
“There is No Need for Translation: She Understands”: Teachers’ Mediation Strategies in a Bilingual Preschool Classroom

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In this study, we explored how major theoretical principles and concepts in the mediation strategies of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory are realized in an Arabic–Hebrew preschool in Israel. The aim of this study was to examine how teachers encourage children to use their second language (L2) during teacher–child conversations. In particular, as a response to relatively low motivation for L2 (Arabic) use, the teachers’ mediation was intended to encourage children to use Arabic. The study participants were one Hebrew model teacher, one Arabic model teacher, and children using either Hebrew or Arabic as their first language (L1). We applied a thematic analysis as the methodological framework. Data were collected during one academic year, including video recordings of the teacher–child conversations, and were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The following content categories were extracted: explicit request for use of the L2, managing the children’s demand for direct translation, the teacher as a model for the L2 learner, and contributions from language experts. The observation showed that the teachers applied diverse mediation strategies, such as scaffolding, identification of the child’s zone of proximal development, and modeling. Avoidance of direct translation was intended to activate children’s zone of proximal development and to boost their involvement in L2 learning.

Keywords: sociocultural theory; mediation strategies; preschool bilingual education; Arabic; Hebrew

THE AIM OF THIS STUDY WAS TO GAIN A deeper understanding of the type of language mediation that occurs during learning events and free communication between teachers and children in a bilingual preschool. The mediation was intended to encourage the children to use their second language (L2). Located in Israel, the bilingual preschool applied a two-way language program that incorporated instruction in both the social majority language (Hebrew) for the native Arabic-using children and in the minority language (Arabic) for the children whose first language (L1) was Hebrew. The main objective of the

two-way language programs is to increase inter-group communicative competence and cultural awareness (Freeman, 2007).

Achieving a balance between the two languages is critical as it is the key to students’ integration within the bilingual classroom. However, research has shown that, even at preschool age, teachers face challenges in realizing this goal, mostly due to the discrepancy in the status of majority and minority languages (DePalma, 2010; Hickey, 2001). The present study, therefore, examines how teachers try to promote the status of the minority language, Arabic, within the preschool bilingual space and to provide a real possibility for its acquisition by the L1 Hebrew-using children. Though there is an obvious connection between teachers’ mediation strategies and language teaching strategies, the study is focused on

teachers' mediation strategies. It proceeds from a *sociocultural theory* perspective, stressing the co-construction of knowledge within the teacher–children interactions in this bilingual preschool classroom.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Sociocultural Theory and Teachers' Mediation

Vygotsky (1978) saw the child as first doing things in a social context, helped in various ways by other people and language, and gradually shifting away from reliance on others to independent thinking and action. This approach to children's mental development highlights the critical role of teachers in shaping the most favorable conditions for enhancing and regulating their development. Vygotsky's theory of learning and development has been transformed and adapted to different educational frameworks, including the L2 classroom (Lantolf & Beckett, 2009; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Such adaptations perceive the institutional context, such as a school, as a formative setting for the child's developmental process. In the particular setting of the bilingual classroom, children acquire their L2 abilities through interaction with teachers and peers.

In this study, we explored how major theoretical principles and concepts included in Vygotsky's mediation strategies—scaffolding, identification of the child's zone of proximal development, and modeling—are realized in the teachers' strategies aimed at encouraging L2 acquisition in the bilingual classroom at preschool age.

Mediation Strategies

The ability to learn through interaction and mediation is characteristic of human intelligence. Vygotsky (1978) proposed the notion of the human mediator and emphasized that “what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow” (p. 211). In a whole range of ways, adults mediate and make the world accessible to children. With the help of adults and peers, children can do and understand much more than on their own.

A substantial number of studies have focused on mediation strategies provided by teachers in L2 classrooms. The focus was on strategies such as corrective feedback and its relation to L2 acquisition (e.g., Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013), imitation (Ohta, 2001; Savielle-Troike, 1988), and the zone of proximal development (e.g., Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Ohta,

2001). Most of these studies drew on observations of students in secondary L2 classrooms. For that reason, our knowledge on how teachers realize main principles and concepts of mediation among preschool children is very limited (but see, for example, Gort & Pontier, 2012).

Teachers' Identification of the Child's Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky (1978) defined the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in cooperation with more capable peers” (p. 86). He considered the ZPD as referring to the well-known fact that “with collaboration, direction, or some kind of help the child is always able to do more and solve more difficult tasks than he can independently” (p. 209). Thus, teacher–children interaction provides conditions for identifying the child's ZPD and the extent to which the child has actually developed (Chaiklin, 2003). Skillful teachers are very ‘tuned-in’ to their classroom students and can evaluate each child's ZPD. In other words, to activate the ‘zone,’ the child's developmental space, the teacher needs to recognize what is known and unknown to the children, and to mediate development by making them aware of what is unknown versus known (Kohler, 2015). This awareness is applied both in lesson planning and in how teachers talk to students minute by minute.

Scaffolding and Teacher as a Model for the Child's Linguistic Behavior

Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and his follower, Bruner (1986), viewed the concept of scaffolding as synonymous with the process of adult–child interaction. Scaffolding is a type of mediation strategy, which occurs within the ZPD, the child's space for growth. In the context of L2 acquisition and use, the teacher scaffolds the children's talk to allow their participation at a level suited to their capabilities. Teachers can help learners by focusing their attention on useful sources of information in the new language and by developing meta-linguistic awareness of similarities and differences between L1 and L2 (e.g., Kenner et al., 2008). In addition, teachers can use gestures as a scaffolding tool in L2 learning (Lee, 2008; McCafferty, 2008). As the child progresses in L2 acquisition, the teacher as mediator reduces such scaffolding.

Vygotsky's theory assists in describing a teacher not only as a source of knowledge but also as a model of children's linguistic behavior as well as a mediator of this behavior (Kozulin et al., 2003). Indeed, studies of the L2 classroom found that the teacher plays a critical role as a model of language use (e.g., Cameron, 2001) and/or language acquisition (e.g., Palviainen et al., 2016).

TEACHERS' MEDIATION STRATEGIES IN THE PRESCHOOL BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

Young children have a biological predisposition that they bring to language learning (Kim et al., 1997). In the preschool bilingual classroom, children usually have intensive exposure to their L2 (e.g., Spanish and English, in DePalma, 2010; Swedish in Södergård, 2008) through the natural environment of peer interaction and structured teacher-led activities. Although age is an important factor for language learning, recent studies have shown that an early start *per se* does not guarantee successful and efficient progress in an L2 (e.g., Cameron, 2001; DePalma, 2010; Hickey, 2001; Hickey, Lewis, & Baker, 2014). In this context, a recent study by Gorbatt-Brodstein (2012) focused on examining the stages of transition from different mother tongues (e.g., French, Russian, and Amharic) to L2 Hebrew among immigrant children in Israeli preschools. The data showed that, in many cases, it took more than 6 months for the 3- to 5-year-old novice L2 learners to start using Hebrew. This pattern was attributed to both the amount of language input and output and the quality of teaching and teacher-child interaction during the first year of L2 immersion. These factors play an important role in L2 acquisition in a preschool educational context (Cameron, 2001).

In addition, Baker (2011) highlighted another factor that affects children's L2 progress, namely, language status. In his example of a Spanish-English two-way language program, young L1 Spanish users had to switch to English to work cooperatively with young L1 English users in the same class, resulting in the marginalization of Spanish in the classroom. This phenomenon was observed also by Hickey (2001) in an Irish immersion context, in which young L1 Irish users were surrounded by peers who spoke the majority language, English, which had higher status in the social context. Children as young as 4 years old appeared to show an awareness of the status accorded to the languages in their environment. Thus, although the aim of this educational

setting was to support Irish as a threatened local language, the results showed that even young native Irish users code-switched to English with the L2 Irish learners rather than stimulating them to speak more Irish.

Besides observing the phenomenon of relatively low progress in a minority language among majority language children, several studies focused directly on teachers' mediation strategies aimed at encouraging the children to use the minority L2 whenever possible (e.g., DePalma, 2010; Gort & Pontier, 2012; Olmedo, 2003; Södergård, 2008). For example, Södergård (2008) aimed at gaining insight into how language learning can be promoted in a Swedish immersion context among young Finnish users in Finland. The data were collected by conducting ethnographic observations of the immersion teacher's strategies in natural classroom interaction. The observations revealed that the teacher used indirect approaches to push the use of the immersion language. Specifically, the teacher avoided explicitly requesting L2 use but worked with a system of 'signals' like questions such as: *What? What did you say?* These signals were intended to serve as signs to the children that she expected an answer in the L2 rather than the L1. This approach was attributed to the immersion teacher's belief in the need to create an authentic learning environment without an explicit declaration that the children are learning an L2 and are expected to use it. However, as noted by the researcher, the observed signals were frequently unclear to the child, and the teacher had to repeat her signaling questions several times until the child understood the request to use the L2.

In another ethnographic study, DePalma (2010) showed the two-way model kindergarten teacher's continuous struggle to teach a lower status minority language, Spanish, as a power language within and beyond academic spaces. She showed how the teacher became a minority language advocate and expended tremendous efforts to maintain an equal ratio between English and Spanish use against the directions of the school authorities. The teacher's conviction that natural conversation is critical to language acquisition in Spanish as a minority language was aimed at enhancing the status of this language. To reach this goal, she followed a strict policy of language separation over the class day.

In line with these studies, Genesee (1987) claimed that successful instructional models for young emergent bilinguals¹ coming from minority language homes depend on raising the prestige of the minority language and respect for

those who speak it as an L1. According to Hickey (2001),

this requires more than the formal use of the minority language as a medium of instruction by teachers if the L1 speakers are surrounded by peers who speak a majority language that has higher status in the wider societal context. (pp. 446–447)

Our own studies to date, which observed the L2 instruction strategies and teachers' reflections on these strategies in the two-way Arabic–Hebrew-using preschool in Israel, highlighted the need to increase Arabic input to promote the minority language from its socially weaker status (see Schwartz & Asli, 2014). Because data on how teachers attempt to achieve this important goal when children are in the early stages of their language socialization and acquisition of L1 and L2 are still limited, the present study was designed to examine in detail the teachers' mediation strategies within the framework of the bilingual Arabic–Hebrew preschool learning environment in Israel.

STUDY BACKGROUND

Hebrew and Arabic in Israel

Israel is officially a bilingual country, with both Hebrew and Arabic as state languages. Hebrew is the dominant language in most life domains, such as government and other social institutions like media and popular culture. Arabic is a minority language and is the mother tongue for one fifth of the Israeli population. Hebrew is studied as an L2 in Arab schools and is part of the curriculum from the second or third to the twelfth grade. In addition to the young Arabic users' exposure to Hebrew in the classrooms, they might also be surrounded by a Hebrew-rich environment, such as exposure via TV programs and news broadcasts. At the same time, L1 Hebrew-using children have a relatively low level of daily exposure to Arabic due to the longstanding tension between the Arab and Jewish populations and the tendency to live mainly as separate communities (Feuerverger, 2001). The two separate communities have parallel cultural milieus as well as separate educational tracks up until tertiary education where the two groups meet for the first time and study together in Hebrew as the majority language. This reality inevitably leads to L1 Hebrew-using students' decreased motivation to study Arabic (Ben-Rafael & Brosh, 1991). In this context, one of the declared aims of the Center for Bilingual Education that will be presented further is to encourage the L1

Hebrew-using children to learn Arabic by means of teachers' mediation strategies.

Center for Bilingual Education

In 1997, the Center for Bilingual Education was established to promote bilingual and bicultural education and the development of diverse ethnic communities with both Jewish and Arab members. The structure of this education network is based on its main ideological objective to raise young L1 Arabic and L1 Hebrew users with mutual respect and understanding from early childhood. Thus, the Center's schools and preschools each engage a teaching and management staff that represents both groups equally, with two teachers in each class – one Arab and one Jewish.

The Target Bilingual Preschool

The target bilingual preschool was established in 2004 and was defined as a bilingual preschool with a two-way language program incorporating instruction in both the majority (Hebrew) and minority (Arabic) languages of the children in the classroom. The preschool is located in central Israel in an Arab community as an integral part of the bilingual school. In addition to language instruction, the preschool curriculum provides the children with the opportunity to meet the two cultures and their values through daily activities in the classrooms.

In this setting, both teachers are supposed to coordinate their daily instructional practices and to share responsibilities. In the classroom, both languages are taught without allocating time for each individual language but sharing the classroom space. Even though each teacher plays the role of a language model for one of the designated languages and is responsible for using this language as a medium of instruction, both sometimes use both languages and apply flexible language practices. During their co-teaching, the teachers do not translate each other but elaborate, extend, and continue each other's utterances in their designated language (for details, see Schwartz & Asli, 2014).

Such co-teaching demands significant preparation by the teachers, reciprocal trust, and the ability to engage in teamwork and cooperation. Despite the teachers' different professional experience and cultural and linguistic background, our longitudinal observations showed that both teachers' classroom communication was characterized by mutual respect. In that sense, they provided to the young Arab and Jewish children

a model of the kind of intercultural behavior that the preschool setting was intended to foster, namely a model of co-existence, appreciation, and respect for cultural similarities and differences that went far beyond the objective of bilingualism.

METHOD

Methodological Framework

This study was part of a large-scale project aimed at examining early bilingual Arabic–Hebrew language use education in Israel with a focus on teacher–child interaction and peer discourses and their role in L2 acquisition. We applied a mixed methods analysis. This research design included a qualitative thematic analysis of the observed teachers’ mediation strategies and a quantitative analysis of their frequency to provide a comprehensive and wide-angle view of the phenomenon under study (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Marsland et al., 1999). The results of this analysis were then interpreted and discussed in light of the teachers’ reflections on their teaching and in regard to the broader sociolinguistic context of the study.

PARTICIPANTS

The study participants were two preschool teachers: one Hebrew model² teacher, Avital, and one Arabic model teacher, Sukainah. The teachers expressed their willingness to participate in the study. This was the first year of their co-teaching. Whereas Sukainah had been teaching in the preschool since its establishment in 2004, Avital was a novice teacher, who had joined the preschool in 2013. Thus, during our study, we could observe the team emerging from the beginning of the academic year when Avital joined the preschool. In their interviews, both teachers addressed this process as challenging, due mainly to some objective differences between them, such as Avital’s lack of experience in teaching in the bilingual classroom and lack of even basic knowledge of Arabic. In addition, the teachers reported that the task of co-teaching of both languages, without language separation by time during a classroom day, was rather demanding and time consuming since they had to devote many hours of work at home to coordinate instruction. During the circle time routine, we observed mostly an alternating type of teacher leadership (Park, 2014). A brief description of each teacher is presented in the following paragraphs.

Sukainah

Sukainah was a teacher with more than 10 years’ professional experience in the bilingual preschool and was a proficient bilingual Arabic–Hebrew speaker. While teaching in the target preschool, she developed diverse didactic strategies and tools to promote children’s bilingual development. As stressed in the interviews, in her daily language practices, Sukainah rarely relied on her professional supervision and training, but mainly on her experience, and moved ahead through trial and error (e.g., avoiding direct translation from Arabic into Hebrew and vice versa and adopting flexible bilingual practices). When the previous Hebrew model teacher was replaced, Sukainah, as the more experienced teacher, took a more leading role in the preschool and helped Avital to adjust.

Avital

Avital was a Hebrew model teacher living on a kibbutz (a collective community in Israel, traditionally based on agriculture) situated not far from the Arab city where the preschool is located. She had immigrated to Israel from Argentina about 20 years before and was a native Spanish speaker. Avital’s Hebrew oral and written language skills were high. Her first exposure to the language was within a Jewish schooling context during her childhood in Argentina. Then, she continued to learn Hebrew in Israel in different settings, including at the State College of Education where she obtained her certificate as a preschool teacher and a 1st-grade teacher.

Prior to entering the preschool, Avital had gained rich pedagogical and bilingual teaching experience as an L2 Hebrew teacher for adult and adolescent immigrants in Israel on her kibbutz. In addition, she had spent many years working as a teacher in the kibbutz preschool. However, as previously noted, Avital had no experience with the preschool classroom setting in the context of Arabic–Hebrew bilingual and bicultural development. It took her a number of months to realize that she needed to change her L2 teaching practices and to adopt and/or develop new practices. In her interview, however, Avital stressed that her personal experience as a multicultural and bilingual person had contributed to her readiness to learn about this novel sociocultural and linguistic reality. In addition, Avital believed that her emotional intelligence, expressed in her warmhearted, kind, and inclusive attitude to children, helped her to break the ice with the young

L1 Arabic users and to create a common language with them even without knowledge of Arabic.

The Children

The emergent bilingual children were 5 to 6 years old and had entered the target preschool at age 5 (1 year before entry into elementary school at age 6) and were observed by the researchers during one academic year. These children could also be defined as child L2 learners with age of onset for L2 acquisition after age 4 and before age 10 (Meisel, 2009; White, 2003). The class comprised 28 children, of whom 19 were L1 Arabic-users and 9 were L1 Hebrew-users. In addition, one child in our sample, Adi, was from an ethnically mixed family, in which the mother was an L1 Hebrew user and the father was an L1 Arabic user. Hebrew was the predominant language in Adi's family and community as well as his preferred language.

In addition, six L1 Arabic users, three girls and three boys, had entered the preschool with a relatively high level of competence in spoken L2 Hebrew (speech understanding and production) and could be defined as L2 experts (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004) or language brokers (Orellana, 2010). As reported by Sukainah, the Arabic model teacher, the experts had received early exposure to Hebrew through TV and radio at home. The teacher also stated in her interview that the presence of the L2 experts in this classroom significantly contributed to the novice children's progress in the L2. The language experts were valid language resources for the novice L2 learners and played a role of peer teachers. At the same time, all L1 Hebrew-using children were just in the beginning stage of acquiring Arabic.

DATA COLLECTION

The data were collected during one academic year, from October 2013 through June 2014. Throughout the research period, 16 observational sessions were conducted (two to three times each month during 7 months) including six sessions of field note taking from October 2013 to January 2014 and 10 sessions of video recording from February to June 2014. Each observation session lasted about 4 hours from morning to midday. The data were collected by the first author and the L1 Arabic-using research assistant, an MA candidate in educational consulting. Both the researcher and the research assistant had as little involvement as possible in the teacher-child interactions.

To investigate a particular phenomenon of the teachers' mediation, we used multiple sources of data (video-recorded observations, field notes, and semi-structured interviews with the teacher). This kind of methodological triangulation permits a comparison of the findings derived from different data sources to interpret the phenomenon under study and to reduce observer or interviewer bias. It also increases scope, truth value, and consistency of the data (Flick, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

INSTRUMENTATION

Field Notes and Video-Recording Observations and Their Transcription

We received permission to perform video-recordings in the preschool from the Israeli Ministry of Education and from the Center for Bilingual Education. The teachers were informed that the purpose of the cross-cultural project was to examine characteristics of the teachers' and children's talk within everyday preschool situations. No further information on the particular focus of the study was offered. They were asked to allocate a time-point for observation that included diverse daily traditionally academic and nonacademic activities such as a meal time, circle time, some structured and planned teacher-led activities within small groups, as well as unplanned and unstructured activities such as free play, games and other activities during leisure time. The teacher-child interactions were observed continuously for 2 to 3 hours per observation day, while the video-recording focused on the situations of the teachers' L2 mediation strategies. This resulted in a total of 10 hours of analysis of the teacher-child interactions.

For the purpose of this study, video-recorded and field-noted teacher-child interactions were selectively transcribed to capture the teachers' mediating strategies. The transcribed discourse events were selected because they reflected the teachers' mediating strategies during circle time, structured teacher-led activities, and free interaction with the children. The selected events were transcribed in detail, in table form, which allowed for the inclusion of nonverbal information (e.g., gestures, tone of voice) from the videos. As both languages were used in the videos, each transcription was made by two transcribers, a native Hebrew speaker and a native Arabic speaker. A second transcription was made, following Conversational Analysis (CA) transcription conventions,

to provide a detailed microanalysis, which served as the basis for our understanding of the observed teachers' L2 mediation strategies and their interpretation (Hamo, Blum-Kulka, & Hachoen, 2004). We present discourse examples later in this article.

Semi-Structured Interviews With the Teachers

The first author conducted two in-depth semi-structured interviews with each teacher individually. The first round of interviews took place near the onset of the study, soon after the beginning of the academic year, in November 2013; the second round of interviews was conducted 6 months after the onset of the school year, in March 2014. The interviews were conducted in Hebrew. Our goal was to examine the teachers' self-reported changes in mediation strategies after 6 months of teaching. We conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers to improve the quality of generated data due to their flexible and open nature, which is more suited to the particular local environment. The primary reason for using the interviews was to obtain the teachers' reflections on the mediation strategies observed during the study. We asked about the rationale behind the observed strategies, the link between their classroom practices and their language and pedagogical beliefs, and the linguistic development of the Arab and Jewish children. The teachers were also asked about their background data (i.e., education, professional experience).

DATA SET GENERATION AND ANALYSIS

As previously noted, we conducted a mixed methods design, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis. The quantitative analysis examined the frequency of the observed teachers' mediation strategies, providing a panoramic view of the situation under study (Marsland et al., 1999). As was noted by Mackey and Gass (2005), in qualitative research quantification permits a more precise examination of phenomenon occurrence and facilitates the subsequent drawing of inferences. Frequency analysis was necessary to pinpoint the teachers' regularly used versus rarely used strategies; as a result, we obtained a deeper understanding of the rationale behind the observed mediation strategies. The qualitative analysis of the observed strategies focused on examples extracted from the classroom observations, field notes, video-recorded interactions, discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews with the teachers. This

analysis allowed us in-depth comprehension and interpretation of the observed teachers' mediation strategies.

Based on Braun & Clarke (2006), we applied a theoretical thematic analysis of the observed video-recorded discourses, field notes, and the semi-structured interviews with the teachers derived from the questions raised in the theoretical background section and in regard to teachers' mediation strategies to encourage children's L2 learning in the preschool classroom. The observations of the teachers' practices and behavior and their interviews were analyzed using the following steps of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006): First, we transcribed the data corpus (all observations collected for the study), which comprised a first transcription version. Second, we familiarized ourselves with the data by reading and rereading the classroom discourse transcriptions and discussing them between us. Through the discussion meetings, we searched the data set for topics that addressed the current study, which examined how the teachers encouraged children's L2 learning and provided scaffolding for this process. Third, we identified the patterns of the teachers' behavior and related them to the research aim. Fourth, we articulated an initial set of codes based on these patterns and explored what those codes indicated. Fifth, we gathered the codes into teachers' observed mediation strategies and organized all relevant extracts of the entire data set into a table. Sixth, we reviewed the teachers' emerged mediation strategies and the relevant extracts through a second rater in order to enhance the analysis by means of inter-rater reliability. This rater was the second author who did not conduct the analysis in the third and fourth stages. The results were compared and some modifications were made to the predetermined strategies to negotiate disagreements between the second rater and the author who conducted the analysis. Seventh, we defined and named the teachers' emerged mediation strategies, namely the explicit request for use of the L2, managing the children's demand for direct translation, serving as a model for the L2 learner, and incorporating contributions from language experts. Finally, we selected the most informative and vivid extract examples of the classroom discourses and determined their final analysis regarding the research aim and literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We will present and discuss how the teachers tried to realize the clear-cut language ideology

TABLE 1
Frequency of the Observed Strategies and Number of Turns

Category	Total Number of Cases	Number of Turns	Hebrew Model Teacher (Number of Cases)		Arabic Model Teacher (Number of Cases)	
			Requests for Use of Hebrew	Requests for Use of Arabic	Requests for Use of Hebrew	Requests for Use of Arabic
Request for use of L2	43	449	1	21	4	17
Managing children's demand for direct translation	11	95				
Teacher as a model for the L2 learner	8	80				
Contribution from language experts	5	73				

of the target preschool to promote L1 Hebrew—using children's progress in Arabic as a minority language in two main sections. In the first section, we will display the frequency of teachers' mediation strategies (explicit request for use of the L2, managing the children's demand for direct translation, teacher as a model for the L2 learner, contributions from language experts). In addition, we analyzed the strategy of asking the children to use the L2 in several cases in which L2 (Arabic/Hebrew) usage or direct translation was requested. In the second section, we will present a qualitative analysis of the observed strategies by focusing on examples extracted from the diverse sources of data presented earlier.

Section 1: Quantitative Characteristics of the Observed Teachers' Strategies

Table 1 provides the total frequency of use for each strategy. The observed strategies will be presented sequentially based on frequency.

The analysis of the frequency of teachers' mediation strategies revealed the following order: (a) request for use of the L2, (b) managing the children's demand for direct translation, (c) the teacher as a model for the L2 learner, and (d) contributions from language experts. As shown in Table 1, the teachers relatively frequently asked the Hebrew-using children to

talk in the L2 (Arabic) and to translate into the L2 (Arabic). This explicit request seems to help the teachers present their expectations more clearly and avoid misunderstandings regarding an expected language of teacher–child communication, namely the use of Arabic instead of Hebrew, in the specific discourse situation in the classroom.

The last two, less frequent strategies—teacher as a model for the L2 learner, and contributions from language experts—were relatively central in the teachers' reflections on how they encourage the children's motivation to use the L2. The following qualitative section of our analysis allows us to obtain a deeper understanding of the rationale behind the choice of these strategies. In addition, we found these two strategies particularly interesting in light of the specific sociolinguistic context of the target bilingual preschool.

Section 2: Qualitative Analysis of the Observed Teachers' Strategies

Explicit Request for Use of the Second Language. As previously presented, our teachers relatively frequently made overt requests of the children to use or to translate into the L2. In most cases, the target language was Arabic and the target population were the L1 Hebrew-using children. This strategy is illustrated in Example 1.

EXAMPLE 1: Observation; 2 January 2014

(in the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Hebrew model teacher, Avital; the Arabic model teacher, Sukainah; three L1 Hebrew-using children, Dani, Ido, and Alin; and an L1 Hebrew- and Arabic-using child, Adi.

Situation: Circle time, Sukainah and Avital continue to present the topic of fruit.

1	Avital:	Ma ze? What is this?	מה זה?
2	Dani:	Limon. A lemon.	לימון.
3	Sukainah:	Billugha ilthanyeh <i>In the other language.</i>	باللغة الثانية.
4	Adi:	Mi she-medaber aravit omer be-ivrit ve-mi she-medaber ivrit omer be-aravit. Those who speak Arabic have to say it in Hebrew and those who speak Hebrew have to say it in Arabic.	מי שמדבר ערבית אומר בעברית ומי שמדבר עברית אומר בערבית. Those who speak Arabic have to say it in Hebrew and those who speak Hebrew have to say it in Arabic.
5	Sukainah:	Axshav be-aravit. (lifting an orange) Now in Arabic.	עכשיו בערבית.
6	Avital:	Be-aravit ma ze? In Arabic, what is this?	בערבית מה זה?
7	Ido:	mmmmmm. (the children and the teachers laugh).	ממממממ.
8	Avital:	Lama at boxa? (addresses Alin) Why are you crying?	למה את בוכה?
9	Alin:	Ani lo boxa. I'm not crying ((answers angrily)).	אני לא בוכה.
10	Avital:	Bo'i axshav tagidi lanu ma ze be-aravit. Now come on, tell us what it is in Arabic.	בואי עכשיו תגידי לנו מה זה בערבית.
11	Alin:	Ani lo yoda'at be-aravit rak be-ivrit. I don't know in Arabic, only in Hebrew.	אני לא יודעת בערבית רק בעברית.
12	Avital:	Aval axshav ha-mesima rak be-aravit. But now the assignment is in Arabic.	אבל עכשיו המשימה רק בערבית.

Example 1 shows how both teachers worked as a team to promote the use of the Arabic language by the L1 Hebrew users and how the Hebrew model teacher, Avital, in particular, supported Sukainah's unrelenting efforts to push retrieval of the new words in Arabic following their instruction and repetition during circle time. By repeatedly referring to Sukainah's questions (Turns 6, 10, 12), Avital emphasized the importance of speaking Arabic to the Hebrew users. Avital's message sounded firm and unambiguous: "But now the assignment is in Arabic."

In her first interview, after 4 months from the onset of her teaching in the preschool, Avital

started to pay attention to the discrepancy between the Hebrew and the Arabic-using children in their progress in their L2s. Avital explained this discrepancy by the fact that the Arabic-using children have more opportunities of exposure to Hebrew in daily life. Therefore, their acquisition of Hebrew was more accelerated and successful than their Hebrew-using peers' progress in Arabic. This awareness of the Arabic language's weaker position due to overwhelming dominance of Hebrew in the Hebrew-using children's linguistic environment resulted in Avital's persistent mediation of the use of Arabic by the Hebrew users in tandem with Sukainah's efforts.

Interestingly, the teachers' efforts to encourage L2 production was supported in this discourse event by Adi, the L1 Hebrew and Arabic user: "Those who speak Arabic have to say it in Hebrew and those who speak Hebrew have to say it in Arabic" (Turn 4). Through his clear-cut statement about language choice, Adi, a simultaneous bilingual child from a Hebrew–Arabic-using family played the role of language policy maker in this bilingual preschool. Thus, Adi answered

Fishman's (1965) classical question of: "Who speaks which language to whom and when?" and by doing this, he declared the preschool language policy aimed to promote L2 use.

Later, our observations showed that, with Avital's own gradual progress in Arabic, she asked the Hebrew-using children, more and more, to say a word or a sentence in Arabic: "Come on, and now tell us what it is called in Arabic." Example 2 vividly illustrates Avital's strategy:

EXAMPLE 2: Observation; 20 February 2014

(In the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Hebrew model teacher, Avital; the Arabic model teacher, Sukainah; the Arabic-using classroom assistant, Amini; an L1 Hebrew-using boy, Doondoon; and an Arabic-using girl, Basmah.

Situation: Outdoor activity. The children visited a nearby farm to become familiar with farm animals, farming, and gardening. While visiting the farmers, Avital asks a Hebrew-using child to say something in Arabic to the farmer.

-
- | | | |
|----|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Avital: | <p>עכשיו אני רוצה לבקש מאחד הילדים.
 Axshav ani roca levakesh mi-exad ha-yeladim.
 Now I want to ask from one of the children.</p> |
| 2 | Basmah: | <p>شكرا.
 Shukran.
 Thank you.</p> |
| 3 | Avital: | <p>לא, הוא ילד שבבית מדברים רק עברית אבא ואמא, מי מהילדים שלנו מדברים רק עברית בבית, אוקיי אני רוצה בבקשה מדונדון להגיד משהו בערבית.
 Lo, hu yeled she-ba-bayit medabrim rak ivrit aba ve-ima, mi me-ha-yeladim shelanu medabrim rak ivrit ba-bayit, okey ani roca bevakasha me-doondoon lehagid mashegu be-aravit.
 No, he is a child whose parents speak only Hebrew at home. Which of our children speak only Hebrew at home? OK. I will ask Doondoon to say something in Arabic.</p> |
| 4 | Doondoon: | <p>למי?
 Le-mi?
 To whom?</p> |
| 5 | Avital: | <p>לאנשים שהזמינו לבית שלהם.
 La-anashim she-hizminu la-bayit shelahem.
 To the people who invited us to their home.</p> |
| 6 | Doondoon: | <p>על זה שהם נתנו?
 Al ze she-ham natnu?
 For what they gave?</p> |
| 7 | Avital: | <p>על זה שהם נתנו, על המקום שהזמינו.
 Al ze she-hem natnu, al ha-makom she-hizminu.
 For what they gave us, for inviting us.</p> |
| 8 | Doondoon: | <p>شكرا.
 Shukra.
 Thank you.</p> |
| 9 | Avital: | <p>אני רוצה להגיד בספרדית muchas gracias תודה רבה.
 Ani roca lehagid be-sfaradit muchas gracias toda raba.
 I want to say it in Spanish muchas gracias thank you.</p> |
| 10 | Amini: | <p>האד בספרדית.
 Had be-sfaradit.
 That's in Spanish.</p> |
| 11 | Sukainah: | <p>האד ב ספרדית.
 Had bi-sfaradit 'ashnha hi.
 That's in Spanish (because she speaks Spanish).</p> |
-

Example 2 shows also that for Avital, as a bilingual Spanish–Hebrew speaker, the Spanish language and Hispanic culture and history are significant, as well as her Jewish roots (Turns 9–11). In the interviews, Avital stressed that her openness to the new language and culture could be attributed to her immigrant background and personal experience as a multilingual and multicultural person.

We also note that when the Arabic model teacher was not present, the target language policy to support Arabic was not neglected and was managed by the L1 Hebrew model teacher. This is illustrated by the following excerpt from Avital's teacher interview: "... a girl in the kindergarten raised her hand. I asked: 'Who wants to say it in Arabic?' When Sukainah is absent, I *insist* on hearing translations from the children. I demand that the children explain things to me in Arabic."

Managing the Children's Demand for Direct Translation. Only a few observations showed that Sukainah completely switched over from Arabic to Hebrew to avoid misunderstandings with the novices and to accommodate the child's language choice. This practice occurred especially at the beginning of the academic year during the adjustment period. The children's request or even a persistent demand for a direct translation was initiated, in most cases, by the L1 Hebrew-using children. In the course of time, Sukainah was firm and responded with a "never give in" approach to

the children's demands. She also accurately controlled the type of words that she translated from Arabic into Hebrew. As was observed, the translated words were words that did not present concrete object or actions that could be presented by means of nonlinguistic strategies such as gestures or pictures.

As she explained in her interviews, Sukainah attributed this strategy to her critical attitude toward direct translation:

I try not to switch to Hebrew immediately. I try in many ways. I repeat words, I use gestures, I give them a "moving instruction." It actually works ... I have to use body movements to explain a new word, for example, the tree ((the teacher shows how she portrays a tree)) ... When I see that they understand, I stop ((using the target gesture)). But at the beginning of every new subject, like a new story, I must use gestures and movements. (January 2014)

Similar to the recent claim by Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012), Sukainah's previous experience with the use of direct translation as a main strategy before the beginning of the study resulted mostly in Hebrew-using children passively waiting for a translation into Hebrew instead of being actively involved in L2 Arabic learning. As a result, the teacher reconsidered this strategy and mostly replaced it in the course of time (see Schwartz & Asli, 2014). Example 3 shows how the teacher negotiates understanding without direct translation.

EXAMPLE 3: Observation; 6 February 2014

(In the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Arabic model teacher, Sukainah; the L1 Hebrew-users, Alin and Ido; and an Arabic-using boy, Shareef, who entered the preschool with a relatively high level of competence in spoken L2 Hebrew and could be defined as a language expert.

Situation: During water break, Sukainah explains to the children what to do, in Arabic. The L1 Hebrew users ask for a translation into Hebrew. Sukainah chooses to explain and clarify while using Arabic.

1	Alin:	Tagidi be-ivrit. Say that in Hebrew.	תגיד ביברית.
2	Sukainah:	Ya'ni fi qanineh kbeereh, ma zeh qanineh kbeereh? <i>It means that there is a big bottle. What is a big bottle?</i>	يعني في قنينة كبيرة, מה זה قנينة كبيرة?
3	Shareef:	Bakbook mayim gadol. A big bottle of water.	בקבוק מים גדול.
4	Sukainah:	Nu,u malee' bilma' u ihna mina'abbi lakum fi alkibyayat. <i>Yes, and it contains water and we will pour it into your cups</i>	ן, ומליء بالماء واحنا منعبى لكم في الكيبايات.

5	Ido:	Ma ze ma'?	מה זה מא?
		What is <i>water</i> ?	
6	Sukainah:	Aw bilkasat bilkasat. <i>Or into cups, in cups.</i> ((Sukainah portrays in her hands that they need to pour water into the cups, and points at a plastic cup)).	أو بالكاسات بالكاسات.
7	Alin:	Aval, eyn li. But, I don't have (a cup).	אבל אין לי.
8	Sukainah:	Lakan qanani, e'na qanani. <i>So, into bottles. We have bottles.</i>	לכאן קנאני, ענא קנאני.
9	Ido:	Hi amra she-yesh lehem bankbook mayim. She said that they have bottle for water.	היא אמרה שיש להם במקבוק מים.
10	Sukainah:	Belzabet! <i>Exactly!</i>	بالزبط!

As illustrated in Example 3, the teacher negotiates understanding without direct translation of frequently used words such as *glass*, *bottle*, *water*, *big* (Turns 2, 4, 6), which she expects the children to know after 6 months' exposure to Arabic. The high frequency of these words in the classroom might be attributed also to the specific Israeli climate conditions. In Israel, each child brings a bottle of water to the preschool every day and is encouraged to drink at least one liter of water during the day. The teacher tried to achieve understanding by use of oral strategies (slow talk, repetition), linguistic strategies (morphosyntactic and lexical simplification), meta-linguistic strate-

gies (cognates: *water*, *cup*), use of visual images, and spontaneous signs and gestures (Turn 1). These diverse mediation strategies appeared to be fruitful. Thus, Ido, the L1 Hebrew-using boy who initially asked Sukainah for the translation of the word *water* (Turn 5), in Turn 9 showed his understanding of the teachers' message by translating it to Alin.

We also observed how Sukainah stressed to the Hebrew-using children that they needed to "anchor" their understanding by listening attentively to her repeated utterances in Arabic to identify cognates or familiar Arabic words. In Example 4, Sukainah calls the children to listen to her

EXAMPLE 4: Observation; 4 May 2014

(in the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Arabic model teacher, Sukainah, and two L1 Hebrew-using boys, Raviv and Dani.

Situation: Classroom activity. The children are coloring. Dani joins Raviv and puts his hand on his painting.

1	Sukainah:	لا لا ميش وين بدكم هسا احنا بدنا نطبع, هاي شو اسمها, كفة يد, هاي كفة يد, شو هاي? מה זה קפה יד, اسمעו זה דומה. La la mish wen bidkom hassa ihna bidna nitba'. Hai shu ismha, kaffet yad, hai kaffet yad, shuhai? Ma ze kaffet yad, isma'u. ze domeh. <i>No no, not where you feel like. We are going to copy now, what is it called? The palm of the hand. What is it? What is palm of hand? Listen, it sounds similar.</i> ((Sukainah points toward the hands in the drawing. Later she holds Raviv's hands))	
2	Raviv:	Et ha-yad. The hand.	את היד.

3	Sukainah:	Bas shu hai? <i>But what is it?</i>	بس شو هاي؟
4	Raviv:	Et ha-yad. The hand.	את היד.
5	Sukainah:	Shu hai? <i>What is it?</i>	شو هاي؟
6	Raviv:	Zot daniet et ha-yadayim al ze. It means the hands on it ((points toward the drawing)).	זאת אומרת את הידיים על זה.
7	Sukainah:	Hai kaffet yad, bidna nitba'ha 'ala il bristorl bas ma zeh kaffet yad? Btisma'u kaffet yad bishbah ilibrani ya dani, domeh le-ivrit. <i>This is the palm of the hand. We want to copy it on the paper. But what is 'palm of hand'?</i> <i>Listen, palm of hand sounds similar in Hebrew. Dani, it's similar in Hebrew.</i>	هاي كفة يد, بدنا نطبعها على البريستول بس מה זה קפה יד? بتسمעו קפה יד בשבیه العبراني يا دني, دومه לעبرית.

attentively and to pay attention to cognates as a scaffolding tool to negotiate their understanding of the Arabic (Turns 1, 7).

Both examples give us an idea of how this experienced teacher was “tuned-in” to her children and to what they were supposed to know after 5 months of intensive L2 exposure and instruction. It is evident that Sukainah could evaluate the children’s ZPD and mediate this development. By doing so, Sukainah aimed to urge them to activate their meta-linguistic awareness and to prevent their disengagement in L2 learning. Identifying cognates was one of the main language teaching strategies used in this bilingual Arabic–Hebrew preschool (Schwartz & Asli, 2014), a strategy that has been shown to result in enriched meaning-making across languages and to reinforce meta-linguistic awareness (García & Li Wei, 2014).

In addition, as reported by the teacher, she tried to regulate her scaffolding by monitoring the children’s understanding: “When I see that they understand, I stop ((using the target gesture)).” In some rare cases, Sukainah’s non-translation policy resulted in a child’s frustration. In these cases, the teacher showed her sensitivity to the children’s emotional needs and used an intra-sentence code-switching to Hebrew, a mediation strategy that has also been observed in other bilingual classrooms (e.g., Gort & Pontier, 2013; Hickey et al., 2014; Pontier & Gort, 2016). As reported in her interview, this contextual code-switch to Hebrew was aimed at preventing a sustained disconnection in the communication between the teacher and the Hebrew-using

children, or a situation where they might have been in danger.

Finally, our observations showed that the teachers explicitly avoided directly translating each other during co-teaching sessions. Instead of translating, the co-teacher modified the message through elaboration and clarification or by continuing to give instructions in her L1.

The Teacher as a Model for the L2 Learner. Avital played the role of the model for the L1 Hebrew-using children as an adult L2 learner. Even though this strategy was not frequently observed, it was quite central in the teachers’ reflections on how they encouraged the Hebrew-using children’s motivation to use Arabic.

In her interviews, she stressed how important it was for her to learn Arabic during the first year of her teaching in this preschool, in parallel with the Hebrew-using children. Indeed, our observation showed that these efforts were fruitful. Thus, we found that the novice L1 Hebrew-using children were accustomed to repeating Avital’s slogan: “I did not understand but I think that you said that ...” word by word, showing their great efforts to understand Arabic. Avital’s teachers were the L1 Arabic-using children and her co-worker, Sukainah. In her endeavor to learn Arabic, Avital spread the message of deep interest in the language and culture of others:

I try to present myself as a model who learns the language and who is interested in the language of the Arabs. They see that I ask Sukainah how to write things in Arabic and the message is that it is OK to

make mistakes, it is OK to learn, and the fact that I am a teacher does not mean I know everything. On the contrary, I want to learn from you ((from the L1 Arabic-using children)) what I don't know. That gives them ((the children)) an amazing energy boost. (March 2014)

In all of our gatherings, talking about different topics, in everything we say ... even when Sukainah is away, I always insist: Remind me what it is in Arabic, my memory is not good. And that's true. I am serious; I say that because *it is important to me. It is important for me to know.* (March 2014)

Over time, we observed that Sukainah kept addressing Avital more and more in Arabic during shared activities and circle time. In addition, we frequently observed that Avital was attempting to understand what her co-teacher said in Arabic by relying on Sukainah's intonation, nonverbal tools (e.g., gestures, visual images), repetitions, and cognates. Thus, it appeared that Avital 'anchored' her L2 comprehension process by means of the same scaffolding tools that Sukainah used in her communication with the children.

Example 5 illustrates how, with her progress in Arabic, Avital started inserting some common

EXAMPLE 5: Observation; 10 March 2014

(In the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Hebrew model teacher, Avital and an L1 Arabic-user, Karem.

Situation: Classroom activity. Following the work on greetings and drawings, Avital asks Karem to explain what he has drawn in Hebrew and in Arabic and later asks him to count the words he knows in Hebrew.

-
- | | | | |
|---|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Avital: | מקסים, איפה כוכבים? אוקיי יפה. אתה רוצה להגיד לי בערבית? קדימה.
Maksim, efo koxavim? OK yafe. Ata roce lehagid li be-aravit? Kadima.
Beautiful, where are the stars? OK beautiful. Do you want to tell me in Arabic?
Come on. | |
| 2 | Karem: | Osheb.
Grass. | عشب. |
| 3 | Avital: | Ex?
Come again? | איך? |
| 4 | Karem: | Al-osheb.
Grass. | العشب. |
| 5 | Avital: | Al-osheb, kaxa omrim? Tistakel alay, al-osheb?
Grass, is that how to say it? Look at me, <i>grass</i> ? | العشب ככה אומרם? תסתכל עליי للعشب? |
| 6 | Avital: | Ze ulay deshe o adia? Le-ze hitkavanta? Le-deshe? Be-eze ceva ze <i>al-osheb</i> ? Ex
ha-mivta sheli yafe?
Maybe that's grass or ground? Is that what you meant? Grass? Which color is the
grass? How is my accent, is it good? | זה אולי דשא או אדמה? לזה התכוונת? לדשא? באיזה צבע זה העשב? איך
המבטא שלי יפה? |
| 7 | Karem: | Ze ha-yona?
That's the pigeon. | זה היונה. |
| 8 | Avital: | Ha-yona? Kama milim yesh lexa ata sam lev? Kama milim be-ivrit ata makir?
Mumtaz!
The pigeon? How many words do you know? Have you noticed? How many words
in Hebrew do you know?
<i>Excellent!</i> | היונה? כמה מילים יש לך אתה שם לב? כמה מילים בעברית אתה מכיר?
מمتاز! |
| 9 | Karem: | Ani yode'a ivrit arbe-esre.
I know Hebrew fourteen. | אני יודע עברית ארבע עשרה. |
-

10	Avital:	ארבע עשרה מה? מילים? אתה רוצה להגיד לי איזה אתה יודע? בוא נספור ביחד. Arba-esre ma? Milim? Ata roce lehagid li eze ata yode'a? bo nispor be-yaxad. Fourteen what? Words? Do you want to tell me the words you know? Come on, let's count together.
11	Karem:	לא רוצה. Lo roce. I don't want to.
12	Avital:	ארבע עשרה אתה יודע? איך אומרים בלבו בעברית? Arba-esre ata yode'a? Ex omrin baba be-ivrit? You know fourteen? How do you say <i>father</i> in Hebrew?
13	Karem:	אבא. Aba. Father.

words in Arabic in her discourses with children, for example, to praise them, as was observed in Example 5 (Turn 15 *excellent*).

Example 5 also shows that Avital played a double role of both student and teacher; as student by asking Karem to check and correct her pronunciation of the Arabic word, *عشب*, "grass" (Turn 5), and as teacher by checking with Karem, a novice learner of Hebrew, how many words he knows in

Hebrew (Turn 8), and "How do you say *father* in Hebrew?" (Turn 13).

In her interview, Avital referred to her gradual and consistent progress in Arabic. While encouraging the L1 Hebrew users to use Arabic, Avital compared the children's progress favorably with her own, as illustrated in the following example (Example 6, Turn 4).

EXAMPLE 6: Observation; 6 February 2014

(In the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Arabic model teacher, Sukainah; the Hebrew model teacher, Avital; and an L1 Hebrew-using boy, Dani.

Situation: Circle time.

1	Sukainah:	אני בדי מן الأولاد اللي بحكوا عبري أنا بسأل اذا في واحد من الأولاد الي بحكوا عبري بقدر يعدلنا كل الأولاد؟ في؟ ٦٦ ممكن؟ بالعربي؟ يلا تعال. Ana biddi min ilawlad illi bihku 'ibri ana bas'alitha fi wahad min ilawlad illi bihku 'ibri biqdar ye3iddilna kul ilawlad? Fi? Dani mumken? Bil'arabi? Yalla ta'al. <i>I want the Hebrew-speaking children – Can any of the Hebrew-speaking children count all of the children. Can they? Dani, can you? In Arabic? Come on.</i>
2	Dani:	واحد, اثنين, ثلاثة, أربعة, خمسة, ستة, سبعة, ثمانية, تسعة, عشرة, احدى عشر, اثناعشر, ثلاثة عشر, أربعة عشر, خمسة عشر, ستة عشر, سبعة عشر, ثمانية عشر, تسعة عشر, عش - ١٤ كل כך. Wahed, ithnen, thalatha, arba'a, khamisa, sitta, sab'a, thamanyah, tis'ah, asharah, ahd ash, ithna ashar, thalathata ashar, arba'ata ashar, khamsata ashar, sittata ashar, sab'ata ashar, thamanyata ashar, tis'ata ashar - lo kol kakh. <i>One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty- not so much.</i>
3	Sukainah:	عشرين. ishreen. (OK, we'll help you), <i>twenty</i> .
4	Avital:	אתה יותר טוב ממני. Ata yoter tov mi-meni. You are better than I am.

Later, Dani continues to count and Avital supports his efforts by positive feedback: “Good for you that you tried (to count).” Sukainah supported Avital’s efforts to improve her Arabic. As she stated in her interview, Avital’s modeling increased the Jewish children’s awareness of belonging to the majority language group, as well as stimulating their interest in Arabic, and apparently boosted their motivation for Arabic acquisition:

Sukainah: Listen, we also set an example for the kids. If Avital can be an example for the Jewish kids, I mean, if she speaks Arabic and shows them that she is learning it as well as they do, then *they will be encouraged to do the same*. They will start to think that learning and speaking Arabic is a good thing. (March 20, 2014)

Contribution From Language Experts. As was addressed in the interview with Sukainah, our research was conducted during an unusual academic year because of the presence of six L1 Arabic users whom she defined as L2 experts. Within the context of peer interaction and L2 learning, Blum–Kulka and Snow (2004) distinguished between two types of peers: novice L2 learners and L2 experts. The latter are at a more advanced stage of competence and can play the role of L2 teachers. Through their interaction with their peers who are L2 experts, the novice learners are guided to the requisite knowledge, including linguistic and cultural knowledge, about a particular social group (Kohler, 2015). The sociolinguistic role of young L2 experts is not restricted to the classroom context, and was found

to function as significant language brokering in negotiating of family members’ understanding of L2 by translating in diverse social institutions, such as hospitals and stores within an immigrant context (e.g., Orellana, 2010).

The presence of the L2 experts in this classroom was a phenomenon that could be attributed partly to their (Arab) parents’ language policy of taking practical steps to promote their children’s exposure to the L2. Some of their family language policy might be attributed to their belief that their children’s competence in Hebrew is a primary predictor of their future academic and economic success in Israel (Bekerman & Tatar, 2009).

Both teachers were helped by the L2 experts’ mediation as well. This is explained in the following excerpt from Sukainah’s teacher interview:

I see many expert children this year and *it is very helpful ... it helps in games, while they are playing. The experts mediate the interaction* and that’s very helpful because they are able to speak Arabic and Hebrew and tell the Arabic-speaking kids what the Hebrew-speaking kids are saying and vice versa. They also mediate what is the intent behind the words and this mediation is priceless. (November 11, 2013)

Example 7 demonstrates how Sukainah openly asks Shareef, the L2 expert, to negotiate understanding of the novice L2 learners by translating from Hebrew into Arabic (Turn 4). Interestingly, Shareef does not translate Sukainah’s utterance word for word in the future plural tense, but formulates the question in the more age-appropriate present tense (Turn 5).

EXAMPLE 7: Observation: 2 January 2014.

(In the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Hebrew model teacher Avital; the Arabic model teacher, Sukainah; and an L1 Arabic-using boy, Shareef.

Situation: Circle time.

1	Avital:	איך נוכל לדעת כמה פירות יש מכל סוג? Ex noxal ladaat kama perot yesh mi-kol sug? How will we be able to tell how many fruits there are of each kind?
2	Sukainah:	فهمتو شو سالت افيثال؟ Fhimto shu sa'lat avital? <i>Did you understand what Avital asked?</i>
3	Children:	لا. La. No.
4	Sukainah:	مين فهم؟ شريف؟ Meen fihem? Shareef? <i>Who understood? Shareef?</i>
5	Shareef:	كيف بنفع نعرف ادي في من كل نوع؟ Keef binfa' ni'raf adee fi min kul no'? <i>How is it possible to know how many are there of each kind?</i>

Sukainah stressed that the L2 experts assisted her not only in negotiating novices' understanding but also in establishing social interactions between the two ethnic groups of children:

... she ((Jamila, the L2 expert girl)) does an excellent job ... She acts like it's something routine that she has been doing forever. She plays with the Jewish kids and the Arab kids and *connects them*. With her mediation, they play together. It's amazing to watch, it really is amazing! Doondoon and Ophir, who didn't know any words at the beginning of the year, now understand everything and are now friends with all of the other children. (November 11, 2013)

In addition, Sukainah viewed the L2 experts to be significant for her and Avita's efforts to

encourage the use of the L2. As she emphasized in her interview, the L2 experts also played a role of bilingual peer models alongside Avital who played the role of the bilingual model for the novice L2 learners.

The language experts' contribution to the teachers was highly contextualized and changed over time. Whereas, during the initial months, Sukainah often asked for the L2 experts' assistance, toward the end of the academic year, we observed a number of cases in which translation was viewed as an impediment. Example 8 shows how Sukainah prevents the assistance from Luna, an L2 expert (Turns 2–3).

EXAMPLE 8: Observation: 4 May 2014

(In the English translation, italic text = Arabic, nonitalic text = Hebrew)

Participants: The Arabic model teacher, Sukainah; an L1 Arabic-using girl, Luna; and an L1 Hebrew-using girl, Alin.

Situation: Classroom activity. Sukainah helps Hani with drawing a palm. Alin stands next to the table.

1	Sukainah:	<p>کمان شوي ماشي? کمان شوي بنادي عليکي ألين. ألين أنا بنادي عليکي. روحي برة ألين روحي وأنا بنادي عليکي. Kaman shwai mashi? Kaman shwai banadi aleki aleen, alee nana banadi aleki, ruhi barra aleen ruhi u ana banadialeki. <i>In a little while, okay? I'll call you in a little while Alin. Alin I will call you. Go outside Alin. Go outside and I will call you.</i> ((Sukainah points at herself and at Alin while talking to her))</p>
2	Luna:	<p>תלכי לשחק והיא. Telxi lesaxek ve-hi. Go and play and she (will call you.)</p>
3	Sukainah:	<p>هی بتفهم. Fish hajeh, hee btifham. (There is no need for translation) <i>She understands.</i></p>

Similar to reducing the scaffolding whenever children reached some target in their developmental space, this observation illustrates how Sukainah is assertive in avoiding a translation in the case of a simple instruction, which seemed to be understood within Alin's zone of L2 development at the end of the year. In her interview, Sukainah reflected on a gradual reduction of the language experts' mediation in time. The aim of this regulation was to activate the novice learners' "zone" of L2 development. In line with Vygotskian views on the regulation of the learner's ZPD, she was aware of a teacher's need to recognize what is known and what is unknown to the learner (in this case Alin) and as a result to regulate mediation (e.g., Kohler, 2015; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This regulation was applied

whenever she recognized that her instruction could be understood by Alin without the experts' mediation.

CONCLUSION

From a sociocultural learning theory perspective, mediation is viewed as an active process, central to teaching and learning through interaction. In this study, we examined how the teachers mediated the children's L2 use through analysis of teacher–children discourses. On the local classroom level, our focus was on direct observation and analysis of teachers' language mediation strategies that were applied in the bilingual preschool. On the wider sociolinguistic level, we tried to understand the relationship between the

teachers' perceptions and reflections of their mediation strategies and their aim to achieve a balance between the majority and minority language and to promote the social status of the latter. Recent research has found that empowerment of the minority language is important for bilingual education and its success around the world (Baker, 2011; DePalma, 2010; Hickey, 2001). However, only a few longitudinal ethnographic studies have examined how teachers try to support that goal through their daily discourses with children (DePalma, 2010; Södergård, 2008). Thus, within a wider international framework, the observed strategies, as well as the teachers' reflections on their behavior, could provide models of mediation strategies for bilingual educators who are working in different sociolinguistic contexts in situations of social imbalance between the majority and minority language. Moreover, the examples and their analysis might help bilingual teachers to view themselves as part of a community of reciprocal learning and correction (Fishman, 1976, p. viii).

In some cases the teachers' mediation behavior overlapped with L2 instruction strategies, such as the negotiation of L2 understanding by means of paying attention to cognates. We found that both Sukainah and Avital relatively frequently asked the Hebrew-using children to use Arabic. These explicit requests helped teachers to present their expectations more clearly and to avoid misunderstandings concerning an expected language of communication in the discourse situation in the classroom. Södergård (2008) found the lack of such explicit requests to be confusing when the teacher used rather ambiguous signals to the children to use the L2 instead of the L1 (Södergård, 2008). Furthermore, it was apparent that Sukainah definitely preferred to avoid direct translation. According to her observations and longitudinal experience, employing translation as a main strategy leads to the children's passive waiting for translations instead of active involvement in L2 learning (Schwartz & Asli, 2014). This remark is in line with growing criticism that translation, as a dominant strategy, is inefficient in bilingual education (Cummins, 2005; Montague, 1997). Thus, she was resistant to the *move-on strategy*, which was defined by Lanza (2007) as the adults' acceptance of children's language choice with the aim of continuing conversation without any implicit and explicit interruption. In addition, she tended to regulate the mediation of the language experts by blocking their assistance once she could see that the novices were able to move toward self-regulation by accommodating

new learning and its active use. Avital supported this struggle and gradually realized that her aim was twofold: to promote the majority language, Hebrew, and to support the minority language, Arabic, by setting a personal example of the emergent bilingual adult. This teacher's successful personal experience as a multilingual and multicultural person served her in her role as bilingual speaker model for the children. In this context, Lemberger (1997) noted that the bilingual teachers' efforts to use the minority language in classrooms with native speakers of this language might increase the children's self-esteem and strengthen their ethnic identity. Further study is needed to examine whether this teacher's effort may enhance the young Arabic-users' ethnic identity.

Finally, we address some critical points and limitations of our study. We are aware that, since our investigation was limited to a case study of a single classroom, our findings might not be readily generalizable. It is reasonable to assume that teachers in other bilingual classrooms might take a different approach to solving the L2 motivation issues involved. Did the teachers provide the most effective assistance? Did they know how best to use their mediation strategies? The current study cannot answer these questions. The teachers' expectations from the novice Arabic learners were reasonably realistic and were limited mostly to greetings, words that are related to basic semantic categories such as body parts and fruit, and cognates. At the same time, the teachers' expectations regarding Arabic users' progress in Hebrew were different and much higher. As we found in our previous study, the teachers attributed this difference to the objective sociolinguistic situation in Israel in terms of the status of Hebrew versus Arabic and the societal power of these languages (Schwartz & Asli, 2014). While taking a pragmatic approach, the teachers also inadvertently reproduced dominant societal language ideologies (Valdés, 1997). Thus, future research is necessary to assess children's progress in the L2 as well as their motivation for its acquisition.

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NOTES

¹ Emergent bilingual children are defined as children “who have the potential of becoming bilingual and biliterate if supported in their immediate environments” (Gort & Pontier, 2012, p. 258). These children are continuously exposed to the dynamical and simultaneous development of thinking, listening, speaking, and literacy skills in two languages.

² The term “Hebrew model teacher” and “Arabic model teacher” was proposed by Pontier & Gort (2016) as a definition of the bilingual teachers.

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