
HOW SOME BILINGUAL PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN NEGOTIATE THEIR PLAY

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Abstract

Play routines are often recognised as important contexts of the interpretation as well as production of actions in studies of child discourse. Participation in peer group activities has also been said to have a positive influence on children's acquisition of a second language.

In this study, some Malaysian pre-school children were observed as they played different games. The real language that they used, specifically those during procedures for entering play activities were recorded and analysed. While most previous research has focused on individual "access strategies" and their outcome for group participation, the focus of this study is on the collaborative work in such interactions as children attempt to control play.

1. Background to the Study

Play routines are often recognised as important contexts of the interpretation as well as production of actions in studies of child discourse (Corsaro, 1985, 1986, 1997; Garvey, 1984, 1991). Previous researches conducted in play groups have shown that children are very protective over their play. As such, they restrict new comers' entry into ongoing play activities. One of the explanations offered for the restrictions is the vulnerable condition of coordinated social events in peer groups where the nature of the shared activity can be changed or terminated with the entry of new participants (Corsaro, 1985, 1986). Other researchers have proposed that denying children access to entry may demonstrate mutual participation in the ongoing play (Garvey, 1984) or to show close relationship between children (Emihovich, 1981).

Whatever the explanation, it seems that any child who attempts to enter ongoing peer activity is likely to face a lot of difficulties. As such they would have to time their bid and engage in socially sensitive negotiations to succeed in their goal. As such, negotiations for entry into play can sometimes be observed.

Children face great difficulty in gaining entry into ongoing play activities. Thus, it would be reasonable to expect children to engage elaborate ways to help them gain entry into play. Among the access "rituals" identified by Corsaro (1979) as cited by Cromdal (2001) are non-linguistic approaches such as 'Non-verbal entry' and 'Producing variant of ongoing behaviour' and verbal strategies that are more negotiative in nature like 'Suggesting other activity' or 'reference to individual characteristics'. Children would sometimes employ a number of strategies over a few attempts to gain entry as initial effort to join an activity are likely to be turned down. Children would usually initiate with a non-verbal entry while verbal strategies were more likely to be used in the later stages of the access ritual.

According to Garvey (1984) successful entry into group play involved understanding the structure of the group's activity, recognizing what is going on and producing well-timed entry bids that accommodate the group's activity. Dodge et al (1983) presented a model of children's social competence in group entry situations. When more than one strategy is used, a child is more likely to use a strategy that would have a low risk of rejection (e.g. imitating the on-going group activity) before adopting a high risk one (e.g. attention getting or behaviour that would disrupt the play). Putallaz and Shepperd (1992) suggested that various settings and groups require "different socially appropriate and desirable behaviours of children". While earlier researchers who have addressed the issue of children's peer group entry behaviour have focussed on the individual's social skills or strategies, Cromdall (2001) proposed that the interactive and collaborative aspects of entry rituals should be focused on. This is based on the view that the negotiations are a joint accomplishment between the party seeking entry and the one attempting to protect the ongoing activity from new participants. This views entry disputes as shared activities. This idea of collaboration is now an important issue in studies of child discourse.

While there have been many studies on the issue of children's play entry, these focused mainly on monolingual situations. One wonders how children would manage entry procedures in multilingual situations or when children have acquired more than one language. Participation in peer group activities have been said to have a positive influence on children's acquisition of a second language (Ervin-Tripp, 1986 and Hatch et al 1979). According to Ervin-Tripp (1986), the repetitive and predictable nature of certain games act as "a scaffold" by helping the early second language learners understand and produce speech.

Thus, it is reasonable to assume that some basic skills for needed for gaining entry are acquired quite early in L2 acquisition.

Cromdal (2001) studied the interactional processes underlying the outcome of negotiations in the play entry procedures of bilingual Swedish children between the ages of 6 and 8.5 years. He found that the children knew how to exploit turn-taking mechanisms in a variety of ways to achieve their aim of gaining entry into play. They also knew how to use their knowledge of play rules, relevant notions of age and gender to their advantage when negotiating.

1.1 Aim of the present study

As can be seen, a few issues were noted to motivate the study of children's language at play in the Malaysian bilingual context. First, negotiating play entry is a common activity amongst children as they play everyday. Second, the very act of negotiating play entry is an important part of children's social lives. The aim of this study thus, is to examine the interactive and collaborative nature of play entry episodes involving some bilingual Malaysian pre-school children. How do bilingual Malaysian preschool children negotiate play entry? What are the bilingual resources used in play entry and what interactive work may be accomplished by their use?

This study describes some of the ways in which a very small sample of preschool Malaysian children negotiate play entry. It is by no means a comprehensive listing of play entry behaviour of Malaysian preschool children nor does it claim to be an in-depth study of the interactive and collaborative work done by children in play entry.

2. Method

In this study, some Malaysian pre-school children were observed as they played different games in their kindergarten. The real language that they used, specifically language used during procedures for entering play activities as well as controlling their play were recorded and analysed. While most previous research has focused on individual "access strategies" and their outcome for group participation, the focus of this study is on the collaborative work in such interactions as children attempt to control play. The focus of this study is on the procedures used by the children for play entry in a bilingual environment, specifically in the kindergarten environment where Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin are taught and used in interactions.

2.1 Linguistic setting and participants

The preliminary study reported here was carried out in a kindergarten in a middle class suburb in Kuala Lumpur. The languages taught in the school are Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin. No attempts were made to control inter-child conversations with regard to language choice and as such, conversations were often conducted using Mandarin, English or both languages. No attempt was made to gauge the proficiency levels of the children in any language. The children who were observed were between 4-6 years old. There were 27 subjects in this study (1 Malay boy, 1 Indian girl, 1 Indian boy, 14 Chinese boys and 10 Chinese girls). The table below is a summary of the participants in the different clips analysed.

Table 1: Summary of Participants in the Excerpts

Excerpt	Length Of Time	Participants	Notes
1	1 min 13 sec	B1, B2, B3	
2	1 min 14 sec	B4, B5, B6, G1, Matthew	B6 and G1 do not talk
3	2 min 12 sec	Angeline, Lily, Shoba, G2, Jin Yee	G2 does not talk
4	2 min 48 sec	Matthew, Rizal, Lor Jin Sin, Kar Ying, Wei Yee, Peng Siang	Matthew, Wei Yee and Peng Siang do not talk
5	1 min 5 sec	Rizal, Lor Jin Sin, Kar Ying, G3, Peng Siang	G3 does not talk
6	37 sec	Rizal, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11	B10 and B11 do not talk
7	5 min 20 sec	Angeline, Shoba, Lily, G4, B12, B13	

2.2 Data collection and analysis

Data were collected by the researcher, who followed the children around the different locations on the school ground, video-recording the interactions that took place during the various play activities. The excerpts examined in the present study were extracted from a corpus of approximately 5 hours of video-taped interactions that were recorded during the recess in the kindergarten over a month. They covered play-related interactions during the recess. The kindergarten had 3 sessions of recess daily with about 40 – 50 children playing

in each session. The total play time for each session lasted for 10 to 15 minutes depending on how fast the children ate as the children were not allowed to start playing until most of them had finished their food. The entire material was examined several times by the author. The analysis focused on situations where the children approached ongoing play activities and made contact with any of the participating children or indicated in some manner, interest in the activity. These instances were transcribed. The primary resource employed in analyzing the interactions was their sequential organization. This is based on the stance that human discourse is a shared activity where interaction tasks are carried out through sequentially coordinated actions and in which participants use a range of resources available to them. Examining the grammatical accuracy of the utterances made by the children is not within the scope of the study. Instead, the focus is on how the children use language to control their play.

3. Entering peer play

3.1 *Negotiating position in play*

Several studies of group entry have found that children tend to protect ongoing play activities by restricting those trying to join in (Corsaro, 1985, 1986; Sheldon, 1996). Cromdal (2001) proposed that although this is so in many activities, there are other activities where the play is not very strongly protected. This is especially so in games where there are roles which are commonly considered less desirable. Consider the following examples.

Two boys play "la la li li". In this game, the participants sit facing each other. As they recite the rhyme, they wave their right hands. At the end of the rhyme, they clap their hands and then they get up and run.

(1) [Two boys run to the middle of porch.]

- | | | | |
|---|--------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | B1 | play la la li li
({ both boys sit down }) | |
| 2 | B1, B2 | la la li li la tam pom, la la li li la tam pom
({ both boys wave their hands in unison according to the rhyme, after the second time of saying la la li li they push each others' hands and roll on the floor laughing, the boys do these three times }) | |
| 3 | B3 | wǒ yào wán la la li li | (I want to play la la li li) |
| 4 | B2 | hǎo'a | (yes) |
| 5 | All | la la li li la tam pom la la li li la tam pom
({ all get up and run }) | |

In the exchange above, B3 tried to enter the play in line 3 by directly voicing his desire to enter the play. B2 gives consent in line 4 and as there was no objection from the other participant, he successfully entered the play. This is a simple entry and probably the ease in entry is because of the organization of the activity. B3 directly mentioned his desire probably because he was quite confident that his entry would be accepted. Any number of children can participate in this simple game without affecting their roles or positions as the children merely get up, run and catch each other after they finish reciting the lines. Thus B3 was exploiting his knowledge of how the game is played in his entry bid.

- (2) [2 boys and 1 girl are on a circular "climbing gym" Matthew joins in.]
- | | | | |
|---|-----|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | B4 | bù kěyǐ wán | (cannot play) |
| 2 | Mat | wǒ yào pá shàngmian | (I want to climb up) |
| | | (1) ({ children continue
To climb and move around the climbing gym }) | |
| 3 | Mat | (1)excuse me wǒ yào pá shàngmian (5) | (I want to climb up) |
| | | ({ Matthew proceeds to climb to the top })
({ a smaller boy (B6) tries to join in at the bottom }) | |
| 4 | B5 | lái liǎo | (come already) |
| 5 | B4 | yǒu xiǎobiàn 'er' | (there's urine here) |
| | | ({ B6 continues to climb }) | |
| 6 | Mat | (2)wǒ bù zhīdào, nǐ kěyǐ diē dǎo | (I don't know, you
can fall down) |
| 7 | B5 | bù kěyǐ | (don't) |
| | | ({ B 6 moves away }) | |

In the transcript above, although Matthew (Mat) was discouraged, he ignored the objections. Only one boy voiced his objection. The others quietly continued to climb. He first told Matthew he cannot join in. This was ignored by Matthew who managed to join the group as the others kept quiet. Later B4 tried to discourage another newcomer, B6, by saying there was urine there. Finally Matthew who seemed to be accepted by the group warned B6 who is smaller in size that he could fall and hurt himself if he continued to climb. This is possibly because the newcomer being smaller in size might not be as strong. The children initially did not seem to protect their place of play very strongly probably because they were just climbing and not playing in a group. Matthew managed to play there by ignoring the objection and imitating the behaviour of the children. Later, however when B6 tried to join them, he faced resistance from 2 children. B4 tried to discourage the boy by telling him that there was urine there. B6 by continuing to climb showed that he did not consider the objection to be valid (there was no urine there). Matthew in saying that B6 could fall down implied that he could hurt himself if he continued to climb. B5

voices his objection. This effectively stopped B6's entry bid and he moved away. The difference in the outcome of the two boys' entry bids could be because of the size or the difference in the interpersonal relationship. Another possibility could be that when B4 objected to Matthew's climbing, he said that he could not play (line 1). Matthew in his turn said he wanted to climb to the top of the frame. Implying, perhaps he was not really playing with him. They could play separately on the same climbing gym. As a student at the kindergarten, he too had the right to use the equipment. As there was no objection to his reasoning, after a pause, Matthew continued by asking B4 to move aside so that he could reach the top (line 3). It is also interesting to note that after Matthew had been accepted into the group, he by discouraging the newcomer from joining the group in effect collaborated with B4 to keep B6 out of the play.

Angeline, Shoba, Lily and another girl (G2) were playing "Baby, baby fillapop" In this game, the participants sit around in a circle. A participant walks behind them and as the group recites the rhyme, the child who is walking, touches the heads of those seated. When the rhyme ends, the person whose head is touched is supposed to get up and chase the person who touched her head. They will run in a circle and try to take the place of the person who got up. The person left standing will then walk around the circle continuing the game.

(3) [The girls had been playing the game for approximately 6 minutes. Lily is walking behind her friends.]

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | All | Baby baby fillapop who is one the fillapop ({Lily touches Shoba's head})
({Shoba gets up and run and manages to catch up with Lily}) |
| 2 | Ang | nǐ kěyǐ jiǎng "choop" ma (you can say "choop") |
| 3 | Lil | "choop choop" |
| 4 | Sho | HOW can ({arms akimbo})
({Lily runs back to the vacated place. Shoba begins walking around the circle.}) |
| 5 | All | baby baby fillapop who is one the fillapop
({Jin Yee stands near Angeline. She is ignored by Angeline.})
({Shoba touches Angeline's head who then chases Shoba})
({Jin Yee moves near Lily}) |
| 6 | JY | I want to play |

- 7 Lil Tan Jin Yee wants to play (.5)
 ((Jin Yee joins the group and sits next
 to Lily, Angeline walks around))
- 8 Lil,Sho I want, I want
- 9 All baby baby fillapop

In the exchange above, Jin Yee (JY) first indicates her interest in gaining entry into the game by standing very close to Angeline (Ang). Angeline, however ignores her, possibly because she was concentrating on the play. After that unsuccessful attempt, Jin Yee goes to Lily (Lil) and makes her bid in line 6. Jin Yee gets an ally in Lily who announces to the group that Jin Yee is joining them. As no objection is raised by the other three participants, Jin Yee manages to gain entry. A closer examination of the transcript shows that Jin Yee's first bid could be unsuccessful because at that time the children were concentrating on Shoba walking around them as one of them would have to quickly get up to chase her if she was the last person to be touched. Angeline in particular was likely to be the last person that Shoba touches. On the other hand, it was easier for Jin Yee to gain entry into the play in her second attempt in line 6 as at that point, Angeline was chasing Shoba. In this exchange, it is likely that the timing in the second bid made it easier for Jin Yee to enter the play.

Matthew, Rizal, Lor Jin Sin, Kar Ying and Wei Yee are playing *méihuā*. In this game, the children hold hands and go round in a circle, at the same time reciting the rhyme in Mandarin which means plum blossom, plum blossom when will you bloom. A child who sits or squats in the centre of the circle would say when the flower would bloom. The children would repeat the rhyme until the child in the centre replies that the flower would bloom that day. At that point, the child would stand up and try to break the circle.

(4) [The play had been going on for 4 minutes. Lor Jin Sin is squatting in the centre. Peng Siang comes in and tries to join them.]

- 1 All *méihuā méihuā jī shí kāi huā?* (plum blossom plum
blossom when will you
bloom?)
- 2 LJS *míngtiān* (tomorrow)
- 3 All *méihuā méihuā ... huā?* (plum blossom...)
 ((Peng Siang stands close to the children but is ignored))
- 4 LJS *jīntiān* (today)
 ((Lor Jin Sin goes round and tries to separate her
 friends' hands. Peng Siang comes in and tries to
 help her))
- 5 LJS *nǐ bù kěyǐ* (you cannot)

- 6 KY eh, Peng Siang, nǐ bù kěyǐ, nǐ méiyǒu wán. (Peng Siang, you cannot, you are not playing)
- ((Peng Siang moves away))
- 7 KY & Riz [me, me, me] ((Both Kar Yee and Rizal volunteer to be the child in the centre))
- ((Rizal goes to the centre))
- 8 All méihuā méihuā jī shí kāi huā? (plum blossom plum blossom when will you bloom?)
- 9 Riz jīntiān ((school bell rings at this time to indicate that recess is over. All the children run away to line up before going into class.))

It can be seen that Peng Siang after standing beside the children for some time decided to make an entry bid by helping Lor Jin Sin. Jin Sin (LJS) protested Peng Siang's 'help' as it was unsolicited and it infringed on her role which is a coveted position since the children seemed to want to take on that central role. (Both Kar Yee and Rizal later volunteered to go to the centre in line 7.) The children seemed to relish trying to use various ways to separate their friends' hands as it showed their strength. Jin Sin's protest was supported by Kar Ying (KY) who added that Peng Siang was not playing with them. As a result of the protests, Peng Siang moved away and the other children resumed their play

The two games, baby baby fillapop and méihuā, are similar in many of their dynamics. The participants are in a circle and one person plays a central role in each round of the games. Jin Yee succeeded possibly because she did not try to infringe on the role of the main player at the entry bid. Peng Siang, on the other hand, tried to help Lor Jin Sin who was playing the main role to break up the circle which she regarded as her privilege. Jin Yee did ask for permission to enter the play and the other children by their silence after Lily's announcement implied their acceptance. The pause before actually entering play provided the other children opportunity to respond. This pause related to the set of values of children's everyday play conduct, namely that children who are engaged in joint play have the right to decide if a non-participant may enter the activity (Cromdal, 2001). Peng Siang, on the other hand did not seek permission to enter play and in moving straight in without permission, made the participants of the play feel that he had violated an aspect of what the children felt was a proper entry

- (5) [Rizal, Lor Jin Sing, Kar Ying and G3 hold hands and jump in a circle.]
 ({They are laughing as they break up in pairs and pretend to dance.})
 ({Peng Siang comes in and tries to take over Rizal's place as Kar Ying partner.})
- 1 Riz you don't
 ({Kar Ying and Rizal move away})
- 2 KY: **wǒ bù yào, jiào tā zǒu** (I don't want, ask him to go away)
- 3 PS don't friend me, lah ({Peng Siang looks very angry, moves closer to Rizal. Rizal moves away to join other children who continue playing})
- 4 Riz I want ({indicating his intention to continue playing})
- 5 PS Mei Har don't friend you ({looks very confrontational})
- 6 LJS I tell Kar Wei Yee, you know. Rizal don't friend you
kuài diǎn zǒu zǒu (quickly, go go)
 ({the group of children all run away, Peng Siang follows})
- 7 PS **bù yào** (don't want)
- 8 PS ({pushes Rizal}) don't friend me lah
- 9 Riz hey ({pushes Peng Siang and continues to run away with the other children})

Here we see a bid from a boy, Peng Siang (PS) to gain entry. When his first strategy to join the group was turned down, he became very aggressive with Rizal, the only boy in the group and attempted to push his way in. Rizal (Riz) did not give in for he was protecting his position in the play. It would mean him giving up his position with his partner if Peng Siang were to take over his place. As Peng Siang faced difficulty in gaining entry, he became quite aggressive and it resulted in a conflict. This is similar to what other researchers have found (Putallaz and Sheppard, 1992; Sheldon, 1996). In line 5, Peng Siang tried to threaten Rizal so that he would give way. Feeling frustrated that the other children in the group still ignored him and included Rizal, Peng Siang tried to tell Rizal that Mei Har did not want to play with Rizal. Rizal then got support from Lor Jin Sin (LJY), another member of the group who threatened to tell another girl (Kar Wei Yee). Lor Jin Sin probably came in to support Rizal as she felt that Peng Siang had violated a rule of play. Peng Siang did not get clearance from the children to play with them. She then encouraged the entire group to run away quickly as Peng Siang was quite aggressive. Peng Siang in his response could either be asking Lor Jin Sin not to carry out her threat or asking the children not to run away. However, he

later pushed and threatened Rizal who retaliated by pushing back and then running away to continue playing with the group. It can be seen that Peng Siang engaged in strategies that were increasingly confrontational to finally being disruptive (he pushed Rizal, who retaliated). The exchange ended when the entire group of children ran to play in another part of the play ground leaving Peng Siang behind.

3.2 Agent work in play entry

The following show a collaboration phenomena in entry negotiations that Cromdai (2001) labelled 'agent work'. In such situations, a child acts as an agent to argue for an entrant's case during entry procedures. The child himself can either be an entrant or a participant in the ongoing play.

- (6) [4 boys sit in a circle, legs facing inwards, feet touching. They are starting to say a rhyme that would decide who gets to determine the next play. Another 2 boys, B 7(a Chinese) and Rizal run to them and try to join in.]

- | | | | |
|---|----|--|--|
| 1 | B7 | wǒ yào gēn nǐ wán | (I want to play with you) |
| | | ((B7 squats down while Rizal remains standing)) | |
| 2 | B8 | nǐmen bù kěyǐ zài zhèlǐ wán | (you all cannot play here) |
| | | ((Rizal squats near B7)) | |
| 3 | B9 | bù kěyǐ wán | (cannot play) |
| 4 | B8 | wǒ yào sì ge rén wán | (I want only four of us to play) |
| 5 | B7 | wǒ gēn lǎoshī jiǎng nǐmen hái
méiyǒu chī dōngxi | (I will tell teacher that
you all have not eaten) |
| | | ((5))((B7 grabs Rizal's hand, Rizal turns back and frowns at the group of boys as they run off to tell teacher)) | |

In line 1, B7 said he wanted to play with the group of boys in his bid to join the boys in their activity. B8 responded by saying the two of them could not play there. This refusal was echoed by the B9. Here, it is clear that B8 regarded B7 as the agent for Rizal. This was accepted by B7 for if he had not, he would have replied that he was only seeking entry for himself. B8 then emphasized that he wanted only four of them to play when the two boys showed no sign of leaving the group. In response, B7 threatened to inform the teacher that the boys had not eaten since the children were not supposed to start playing until they had finished eating their food. When the threat did not make the participants of the play reverse their decision, the two boys ran

off to carry out their threat. It can be seen here that in their bid to protect their play, the children used increasingly 'more explicit' expressions to emphasize that they were not interested in having newcomers join in their play. B7 on his part also progressed from expressing his intention of joining them to making threats later.

(7) [Angeline, Shoba, Lily and another girl (G4) play a variant game of London Bridge. Two other boys (B12 and B13) try to join them.]

- 1 Sho hey we all start skipping ({holds out hand, three others join in, all jump in a circle and then fall down})
- 3 B12 **wǒ yào wán** (I want to play)
- 4 Lily **nǐ bù kě yǐ wán** (you cannot play)
- 5 All London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down ({all fall down and laugh, B12 runs away})
- 6 All London bridge is falling down, my fair lady ({all the girls hold hands and skip in a circle})
- 7 Ang ok ({goes to the centre of circle})
- 8 All London bridge is falling down
- 9 G4 hold hand, hold hand ({Angeline goes to friends and tries to separate friends who are holding hands, all the girls are giggling})
- 10 Sho ha! Cannot yet ({mocks Angeline as she tries very hard to hold on to friend's hand})
({Angeline finally succeeds in separating all her friends' hands})
- 11 Sho ok, me now
- 12 All London bridge is falling down
- 13 Sho ok stop ok ok stop
({Sho tries to separate hands of friends, B12 and B13 come in to help break hold})
({when all the partners have been separated, all hold hands again except the 2 boys})
- 14 Li **gěi tā wán** ({indicating B13}) (let him play)
({ (B13) is allowed into the play but the taller boy (B12) is ignored})
- 15 All London bridge is falling down, ({B13 stands in centre, the others hold hands and skip in circle})
({B13 tries to break their hold but is not successful})

- 16 B13 **wǒ bù yào liáo** (I don't want already)
 ({B13 runs off})
 ({girls break off and move further, nearer to
 where B13 is standing})
- 17 Lil **lái, lái** ({coaxes B13 to join them}) (come come)
- 18 B2 (xxx)
- 19 Lil **bùyào zhèyàng dǎi ah, tā bù huì** (don't hold so tight, he
 doesn't know)
- 20 All London bridge is falling down.
 ({B13 stands in centre while others skip around})

In the exchange above, we see two boys (B12 and B13) making bids to enter the play. B12 failed in his bid while B13 succeeded because Lily in line 14 acted as his agent, paving the way for his entry. In fact Lily encouraged him to rejoin later in line 17 after he moved away from the play when he found he could not participate well. She again acted as the agent in line 19 and told the others not to hold their hands so tightly to accommodate him.

3.3 Code-switching in play entry

Gumperz's (1982) work on interactional strategies are based on the idea that code-switching can be understood partly from the cultural values associated with each language and partly in terms of a linguistic contrast that is effected by the switch. Through this, code-switching actually helped to enhance the speakers' inferences. According to Auer (1984) and Gafaranga (1999, 2001), language alternation can be viewed as "practical social action". With this view, code-switching can be analysed in terms of the participant-related aspects (e.g. individual preferences and proficiency) and discourse-organizing functions (e.g. marking changes in individual's footing) (Cromdal, 2001). This adaptation of language with respect to the other interlocutors was also seen in the children's interactions.

In excerpts 3 and 7 above, there was a difference in the language choice made by Lily, as she helped new entrants enter play although the other participants of the games are almost the same (Angelina and Shoba). In excerpt 3, the conversation between Angelina and Lily was in Mandarin yet in line 7, Lily switched to English when she announced Jin Yee's interest in joining the group. There, Lily used English to show her support for Jin Yee who used English in her entry bid in line 6. In contrast, in excerpt 7, Lily used Mandarin in line 14 in negotiating entry for B13. A close examination of the excerpt shows that Lily used only Mandarin when interacting with B13. She probably used Mandarin to convey B13's message to show solidarity with him although

Shoba, the Indian girl did not speak Mandarin. Lily's language choice seemed to be done deliberately to show her identification with Jin Yee and B13 to help them enter the play

In excerpt 5, it can be seen that code switching was used as a strategy in Peng Siang's play entry bid. In line 3, Peng Siang used English to accuse Rizal (an Indian boy) of not being his friend and thus frustrating his entry bid. Perhaps this is because he felt that he stood a better chance of entering the play if he did not antagonise the other girls who were all Chinese and alienating Rizal by speaking to him in English. However, Loh Jin Sin came to Rizal's rescue by threatening Peng Siang in English (line 5). By using English, Lor Jin Sin emphasized the fact that she was on Rizal's side. Interestingly, Jin Sin then told her other friends in Mandarin to quickly move away from Peng Siang. Peng Siang's response in line 7 was in Mandarin to downplay his opposition. His response could be to tell Jin Sin and the other participants of the play not to move away from him or ask Jin Sin not to carry out her threat.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate how bilingual pre-school Malaysian children accomplished negotiations of play entry. Play entry episodes were examined to discover some of the strategies the children used to negotiate issues of play entry. Analysis was done focusing on the dialogic properties of the negotiation events allowing for an understanding not of the most successful and the least successful strategies but of the interactional processes influencing the outcome of the negotiations. The children have been seen to exploit the turn-taking mechanisms in various ways (excerpts 1, 2, and 5) to strengthen their case. They made relevant notions of size (excerpt 2) and knowledge of play rules (excerpts 1 and 4) orientating to these ideas in the negotiations. The collaborative aspects of the events were also seen through the dialogue. The good coordination of the children's interactive moves also suggests that the children were very sensitive to such matters. Code-switching was also used as a resource by the children in negotiating play entry. The children exploited their bilingualism for various purposes like forming alliances or building opposition. As such, bilingualism was seen to be very relevant in the interactions.

Appendix : Transcription key

(.5)	numbers in single parentheses represent pauses in seconds
{ }	researcher's comments
[]	indicates start/end of overlapping speech
(x)	inaudible word
(xxx)	inaudible words
?	indicates rising terminal intonation
	indicates falling terminal intonation
	indicates continuation of rhyme
wǒ yào wán	talk in Mandarin in bold script

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CLASS DEPENDENCY IN MALAY DIALECTS

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