

# **SOCIOLINGUISTICS**

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## **“THE POSITION OF ENGLISH IN BILINGUAL PRESCHOOL EDUCATION. SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES AND LANGUAGES POLICIES”**

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### **Abstract**

The research aims to investigate the communicative abilities of Italian children in a bilingual (English-Italian) preschool, focusing on the benefits of bilingualism in children’s cognitive, social, and cultural growth. After an introduction to the role of bilingual education in early childhood in promoting a child’s life-long love of language and bilingual proficiency, and through the support of some European documents and key studies in the field, the research design is presented. A variety of instruments were used, such as video-recorded class observations, field notes, and observation sheets, semi-structured interviews with L1 and L2 teachers and structured interviews with children, questionnaires for parents, as well as language knowledge tests for children and teachers. Children’s lexicon development was taken into consideration, especially the frequency of use of the English language, thus showing a significant growth of the perceptive and productive lexicon for the investigated age range. This provided

evidence that the children in this study were still at a sensitive age for lexicon acquisition. The linguistic phenomena that, among the preschool children, were practiced the most were: code-switching and code-mixing. This study provided new findings on the early acquisition of the English language in bilingual children with the home language Italian. This language experience usually takes place in five dimensions: the materiality of language and its use, children's perceptions of it, beliefs about self and others in the speech community, and emotional responses to language and language users.

***Keywords:*** *preschool children, bilingualism, English language learning, code-switching, code-mixing.*