of English skills, so they will not be interested in the later play, as Justin said:

> So every class, there is definitely direct input from the teacher to the students just to ensure that whatever activities we end up doing or whatever games we end up playing, the students have the knowledge of the language could produce. I guess, in a pure play-based system, we would allow the students to take the knowledge as it comes to them. Right? So whether they can produce the language from the beginning of the game or not, we would still continue using the language and hope that by the end of it they're able to do. we always have to do some sort of direct method so that the students can use the language prior to the activity (Justin, foreign teacher).

According to teachers' sharing about their practices of using play in the classroom, play or activities can be classified into seven types according to play materials and play essence. The first three types of play are defined by different materials.

Flashcards. Flashcards were mentioned by all teachers and regarded as one of the play approaches. In addition, flashcards are usually used to help children to learn

vocabulary. For example, teachers will place flashcards on the floor, either child jumps while making a sentence with the word on flashcard in English, or child swats the flashcard with the word that teacher says. From most teachers' perspectives, such play activities using flashcards allow children to both produce language and to move.

Multi-media. The best example of using multi-media is to incorporate animated videos or rhythms into classroom. Especially, in the initial introductory part, many teachers will play some animated videos for children to get a glance at the main topic and understand the targeted language. In particular, many private English institutions either design their own animated videos and rhythms or collaborate with other branded companies and introduce other companies' animated videos and rhythms into classroom. For example, based on Kevin's research about different English programs, he found:

> In the very beginning of 10 or 15 minutes, teachers will play videos for children. Now, almost every institution has its own video teaching materials…Some companies implement rhythms in teaching (Kevin, Chinese teacher and three years old girl's father).

The use of smart screens is also identified in teachers' play practices. The combination of animated videos, soundtrack and interactions on smart screens provides additional enhancements for young children and encourages them to better understand and memorize the learning objectives.

Other Teaching materials. Teaching materials, like puppets, toy fruit, real objects, are also frequently used by teachers to engage young children's English. For example, when teaching about fruit, teachers will use toy fruits and design a topic related game.

The following types of play practices are defined based on the play content.

Competitive play. Unlike male teachers who spontaneously mentioned their large use of competitive play, female teachers did not intentionally talk about competitive play. However, according to their sharing, competitive play is frequently used by all teachers because teachers believed children had a natural interest in competing and winning. As Justin said:

> One of the things that I guess especially younger students seem to enjoy, would like activities where they get to compete against each other. So if you have them, I

guess a common childhood game is to race from one thing to another (Justin, foreign teacher).

In the Chinese school system, competitive play includes race and reward. Race, like musical chairs and lightning round, is used to engage children in producing language. Reward, like gaining points or stars, is another style of competition. When asking whether the competitive play is suitable for younger children as it may cause crying and chaos among younger children, Angelina shared that it has seldomly happened during her eight years of teaching. She also pointed out students can also get reward just for their efforts or by trying. In addition, she considered competitive play a good opportunity to teach students life lessons of winning and losing in a more interactive way.

Silly saying. According to Leah's observations, she found that children are always fond of some silly saying or teachers' "mistakes". So she encouraged children to freely speak no matter if it is right or wrong. Sometimes, she would say something ridiculous or wrong which leaded children to laugh and motivated them to correct her. In Leah's classroom, her silly saying looked as follows:

As to speaking, I will encourage children to speak freely no matter right or wrong, reasonable or ridiculous. For example, I remembered in the classroom of three years old children, I asked them: "What can we use scissors for? Can we use scissors to cut the table?" Then one kid replied: "I can use scissors to cut John's leg". Younger children love such silly things. As to grade one or grade two students, I will intentionally say something wrong, kids find it funny (Leah, Chinese teacher, and mother of boy aged 5 years).

In the silly saying activity, Leah will write several words under different categories of "when", "who", "where", "how", "what". Usually, she will come up with some unusual or unrealistic stuff so that students can make up phrases, like ride on dinosaur, eat the flies. Leah referred to such silly saying as an effective way to engage students in practicing sentence structure and speaking, as well as imagination.

Riddle. As to riddle, it is mostly used to help children build vocabulary. Instead of asking students to repeat, teachers will design vocabulary teaching in a fun way by using riddle. For example, Leah used a lot of riddles in her class:

I like to use riddle to build children's vocabulary. However, if you only ask children to repeat after you again and again, it's boring. So I will combine riddle and vocabulary learning. For example, desk, I will say: "It's flat" and do some posture of sitting at the desk to encourage children to guess the word. Besides learning words, children also develop their skills of listening and interpreting (Leah, Chinese teacher, and mother of boy aged 5 years).

A holistic play design. Besides incorporating different resources and materials into play, when designing play or activities, Becky will always consider developing children's soft skills, as she pointed out:

Usually, my activities will have two purposes: cultivating soft skills and promoting language skills. Soft skills include children's concentration and EQ. For example, when teaching fruits, I will prepare some fruit materials, at the beginning I will give children one minute to observe fruits and the amount. One minute later, I will close the box and let children recall what the fruits are and the amount. This activity allows children to develop their concentration and memory. Then I will ask children to describe what they have observed in the specific sentence structures. For example, when we are learning "there be" structure, children will be able to make a sentence like "there are four lemons in the box". In this sense, children can practice English skills. It's a very simple playful activity, but it helps develop children's soft and hard skills and children like it very well (Becky, Chinese teacher).

Teachers' practices of using play at home. In this research study, there are two teacher participants, Leah (Chinese teacher, mother of boy aged five years) and Kevin (Chinese teacher, father of girl aged three years), who are also parents and teach their children English at home. However, their teaching approaches are slightly different from the ones they use in school. Generally speaking, when teaching their own children, they tend to use more immersive approaches that promote a natural literacy acquisition, as Kevin shared:

For example, when teaching animals, I will take her to the zoo and name the animals in English. When we are back, I will help her review the animal vocabularies through flashcards. So I will use a more immersive, natural and

living approach to teach my daughter. Another example, in daily life, prior eating, I will tell her its English and repeat several times, she is able to memorize this word. I find kids like food very much and other daily stuff (Kevin, Chinese teacher, father of girl aged 3 years).

In addition, they will use multi-dimensional resources and materials to facilitate children's English learning. For example, they will combine the use of rhythms, animated videos, apps to provide additional enhancements for young children, and this combination encourages children to better understand and maintain their motivation and interests in English. The following table shows the English competency of Kevin and Leah's children.

Table 9 *Children's English Competence*

Pseudonym	Age	English Competence
Kevin's daughter	3	Knowing 1000-1500 English words, understanding English animated videos, and having the ability to translate, like Peppa Pig
Leah's son	5	Children book series "I Can Read", Level two, United States grade one or two

As for the reasons for the different teaching designs between school and home, Leah and Kevin thought the limited class time and the big class size made it impossible to implement a more immersive approach to classroom. Furthermore, considering the benefits of immersive learning and the impossibilities of providing an immersive environment in classroom, Kevin and Leah suggested parents actively and frequently involve themselves in children's English learning at home. Today, Chinese parents' English level is quite high and many teachers believe parents have the English competency to enhance their children's English development at home. For example, two foreign teachers, Andrew who teaches English in China for ten years and Angelina for eight years, observed the significant improvement of Chinese parents' English over the period of approximately ten years. Andrew pointed out:

I live in Hefei which is quite a provincial city. When I first arrived, not a lot of

people can speak English, right? So it was very difficult for them to judge

whether a class is successful or not. But now parents' English level is much

higher. They understand a lot more about what their children are doing and they

have higher expectations about things like pronunciation things, like language

production (Andrew, foreign teacher).

Teachers' practices for individual needs. When asked "How do you provide for

individual differences", most teachers were spontaneously inclined to refer to individual

differences as a different learning pace. To balance the different needs between faster

learners and slower learners, three different approaches were identified: (a) giving slower

learners more opportunities to practice, (b) providing ability-appropriate activities for

different learners, and (c) making stronger learners as peer models to help weaker

learners to learn. The first approach of giving slower learners more opportunities to

practice is the most frequently used by teachers. For example, in Justin's classroom:

So if there are students who are able to identify the target language more quickly,

then I'm able to have them leave the activity. I will give slower learners more

opportunities and more time to practice (Justin, foreign teacher).

Some teachers, like Kristin and Andrew, tend to design different levels of

activities for students, so that each individual student's learning pace is well cared for. In

addition, before applying different levels of activities, teachers will thoroughly observe

students' participation, then provide extra help. Kristin said:

You know, often in the classroom, children have different levels… I always

observe whether children are capable to complete the objective…I could see that

most kids needed a little help, but there were some children, they were unable to

complete the task for different reasons. Some kids are just nervous, it just fine.

They didn't need any help. They understood what you were expecting to do, and

they just needed time. There were also some kids, no matter how many times they

repeated, they didn't understand for a variety of reasons. Either still not very good

at recognizing letters or understanding me, like didn't understand what I was

trying to explain to them because their English level is not enough. So during our

independent working time, I always design different types of small games…I just

steer them towards a similar task…I better lower the level, and continue to work on the foundation skills that he doesn't have (Kristin, foreign teacher).

The third method is to let stronger students be peer mentors to show their classmates. In Debra's classroom, it usually happens like this:

> To test whether children have mastered the learning objective, I usually assign students into three levels, high, medium and low, and ask students to answer questions in sequence from high level to low level. This is also intentionally designed to let the high-level students model for the lower level ones (Debra, Chinese teacher).

However, only one teacher, Becky, interpreted children's individual needs from the perspective of different learning styles. In order to manage her classroom and students, as well as truly provide individualized instructions to satisfy individual needs and learning style, she always kept her class ratio as 1:1, 1:2, 1:4, or no more than 1:6. The small class size allows her to acknowledge individual child's needs and plan different activities for each child, in her word:

> For example, some children are talented in drawing but not good at mathematics, then I will give them more time on drawing and allow them to express themselves through drawing. I will utilize their strengths to develop and enhance their weaknesses. Some children are kinesthetic learners, they have to learn by carrying out physical activities. For these children, I will provide more physical activities, like board games, exploring activities. In kinesthetic settings, these children will learn more happily and effectively... I also have some children who truly enjoy doing those exam-oriented practices. I don't think this kind of habit is from parents, instead this child enjoys the feeling of self-fulfilling during doing exercises...So as to these children, I will not disappoint them and will let them choose to do exercises, in China we have tons of tests (Becky, Chinese teacher).

General Constraints of Incorporating Play into Class

Overall, both parents and teachers valued the importance of play in children's development not only for ESL or other subject learning but also for non-cognitive development. However, although parents and teachers believed in using play in ESL

literacy, parents' anxiety and the complexity of the classroom dynamic interfered with teachers' abilities to put their beliefs in play-based teaching into practice.

Parents' concerns about the effectiveness of play. Parents' interpretations of the constraints of play are quite different from teachers' perspectives. Most parents evaluate the constraints of play-based learning based on the effectiveness in improving children's English academic performance, or specifically in terms of speaking test scores. Parents may intrinsically reject the examination-oriented program, however, as illustrated in the section of Mapping Chinese K12 Schooling Path, parents and students eventually will face the provincial Senior High School Entrance Examination and the National College Entrance Examination which highly rely on students' solid knowledge foundation of required subjects and test skills. Parents want their children to accumulate as much knowledge as possible as soon as possible, however, they do not believe play-based learning could achieve this goal, or if it does help, it takes longer. For example, Shirley and Anna shared their distrust in play-based learning regarding improving academic performance:

> I think play-based learning is not to train child for test, so it is not helpful for test. At least, so far the play-based programs my son takes don't help improve scores (Shirley, mother of boy aged 4 ½ years).

> From my perspective as a parent, child has little ability of self-regulation and self-control. So if you allow children freely play without any regulation and expect them to learn and grow through play, it's impossible, because children don't have the ability of self-control. Relying on using play to support child's development and growth, as a Chinese mother, I feel like it's too slow. I tend to believe we should separate play and learning. When it's playtime, enjoy the play, if it's study time, then focus on learning…As to teaching methodology, it's teachers' choice. If teachers can help children master the targeted knowledge in a playful way which is the child interested in, as a parent, I will definitely say yes. But, don't go overboard. For Chinese parents, especially in early learning, we think western teachers overly use play-based teaching…Of course, we don't speak for Chinese style of high-pressure study. But if we just discuss the academic performance, probably Chinese teachers' method is much more effective and quicker than

western teachers (Norah, immigrant mother of girl aged 9 years and boy aged 4 years).

Teachers' difficulties in implementing play. Teachers' difficulties in incorporating play-based teaching methodology into class can be categorized into three layers of reasons: (a) parents' concern and less support, (b) the complexity of classroom dynamic, and (c) students' limited English knowledge.

Parents' concerns and less support. Obviously, parents' concerns about the effectiveness of play in helping improve children's test scores become the teachers' biggest constraint in terms of implementing play into classroom, as parents may not support teachers' teaching approach. Parents' non-support is represented in two ways, either directly dropping out from the play-based programs as Jenny did, or pushing teachers by constantly asking about their children's academic performance and expecting teachers to give more difficult lessons, thereby ignoring students' true English levels.

Parents naturally view the extra-curricular English program as supplementary and rely on it to improve their children's test scores in public school, for example, Angelina once received parents' complaints about her center's failure to improve student's scores. Angelina stated:

Especially new parents, if their children can't get a 100% score in public school, they will be angry, because parents expect EF enhances English scores (Angelina, foreign teacher).

If the centers continually fail to satisfy parents' demand on children's test scores, they will leave that center for another more academic-based and examination-oriented program. The phenomena of high drop-out rates from play-based English programs for primary school age children was observed and discussed by all the interviewed teachers, as Justin said:

I do know at least from the PA (progress advisor) and CC (course consultant) side, they say it's more difficult for parents to stay with our center because they do want to focus on specific things, like testing, like the basically focusing their students on the specific test skills that they need to move to a good middle school or high school (Justin, foreign teacher).

Furthermore, parents will pass on their anxiety to teachers by constantly discussing the scores and showing their preference for giving children higher-level instruction. For example, in Becky's center, there are some parents expecting teachers to give higher-level lessons:

> One thing that I feel hopeless and wordless is that parents push themselves too hard...For example, in a new class, everyone has a different level of English. So I will fully communicate with parents that my teaching will be different. However, some parents can't help comparing their children with higher level students, expecting the same level of materials and same amount of practice. Although I will tell parents it's okay for their children's English is at A level, they will gradually reach B level, parents can't accept it as they know some children are at a higher level, therefore they also expect their children immediately jumping into a higher level (Becky, Chinese teacher).

Parents' concern about play-based approaches and high expectations on test scores places a lot of pressure on teachers and institutions. From a business perspective, to maintain the market share probably some teachers or institutions will compromise and add more academic-focused lessons. For example, in Kevin's self-owned center, for students of grade six, he only teaches the language knowledge that the provincial Senior High School Entrance Examination requires and lets students do tons of worksheets and tests to practice the learning objectives.

The complexity of classroom dynamic. Unlike parents, teachers have few concerns about the benefits of play in promoting academic-oriented English skills. Their concerns mainly focus on the effectiveness of incorporating play into the classroom, like class size, time constraints, safety issues, classroom management concerns and teachers' energy.

In most private English institutions, there are 14-20 students in one classroom, however public schools' class size is bigger, varying from 40 students to 50 students. In addition, normally one class is 40-45 minutes. Therefore, for many teachers, in such a big class size and limited class time, it is difficult to maintain a balance of having fun and fulfilling learning objectives and, many times, they save the time for learning objectives rather than play.

Safety issues are another important constraint for teachers. As discussed before, foreign teachers and Chinese teachers, male teachers and female teachers all used lots of competitive play which definitely involved running, jumping, chasing or other intensive physical movements. How to keep children safe along with language production was crucial and may have distracted teachers from their focus on teaching objectives. As Justin said:

> I would definitely agree with the safety issue. For example, if you're playing musical chairs and then having the students produce the language when they sit down. It's very important that I remind them to stop running, stop running, stop running. Because if someone falls and hits their head or they are tripped or something. So yeah, safety, safety definitely. (Justin, foreign teacher)

Classroom management is also difficult for teachers, especially for new teachers. If the play is very unstructured and children get excited, they may get out of control. According to teachers' observations and experiences, if children are engaging in the play, they may not actively connect their play with language production. Furthermore, if the classroom fell into chaos, teachers were unable to take good care of each child's needs, including having fun and ensuring children produce language in all the centers.

Teacher Kristin, who is an all-subject teacher in a kindergarten, also pointed out energy is her big concern in terms of incorporating play into the classroom all the time, in her words:

> The other one is keeping my own energy. Ok. When I taught at EF, I could easily go into a class with lots of energy. Let's play a game right away. I'm in kindergarten. I'm with children much longer. I can't have like, let's have a big exciting burst of energy. You know, I have to keep in mind, I need the kids to understand when to be calm and when to be energetic. Yeah, so keeping my own energy is important (Kristin, foreign teacher).

Students' limited English knowledge. English is not children's first language, and may not be used outside English classroom. When the children have very a limited knowledge and understanding of English, it may be impossible for teachers to use play at the very beginning. Therefore, teachers have to design direct instructional time to give children a whole picture of targeted learning aims and understand the targeted language,

at least to ensure children understand teachers' rules in the later playtime. In addition, when teaching students whose English skills cannot match their cognition, it is difficult for teachers to design age-appropriate and English-level-suitable games. For example, in Leah's non-profit English program for children of migrant workers or children from rural areas in Shanghai, she found:

> Now, I'm working on a non-profit English program to provide lessons for children of migrant workers or children from rural areas, including online and offline English courses. I find it's difficult for me to design play or games among these students. These students are usually in grade three to five, however, their English level is quite low, no better than a four or five years old preschool child. Therefore, what kind of play or activity is suitable for them? If you give them a difficult game, their English level doesn't allow them to engage in this game. However, if you give them a simple one, like the game designed for preschool kids, they won't be interested in playing. So it's a problem of the gap of English level and cognition (Leah, Chinese teacher, and mother of boy aged 5 years).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented and interpreted the data and findings, guided by research questions which focus on exploring how parents and teachers understand the role of play in Chinese young children's English acquisition. The findings were organized into three parts. The first section was how parents understood the values of play in their children's ESL acquisition. In order to understand this point thoroughly, I covered findings regarding Chinese expectations on children's non-cognitive development, cognitive development, and specifically children's English literacy development. Parents' expectations of children's development determine their understanding and interpretation of play and play-based learning, and influences their choice of play-based or examination-oriented English program. The findings revealed that Chinese parents were stuck with the dilemma of raising a happy child versus raising an academically successful child. Most Chinese families chose to raise an academically successful child, and this trend is significant after children reach primary school age.

The second part explored teachers' understanding of play and play-based learning, their practices of play approaches in their classroom and their roles in play. Data showed that all teachers agreed on the value of play in promoting children's cognitive and non-cognitive development. As for play practices, teachers presented some similarities of using flashcards, multi-media, and realia as the most frequent materials. Competitive play, like race and rewards, is commonly used by teachers. Silly saying and riddles are used by some teachers to support children's sentences and vocabulary learning. Teachers' roles will change along with different play settings. In a more structured play, teachers mostly take a leading and direct guidance role. However, in less structured play, which focuses on providing children practice opportunities, teachers are more like facilitators and monitors.

Analysis of the third part relating to the constraints when implementing play into classroom, demonstrated parents' concerns and teachers' difficulties. Parents' concerns or distrust in play are more based on the effectiveness and contributions in improving children's English academic performance, or specifically speaking test scores. Teachers' difficulties in incorporating play-based teaching methodology into class show three different reasons: (a) parents' concern and less support, (b) the complexity of classroom dynamic, and (c) students' limited English knowledge.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

I begin this chapter with a quote from a participant whose reflection represents some Chinese parents' mentality and their paradoxical attitudes towards children's development and learning.

> When reaching primary school age, parents becoming push is understandable, although I know most parents don't want to become such anxious parents. I read a vivid description of anxious parents' dilemma. Imagine you're in the theater, if the people in front of you stand up, you have no choice and have to stand up as well (Cathy, mother of girl aged 3 ½ years).

Despite the increasing number of studies investigating the relationships between play and children's literacy learning, there are few studies focusing on the use of play in children's ESL learning in early years, and fewer specifically looking at it in a Chinese context with respect to Chinese parents' and teachers' understandings and interpretations. This research study explores Chinese parents' expectations and involvement, Chinese parents' perceptions about play, teachers' interpretations and practices about play, and the challenges of incorporating play from multi-dimensional perspectives. Findings from this study are mostly consistent with reviewed studies, however, there are also some findings that offer new insights. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings and answer the following research questions at length:

1. How do parents and teachers understand the role of play in children's ESL learning?

2. How do teachers use play in their classroom practices?

3. What are the general constraints regarding the use of play from teachers' perspective?

4. What are parents' concerns about using play?

The Zone of Proximal Development Versus Planning Ahead

During the interviews, I first asked parents what they think is most important for the development of the child. Most parents indicated they respected children's developmental stages, however, interview data showed that their actual practices were contradictory to their beliefs. They enrolled their children aged three to eight years old, in a great many extra-curricular activities, either academic-focused or interest-focused ones.

It was hoped this would provide them with some form of competitive advantage, rather than the activity being selected because the parent hoped the child would enjoy the activity. In this study, parents were planning ahead of their children's learning.

Children's development. Reflecting on Vygotsky's theory of ZPD (1986), children develop following stages from elementary mental functions (e.g. pre-linguistic thought, pre-intellectual speech, sensation, spontaneous or associative memory, and basic forms of attention, perception, and volition) to higher mental functions (e.g. linguistic thought, intellectual speech, deliberate memory, voluntary attention, conceptual perception, and logical thinking) (Cohen & Waite-Stupiansky, 2017; Wertsch, Daniels, & Cole, 2007), children cannot respond to what goes beyond life experiences. Most interviewed parents agreed with children's developmental stages and claimed they indeed respected children's pace in development. However, reviewing parents' actual behaviors regarding their children's extra-curricular enrollment, it seems that they cannot insist on their belief in giving their child age-appropriate learning.

All the parents in this study enrolled their children in English programs and started to teach their children at home as early as two or three years old. In addition, besides English programs which can be view as academic-based courses, parents also enrolled their children in various interest-based programs, such as sports (Shirley, Cathy, Lara, Jenny), logic (Shirley), music (Lara, Tracy, Leah, Norah, Jenny), dancing (Adele, Cathy, Lara), drawing (Adele, Shirley), chess (Lara), etc. As the goal of this research is not about how many or how intensive extra-curricular programs Chinese children are taking, I sorted out the above data only when parents mentioned it, regardless of other academic-focused programs, like mathematics and Chinese.

In this sense, including English, many children were taking at least two extra-curricular activities outside their school, and at most five extra courses (Lara's eight years old daughter). It is consistent with the study conducted by Shanghai Customer Evaluation Center (SCEC) in 2017, which showed 40% of parents of 0-3 years old children and 74% of parents of 4-6 years old enrolled their children in extra-curricular programs. In addition, on average, 59% of children between 0-6 years of age, attend at least two extra-curricular programs. The reason could be reflected by the two prevalent sayings: "不要让

你的孩子输在起跑线" translated means, "Don't let your child lose at the starting line" and "让你的孩子赢在起跑线" means, "Let your child win at the starting line".

Children's language development. In terms of language development, Vygotsky (1987b) suggested that children developmentally obtain their language competency by interacting with their surroundings, generalizing the relationships between their internal action with external reaction, and establishing language schemas. Relating to parents' sharing about their children's ESL learning, most preschool parents pointed out they did not set any particular goal of English attainment, like vocabulary, sentence and grammar. They referred the current age as a period of having fun and cultivating interest, but not for grade competition.

However, parents of preschoolers, like Kevin and Leah, did plan ahead for their children. Kevin's three year old daughter remembered 1000-1500 English words and could translate English animated videos, like Peppa Pig. Leah's five years old son could read and understand picture books equivalent to a grade one or two level in Canada. Leah also shared about her son's classmate's English learning path of only reading non-fiction books and analyzing book contents through thinking maps. Relating the above three preschoolers' ESL learning with Piaget's language process of egocentric speech from ages two to four or five years old, and socialized speech from ages five to seven years old (Müller et al., 2009; Piaget et al., 1962; Piaget, 1976; Pulaski, 1980; Singer & Revenson, 1996; Wadsworth, 1971), these parents turned children's age-appropriate egocentric speech period into socialized speech. Developmentally, at age three, children mostly display egocentric speech in which children are speaking to self when play. Children whisper vocabulary and phrases just for the pleasure of talking rather than mastering language. At this stage, children's representational skills are immature, it means children are unable to formulate language schemas. The phenomenon of Chinese parents preparing their children to learn English as early as three years old is caused by parents' belief in the idea that the earlier, the better, as well as the media's propagation about the golden age of three years of learning English. This phenomenon also aligns with SmartStudy and Sina's survey (2018), namely 49% of parents believe children should start to learn English as early as 3-6 of age.

Free Play Versus Structured Play

Both parents and teachers were invited to share their understandings of play. Two very broad themes of free play and structured play emerged. One possible reason is that play as a learning tool or teaching methodology is quite a new concept in China, and it challenges Chinese parents and teachers' typical interpretations of play and learning.

Free play. Theoretically, play is an activity freely chosen and designed by children (Gray, 2011). Children play because they enjoy the process, and they do not aim for any achievements or any external goals. Along with the definition, the image or the nature of child also has been discussed comprehensively. Researchers like Duckworth (2006), Gutek (2011), Piaget, Gattegno, and Hodgson (1962), Shipley (2008), and Vygotsky (1978) posited that children are active learners who learn the best by being allowed to have their own ideas and being responsible for their own learning. Consequently, play must be spontaneous and valued for play itself, rather than for achievements or specific purposes. In this research study, free play was also discussed by both parents and teachers. According to parents' and teachers' interpretations, children play for fun and to relax. They may or may not learn something, which is not a big concern, but parents and teachers do believe children must learn, even though adults may not be aware of their learning or growth.

However, the number of discussions about free play were few. The possible reason could trace back to the Chinese traditional perception about play and work: "勤有功，戏无益。戒之哉，宜勉力。Diligence has merit; play has no advantage. Guard against it; exert your strength" (Three Character Classic, n.d.). There are various similar sayings discussing play and work in Chinese classics, for example, another one saying is "业精于勤，荒于嬉。Efficiency comes from diligence, but is ruined by play". For centuries, Chinese people separate learning from play and regard play as a treat not a tool which could be given only if achieving certain learning or working goals. Such a cultural value is passed from generation to generation as the above classics are required to learn in school. It may also because the focus of research, which was on play and young children's ESL learning, was communicated well at the beginning. Therefore, when I asked for definitions of play, parents and teachers mostly responded with explanations about structured play, which is frequently used in Chinese ESL classrooms.

80

Structured play. Educators like Piaget and Vygotsky critiqued free play and proposed that play should have rules and purposes. Piaget classified play into three categories: practice games, symbolic games, and games with rules (Piaget et al., 1962; Pulaski, 1980). Vygotsky regarded freedom in children's play as 'illusory freedom' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.103). Freedom of self-discovery must be limited within a structured environment where children self-discover safely, freely and purposefully. In the context of ESL learning, all the parents and teachers in this research reached a consensus on teaching or learning in English within a structured environment and with a specific learning objective. As a result, in most English institutions, teachers' lessons tend to be split into two parts: direct instructions about target language and learning goals and structured play (or in teachers' term: activities) focusing on practice and target language production.

In Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky's work (1978a, 1978b) or subsequent work by researchers such as, McLoyd, Warren, and Thomas (1984), and Kozulin (2003), symbolic play was broadly explored regarding its role in helping children to internalize and create language patterns in their minds. McLoyd, Warren, and Thomas (1984) found that symbolic play enabled children to build more complex vocabularies and language beyond their age, if children involved themselves in less realistic play. However, symbolic play was never mentioned or used by teachers in their classrooms. There are three factors that played a role in this gap: class size, time constraints, and children's English level. Normally, the ratio of teacher to students ranges from 1:14 to 1:20, and class time is about 40-45 minutes; therefore many teachers indicated it is difficult to facilitate complex play. In addition, children's English level, especially preschool children, does not allow them to do complex play due to their lack of English language.

Non-Cognitive Benefits Versus Academic Achievement

Consistent with Chinese parents' beliefs in planning ahead, parents' perceptions about play's benefits showed a fine line between non-cognitive benefits and academic benefits. In addition, as to whether play is beneficial to children's academic performance, parents and teachers held different perspectives.

Non-cognitive benefits. According to Ciolan (2013), play is beneficial for children's holistic development as it complies with children's developmental pace and

complex individual style, promoting care for wellbeing, developing adaptability and nurturing imagination, and creativity. Play also helps children build social competence and self-confidence when interacting with peers (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006).

Aligning with Ciolan (2013) and Zigler and Bishop-Josef (2006), all the interviewed parents and teachers also showed their agreement on play's contributions in building children's social skills, emotional intelligence, competency in logical thinking, and concentration. However, in regards to helping children develop the skills of self-regulation and self-discipline (Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006), many parents disagreed because they thought children would be inevitably addicted in play and would not be able to leave play situations. Parents' concerns about children's lack of self-regulation and self-control also led them to criticize free play and supported play with rules and disciplines.

Academic achievement. As to the role of play in supporting children's academic achievement, various research studies confirmed play's positive influence. Play is considered an excellent and enjoyable approach to increasing children's literacy development (Korat et al., 2002). Unfortunately, the positive correlation between play and academic attainment was not evident in the interviews with parents, as most parents questioned the effectiveness of play. As discussed above, parents expected their children to build test-related English knowledge as soon as possible, so they thought play may help with children's academic performance, but it takes longer to see the result. Unlike parents, teachers, and especially foreign teachers, believed that play could benefit children's language development. In particular, teachers indicated they believe that creating an immersive and enjoyable environment will encourage children to produce more language. This finding supports Badzis's (2003) and Christmas's (2005) study which identified the significant difference in perspectives between teachers and parents. Teachers believed that play could contribute to "learning skills, developing imagination and skill for life" (Chiristmas, 2005, p.146), whereas parents only considered play as an approach for fun and for mental and physical health.

In Badzis's study (2003), findings also showed that when children get older, parents are more likely to question play's contributions to children's academic study. This study also identified a similar trend. The data were represented in three aspects: (a)

parents' direct concerns during the interview, (b) parents' actions of quitting from play-based learning program, and (c) teachers' observation or the center's market data about the high drop-out rate among older children (above nine years old).

In this current research, immigrant parents were also included, and the interview data showed their unique anxieties and concerns about play-based learning and the Canadian education system. All three immigrant mothers shared their observation of what they considered the all-play approach in Canadian primary schools, at least in the schools their children attended. The mothers worried their children might not build a solid foundation of knowledge. There are also some articles exploring immigrant families and their conceptions about play, and similarities can be identified between this research and previous studies. For example, in Yahya's study (2016), nineteen immigrant mothers were interviewed, and two of them indicated they preferred a mixed approach of play-based and rote-based learning and three mothers preferred rote-learning. As studies affirmed, individual's beliefs are strongly shaped by his or her cultural background, personal experiences and practices (Massing, 2015). Immigrant parents bring in their cultural tradition and their perspectives on learning which may consequently influence their attitudes toward the current education system and teaching methodology.

Literacy development. Specifically examining the role of play in young children's ESL acquisition, in symbolic, interactive and scaffolding play settings, children have confidence and feel less anxious to use and learn a new language through interactions with peers and teachers (Cho & Kim, 2018; Choi, 2016; Piker, 2013). In this study, parents and teachers asserted that playful activities and interactions with peers empowered children to speak in English and enabled them to not be afraid of mistakes. For parents and teachers of young ESL learners, this is a huge advantage. The benefit of building confidence in young children can find a rationale in the study conducted by Datta (2004) who regarded peer interactions in literacy acquisition as friendship literacy which allowed non-English-speaking students to talk freely without being afraid of making mistakes. The friendship literacy development was also described by one teacher participant who observed how individual child brought their family experience into school and how children became each other's mentors and learned from each other regarding their different backgrounds.

Home Learning Versus Private Insitution Learning

Reflecting on parents' and teachers' sharing about Chinese young children's ESL learning, both the informal home learning and formal learning in school were described. In particular, Chinese parents' high involvement in their children's English learning was detected. According to the observations of foreign teachers who have taught English for eight to ten years in China, parents' English level became better which enabled them to provide home English learning environments and practices to help with young children's ESL acquisition.

Home Learning.

How parental expectations shape home learning environment. Educators and researchers have indicated that parental involvement contributes to improving children's social and emotional functioning (Christenson, 2004), high parent-oriented motivation and self-regulated learning (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012), lower grade retention and drop-out rates (Barnard, 2004), a reduction of problem behaviors (Stormshak, Dishion, & Falkenstein, 2009), and is associated with children's high academic performance (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). In particular, Epstein and Salinas (2004) classified parental involvement as: "parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community" (p.13). In this research, parental involvement was not intentionally touched on, however, as an emerging theme, two parents and two teachers recognized the importance of parental involvement in young children's English learning. Their reasons can be divided into three categories: (a) class time is not enough to master a language, (b) language development needs practice, and (c) family English practice can help expand the play into a more immersive and natural lens which cannot be achieved in any classroom.

According to Dearing and Tang's (2009) conceptual framework of the home learning environment, parents' attributes, such as their skills, knowledge and motivation, will influence their expectations, beliefs and values about children's learning which will directly determine what kind of home environment that parents will provide for children. All of these factors play a key role in cultivating children's motivation and attitudes about English, and eventually positively predict children's achievement in English. In this research, the causal relationship between parents' attributes, family socioeconomics and

expectations is not evident. However, parents' expectations did influence children's motivation and self-regulatory functioning. For example, two mothers redefined what happy means to children and described how academic achievement created a sense of self-fulfillment and eventually led to true happiness. Based on their observations, their children enjoyed this kind of true happiness and were willing to regulate themselves for higher academic attainment. Children's learning motivation and self-regulation are oriented by parents' expectations, as was also described and discussed by Cheung and Pomerantz (2012).

Home English learning practices. Although other parents did not proactively mention or acknowledge the significance of parental involvement and engagement, all of the parents established home English learning environments for children and practiced English with their children. The high level of parental involvement was recognized through the interview data. The identified practices of parental involvement in this study matched the common types of family English language practices discussed by Kwok (2015), namely the use of multi-media materials (animated videos and rhythm), shared reading (picture books), doing English study plan or activities (vocabulary practices by using flashcards, field trip), and speaking English with children. Another two activities utilized by interviewed parents, such as homework checking and reviewing and parental instruction, were also reflected in Lau's et al. study (2011), which investigated Chinese parent's involvement and children's language development.

In the process of language development, Vygotsky (1987a) valued the role of children's life experience and surrounding input. As Vygotsky explained, the more frequently words are exposed to children, the more quickly and easily children acquire the words. The surrounding interactions are serving as mediational tools which scaffold children's language development and contribute to the transition from pre-linguistic thought and pre-intellectual speech to linguistic thought and intellectual speech. Further, Wertsch et al., (2007) and Massing (2018) explained explicit and implicit mediation are utilized as scaffolding tools by teachers to help children learn language. According to Massing (2018), "learning centers, videos, song recordings, props, written song lyrics, pictures in children's books, diagrams, and musical instruments" (p.75) are explicit mediators, as these concrete materials or activities are deliberately selected and

introduced into children's language learning. Implicit mediation devices include verbal prompts and gestures.

The interview data found that Chinese parents unconsciously introduced various explicit and implicit mediators in their children's home learning, such as providing various English materials and applying daily language activities with children. Chinese parents played a lot of rhythms and animated videos to establish an immersive environment as much as possible. As parents shared, they referred to the sounds coming from English rhythms or animated videos as no different than background music. The children may not respond to the rhythms or animated videos, but parents believed children would unconsciously perceive English, and they called this daily practice as "磨耳朵 immersing child's ears in English". The significance of an enriched literacy environment was confirmed by Morrow (1990), and Morrow and Rand (1991), who found when children were offered rich literacy-related resources and materials, like paper, writing utensils, books, and play props, children initiated more literacy activities and were engaged in these activities.

In China, parents seemed to know some professional and theory-informed practices when creating an immersive and situated home learning environment. The reasons could be threefold: (a) Chinese parents viewed themselves as key teachers in terms of enhancing their children's development, (b) Chinese parents' English level allowed them to engage in children's English learning, and (c) due to the development of social media, many educators gave free online lessons, so that Chinese parents were able to learn the updated parenting strategies related to a productive home learning environment.

Private Institution Learning.

How parental expectations shape private English institutions. To some extent, parents' expectations set the standards for private English programs. Reflecting on Dearing and Tang's (2009) conceptual framework of the home learning environment, private English institution environments should be included in a larger child-family system. Private institutions' learning environments and teaching methodologies influence parents' efficacy, expectations, beliefs and values, and are influenced by parents' factors as well. When choosing an appropriate English program, parents decided on: (a) foreign

teachers, (b) authentic pronunciation and intonation, (c) relaxing and playful environment, (d) teachers' skills and reputation, (e) teaching methodology, and (f) consistency with public school curriculum.

Research findings showed, on the one hand, private English institutions tried to educate parents about how and what children learn and; on the other hand, they conformed to parents' expectations to some extent. This compromise was confirmed by all teachers except the one who ran her own community-based program. Recalling my working experience in an English training company which promoted learning in a playful way and a happy environment, compromises were made to accommodate parents' insistence on vocabulary, grammar, and testing skills. For example, the company provided academic-focused and examination-oriented summer courses, such as Grammar Booster and Academic Reading and Writing. Its marketing materials said: "One English book one day, let your child love to read; improve all your academic weakness in two months".

Teachers' role in play. Kozulin (2003) and Vygotsky (1978) placed special emphasis on the human mediator, playing or interacting "under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p,86), which otherwise would be ineffective. In terms of the adult's role, scaffolding was discussed by many educators and was considered to play a significant role (Chappell, 2014, 2016; Forman, 2008; Mei-Ju & Ching-Chi, 2014). In particular, Chappell (2014, 2016) emphasized the importance of verbal scaffolding. Reflecting on all teacher participants' sharing, their teaching process of direct instruction and then structured play was also a way of scaffolding. During the structured play, in the teacher's example, her scaffolding role changed from more intrusive and instructive (reading to students), to less intrusive and instructive (mouth movement demonstration), to eventually no intrusion and instruction. All the teachers in this study defined their role as to facilitate children's growth and development, and to observe and identify children's behaviors. They also concluded that as there was always something unpredictable happening, they should know how to respond to emergencies and make sure every child plays safely. In conclusion, teachers in this study viewed themselves as teachers, facilitators, players, monitors and problem solvers.

Teachers' play practices. All teacher participants were invited to share their practices related to play-based learning with the researcher. As listed in the findings, the most frequently used play approaches were those aided by various materials including flashcards, pictures, multi-media and other themed props. The misinterpretation of play as an instrument was also discussed in Cheng and Stimpson's study (2004). This misunderstanding results in teachers' play practices not representing the child-centered and constructivist perspectives of play. Therefore, lots of teacher-centered direct instruction or in-direct instruction was applied in the ESL classroom.

Parents' Concerns About Play Versus Teachers' Constraints About Play

Parents' concerns mostly came from their failure to recognize the positive correlation between play and children's academic attainment. However, as for teachers, besides parents' refusal of play-based teaching, the complexity of classroom dynamics and students' limited English knowledge were also the barriers for them in terms of incorporating play into their curriculum.

Parents' concerns. Although parents did set the home English environment and engaged themselves in children's English learning, most of them admitted that they relied on public school and the private English training company for their children's English acquisition. As discussed above, parents had a high expectation of scores. This pressure came from the provincial and national education policy, as well as competition with other families. This phenomenon was not exclusive in China, it was also identified in the United States by Shipley (2008) and shared by one South Africa teacher participant. In the United States, the 1990s Back to Basics Movement which "blamed laissez-faire approach to child-centered learning for the overall poor to mediocre academic performance of North American students" (Shipley, 2008, p.54) called for academically-oriented curriculum in primary schools, including preschools. In South Africa, as participant Angelina shared, the government introduced tests into primary schools. Therefore, parents' distrust in play influences and is also influenced by societal beliefs and education systems.

Teacher's constraints. First, many teachers asserted that parents' pessimism in play placed lots of pressure on their teaching strategies, which was evident in Lynch's study (2015). Even if teachers were able to educate parents to believe in play-based

learning, they also need to overcome the challenges and barriers caused by the complex classroom dynamics, such as limited class time, inappropriate class size, classroom management difficulties, safety issues, and teachers' own energy levels. Constraints of time, class size and safety were also identified by Fesseha and Pyle (2016). New constraints, such as teachers' energy and students' language barriers, emerged in this study. Teachers' energy concerns are associated with class size and classroom management. According to teachers' perspectives, staying with children for a whole day was a big challenge for them, as they tried to maintain their energy levels and enthusiasm. As for students' language barriers, most teachers worried that students' English levels did not allow them to engage in free play or less structured play while continuing to produce language.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the interview findings, related them to previous research and interpreted them, under five headings: (a) the zone of proximal development V.S. plan ahead, (b) free play V.S. Structured play, (c) non-cognitive benefits V.S. academic achievement, (d) home learning V.S. school learning, and (e) parents' concerns about play V.S. teachers' constraints about play. I found many of the findings to be consistent with those in previous research studies. However, there were also some unique phenomena that emerged in this study, and they were discussed and analyzed.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From examining parents' and teachers' perceptions, the findings of this study have several implications for parents, teachers and school administrators.

Implications for Parents

Parents can be wonderful allies of teachers for their young children's ESL education. In particular, as to a second language or an additional language learning, an immersive and natural environment is crucial (Vygotsky, 1987a). Parents should continue to provide an English learning environment for their children at home. Parents' rich English practices of shared reading and video watching, English dialogues, and English interactions in daily life were confirmed as beneficial for children's English development (Morrow, 1990; Morrow & Rand, 1991), therefore they should keep on with these practices. During these practices, parents could apply verbal scaffolding and inquiry dialogues to engage and motivate children to use English which is consistent with Chappell's study (2014, 2016). For example, when reading, or watching videos together with children, parents can ask them whether they like the characters or to guess what will happen. In addition, after reading, parents can also conduct role-play or craft activities for children to enrich learning and engagement. Reflecting on Kevin and Leah's practices, parents can also integrate English into daily life, for example, in the zoo, in the shopping mall, before lunch or other scenarios, parents can lead English conversations and practices with children.

However, in the interviews, some parents showed their concerns about their English pronunciation and accuracy, but I suggest discarding this perspective as its disadvantage is tremendous. Parents are regarded as children's models, and if parents are afraid to speak English, children will think English is difficult and will be reluctant to speak English. To overcome the concern about accent, parents can introduce the original video and audio at home.

Implications for Teachers

Similarly, teachers should also provide a literacy-rich school environment for children, for example, books, magazines, rhythms and animated videos. In addition, reflecting teachers' concerns about class size and time, teachers could establish play areas outside the classroom, like a dramatic play area. This play area would be well designed

with rich play props and a teaching assistant could be assigned to support and scaffold children's free literacy-focused play. Parents would be encouraged to take their children to institutions earlier and allow their children to play in that special playroom with peers.

Another barrier for teachers comes from parents' concerns about play; there are three implications. One teacher participant, Becky, who firmly insisted on her belief in play-based teaching, could communicate with parents to achieve shared-understandings and values. If parents still did not buy into her philosophy of teaching, she could refuse this parent and his or her child. In this sense, educators need to educate parents about center's principles and children's learning styles to hopefully reach a shared understanding of teaching and learning. Another solution is, as many institutions do now, to provide more open classes for parents to observe and experience how their children learning through play. In my last company, before enrolling children into the program, parents were invited to sit at the back of classroom and observe how teachers teach and engage young children in English. Then every two months, parents were welcomed to the classroom again so that they were able to see their children's progressive development in the classroom. Furthermore, frequent and systematic weekly or monthly communications are necessary for parents to oversee their children's play learning. Teachers can send parents weekly or monthly folders of student work. Through photos of students' work, along with teachers' detailed comments, parents can make sure their children indeed learn effectively. For example, teachers can create pedagogical narrations or learning stories, recording children's play moments through photos, videos, or teachers' annotation, and share with colleagues, children and parents. Making children's ordinary moments in school visible to parents will allow them to understand what learning might happen through play. Teachers can also hold regular conferences or galleries of student work inviting all parents to see their child's progress and achievements in play-based programs.

Implications for Private Institution Administrators

In China, there is a shift from completely test-focused teaching to more playful and student-centered teaching, however, as discussed before, teachers have very narrow interpretations of play-based learning and limited play approaches. Therefore, there is an opportunity for leaders to provide professional teacher training and abundant examples of play-based teaching, which would be beneficial for teachers to refer to. Given teachers'

difficulties around class size and class management when integrating play, school administrators could decrease teachers' pressure by employing one teaching assistant in the classroom. These assistants could aid teachers in managing classroom and enriching play. Cost might be the biggest concern for school, therefore, practicum students and volunteering students with proper training may be involved in the classroom to support teachers. Safety is another concern for teachers. School leaders can help to alleviate the concern by employing child-friendly furnishings, such as carpets and round-corner tables.

The definition of play essentially goes against Chinese cultural traditions. Reflecting on one teacher's dislike of the term play-based learning, therefore, school administrators may change strategies in communicating with parents, for example, instead of using play-based learning, using the term, inquiry-based learning. The school could also develop family-school partnership programs to enhance family-school communication and help parents understand school programs better.

Many teachers identified the significance of parental involvement regarding expanding play into a more immersive and natural environment. However, parents may not be able to provide appropriate play settings and activities at home. Therefore, I suggest school administrators could give parents workshops or provide parenting booklets for parents regarding how to design home play areas and conduct play-based activities at home.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate Chinese parents' and teachers' understandings of the use of play in young children's ESL acquisition, however, it has limitations. I applied a purposeful snowball sampling method to recruit the targeted participants, and while it allowed me to uncover participants' deep understandings, the small sample size cannot be generalized to findings relevant to all Chinese parents and teachers. In addition, although there were participants recruited from second or third-tier cities, like Tianjin, Changsha, Hefei and Bengbu, most of the participants were from Shanghai a well-developed city. China varies greatly when comparing first, second and third-tier cities in terms of socio-economic status, education level and other factors. The voices of parents and teachers primarily from Shanghai are not representative of Chinese parents and teachers in general. Additionally, as most of the participants were female

(only three out of fifteen males were recruited), it is dangerous to say the findings are representative of both men and women. Furthermore, fathers' sharing was lacking in this study. Therefore, future study could be designed drawing from a more diverse population.

This research explored play-based learning and practices in the context of private English institutions rather than in the public school system. In this sense, the research findings cannot be utilized to describe ESL teaching in the public school system.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the only data source. On one hand, like other qualitative research studies, the interview questions were designed based on the researcher's personal beliefs and theories about play and Chinese ESL education which may be partial or biased. On the other hand, the subjects' sharing may also be a partial and biased one. The data analysis was a narrative method, and I only applied research-related themes to my data; this also may represent the researcher's partial understandings. In the future, a more open-ended interview could be used to expand the objectivity of the study. However, this study can also be considered as pilot research for future in-depth exploring of Chinese parents' and teachers' interpretations about the role of play in young children's ESL learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative research applied semi-structured interviews and snowball and convenience sampling. Therefore, in order to reflect a more diverse population, future researchers could include a quantitative research design to reach out to different groups of people, like rural area families and schools, as well as fathers.

Teaching practices need greater study. This research heard only what teachers could recall, however there was no verification that what they remembered about their teaching was actually what was occurring. Something could be missing. Therefore, future researchers may expand this study by using methods, like classroom observations or case studies. Classroom observations may also enable the researcher to get first-hand information about children's involvement and engagement in play-based learning.

Regarding English performance, future studies may adopt a longitudinal and comparative design to examine how play-based learning influences children's grades. This research was established in the context of exploring what play-based learning looks like in private English institutions, therefore voices from the Chinese public school

system were lacking. Future study could include some participants who are from public schools and investigate what play-based learning looks like in public schools.

In this study, parental involvement was widely identified, but because it was not the major research question, I did not deeply explore this theme. Future studies might focus on investigating how parents value their involvement and their practices, as well as what factors influence parental engagement in young children's ESL learning. In particular, in this research study, all parents mentioned the use of rhythms, animated videos and storytelling to facilitate their children's English learning. This could also be expanded and the topic of how rhythms, animated videos and storytelling children's literacy development could be further explored.

Conclusion

These research findings first reveal the contradiction between Chinese parents' beliefs and practices in their young child's age-appropriate development. Parents in this study prefer to prepare their child in various academic-focused and interest-oriented programs as early as three years old. The major reason is Chinese test-oriented education system. Second, this study explores parents' and teachers' perceptions of play-based learning to promote young Chinese children's English learning. In particular, teachers' knowledge of play only superficially touches on free play and structured play which could be broader and detailed. Therefore, professional training regarding play pedagogy could be designed and provided for Chinese teachers. As for parents, they undervalue the positive influences of play on children's English learning in terms of promoting grades. To convince parents about the benefits of play, teachers could thoroughly communicate with parents and give timely updates about children's development. Third, both practices of play-based learning at home and school were explored in this study. At home, most parents in this study chose multi-media materials, like smart phone games, videos, audios, to facilitate their child's learning. In the private English training companies, teachers were more likely to use structured play due to the constraints of child's language barriers, time, and safety. Finally, in terms of concerns about play, parents tended to underestimate play's benefits on academic performance, while teachers stated that purely play-based teaching cannot realize due to child's lack of language competency, time limits, and safety.

References

Adamson, B., & Morris, P. (1997). The English curriculum in the People's Republic of China. *Comparative Education Review*, *41*(1), 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1086/447413

Albright, M. I., & Weissberg, R. P. (2009). School-family partnerships to promote social and emotional learning. In S. L. Christenson & A. L. Reschly (Eds.), *Handbook of school-family partnerships* (pp. 246–265). New York, NY: Routledge.

Badzis, M. (2003). *Teachers' and parents' understanding of the concept of play in child development and education* (Coventry, England: University of Warwick). Retrieved from http://webcat.warwick.ac.uk/record=b1667768~S9

Barnard, W. M. (2004). Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *26*(1), 39–62.

Bergen, D. (2009). Play as the learning medium for future scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. *American Journal of Play*, *1*(4), 413–428.

Berk, L. E., & Winsler, A. (1997). *Scaffolding children's learning: Vygotsky and early childhood education* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: National Assoc. for the Education of Young Children.

Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2007). *Tools of the mind* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Burke, A. (2000). *Ready to Learn: Using play to build literacy skills in young learners*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.

Butler, Y. G. (2014). Parental factors in children's motivation for learning English: A case in China. *Research Papers in Education*, *30*(2), 164–191. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2014.891643

Chappell, P. (2014). Engaging learners: Conversation- or dialogic-driven pedagogy? *ELT Journal*, *68*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/cct040

Chappell, P. (2016). Creativity through inquiry dialogue. In R. H. Jones & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Creativity in language teaching: Perspectives from research and practice* (1st ed., pp. 130–145). New York, NY: Routledge.

Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and

demands on insider positionality. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(3), 474–497.

Cheng, D. P.-W. (2001). Difficulties of Hong Kong teachers' understanding and implementation of 'play' in the curriculum. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *17*(7), 857–869.

Cheng, D. P.-W., & Stimpson, P. (2004). Articulating contrasts in kindergarten teachers' implicit knowledge on play-based learning. *International Journal of Educational Research, 41*(4–5), 339–352.

Cheng, X. (2011). The "English curriculum standards" in China: Rationales and issues. In A. Feng (Ed.), *English language education across greater China* (pp. 133–150). Bristol, UK: Multilingal Matters.

Cheung, C. S.-S., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2012). Why does parents' involvement enhance children's achievement? The role of parent-oriented motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *140*(3), 820–832.

Cho, H., & Kim, H. K. (2018). Promoting creativity through language play in EFL classrooms. *TESOL Journal*, *9*(4), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.416

Choi, J. (2016). Creative criticality in multilingual texts. In R. H. Jones & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *Creativity in language teaching: Perspectives from research and practice* (1st ed., pp. 146–161). New York, NY: Routledge.

Christenson, S. L. (2004). The family-school partnership: An opportunity to promote the learning competence of all students. *School Psychology Review*, *33*(1), 83–104.

Christmas, J. (2005). Is it OK to play? Perceptions of play in a small rural primary school. In K. M. Hirst & C. Nutbrown (Eds.), *Perspectives on early childhood education: Contemporary research* (pp. 141–149). Stoke-on-Trent, England: Trentham Books.

Ciolan, L. E. (2013). Play to learn, learn to play. Creating better opportunities for learning in early childhood. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *76*, 186–189.

Cohen, L. E., & Waite-Stupiansky, S. (2017). *Theories of early childhood education: Developmental, behaviorist, and critical*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Cook, V. (2011). Teaching English as a foreign language in Europe. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning: Volume 2* (pp.

140–154). New York, NY: Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, Mass: Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design : Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, US: SAGE Publications.

Datta, M. (2004). Friendship literacy: Young children as cultural and linguistic experts. In E. Gregory, S. Long, & D. Volk (Eds.), *Many pathways to literacy : Young children learning with siblings, grandparents, peers and communities* (pp. 129–149). New York: Routledge Farmer.

Daynes, R. (2007). Social location and practising as an ally in community development. *Research and Perspectives on Development Practice*, 1–16.

De Groot, A. M. B., & Van Hell, J. G. (2005). The learning of foreign language vocabulary. In B. Stroud, A. M. B. De Groot, & J. F. Kroll (Eds.), *Handbook of bilingualism: Psycholinguistic approaches* (pp. 9–29). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Dearing, E., & Tang, S. (2009). The home learning environment and achievement during childhood. In S. L. Christenson & A. L. Reschly (Eds.), *Handbook of school-family partnerships* (pp. 131–157). New York, NY: Routledge.

Dietze, B. (2006). *Foundations of early childhood education: Learning environments and childcare in Canada*. York, ON: Pearson Canada.

Doan, L. K., Patten, M. H., & Piwowar, C. (2009). *Look at me ... I'm learning everyday : Tips for parents*. Kamloops, CA: Thompson Rivers University.

Duckworth, E. R. (2006). The having of wonderful ideas. In *The having of wonderful ideas and other essays on teaching and learning* (3rd ed., pp. 1–12). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London, UK: SAGE.

Eminent psychologists of the 20th century. (2002). *Monitor on Psychology*, *33*(7), 29. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/monitor/julaug02/eminent

Epstein, J. L., & Salinas, K. C. (2004). Partnering with families and communities. *Educational Leadership*, *68*(8), 12–19.

Evans, R. I., & Piaget, J. (1973). *Jean Piaget: The man and his ideas*. New York, NY: E. P. Dutton.

Fesseha, E., & Pyle, A. (2016). Conceptualising play-based learning from kindergarten teachers' perspectives. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *24*(3), 361–377.

Fogle, L. M., & Mendez, J. L. (2006). Assessing the play beliefs of African American mothers with preschool children. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *21*(4), 507–518.

Forman, R. (2008). Using notions of scaffolding and intertextuality to understand the bilingual teaching of English in Thailand. *Linguistics and Education*, *19*(4), 319–332. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2008.07.001

Gabas, C., Marante, L., & Cabell, S. Q. (2019). Fostering preschoolers' emergent literacy: Recommendations for enhanced literacy experiences and collaborative instruction. *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, *4*(1), 167–176. https://doi.org/10.1044/PERS-SIG16-2018-0012

Galindo, C., & Sheldon, S. B. (2012). School and home connections and children's kindergarten achievement gains: The mediating role of family involvement. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *27*(1), 90–103. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.05.004

Garvey, C. (1990). What is play. In *Play* (pp. 1–16). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Gil, J., & Adamson, B. (2011). The English language in mainland China: A sociolinguistic profile. In A. Feng (Ed.), *English language education across greater China* (pp. 23–45). Bristol, UK: Multilingal Matters.

Gopaldas, A. (2013). Intersectionality 101. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *32*(1), 90–94.

Gray, P. (2011). The decline of play and the rise of psychopathology in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Play*, *3*(4), 443–463.

Greene, M. J. (2014). On the inside looking in: Methodological insights and challenges in conducting qualitative insider research. *The Qualitative Report*, *19*(29), 1–13.

Gutek, G. L. (2011). *Philosophy and history of education* (Custom). Boston, Mass: Pearson Custom.

Hall, N. (1991). Play and the emergence of literacy. *Play and Early Literacy Development*, 3–25.

Hawkins, M. R. (2005). ESL in elementary education. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning: Volume 1* (pp. 49–68). New York, NY: Routledge.

Hofferth, S. L. (2009). Changes in American children's time: 1997 to 2003. *Electronic International Journal of Time Use Research*, *6*(1), 26–47.

Hofferth, S. L., & Sandberg, J. F. (2001). Changes in American children's time: 1981-1997. In T. Owens & S. L. Hofferth (Eds.), *Children at the millennium: Where have we come from? Where are we going?* (pp. 193–229). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science.

Hu, G. (2007). The juggernaut of Chinese-English bilingual education. In A. Feng (Ed.), *Bilingual education in China: Practices, policies and concepts* (1st ed., pp. 94–126). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Huang, J. (2005). 试论我国英语教育方针和目的的改革 [Analysis English education improvement of policy and intent]. *学术论坛 [Academic Forum]*, *7*(168), 182–185.

Justice, L. M., Jiang, H., & Strasser, K. (2018). Linguistic environment of preschool classrooms: What dimensions support children's language growth? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *42*, 79–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.09.003

Kitson, N. (2014). Children's fantasy role play–why adults should join in. In M. Janet (Ed.), *The excellence of play* (4th ed., pp. 108–120). Berkshire, UK: McGraw-Hill: Open University Press.

Klein, W. (1986). Some forms of language acquisition, some fundamental facts, some focal issues, some well-known theories. In *Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 3–32). https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815058

Korat, O., Bahar, E., & Snapir, M. (2002). Sociodramatic play as opportunity for literacy

development: The teacher's role. *The Reading Teacher*, *56*(4), 386–393.

Kozulin, A. (1998). *Psychological tools: A sociocultural approach to education.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Kozulin, A. (2003). *Vygotsky's educational theory in cultural context* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Kwok, Y. Y. (2015). *Understanding parental strategies in supporting children's second language learning from the perspectives of bourdieu's concept of capital: A study of Hong Kong Chinese parents* (Hong Kong Institute of Education). Retrieved from http://libdr1.ied.edu.hk/dspace/bitstream/2260/4350/1/image_file.html

Lau, E. Y. H., Li, H., & Rao, N. (2011). Parental involvement and children's readiness for school in China. *Educational Research*, *53*(1), 95–113.

Learn. (n.d.). Retrieved from Oxford Dictionary website: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/learn

Lesley, M. M., & Rand, M. K. (1991). Promoting literacy during play by designing early childhood classroom environments. *The Reading Teacher*, *44*(6), 396–402.

Lin, W. (2001). 双语教育上海起步 [Bilingual education has taken off in Shanghai]. *中国青年报 [China Youth Daily]*, *24*(September).

Lynch, M. (2015). More play, please: The perspective of kindergarten teachers on play in the classroom. *American Journal of Play*, *7*(3), 347–370.

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., Macqueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). Qualitative research methods overview. In *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide* (pp. 1–12). North Carolina, US: Family Health International.

Massing, C. (2015). Authoring professional identities: Immigrant and refugee women's experiences in an early childhood teacher education program. *Journal of Childhood Studies*, *40*(1), 73–99.

Massing, C. (2018). Scaffolding immigrant early childhood teacher education students toward the appropriation of pedagogical tools. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *39*(2), 73–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2017.1408720

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Thousand Oaks, US: Sage publications.

McLoyd, V. C., Warren, D., & Thomas, E. A. (1984). Anticipatory and fantastic role enactment in preschool triads. *Developmental Psychology*, *20*(5), 807–814. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.20.5.807

Mei-Ju, C., & Ching-Chi, C. (2014). Let's scaffold elementary G1 students playing with English. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *143*, 542–549. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.433

Merriam, S. B. (1995). What can you tell from an N of 1: Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*, *4*, 50–60.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, US: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Ministry of Education. (1997). *中国教育统计年鉴1997[Educational statistics yearbook of China in 1997]* (J. Han, Ed.). Beijing: BJ: 中国统计出版社[China Statistics Press].

Ministry of Education. (2017). *中国教育统计年鉴2017[Educational statistics yearbook of China in 2017]* (L. L. J. Changya;, Ed.). Beijing: BJ: 中国统计出版社[China Statistics Press].

Ministry of Education. (2019). *教育部关于做好2019年普通高校招生工作的通知 [Guidelines of 2019 National College Entrance Examination] (No. 360A15-07-2019-0005-1)*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A15/moe_776/s3258/201904/t20190415_378127.html

Morrow, L. M. (1990). Preparing the classroom environment to promote literacy during play. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *5*(4), 537–554. https://doi.org/10.1016/0885-2006(90)90018-V

Müller, U., Carpendale, J. I. M., & Smith, L. (2009). *The Cambridge companion to Piaget*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Naples, N. (1996). The outsider phenomenon. In C. S. Smith & W. Kornblum (Eds.), *The field: Readings on the field research experience* (2nd ed., pp. 373–381). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Neuman, S., & Roskos, K. (1991). The influence of literacy-enriched play centers on preschoolers' conceptions of the functions of print. *Play and Early Literacy Development*, 167–187.

Nielsen, D. C., & Monson, D. L. (1996). Effects of literacy environment on literacy development of kindergarten children. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *89*(5), 259–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1996.9941327

Nikolov, M., & Djigunovic, J. M. (2006). Recent research on age, second language acquisition, and early foreign language learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *26*. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190506000122

Nunan, D. (2017). Teaching English to young learners. In H. Eli (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning: Volume III* (pp. 61–81). New York, NY: Routledge.

Olfman, S. (2003). *All work and no play: How educational reforms are harming our preschoolers*. Westport, ON: Praeger.

Parmar, P., Harkness, S., & Super, C. M. (2004). Asian and Euro-American parents' ethnotheories of play and learning: Effects on preschool children's home routines and school behaviour. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *28*(2), 97–104.

Pellegrini, A. D., & Galda, L. (1991). Longitudinal relations among preschoolers' symbolic play, metalinguistic verbs, and emergent literacy. *Play and Early Literacy Development*, 47–67.

Pelletier, J., & Brent, J. M. (2002). Parent participation in children' school readiness: The effects of parental self-efficacy, cultural diversity and teacher strategies. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, *34*(1), 45–60.

Piaget, J. (1976). *The child and reality: Problems of genetic psychology*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Piaget, J., Gattegno, C., & Hodgson, F. M. (1962). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood*. London, UK: Routledge.

Piker, R. A. (2013). Understanding influences of play on second language learning: A microethnographic view in one head start preschool classroom. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, *11*(2), 184–200.

Pirpir, D. A., Er, R. K., & Koçak, N. (2009). Comparison of attitudes of parents having children in early childhood period related to play. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *1*(1), 933–938.

Pulaski, M. A. S. (1980). *Understanding Piaget: An introduction to children's cognitive development* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Rogers, S., & Brown, C. (2014). Developing play pedagogy through critically reflective practice. In M. Janet (Ed.), *The excellence of play* (4th ed., pp. 148–158). Berkshire, UK: McGraw-Hill: Open University Press.

Roopnarine, J. L. (2010). Cultural variations in beliefs about play, parent-child play, and children's play: Meaning for childhood development. In P. Nathan & A. D. Pellegrini (Eds.), *The oxford handbook of the development of play* (pp. 19–27). Oxford, UK: Oxford Library of Psychology.

Roskos, K. A., & Christie, J. F. (2001). Examining the play-literacy interface: A critical review and future directions. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *1*(1), 59–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/14687984010011004

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Shanghai Customer Evaluation Center(SCEC). (2017). 上海幼儿早期教育（0-6岁）状况调研报告[An investigation report on early education in Shanghai (0-6 years old)]. *上海质量 [Shanghai Quality Magazine]*, *2017*(Aug), 26–30.

Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. (2019a). *2019年上海市普通高等学校秋季统一考试招生工作办法[Guidelines of 2019 Shanghai College Entrance Examination] (No. AA4307003-2019-006)*. Retrieved from http://edu.sh.gov.cn/html/xxgk/201905/420032019006.php

Shanghai Municipal Education Commission. (2019b). *2019年本市中等学校高中阶段考试招生工作的若干意见 [Guidelines of 2019 Senior High School Entrance Examination] (No. AA4307005-2019-001)*. Retrieved from http://edu.sh.gov.cn/html/xxgk/201903/420052019001.html

Shen, Z. Y. (2004). 意义在实践目标在成效 [Significance and objectives of bilingual education]. *中国教育报 [Chinese Education Newspaper]*, *13*(May).

Shipley, C. D. (2008). Issues related to play, development, and learning. In C. D. Shipley (Ed.), *Empowering children: play-based curriculum for lifelong learning* (4th ed., pp. 48–64). Toronto, ON: Thomson Nelson.

Singer, D. G., & Revenson, T. A. (1996). *A Piaget primer: How a child thinks*. Madison, US: International Universities Press.

Singer, D. G., Singer, J. L., D'Agostino, H., & DeLong, R. (2009). Children's pastimes and play in sixteen nations: Is free-play declining. *American Journal of Play*, *1*(3), 283–312.

SmartStudy, & Sina. (2018). 中国家长教育焦虑指数调查报告[An investigation report on Chinese parents' anxiety about their children's education]. Retrieved from http://f.sinaimg.cn/edu/bc205105/20180921/jlreport.pdf

Song, Y. Q., & Yan, H. . (2004). 开展双语教育的可行性及问题报告 [A discussion of the feasibility of bilingual instruction and related issues]. *吉林工程技术师范学院学报 [Jilin Engineering Normal University Magazine]*, *20*(11), 20–22.

Statistics Canada. (2016). First Official Language Spoken (7), Language Spoken Most Often at Home (269), Age (15A) and Sex (3) for the Population Excluding Institutional Residents of Canada. Retrieved from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/dt-td/Rp-eng.cfm?TABID=2&Lang=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GID=1161980&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=109981&PRID=10&PTYPE=109445&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2016&THEME=118&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=&D1=0

Stern, H. H. (1983). Talking about language teaching. In *Fundamental concepts of language teaching* (pp. 9–22). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Stormshak, E., Dishion, T. J., & Falkenstein, C. A. (2009). Family-centered, school-based mental health strategies to reduce student behavioral, emotional, and academic risk. In S. L. Christenson & A. L. Reschly (Eds.), *Handbook of school-family partnerships* (pp. 228–245). New York, NY: Routledge.

Su, J. (2003). 上海拓展双语教育实验 [Shanghai expands experimentation with bilingual education]. *文汇报 [Wenhuibao]*, *21*(October).

Three Character Classic. (n.d.). Three Character Classic. Retrieved from https://motivationmentalist.com/2014/05/04/three-character-classic-san-zi-jing-

translated/#number05

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society the development of higher psychological process* (M. Cole, J. V. Steiner, & S. Scribner, Eds.). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard university press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1987a). *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky. Volume IV. The history of the development of higher mental functions.* (R. W. Rieber & A. S. Carton, Eds.). New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1987b). *The collected works of L.S. Vygotsky. Volume V. Child psychology*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Vygotsky, L. S., & Kozulin, A. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Wadsworth, B. J. (1971). *Piaget's theory of cognitive development* (7th ed.). New York, NY: McKay.

Wertsch, J. V, Daniels, H., & Cole, M. (2007). *The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Wu, S. C., Faas, S., & Geiger, S. (2018). Chinese and German teachers' and parents' conceptions of learning at play–similarities, differences, and (in) consistencies. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *26*(2), 229–245.

Yahya, R. (2016). Bridging home and school: Understanding immigrant mothers' cultural capital and concerns about play-based learning. *Early Years*, *36*(4), 340–352.

Zhang, D. (2012). Chinese primary school English curriculum reform. In J. Ruan & C. Leung (Eds.), *Perspectives on teaching and learning English literacy in China* (pp. 67–83). New York, NY: Springer.

Zhang, X. D., Sun, H. Y., & Zhao, X. (2017). 从"90后"到"00后"：中国少年儿童发展状况调查报告 [From the post-90s to the post-00s, national survey of children and youth development]. *中国青年研究 [China Youth Research Magazine]*, *2017*(2), 98–107.

Zhang, Y. P. (2003). 双语教育的意义和策略思考 [The significance and strategies of bilingual education]. *乐山师范学院 [Leshan Normal University Xuebao]*, *18*(6),

—

38–40.

Zigler, E. F., & Bishop-Josef, S. J. (2006). The cognitive child versus the whole child: Lessons from 40 years of head start. In D. G. Singer, R. M. Golinkoff, & K. Hirsh-Pasek (Eds.), *Play= learning: How play motivates and enhances children's cognitive and social-emotional growth* (pp. 15–35). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Sample interview questions for teachers

1. Would you introduce yourself? How long have you been a teacher? 您能介绍一下自己吗？您教英语有多长时间了？

2. What is your educational background? 您的教育背景是？

3. What does 'play' mean to you? What does "play-based learning" mean to you? 您怎样理解"玩耍/游戏"？你怎样理解游戏化教学？

4. Do you use "play" in your classroom? If yes, can you tell me about the types of play you provide in your classroom? 您在教学中会使用游戏化教学吗？

5. If yes, can you tell me about the types of play you provide in your classroom? And would you answer for each practice of play in the terms of following questions? 如果是，您能告诉按照下面的形式，告诉我您使用过哪些游戏教学？

(a)How do you use play in (ESL) literacy learning? What type of play do you use most? Whole class, small group, or individual? 您怎样进行游戏化教学？您以什么形式开展游戏化教学？集体化、小组化、个别化？为什么？

(b)What is your intention for each activity? 您采用这个游戏的目的是什么？（e.g. 训练什么项目？）

(c)How do you guide them to use it? 您怎么引导孩子进行某项游戏活动？

(d)How do ESL children experience literacy learning while they play in these activities? 根据您的观察，孩子在游戏中如何习得英语技能？

6. How do you provide for individual differences? 您如何根据孩子的学习或者个性特征，提供个性化教学？

7. How do you assess and measure the growth of children? 您怎么衡量孩子的英语能力的提高？

8. Can you tell me about your role in (ESL) literacy learning through play? How do you model for children? 您能告诉我，您在游戏化教学中的角色和作用是怎样的吗？你如何引导在游戏中学习？

9. What's the difference in children's learning and behavior between play and non-play based teaching, e.g. motivation, initiative, interest, emotion etc? 孩子在游戏化

的教学活动和非游戏化的教学活动中表现有什么不同？（包括积极性，主动性，兴趣性、情绪体验等）

10. What would be the constraints of using play in ESL literacy learning in your classroom? 从您的角度来看，您觉得实施游戏化教学的困难是什么？

Appendix B Sample interview questions for parents

1. Would you introduce yourself? What is your educational background? 您能介绍一下自己吗？您的教育背景是？

2. Would you introduce your child? How old is your child? How long has he/she learnt ESL? 您能介绍一下您的孩子吗？他/她多大了？他/她学英语多长时间了？

3. What do you think is most important for the development of your child? 您认为对孩子的发展来说，最重要的是什么？

4. What does 'play' mean to you? What do you think of children's play? 您怎样理解"玩耍/游戏"？那孩子的"玩耍/游戏"呢？

5. What does play-based learning mean to you? In what ways do you think play contributes to the development of your child? 您怎样理解"游戏化教学"？您认为"玩耍/游戏"会以什么样的方式帮助孩子的成长？

6. Would you give some examples of the use of play in your child's ESL learning? 根据您的观察或者孩子的描述，您能给出一些您的孩子游戏中学英语的例子吗？

7. Has your child learned ESL in traditional way? If yes, would you compare the two ways from your own perspective? 您的孩子上过传统式的英语学习班吗？如果是的，您能比较一下两种学习方法吗？

8. What improvements have your child made according to your observations? 根据你的观察，您觉得您的孩子有哪些英语学习方面的进步？

9. What would be the concerns of using play in ESL literacy learning from your perspectives? 从您的角度来看，您觉得游戏化教英语有哪些潜在的弊端吗？

Appendix C Consent Form for Teachers

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

研究员姓名、职位、学院、电话、邮箱：

Wei MAO, Graduate Student, Master of Education Program, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 778-237-3980, maow18@mytru.ca

毛伟，在读研究生，教育学，教育和社会工作学院，778-237-3980，

maow18@mytru.ca

Title of Project: What do parents and teachers value about play pedagogy in children's English as a Second Language (ESL) acquisition?

项目名称：游戏化教学在孩子 ESL 学习中的应用——家长和老师的观点调查

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

您将会收到本知情同意书副本。本知情同意书，仅是维护受访者知情同意程序的一部分。如果您想了解更多关于本知情同意书提到的研究的细节，或者这里没有涵盖的信息，您可以随时向研究员提出。请您仔细阅读本知情同意书。

The Thompson Rivers University Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

本研究项目已经获得 TRU 伦理委员会的同意。

Why Is This Study Being Done? 为什么要展开这项研究？

The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers understand play in children's ESL acquisition, what their classroom play practices are like and what best practice in children's ESL acquisition is. With globalization and immigration, there are increasing populations of children who learn and speak English as a second language. It's important

to find out the best ways in supporting children's ESL learning and the most effective strategy to implement play in classroom.

本研究旨在探究老师如何理解"玩耍/游戏"在孩子英语学习中的作用，他们在课堂中如何应用游戏化教学，以及他们认为最有效的英语教学方法。随着全球化和移民热的不断兴起，越来越多的孩子需要学习第二语言。因此探究如何帮助孩子学习英语/第二语言，如何有效的应用游戏化教学就显得非常重要。

You are considering an invitation to participate in a telephone interview focusing on your teaching experiences in children's ESL acquisition. You are invited to participate in the study as outlined below.

您将受邀参加一个电话访问，来分享您在英语教学中的经验和实践，具体的研究信息如下。

What Will I Be Asked to Do? 研究中我该做什么？

As a voluntary participant in the research, you will have the opportunity to participate in a telephone interview focusing on your understanding and practice of the role of play in children's ESL literacy development. Your inclusion in the interview may take around 30 minutes. Interviews may be audio recorded, and audio recordings will be stored as digital files. Some comments that you make may be recorded in written form. All written and recordings will be used as study data.

作为自愿参加研究的受访者，您将会参加一个电话访问，访问主要针对您在英语教学中关于游戏化教学的理解和应用。此次电话访问将会花费您 30 分钟。访问将会被录音，录音文件将会被转化成电子文档并被妥善保存。访问中，针对您的一些分享，研究员也会以书面形式记录，所有录音和书面文件将会被用于此次研究分析。

You may refuse to participate altogether in the study or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss. If you initially agree to participate in the research study but subsequently withdraw, then any data gathered at that point will be deleted.

您可以选择拒绝参加本项研究，或者在任何时候通知研究者要求退出研究，您不会受到任何惩罚或者损失。如果您开始同意参加研究，但是中途要求退出，您的数据将会被删除。

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected? 研究中会收集什么个人信息？

Should you agree to participate in the study, your educational role, years of ESL teaching experience, and practices may be noted by the researcher. However, all study data will be reported in an anonymous format and no personally identifying information will be included in study reports.

如果您同意参加此项研究，您的教育角色，教龄，以及教学经验将会被记录。但是所有数据将会以匿名的形式被记录，能够识别您的个人信息将不会用于研究。

There will be no remuneration or compensation for participating in this study.
本次研究没有薪酬。

I grant permission to be audio taped 我已知晓本研究会被录音，并同意录音
Yes 同意: _____   No 不同意:_____

Are There Risks or Benefits if I Participate? 我参加此项研究会有什么风险？

There are no known risks associated with participating in the research project.
本项研究不会给您带来任何已知的风险。

What Happens to the Information I Provide? 我提供的信息是保密的吗？

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. No one except the researcher and her supervisor and co-supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the written, digital, or video recordings of your participation. There are no names on the questionnaire or interview. Study findings will be summarized for any scholarly presentation or

publication of results. Individual comments may be quoted in presentations and publications, but only if there is minimal risk of identifying the individuals involved. The anonymous data will be stored for five years on an encrypted device accessible by the researcher. After that time, the data will be permanently erased.

您的参加将完全是自愿的，匿名的和保密的。您可以在任何时候选择退出此次研究。除了研究者和她的导师，其他人都被禁止访问您任何形式的数据。采访中不会记录您的姓名。研究结果将会以学术报告或者出版发表呈现，在报告或出版物中，您的意见和评论可能会被引用，但是您的身份不会被识别。所有匿名处理的数据将会在只有研究员可访问的加密设备上存储 5 年，到期之后，所有数据将会被永久删除。

Who Can I Contact If I Have Questions About This Study? 如果我有问题可以联系谁？

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

如果您对这项研究有任何疑问，请联系：

The Researcher: Wei MAO, Graduate Student, Master of Education Program, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 778-237-3980, maow18@mytru.ca

研究员：毛伟，在读研究生，教育学专业，教育与社会工作学院，778-237-3980, maow18@mytru.ca

The Researcher's Supervisor: Dr. Laura Doan, Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 250-371-5760, ldoan@tru.ca

研究员导师：Laura Doan 博士，助理教授，幼儿教育专业负责人，教育与社会工作学院，250-371-5760, ldoan@tru.ca

The Researcher's Supervisor: Dr. Victoria Handford, Associate Professor, Master of Education Program Coordinator, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 250-852-6353, vhandford@tru.ca

研究员导师：Victoria Handford 博士，副教授，教育学硕士专业负责人，教育与社会工作学院，250-852-6353, vhandford@tru.ca

Faculty of Education and Social Work: Dr. Airini, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Social Work, 250-320-5552, airini@tru.ca

教育与社会工作学院：Airini 博士，教育与社会工作学院院长，250-320-5552, airini@tru.ca

TRU Research Ethics Board: 250-828-5000, TRU-REB@tru.ca.

TRU 伦理委员会：250-828-5000，TRU-REB@tru.ca

Signatures 知情签名

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

您签字代表：1）您阅读并理解您将参加的研究目的和内容，2）您同意参加本项研究。

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

您同意参加并不会以任何形式剥夺您的法律权利，也不会使研究员或者相关机构逃避法律和专业责任。您可以随时退出此研究项目，在整个参与过程中，您可以向研究员要求澄清或者提供新信息以帮助您理解这项研究。

Participant's Name (please print) 受访者姓名（正楷书写）：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Participant's Signature（受访者签名）＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ Date（日期）＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Please indicate whether or not you were given a copy of the consent form:

请确认您是否收到本知情同意书副本：

Yes 是 ＿＿＿＿　　　　No 否 ＿＿＿＿　　Your Signature 签名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Researcher's Name (please print) 研究员姓名（正楷书写）：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Researcher's Signature（研究员签名）＿＿＿＿＿＿　Date（日期）＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

If you would like to receive an executive report on the findings, please contact Wei MAO. Additionally, if you would like to debrief your experiences in this research study, please contact Wei MAO who will be happy to meet with you.

如果您想收到研究报告，请联系研究员毛伟。此外，如果您对您提供的任何信息有疑问，请联系研究员毛伟，她会很乐意帮助您。

If you have concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact TRU Research Ethics Board at TRU-REB@tru.ca 250-828-5000.

作为参与者，如果您对您参与过程中受到的任何对待有疑问，请联系 TRU 伦理委员会，TRU-REB@tru.ca ，250-828-5000。

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form. 本知情同意书一式两份，受访者和研究员各保留一份。

Appendix D Consent Form for Parents

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:

研究员姓名、职位、学院、电话、邮箱：

Wei MAO, Graduate Student, Master of Education Program, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 778-237-3980, maow18@mytru.ca

毛伟，在读研究生，教育学，教育和社会工作学院，778-237-3980，

maow18@mytru.ca

Title of Project: What do parents and teachers value about play pedagogy in children's English as a Second Language (ESL) acquisition?

项目名称：项目名称：游戏化教学在孩子 ESL 学习中的应用——家长和老师的观点调查

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

您将会收到本知情同意书副本。本知情同意书，仅是维护受访者知情同意程序的一部分。如果您想了解更多关于本知情同意书提到的研究的细节，或者这里没有涵盖的信息，您可以随时向研究员提出。请您仔细阅读本知情同意书。

The Thompson Rivers University Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

本研究项目已经获得 TRU 伦理委员会的同意。

Why Is This Study Being Done? 为什么要展开这项研究？

The purpose of this study is to explore how parents understand play in children's ESL acquisition, what their children's ESL learning experiences are like and what parents' concerns in children's SL acquisition are. With globalization and immigration, there are increasing populations of children who learn and speak English as a second language. It's

important to find out the best ways in supporting children's ESL learning and the most effective strategy to implement the play in classroom.

本研究旨在探究家长如何理解"玩耍/游戏"在孩子英语学习中的作用，以及他们游戏化教学的疑虑。随着全球化和移民热的不断兴起，越来越多的孩子需要学习第二语言。因此探究如何帮助孩子学习英语/第二语言，如何有效的应用游戏化教学就显得非常重要。

You are considering an invitation to participate in a telephone interview focusing on your understanding of your child's ESL acquisition. You are invited to participate in the study as outlined below.

您将受邀参加一个电话访问，来分享您对游戏在英语教学中的理解，具体的研究信息如下。

What Will I Be Asked to Do? 研究中我该做什么？

As a voluntary participant in the research, you will have the opportunity to participate in a telephone interview focusing on your perspectives on the role of play in your child's ESL learning. Your inclusion in the interview may take around 30 minutes. Interviews may be audio recorded, and audio recordings will be stored as digital files. Some comments that you make may be recorded in written form. All written files and recordings will be used as study data.

作为自愿参加研究的受访者，您将会参加一个电话访问，访问主要针对您关于游戏化教学在孩子英语学习中作用的理解。此次电话访问将会花费您 30 分钟。访问将会被录音，录音文件将会被转化成电子文档并被妥善保存。访问中，针对您的一些分享，研究员也会以书面形式记录，所有录音和书面文件将会被用于此次研究分析。

You may refuse to participate altogether in the study or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss. If you initially agree to participate in the research study but subsequently withdraw, then any data gathered at that point will be deleted.

117

您可以选择拒绝参加本项研究，或者在任何时候通知研究者要求退出研究，您不会受到任何惩罚或者损失。如果您开始同意参加研究，但是中途要求退出，您的数据将会被删除。

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected? 研究中会收集什么个人信息？

Should you agree to participate in the study, your child's years and experiences of ESL learning, and your perspectives of your child's ESL learning may be noted by the researcher. However, all study data will be reported in an anonymous format and no personally identifying information will be included in study reports.

如果您同意参加此项研究，您孩子的年龄，英语学习经历，以及您对孩子英语学习的认识将会被记录。但是所有数据将会以匿名的形式被记录，能够识别您的个人信息将不会用于研究。

There will be no remuneration or compensation for participating in this study.

本次研究没有薪酬。

I grant permission to be audio taped 我已知晓本研究会被录音，并同意录音

Yes 同意: _____   No 不同意:_____

Are There Risks or Benefits if I Participate? 我参加此项研究会有什么风险？

There are no known risks associated with participating in the research project.

本项研究不会给您带来任何已知的风险。

What Happens to the Information I Provide? 我提供的信息是保密的吗？

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You are free to discontinue participation at any time during the study. No one except the researcher and her supervisor and co-supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any of the written, digital, or video recordings of your participation. There are no names on the questionnaire or

interview. Study findings will be summarized for any scholarly presentation or publication of results. Individual comments may be quoted in presentations and publications, but only if there is minimal risk of identifying the individuals involved. The anonymous data will be stored for five years on an encrypted device accessible by the researcher. After that time, the data will be permanently erased.

您的参加将完全是自愿的，匿名的和保密的。您可以在任何时候选择退出此次研究。除了研究者和她的导师，其他人都被禁止访问您任何形式的数据。采访中不会记录您的姓名。研究结果将会以学术报告或者出版发表呈现，在报告或出版物中，您的意见和评论可能会被引用，但是您的身份不会被识别。所有匿名处理的数据将会在只有研究员可访问的加密设备上存储 5 年，到期之后，所有数据将会被永久删除。

Who Can I Contact If I Have Questions About This Study? 如果我有问题可以联系谁？

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact: 如果您对这项研究有任何疑问，请联系：

The Researcher: Wei MAO, Graduate Student, Master of Education Program, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 778-237-3980, maow18@mytru.ca

研究员：毛伟，在读研究生，教育学专业，教育与社会工作学院，778-237-3980, maow18@mytru.ca

The Researcher's Supervisor: Dr. Laura Doan, Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 250-371-5760, ldoan@tru.ca

研究员导师：Laura Doan 博士，助理教授，幼儿教育专业负责人，教育与社会工作学院，250-371-5760, ldoan@tru.ca

The Researcher's Supervisor: Dr. Victoria Handford, Associate Professor, Master of Education Program Coordinator, Faculty of Education and Social Work, 250-852-6353, vhandford@tru.ca

研究员导师：Victoria Handford 博士，副教授，教育学硕士专业负责人，教育与社会工作学院，250-852-6353, vhandford@tru.ca

Faculty of Education and Social Work: Dr. Airini, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Social Work, 250-320-5552, airini@tru.ca

教育与社会工作学院：Airini 博士，教育与社会工作学院院长，250-320-5552, airini@tru.ca

TRU Research Ethics Board: 250-828-5000, TRU-REB@tru.ca.

TRU 伦理委员会：250-828-5000，TRU-REB@tru.ca

Signatures 知情签名

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

您签字代表：1）您阅读并理解您将参加的研究目的和内容，2）您同意参加本项研究。

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

您同意参加并不会以任何形式剥夺您的法律权利，也不会使研究员或者相关机构逃避法律和专业责任。您可以随时退出此研究项目，在整个参与过程中，您可以向研究员要求澄清或者提供新信息以帮助您理解这项研究。

Participant's Name (please print) 受访者姓名（正楷书写）： _____

Participant's Signature（受访者签名） _____ Date（日期） _____

Please indicate whether or not you were given a copy of the consent form:

请确认您是否收到本知情同意书副本：

Yes 是 _____   No 否 _____   Your Signature 签名：_____

Researcher's Name (please print) 研究员姓名（正楷书写）：_____

Researcher's Signature（研究员签名）_____ Date（日期）_____

If you would like to receive an executive report on the findings, please contact Wei MAO. Additionally, if you would like to debrief your experiences in this research study, please contact Wei MAO who will be happy to meet with you.

如果您想收到研究报告，请联系研究员毛伟。此外，如果您对您提供的任何信息有疑问，请联系研究员毛伟，她会很乐意帮助您。

If you have concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact TRU Research Ethics Board at TRU-REB@tru.ca 250-828-5000.

作为参与者，如果您对您参与过程中受到的任何对待有疑问，请联系 TRU 伦理委员会 TRU-REB@tru.ca，250-828-5000。

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

本知情同意书一式两份，受访者和研究员各保留一份。