

## Translingual Practices in a Korean Boy's Playdates

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This study examined translingual practices in two playdates of a Korean four-year-old boy (Theo) with a Korean boy and an American boy. The boys played a game called *Candy Land*. In both playdates, the boys' naturally occurring English and Korean communication strategies were observed and analyzed based on Canagarajah's (2013) four types of negotiation strategies: *envoicing*, *recontextualization*, *interactional*, and *intertextualization*. They adapted and accommodated translingual practices in communicative situations using strategies such as body language, whispering, codemeshing, and codeswitching. Interviews were conducted with Theo to examine his understanding of his language as a user of Korean and English in the United States. Theo expressed his thoughts about language in metaphor, using his hands, and asserted that he needed English to have a sense of belonging and access to resources in his preschool.

**Keywords:** translingual practice, Canagarajah's negotiation strategies, language identity, playdate discourses

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Canagarajah (2013) argued that a focus on strict adherence to formal grammatical rules is “not innocent” (p. 20) as it does not reflect the often improvised yet systematic ways in which language is actually used in real situations. Based on this premise, the present study was undertaken to explore the translingual practices between a four-year-old Korean boy, Theo, and his playmate in two play date settings, one with another four-year-old Korean boy, Taine, and the other with a four-year-old American boy, Lucas. Canagarajah (2014) defined translingual orientation as language being “borrowed, mixed, and reconstructed” in daily lives by language users (p. 770). In this study, translingual practice refers to a situation where multiple languages are used in daily communications rather than as a system of structures and rules.

Playdates are casual social events for young children in which language is used naturally. This study was conducted to examine the rules of translanguaging used in an “innocent” way during playdates as children were open to an environment where both English and Korean were used while they played. In the playdates, Theo crossed boundaries between English and Korean to build and negotiate his own communication strategies while playing a board game called *Candy Land*. In the game, players drew cards on which instructions were given for moving their candy-men in terms of numbers of squares of different colors. The first player to reach the Candy Castle won the game.

Theo, Taine and Lucas’s discourses were analyzed based on Canagarajah’s (2013) four types of negotiation strategies: “envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and entextualization” (p. 79). Negotiation strategy refers to the ability to use language for one’s needs to communicate successfully or to communicate with others who use a different norm for the language (Canagarajah, 2014). The three boys’ preferred norms in their language usage were observed in playdates. The day of the data collection was the first time each pair of boys played *Candy Land* together. A week before the playdate with Taine, the boys were informed that they were to speak English during the following playdate. Also, during the playdate with Lucas, Theo was told to speak English.

The purpose of this research is to examine the positive aspects of translanguaging and to observe the effective communication strategies that four-year-old boys use in their playdates. This study differs from prior studies as an investigation of young children’s translingual communications in a natural situation. This study views children’s discourses among themselves, and with adults as parents are present in children’s playdates.

This study also examines Theo’s expression of his language identity as a Korean boy learning English. For many people, learning a new language is a difficult process. This was the same case for Theo who attended an American preschool as a Korean boy. In the study, Theo reveals the strength he has as a language learner negotiating through strategies to

communicate. This opens a chance for new language learners to look back at the strategies that they have supporting their language practices.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kramersch (2010) described language as “labels” applicable to the daily life (p. 27). A non-native speaker of one language is a native speaker of another, not a “blank slate” (p. 28). Language learners consciously and unconsciously experience each language’s multiple labels and differentiating contexts while relating them in various ways. Also, Kramersch found that at the beginning of this process, not only do language learners have profoundly different attitudes toward the new language, but also the process of learning and using labels is affected by each learner’s unique personality. Therefore, each language learner has his or her individual identity in the newly learned language, and in translanguaging practices, language users go through the process of signifying themselves.

Kramersch’s (2010) blended space theory which conceptualizes the connection between learners’ language and thought in their multiple languages as to make sense of the realities expressed through the languages. Kramersch theorized that learners’ language had “subjective values” built on “conventional meanings,” which are transformed through valued personal experiences to reflect their “desires, memories, and projections” being more valued than before (p. 30).

In early childhood language, even playful dialogues imply symbolic meanings (Huerta & Riojas-Cortez, 2014). Three- and four-year-old children are in a language-learning mode, absorbing what they hear in their circumstances, and at age five, children start to reason and develop as speakers of the language in the school they attend (Fillmore, 1991). Fillmore (1991) insisted that nonnative English-speaking students in English-speaking environments should learn English after their native languages are stable enough to handle transactions with English. In real situations, however, it may be difficult to follow an ideal process.

Huerta and Riojas-Cortez (2014) found that children used translanguaging to provide clarity of meaning, add cues for language usage, and convey demands, although deficiencies in language as a tool for communication affected children’s playing processes. That is, lack of proficiency in the major language of a play group interfered with children’s actions. Children cultivate identity and understand their connections with other people through native language, which provides the feeling that they belong (NAEYC, 1995). Thus, Cheatham and Ro (2010), and Prieto (2009) emphasized that children’s native languages should be respected and can be used as resources in learning English. Song (2015) found that children developed new and hybrid ways to apply their languages in diverse social and cultural situation. Several researchers have found that language learners develop unique identities

while applying their own strategies for communicating (Cheatham & Ro, 2010; Huerta & Riojas-Cortez, 2014; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997; Song, 2015; Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008; Young, 2013).

The children's communications were analyzed using Canagarajah's (2013) negotiation strategies of *envoicing*, *recontextualization*, *interactional strategies*, and *entextualization*. In this framework, envoicing provides participants with distinguished identities which are connected to their actions. Envoicing strategies also facilitate negotiations that soften situations of tension. Next, recontextualization refers to the process of modifying ideas to fit into the current context, which involves renegotiating. Interactional strategies assist interlocutors in handling ambiguities and misunderstandings. They include strategies of *alignment*, in which interlocutors' backgrounds are activated as language resources. Lastly, entextualization helps speakers recontextualize an interaction to meet the target of negotiations. Furthermore, Canagarajah (2018) expanded his research to explore spatial repertoires beyond languages, an approach which conflicted with the structuralist paradigm, in which the framework for space is inflexible. He claimed that space could be redefined based on understanding of human cognition and language. He referred to STEM scholars to illustrate semiotic resources as "gestures, visuals, body language, and modalities such as PowerPoint and blackboard" could move scholars beyond their limited English proficiency (p. 37). In this study, Canagarajah examined the way participants used semiotic resources to move beyond language and how they created translingual practices which were appropriate for particular situations.

Canagarajah's (2012, 2022) personal background of experiencing language diversity in Sri Lanka affected his research on translanguaging and to respect local practices in learning and teaching English. Canagarajah reflected on his experience of being influenced by the West and continuously studied to decolonized from the power of Western English and to add locality to communicative practices. Along with recognizing local interest, Canagarajah (2006) focused on the way individuals "modify, resist, and reconstruct" discourses in different communications (p. 204). In his 2006 study, Canagarajah claimed that the local factors that individuals bring into the communications activate as strategies helping speakers to communicate without barriers. I hope to examine translanguaging practices in my participants' playdate discourses implying their background locality to overcome the obstacles using languages.

Translanguaging provides benefits for language learners such as opportunities for practicing target languages (Dryden, Tankosić, & Dovchin, 2021) and support for drawing on the resources of multiple languages (Berlianti & Pardita, 2021). Similarly, Cenoz and Gorter (2017), in a study of trilingual students in the Basque Country who were being educated in Basque, Spanish, and English, found that translanguaging encouraged learners' creativity in language usage. The authors found that multilingual students could find

common factors of languages which helped their understandings in multiple language usages. They claimed that translanguaging opened chances for individuals to develop their own language features. Choi's (2019) research also examined a trilingual child in the US using three languages: Korean, Farsi, and English. The child uses strategies of translation and codeswitching to communicate with family members of diverse languages at home. The study implements to show language development practices of multilingual learners at home. Choi's study was the closest cases among the previous literature focusing on a child translanguaging practices, but it differed with my study as communication was within the family.

Ooi and Aziz (2021) reviewed translanguaging pedagogy from 14 journal articles in ESL classrooms within 2017 and 2020. The authors found that there was less research on younger ESL students, variety of L1 were used in the ESL classroom, so cultural backgrounds and identity were respected. Results also showed the importance of the teachers having knowledge about ESL students' L1 and background culture. Based on the authors' analysis, I examined how teachers' acknowledgement and receptance of translanguaging can bring a safe space for learners of different L1s in the ESL classrooms which is what I hope to view in translingual practices.

Research questions were presented to observe the positive aspects of translingual practices by comparing the two playdates and examining the negotiating strategies that the participants in the study used. Also, the research questions were used to study the language identity a child who uses both Korean and English has about the languages.

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) How are translingual practices in the two playdates similar or different?
- 2) How do the children apply negotiation strategies in the playdates?
- 3) What is Theo's language identity as a user of Korean and English?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study focused mainly on the discourses that took place during the two playdates, in which Theo, a Korean English language learner, played *Candy Land*, a board game, with each of his two playdate friends. All three boys were four years old. On September 15th, 2015, he played with Taine, a Korean native speaker. Theo's mother also joined the game, but Taine's mother was not able to participate due to her evening graduate class. As Taine previously had multiple playdates with Theo, Taine's mother's absence apparently did not affect him. On October 29th, 2015, Theo played with Lucas, a native English speaker, along with both boys' mothers.

Viewing Theo in 2023 who is still struggling to learn English and to use it effectively, I

decided to examine this study that Theo had participated in 2015 when he was four years old. I assumed Theo's playdate data from 2015 could be encouraging for Theo and various language learners to view the communication skills and the language identity Theo already had from when he was at the age of four.

### 3.1. Participants

Theo was born in the US, but at seven months old, he returned to Korea and was brought up there. From age two he was exposed to English through an English TV program, Disney Junior. From time to time, Theo's mother read children's books in English to him. When he was three years old, he enjoyed participating in English classes one afternoon a week for an hour at his daycare facility. At four, Theo came to the US with his mother, who started a doctoral program in a Mid-western university while he attended preschool. Due to Theo's mother's interest about translanguaging practices in daily life, Theo and his playmates participated in this study.

Taine was born and raised in Korea until he came to the US at the age of three. From the time he was six months old, Taine's mother read him *NoBuYoung* books (children's books in English with songs). From age two, he participated in his daycare's afternoon English classes twice a week. When he was four, Taine also came to the US with his mother, who began a master's program in a Mid-western university while he attended a different preschool from the one Theo attended.

Lucas was born and raised in the Mid-west area of US, where he lived with his mother and father, who had also been born and raised in this area. Lucas's father spoke only English, and his mother spoke some Spanish but had not spoken that language with Lucas. Thus, only English was spoken in the family. When Lucas was younger, he was under the care of his aunt, who also spoke only English, while his mother worked. Therefore, until the playdates with Theo, Lucas had been exposed only to English. Nevertheless, he naturally accepted that Theo and Theo's mother spoke Korean with each other in his presence and showed interest in what they were talking about.

### 3.2. Setting

While playing *Candy Land*, Theo, a beginning English learner, Taine, a Korean and English bilingual speaker, and Lucas, a native English speaker applied negotiating strategies. At the beginning of the first playdate with Taine, Theo expressed negative feelings toward using only English. But shortly after, he accepted the situation and switched his mode saying the English word, "Candy man" in a singing voice. Theo used body language to fill in the gaps of his insufficient English. Through playing *Candy Land*, he learned the English order

for expressing color and numbers together, in which numbers precede colors, which was different from the Korean way. Taine was quieter than in earlier playdates he had had with Theo. Nevertheless, recognizing that English was more effective in this playdate, he used it to communicate his wishes, such as his desire for candy or a napkin.

During the second playdate, Theo played with Lucas, a monolingual English speaker. In the play date with Taine, Theo was able to use both Korean and English to communicate with his mother and playmate. However, in the playdate with Lucas, Theo mostly spoke to his own mother in Korean despite being told several times to speak English. In rare cases, when he talked to Lucas and Lucas’s mother, Theo spoke in English. In addition, Lucas, applied a strategy of whispering for privacy when talking only with his mother.

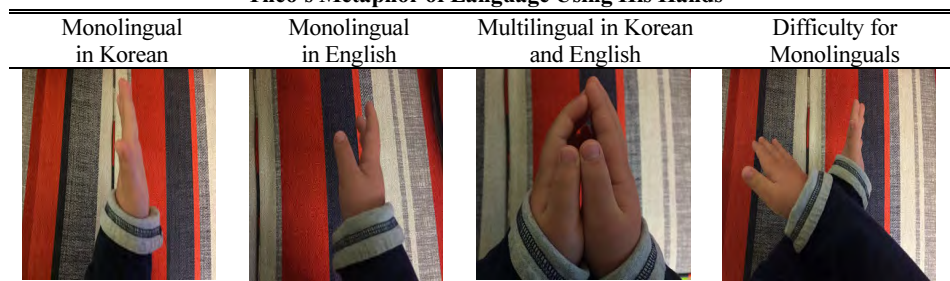
### 3.3. Data Sources

Data sources included video recordings of the two playdates and transcriptions of all discourses occurring during the game *Candy Land*, recordings and transcriptions of Theo’s two interviews, and observation notes. In Theo’s first interview, his overall ideas about learning English were explored. In the second interview, the focus was on Theo’s thoughts about his language usage in the playdate with Lucas.

Kramsch (2010) discussed the possibility that beginning learners could have deep personal reactions to foreign languages. Theo’s interviews (see Appendix) revealed his understanding of learning English and that, even as a four-year-old, he had his own thoughts about language. Theo expressed these thoughts metaphorically with his hands in Figure 1. Each had signified speakers of a language different from that of the people represented by the other hand. To illustrate that there was no way that the left-handed people could communicate with the right-hand people, he made his hands bypass each other. In contrast, Theo signified bilingual speakers by bringing his two hands together in a praying position, indicating that these people could communicate with each other and with single-handed people.

**FIGURE 1**

**Theo’s Metaphor of Language Using His Hands**



### 3.4. Data Analysis

As noted, the playdate discourses were analyzed according to Canagarajah's (2013) *envoicing*, *recontextualization*, *interactional*, and *entextualization* negotiation strategies. Canagarajah's (2013) *envoicing* strategy, in which the speakers' identity and location are encoded within the talk was observed among all three boys in various ways during the playing of *Candy Land*. In the *recontextualization* process of establishing footing for efficient negotiation *contextualization cues* were used. The boys used contextualization cues, including words, gestures, body postures, and other semiotic resources (Canagarajah, 2013; 2018). Entextualization, Canagarajah's *interactional* strategy, was used by the boys to achieve *alignment* of their various speech and communication resources.

Canagarajah (2013) stated that effective communication derives from common language based on accepted rules. Similarly, in the space in which Korean and English were used, the boys adjusted their communication resources to convey their meanings efficiently. Overall, multiple translingual practices were observed in the playdates. In the analysis, the focus was mainly on Theo's discourses, which were analyzed according to Canagarajah's negotiation strategies, and his interviews, which were analyzed using Kramsch's *The Multilingual Subject* (2010), especially from the first chapter, "The Signifying Self."

## 4. DESCRIPTIONS OF PLAYDATES

### 4.1. Playdate with Taine

Theo and Taine had been having playdates since February 2015. Both lived with their mothers, who were studying at a university in the mid-west area of the United States. They had regular playdates on Tuesdays at Theo's house, during which Taine's mother attended evening classes during the semester.

Theo and Taine's playdate was a casual event. Compared to Theo, who was highly active, Taine was calm. As the playdate in this study was the first time they were instructed to speak only English while playing *Candy Land*, the two boys thought the situation was unusual. Theo reflected his negative impression about having to speak English, and Taine became quieter than normal. However, despite the instruction, the boys spoke Korean along with English while playing the game. A unique aspect of their interactions was that the boys sometimes used English to emphasize their speech.



## 4.2. Playdate with Lucas

Theo and Lucas met for the first time at the playdate for this study. Lucas attended a different preschool from either Theo or Taine. Because he did not go to preschool on Thursdays and spent time with his mother, the playdate took place on a Thursday. As both mothers were graduate students at the same university and had been assigned as partners in a summer course, they had talked about parenting on various occasions. After the class ended, they both wanted their boys to have a playdate in the future, which happened earlier than they had expected due to the research.

Both Theo and Lucas were excited to meet each other on their initial playdate. They did not need much language in their play as they were able to communicate with each other in actions. Having complementary personalities strongly affected their playdate.

While playing the game, Theo consistently spoke in Korean to his mother although he was told to speak English several times. Theo pointed out to his mother that she also was speaking in Korean when they were communicating between themselves. During the game, Theo did not have much cause to speak English other than specifying the cards to indicate the colors and numbers. Interestingly, Lucas also had his own way of communicating exclusively with his mother, which was to whisper. It was observed that in the presence of the mothers, each child considered connecting with his mother in their native language as an indispensable component of the situation. The difference was that Theo spoke aloud in Korean to his mother, and Lucas whispered to interact confidentially with his.

There were two instances when Theo spoke up in English. One was when he was asking for more juice in Korea and did not get the desired response, so he changed to English, thinking it would be more effective in getting what he wanted, though that didn't work either. The other instance occurred when his turn was accidentally skipped, and he informed his mother of the oversight in English. Therefore, Theo adopted English to empower his position.

## 5. TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICES IN THE PLAYDATES

Canagarajah's *envoicing*, *recontextualization*, *interactional*, and *entextualization* negotiation strategies were used to analyze the discourses in the playdates. In addition, *codemeshing* and *codeswitching*, which were not included in Canagarajah's negotiation strategies, were added to examine how Theo and Taine used both English and Korean in their dialogues.

### 5.1. Envoicing

When told a week prior to the first playdate that he and Taine would play *Candy Land* in English, Theo's initial reaction was not positive. After asking in Korean why he had to play the game in English, Theo frowned to express his negative feeling. But shortly afterwards, he was in a positive mood about playing the game, which he expressed in a singing voice. On the other hand, Taine appeared neutral about the game as he watched its setup. Theo may have felt more comfortable expressing himself as it was his mother setting up the game in his house. Meanwhile, Taine's mother was absent, and he was at someone else's house and expected to communicate in English. However, Taine had had various playdates in Theo's house, so I assumed that while he might have been less comfortable than Theo, but he would not have felt anxiety in the playdate situation.

Canagarajah's *envoicing* strategy was enacted differently in the playdate with Lucas, an English monolingual speaker which is shown in Table 1. Lucas kept repeating, "I know you are going to win." Counting similar forecasts based on Theo's lead, there were 19 such utterances in total. I interpreted these reiterations as reflecting Lucas's major concern was about who would be the champion of the game. Also, he might have been predicting Theo as the winner to save face.

**TABLE 1**

**Envoicing in Playdate with Lucas (Lucas' Discourses on Winning)**

Lucas' Discourses on Winning	Times
You're going to get in front of my mom.	2
He is (He's) winning.	2
He is going to win.	1
But, you're in front of me.	1
I know you are going to win.	5
I know they're going to win.	1
I know he is going to win.	1
You're going to win I think.	1
Actually, I think Theo is going to win.	2
I think Theo is going to win now.	1
Now, YOU are going to win!	1
I think you won.	1
Total	19

### 5.2. Recontextualization

Contextualization cues, including words, gestures, body postures, and other semiotic resources, were examined. Theo's frown in reaction to being told to use English and his questioning why he could not play the game in Korean changed to his uttering "Candy man" in a singing voice, indicating a change of attitude to acceptance of the situation (see Excerpt 1).

### EXCERPT 1

#### Recontextualization in Playdate with Taine (Theo)

Mother: Let's play the Candy game. Theo, where's the other man? Candy man.

**Theo: 영어로 왜 해야지? [Youngeuro wea heayaji?] (Frowning)**

Mother: Candy man.

**Theo: Candy man~ (in singing voice)**

Mother: Where's the candy man.

(Mother is setting up the game and Theo is playing with the candy man. Taine is watching.)

Theo: Why do we have to do it in English?

Compared to Taine, Theo used more body language to express himself (see Excerpt 2). When Theo's mother questioned him in English about the monster, Theo used the words his mother had said to answer. Then when his mother asked for more details, Theo used facial and body expressions. When his verbal proficiency failed with him, Theo used contextualization cues of body language for communication.

### EXCERPT 2

#### Contextualization Cues in Playdate with Taine (Theo)

Mother: Oh, there's a monster there?

Theo: Monster there!

Mother: Monster there?

Theo: Monster... (then open his mouth and crooks his fingers to express monster)

In addition, though Taine was calm and quiet in the beginning of the game, he spoke up as time went by, which was also a case of recontextualization.

As another example of recontextualization, after the first round in the playdate with Lucas, Theo's mother indicated that there would be a prize for the winner. Lucas had much interest in the prize and thus in winning the game. To confer only to his mother, Lucas put his left hand partly over his mouth and whispered to ask whether he could have the prize if his mother won the game. Confirming his mother would share her prize from her facial expressions, Lucas nodded his understanding. Similarly, although the content was different, Theo's use of Korean was not an indication of his lack of English proficiency but a way for him to communicate exclusively with his mother while expressing intimacy with and reliance on her (see Excerpt 3).

### EXCERPT 3

#### Recontextualization in Playdate with Lucas (Lucas)

Theo: My turn.

Lucas: Yours special. Good job. I know you are going to win.

Theo's Mother: Two yellow.  
**Lucas: If you win, (puts his left hand over his mouth to whisper to Lucas's Mother) could I have your prize if you win? (in a softer voice) Could I have the prize if you win?**  
 (after seeing Lucas's Mother's expression, Lucas nods)  
 Theo's Mother: One blue.  
 Lucas: We thought we would get a prize if we win.  
 Theo's Mother: Yeah. We do. We are getting a prize if we win.  
 Lucas: You get a prize.

### 5.3. Interactional Strategies and Entextualization

Entextualization occurred in the boys' playdates dialogues to satisfy the expectation of an audience, Theo's mother, and also fore fronted the speakers' needs through their use of their favored codes (Canagarajah, 2013).

An instance of entextualization occurred when Taine wanted a snack (see Excerpt 4). At first, Taine asked if he could have a '말랑카우 (malangcow), which literally means "soft cow" referring to the tender texture of the chewy milk flavor candy that Taine had brought to previous playdates. When Theo's mother responded that there were no '말랑카우 (malangcow)' available. Taine asked what else he could have. Acknowledging her reply, Taine codeswitched to English to express his desire for cookies.

#### EXCERPT 4

##### Interactional Strategy in Playdate with Taine (Taine)

<p>Taine: 나 말랑카우 하나 먹어도 돼?          [Na malangcow hana muakeudo dwe?]          Theo's Mother: We don't have 말랑카우 [malangcow].          Taine: 다 먹었어? [Da muekeusuea?]          Theo's Mother: It's finished. We don't have any now.          Taine: 그럼 뭐 있어? [Guerom mue issauo?]          Theo's Mother: Cookies? You want this? Or Dream Animals?  <b>Taine: I want that!</b>          Theo's Mother: This one?  <b>Taine: Yeah!</b>          Theo's Mother: Okay.</p>	<p>Taine: Could I have a <i>malangcow</i>?          Theo's Mother: We don't have <i>malangcow</i>.          Taine: Did you eat it all?          Taine: What do you have?</p>
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An instance of interactional strategy was observed when Taine asked for a napkin (see Excerpt 5). The video clip showed that he did not need the napkin that he asked for in a clear and strong voice while glancing at the refrigerator. Rather, Taine words and body posture were interpreted as a contextualization cue of wanting to call attention to his existence. In addition, Taine fluently expressed, "Could you grab me a napkin," a common colloquial request form that contrasted with the formal expression, "May I have a napkin, please?"

Taine's mother said that Taine had begun to prefer English to Korean, saying that he talked like a *gyo-po* (Korean American). Her reference to "gyo-po" meant that Taine's Korean was becoming somewhat awkward compared to his increasingly native-sounding English. Also, I inferred that Taine's colloquial expression reflected the familiarity of having a playdate at Theo's house, where he felt comfortable.

### EXCERPT 5

#### Interactional Strategy in Playdate with Taine (Taine)

Theo: My turn.  
 Theo's Mother: Your turn.  
 Theo: Green.  
**Taine: Could you grab me a napkin?**  
 Theo: Green two.  
 Theo's Mother: You need a napkin? Okay.

To make his requests, Taine spoke in English with a clear and strong voice compared to his other utterances. As words themselves can provoke thoughts and feelings (Kramersch, 2010), changes in Taine's utterances implied subconscious meaning-making. Possibly he was experiencing conflicts of social positioning within the power dynamics (Kramersch, 2010) of the playdate, expressed in his uses of Korean and English. Having been required to speak English, Taine might have felt that he could be more assertive talking in English than in Korean, especially when making requests.

A similar case was observed in Theo's discourse during the playdate with Lucas (see Excerpt 6). Theo asked his mother for more juice in Korean, to which she replied that she would give him more later. He tried to negotiate for more juice by adding "please" to his request, and then he said in English, "I'm juice." instead of "I want juice." Recently, Theo had been frequently miswording "want" as "am." In his effort to get more juice, Theo did his best to answer his mother in English. He also replaced his usual title for her, "umma," with "mommy." Other efforts Theo put into speaking English were tracked with sentences in English he began with "I'm ~." and "I think ~." but was not able to finish. Also, Theo tried his best to answer his mother's questions describing the card he drew (Two! One green.) and telling her the color of her candy man (Blue one.) misunderstanding her "where" as "what." Moreover, Theo exclaimed "Oh, no," an expression that he had not used before.

### EXCERPT 6

#### Interactional Strategy in Playdate with Lucas (Theo)

Theo: 엄마, 주스 더 줘. [Umma, jucae duea juwa.]                      Theo: Mom, give me more juice.  
 Theo's Mother: I little bit later.  
**Theo: Uhh. Juice, please. Juice.**  
 Theo's Mother: (laughs) I little bit later.  
 Lucas's Mother: Good.

**Theo: I'm juice.**  
 Theo's Mother: You're not juice. You're Theo.  
**Theo: Juice, please.**  
 Theo's Mother: A little bit later. It's your turn.  
 (Theo picks a card)  
**Theo's Mother: What do you have? Theo, what's this?**  
**Theo: Two! One green.**  
 Theo's Mother: Okay.

**Theo: Mommy, juice, please.**  
 Theo's Mother: In a little bit.  
**Theo: Mommy.**  
 Lucas: Blue. One what?  
 Theo's Mother: Oh, this one? Let's see. One yellow. I was here. Theo!  
**T: I think...**  
 TM: One, one, only one, you picked two.  
**T: I'm...**  
 TM: What is that?  
 T: Two red! One. Twwwwwwwwo.  
 TM: Lucas!  
 L: One orange again. Orange.  
 TM: But you get to share your prize.  
 L: (nods)  
**T: Oh, no.**

**TM: Wait! Where's my color?**  
**T: Blue one.**

Another example of interactional strategy was observed at the end of the game (see Excerpt 7). Theo claimed that he was within five steps of arriving at the finishing point. His mother asked if it was Theo's turn, to which Lucas answered that it was his turn to play, but Theo insisted in Korean that Lucas already had his move, and he was next. As Lucas had already drawn a card, Theo's mother told Theo to wait till the next turn, Theo stood firm and continued to repeat that it was his turn now, saying in English, "I think my turn." Then Theo's mother let Theo play, and he won the game. As there was no result from telling his mother in Korean that it was his turn to play, Theo spoke in English to confirm with Lucas and Lucas's mother that he had not yet had his turn.

### EXCERPT 7

#### Interactional Strategy in Playdate with Lucas (Theo)

Theo: Oops. 나 거의 다 왔어. [Na guayi da watso.]	Theo: I'm almost there.
Theo's Mother: Lucas, it's your turn.	
Theo: 나 다섯 개만 하면 돼. [Na dasut geaman hameun dae.] My turn.	Theo: I only need five.
Theo's Mother: Two green. One. Two.	
Theo, your turn. Theo, is it...?	
Lucas: My turn, I think.	
Theo's Mother: Okay.	

Theo: 제 했는데... 제가 먼저... [Jea heatnundea... jeaga munjeau...] (pointing to Lucas)  
 Theo's Mother: Then you can do next.  
 Lucas: Is this the right way?  
**Theo: I think my turn.**  
 Theo's Mother: Okay, have your turn.  
 Theo: Two blue.  
 Lucas: Jump on this blue and then... I think you won.  
 Lucas's Mother: Yuppie!  
 Theo: Yeang, yeang, yeang, yeang. Abbibi (making sounds of happiness of winning)  
 Theo's Mother: Wow!

### 5.4. Codemeshing and Codeswitching

Compared to Taine, who was capable of expressing himself in English, Theo was at the starting point of learning English. However, Theo understood that English and Korean were different languages, which allowed for codemeshing and codeswitching. Codemeshing occurred when different languages were used (meshed) in one sentence. Codeswitching occurred when a structure of one language was applied to another language, such as using English grammar when speaking Korean.

Table 2 shows examples of code-meshing. Theo combined Korean and English in “내[nae] turn?” to ask if it was his turn to play. Taine codemeshed when he said, “Castle로[ro] 가는거야[ganunguey]?” and “그래도[guereado] pretend chocolate이잖아[eijana].” His use of “castle” and “pretend chocolate” in Korean language contexts suggested that Taine was more familiar with the English word than the Korean terms.

**TABLE 2**  
**Codemeshing in Playdate with Taine (Theo and Taine)**

	Theo	Taine
내(nae) turn?	‘내(nae)’ is used for ‘my’ Later Theo changes his expression to ‘My turn’	Castle 로 가는거야? (Castlero ganunguey?)  그래도 pretend chocolate 이잖아. (Guereado pretend chocolate eijana.)
		Are we going to the castle?  ‘그래도 (guereado)’ means ‘but’ So, Taine was insisting that it’s still pretend chocolate which is artificial.

Table 3 shows examples of code meshing in the second playdate with Lucas, Theo again codemeshed “내[nae] turn,” this time saying “내[nae] turn도[do] 아니야[anea]?”, asking twice if it was his turn. As four players were playing the board game, the order of taking turns in the game was confusing. Therefore, Theo was checking about his turn. But waiting

was hard for him, and he asked using a negative form, “ $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{-}\text{\textcircled{n}}\text{\textcircled{a}}$ [anea].” Theo’s codemeshing of “ $\text{\textcircled{n}}$ [nae] turn,” once again changed to “my turn” as in the first playdate with Taine. Next, Theo again asked whether it was his turn to draw a card, questioning “ $\text{\textcircled{n}}$  turn  $\text{\textcircled{o}}$   $\text{\textcircled{y}}$   $\text{\textcircled{o}}$  [Nae turn yiyayoo]?”

**TABLE 3**  
**Codemeshing in Playdate with Lucas (Theo)**

	Theo		Theo
	$\text{\textcircled{n}}$ turn $\text{\textcircled{d}}$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}$ - $\text{\textcircled{n}}$ - $\text{\textcircled{a}}$ ?	It’s not even my turn?	T: $\text{\textcircled{n}}$ turn $\text{\textcircled{o}}$ $\text{\textcircled{y}}$ $\text{\textcircled{o}}$ ?
	$\text{\textcircled{n}}$ (nae) turn?		[Nae turn yiyayoo?]
	[Nae turndo anea?]	Negative emotion added due to difficulty waiting for his turn. A detailed translation would be ‘Is it still not my turn?’	

Another kind of codemeshing was observed during the first playdate in Theo’s description of the cards (see Excerpt 8). The transformative feature of codemeshing was that it developed mastery of the dominant code for ordering numbers and colors, which was a form of *entextualization*, adjusting to the modal (Canagarajah, 2013). In real talk, revisions and changes entextualize the purposes of speakers’ performances (Canagarajah, 2013). In English, when combined in phrases, numbers precede colors, which is opposite to the Korean order. For example, “two green” in English is expressed in Korea as “ $\text{\textcircled{c}}$   $\text{\textcircled{r}}$   $\text{\textcircled{d}}$  (Chorok dool),” literally “green two.” Theo however repeatedly stated the color before the number in English until, later in the game, Theo’s mother and Taine both described a card as “two red,” after which Theo also changed to the English order in expressing numbers and colors.

### EXCERPT 8

#### Entextualization in Playdate with Taine

Taine: (shows his card)

Mother: One blue? Over here. Taine?  $\text{\textcircled{t}}$   $\text{\textcircled{a}}$   $\text{\textcircled{o}}$  (Tae-o) your turn.

**Theo: Blue one!**

Mother: One blue. Oh, no. This way. This way.

Okay. Taine, your turn.

Taine & Mother: Two red.

**Theo: Two red.**

$\text{\textcircled{t}}$   $\text{\textcircled{a}}$   $\text{\textcircled{o}}$  (Tae-o) is Theo’s name pronounced in Korean.

In the second playdate, Theo switched the English order of number and color only twice saying, “Blue two.” and “I am green two.” Theo used “I am” in the majority of his English sentences. He understood the need of a verb in sentences, but due to his limited vocabulary, he consistently relied on a form “to be.”



Overall, Theo was resorting to strategies that were suitable for the playdate situation. Although his English ability was limited, he tried to make the most out of what he had as resources. Theo often reverted to speaking Korean because until now his daily conversations had been in Korean.

## 6. THEO'S INTERVIEWS

For Theo, English was a means by which he could take part in the preschool in which he desired to belong. Also, English expedited his ability to play with others. Despite his outgoing character, Theo turned timid when talking about English in his interviews, saying that he found learning English difficult (see Excerpt 9). However, his desire to take part in his preschool activities motivate him to persevere.

### EXCERPT 9

#### Theo's Interview

Interviewer: 영어 배우고 싶지 않아?

**Theo: 배우고 싶어.**

Interviewer: 왜 유치원에서 영어 안 했을까?

**Theo: 나는 영어 말하는 것이 싫어.**

Interviewer: 왜?

**Theo: 나는 어려우니까**

Interviewer: 뭐가 제일 어려워?

**Theo: 나는 펜날 영어를 해... 달력 가지고  
몇일인가 묻는 것이 어려워.**

Interviewer: Don't you want to learn English?

**Theo: I want to learn.**

Interviewer: Why didn't you use English in preschool?

**Theo: I don't like speaking English.**

Interviewer: Why?

**Theo: To me, it's difficult.**

Interviewer: What is the most difficult thing?

**Theo: I do English everyday...asking  
dates with the calendar is difficult.**

Also, in Theo's perspective, having the ability to speak English increased his access to the preschool's playing materials, which otherwise he could not ask for (see Excerpt 10).

### EXCERPT 10

#### Theo's Interview

Interviewer: 영어로 이야기하면 유치원에서 어떤 일이 생겨?

**Theo: 가위가 있어. 그래서 영어 잘하면 가위를 하나씩 줘.**

Interviewer: 영어를 하면 가위를 가질 수 있어?

**Theo: 가위 가질 수 있어.**

Interviewer: 친구들이 가위를 다 가져가면?

Interviewer: What happens when you speak English in preschool?

**Theo: There are scissors.  
If you are good at English, they give you one.**

Interviewer: You can get scissors if you speak English?

**Theo: I can get scissors.**

Interviewer: What if all the friends take all the scissors.

**Theo:** 그냥 나는 다른 걸로 노는 거야.

**Theo:** I just play with other things.

In the second interview, Theo admitted that he felt shy to speak English in front of Lucas who he met for the first time on the day of the playdate (see Excerpt 11).

#### EXCERPT 11

##### Theo's Interview

Interviewer: 왜 루커스랑 게임할 때 한국말을 할까?

Interviewer: Why would you speak Korean playing with Lucas?

**Theo:** 나는 한번 밖에 못해. 미국말. 그 다음에 유치원 가서 많이 할 수 있어.

**Theo:** I can only do it once. American language. Then I can speak a lot at preschool.

Interviewer: 한번 밖에 못하는 것은 무슨 뜻이야?

Interviewer: What do you mean by once?

**Theo:** 나는 쑥스러워서 한번 밖에 못해.

**Theo:** I am shy so I can do it only once.

Theo insisted that since his mother is Korean, he spoke Korean. He confessed the difficulty of speaking English (see Excerpt 12).

#### EXCERPT 12

##### Theo's Interview

Interviewer: 왜 게임할 때 한국말을 할까?

Interviewer: Why would you speak Korean playing games

**Theo:** 엄마가 한국 사람이잖아. 그런데 어떻게 한국말을 안해!

**Theo:** Mom, you are Korean. How can I not speak Korean!

Interviewer: 루카스랑 루카스 엄마는 영어로 게임하는데?

Interviewer: Lucas and his mother was playing in English?

**Theo:** 너무 힘들어서. 아까 조금 피곤하기는 했는데...

**Theo:** It's so hard. I was a little tired earlier...

## 7. CONCLUSION

Translingual practices were observed in the dialogue content of Theo's two playdates, one with Taine, a native Korean speaker and bilingual in English, and one with Lucas, a monolingual English speaker. The norms and values of the boys were reflected in their discourses. Throughout his playdate with Taine, Theo was able to express broad meanings in English and added facial expressions and body motions for detailed descriptions. Both boys learned to negotiate language bodily in the playdate situation (Bourdieu, 1997).

Using English during a playdate was not a common situation for Theo and Taine. But both

boys attended English medium preschools, so, communicating in English was part of their daily lives. Thus, differences in their communication practices occurred as the language of the contact zone changed. Requiring them to use English in the playdate was a way to examine the boys' ways of applying themselves in a novel communicative situation.

Even though he was a monolingual English speaker, Lucas developed a way of speaking exclusively to his mother. With no other way to change his language, Lucas partly covered his mouth and whispered to indicate that he wanted to talk only to her. In this way, Lucas implemented a private translanguaging practice which was comparable to Theo talking to his mother in Korean.

Canagarajah (2013) claimed that language which has changes sites is in "alien territory" (p. 21) and differs according to the place in which it is used. The idea of playing *Candy Land* in English caused the participants in the study to experience an alien situation in which their subconscious strategies were revealed. Interestingly, Theo, Taine and Lucas adapted their translanguaging practices to accommodate the situation in their unique ways. As Canagarajah (2013) argued, the strangeness of the situation motivated them to creatively achieve the necessary communication strategies to proceed in the activity. Even for four-year-old boys, translanguaging practices supported them in exploiting their individual resources to negotiate differences and achieve efficient communication.

Theo's hand metaphor showed his understanding of the stronger language identity of multilingual people while acknowledging that people needed common language to communicate. Theo wanted to know English in order to be included in his preschool group and be able to access the materials that he wanted to use there. In his case, acquiring English opened opportunities for him to gain what he wanted in the group, which was a strong motivating factor.

This research contributes to the area of translanguaging practices in daily life by focusing the language and communication strategies of preschool children in a multilingual situation, thus providing insight into a critical stage of bi- or multi-lingual development. However, some limitations must be acknowledged. Only discourse occurring during the playing of the board game, *Candy Land*, was recorded and analyzed, leaving open the question of whether the full range of discourses during the playdate would have yielded more diverse findings. Also, as the analysis was based mainly on Canagarajah's (2013) negotiating strategies along with encoding, and enmeshing, investigating other multilingual factors might result in different insights. Accordingly, in further research, I plan to examine translanguaging practices in entire playdates involving children at different ages and in diverse situations as well as broader range of extenuating factors.

The pedagogical implication of this study was to provide an instance of how a Korean four-year-old boy overcomes barriers using his way of negotiating strategies while communicating in English. For most people, learning a new language and using it in an

actual situation is not an easy process. As examined from the study, through translanguaging strategies, language was used to broaden ways to communicate. This study applies to all levels of language proficiency, regardless of age as every language user applies language strategies to communicate successfully. I hope this study encourages Korean English learners to step aside from the pressure of having to or wanting to communicate in standardized Western English and look back on their effective negotiating strategies. For successful communication, Korean English learners need to understand their unique language personality (Kramsch, 2010). Then they need to focus on the value that the talk itself has by bringing in their local backgrounds to negotiate for the communication of their preference by applying diverse negotiating strategies (Canagarajah, 2013).

Applicable level: Early childhood

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**APPENDIX**  
Theo's Interview Questions

Interview 1 Questions
1. How do you know the difference of Korean and English? 2. What language do you use? 3. What language do children in preschool use? 4. How are the language they use different? 5. What difficulty do you have learning languages? 6. How is language different at home and preschool?

Interview 2 Questions
1. How was playing with Lucas and Taine different? 2. What language did you use in the playdate and why? 3. How do you feel using different languages? 4. Why did you use Korean during the playdate?