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**Family Language Policies and Teaching
Practices in Early Bilingual Education:
A Case Study of a Dual-Language
German/Italian Kindergarten**

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Abstract

As a result of global migration waves, the increasing number of interethnic couples, the general agreement on the benefits of an early contact with different languages and cultures and the growing interest towards the preservation of minority languages, bilingual programs meet now different needs. These can range from the maintenance of the heritage language to the wish for bilingual education by monolingual families in order the child to have an advantage in the future. The effectiveness of bilingual programs is also linked to parents' and teachers' practices and to the support by the surrounding community. Moreover, it has to be noticed that programs which were originally thought for monolingual groups are now attended by individuals who are already bilingual or multilingual when they enter pre-school, which is a new challenge of the 21st century (Schwartz & Palviainen, 2016).

All these aspects were taken into account throughout this study, which aims to investigate parents' choice regarding bilingual education and their practices to pursue additive bilingualism, in interaction with strategies adopted by educators at pre-school in order to engage children with diverse linguistic backgrounds. The support by the surrounding community was taken into account as well. Data were collected among families that decided to enroll their children in a German-Italian kindergarten in Berlin and educators working there.

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Introduction

Many studies concerning immersion and dual language programs have been led in USA and in Canada since the 1960s.

Due to a general agreement on the positive effects of an early exposure to foreign languages, there is now an increasing number of families who opt for this kind of programs because they see bilingual education as a means to promote the child's social, cultural and intellectual development.

Baker and Wright (2017: 427) have defined dual language programs as

“a form of bilingual education that seeks to develop bilingualism, thus enriching a person's cultural, social and personal education”.

Moreover, a new trend can be noticed among some migrants groups, who want now their children to master both the community and the home language and to develop bicultural identities, in contrast with what used to happen in the past, when expatriates wished their children to take on the host society's way of life only in order to better integrate (Balboni, 2000).

Additive bilingualism is therefore no more pursued by upper class parents or academics only (Schwartz & Verschick, 2013).

To date, no study seems to have focused on bilingual education held by Italians in Germany, even if there is a long history of Italian immigration in Germany, which hosts today the second largest Italian community in the world, which has exponentially grown during the last decade.

Italians are the first migrant group by length of stay and, according to Haug (2011), they are well integrated into German society.

The city of Berlin has not been randomly chosen in order this study to take place, but there were two important reasons for this, namely:

- a. the Italian community in Berlin has increased by 73% in the last ten years; main destinations are no more industrialized Länder such as Baden-Württemberg or Nordrhein-Westfalia but the city-state of Berlin. Even if the two previously mentioned regions still host the largest Italian

- b. communities in Germany, the number of Italian migrants has slightly increased from 2006 if compared to what happened in Berlin;
- c. the city-state of Berlin has funded from 1992 the “SESB Staatliche Europa-Schulen Berlin” program, a special educational offer that gives everyone the possibility of accessing to bilingual education programs, regardless of the parents’ income. It involves today 17 Elementary schools and 14 Secondary schools. Students’ parents can choose among 9 different languages, i.e. English, French, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish. 50% of the instruction is provided in German and the remaining 50% in the partner language. It promotes bilingualism, enrichment and encourages cooperation among different levels (Pre-schools, Elementary schools, Secondary schools).

This study focuses on linguistic practices and beliefs of families and educators who aim to foster additive bilingualism in a group of children from 2 to 6 years old attending a bilingual German-Italian pre-school in Berlin. The children taking part to the program during the 2016-2017 school-year were both heritage, L1, L2 and FL learners of Italian. It has also to be taken into account that most of the children were already bilingual when they entered pre-school, which is, according to Schwartz & Palvianen (2016), “a new challenge of the 21st century”. The kindergarten under question included therefore both simultaneous and sequential bilinguals.

The study is based on Schwartz & Palvianen’s (2016) idea that research on preschool education for bilingualism should take into account the individual agencies of children, parents and teachers, and examine their interaction.

Moreover, according to Lo Bianco (2010), few works since now have focused on a deeper understanding of bilingual teachers’ work, their language practices and strategies adopted to develop bilingualism.

Therefore, the following aspects have been questioned:

- A. What are the reasons why parents send their children to a German-Italian preschool?
- B. What are both teachers' and parents' attitudes toward bilingualism and dual language programs?
- C. What are parents' and educators' actual practices regarding language, and their language-related expectations for the children? How supportive is the German-Italian bilingual language environment both at home and at school?
- D. What is the surrounding community attitude toward bilingualism and Italian language?

Data were collected through interviews to teachers and during a three-months long observation period which took place between October and December 2016. Questionnaires to parents were later included as well because, as Fisherman (1991) claims,

“school-based programs alone are insufficient to maintain and develop a native language. Rather, language practice in the home is the most crucial factor in predicting whether a language will be maintained across generations”.

Attitudes toward biliteracy have received particular attention for two main reasons. First of all, we wanted to investigate whether the tendency to interrupt bilingual schooling after pre-school (which has been highlighted by the FMKS) in order not to “overwhelm” children was spread among the families under survey too. Secondly, the study aims to derive whether biliteracy may be seen as an obstacle for the achievement of high proficiency levels in the German language, taking also into account the fact that many studies concerning the educational outcomes of immigrants found out that Italians are one of the immigrants groups that achieve the lowest educational levels (Algan et al., 2010; Bönke & Neidhofer, 2016). This latter study, in particular, suggests that immigrants who speak only German at home

outperform those who communicate using their parents' language or both languages at home, in contrast with Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (1996), which proposes that bilingualism can positively affect academic achievement and cognitive functioning, but only in case the child has reached a threshold level in both L1 and L2/FL.

On the other hand, according to Cummins, subtractive bilingualism is likely to take place if minority language speakers are not taught writing and reading in their L1 too.

In order to better understand the theoretical framework behind this study, Chapter 1 will mainly focus on early development of bilingualism and, in particular, on advantages related to early acquisition of languages and the role of adults in early bilinguals' language development.

Chapter 2 will draw the attention to bilingual education, mainly to strong forms of bilingual education, cognitive advantages related to it and pre-school bilingual programs.

Chapter 3 will briefly concentrate upon Italian immigration to Germany in the last decade, while Chapter 4 will focus on Bilingual Education in Germany in kindergartens and Elementary Schools and, in particular, on the SESB Staatliche Europa-Schulen Berlin program.

In the second part of this work, the case study will be presented. Chapter 5 will concentrate on family language policy. Data concerning language practices, beliefs about language and bilingual education and language management within the home environment will be analyzed and discussed.

Chapter 6 will instead focus on the teachers' point of view. Language practices in order to develop both bilingualism and enrichment, attitudes toward bilingualism and bilingual education and external factors will be here examined.

Finally some conclusions will be drawn.

Part 1:
Theoretical Framework

Chapter 1

The Early Development of Bilingualism

1. Definitions of Bilingualism based on Use and Language Proficiency

Bilingualism has been subject to many studies, especially in the last decades. However, there is not a generally accepted definition of the meaning of “bilingualism” and “multilingualism” because of the multidimensionality and the “open-ended semantics” of this concept (Beardsmore, 1986: 1).

Hamers & Blanc (2000) have recently emphasized the need to distinguish between “societal” and “individual” bilingualism. The first term would refer to the state of a linguistic community in which two codes can be used to interact, while the latter expression denotes the

“psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code” (in various degrees) “as a means of social communication” (2000: 6).

This chapter will mainly focus on the individual dimension of bilingualism and multilingualism. This is the reason why we have chosen to provide, first of all, some of the most frequently quoted interpretations, in order to better understand the debate on the meaning of the words. However, it has to be beared in mind that these distinctions, though useful, are insufficient, and there are cases in which a bilingual can belong to more than one group.

Some researchers have based their definitions on language proficiency, ranging from very restrictive psycholinguistic definitions to less demanding ones.

Bloomfield (1933: 55-56) asserts that

“in...cases...where perfect foreign-language learning is not accompanied by loss of the native language, it results in bilingualism, native-like control of two languages.”

From his point of view high mastery of both native and foreign language is therefore necessary in order to label an individual as “bilingual”. Similarly, Halliday, McKintosh, and Strevens (1970) proposed that a “true bilingual” is someone who can themselves equally with the same fluency in both of their languages and in all domains, without any traces of the other language known while communicating. The previously cited views have also been called “the maximalist view of bilingualism”. Equal mastery of both languages has also been referred to as “balanced bilingualism”, even if, as Baker & Wright (2017: 9) claim, this is:

“[...]mostly used as an idealized concept. Rarely is anyone equally competent in two or more languages across all their domains.”

On the other hand, in case of unbalanced knowledge, the bilingual may be classified as “dominant” in one language or, if they achieve native-like levels neither in L1 nor in L2 and need both to express their thoughts, as “semilingual” (Paradis, 2004).

The following interpretations of bilingualism come instead under the “minimalist view of bilingualism”.

A more recent definition by Valdés, Poza & Brooks (2015: 38) argues that:

“Bilingual/multilingual individuals share one key characteristic: they have more than one language competence. They are able to function (i.e. speak, understand, read or write) even to a very limited degree in more than one language”.

These words recall Haugen’s (1953) ones, according to which whoever can produce meaningful sentences in non-native languages should be considered bilingual.

Butler and Hakuta (2004: 115) focus instead on communication rather than on the level of proficiency, and they define bilinguals as

“...individuals or groups of people who obtain communicative skills, with various degrees of proficiency, in oral and/or written forms, in order to interact with speakers of one or more languages in a given society”.

Some researchers have put the stress on language use. A first proposal was made by Weinreich (1953: 1), who defined bilingualism as “the practice of alternately using two languages”. Recently Grosjean & Li (2012: 4) have drawn the attention to the regularity of use, claiming that:

“bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives”.

Reasons which underlie the decision to learn a language have also been taken into account to classify bilingualism (Saha & Dworkin, 2009). In this case researchers make a distinction between

- elective bilingualism: the learning of the L2 is a voluntary decision, not influenced by the community outside home, and
- circumstantial bilingualism: this is often the result of immigration. The acquisition of the L2 is a necessity in order to be able to express themselves within a specific language community.

2. Distinctions based on the Time of Acquisition

Further definitions based on other factors are frequently cited and used as well. Hoffmann’s (1991) distinction between “early” and “late” bilingualism, focused on the time of acquisition of the languages, is one of the most extensively used. This categorization is strictly connected with the Critical Period Hypothesis, which will be discussed in the following paragraph. Hoffmann talks about “early bilingualism” when exposition to both of languages takes place before adolescence, while late bilinguals are those who get into contact with the L2 after puberty, around at the age of 11/12.

Hoffmann (1991: 19) also adds that

“the infant/child who acquires two languages from the speakers around him/her in an unstructured way can be called a “primary” bilingual or “natural bilingual”, while an “acquired” bilingual or a “secondary” bilingual refers to “the person who becomes bilingual through systematic or structured instruction, that is, undergoing some kind of training”.

This would imply that individuals who are exposed to the language before puberty “acquire” the language, in contrast with what happens during adulthood, when this can only be “learnt”.

A further distinction between “*simultaneous*” and “*sequential*” bilinguals has been made among those who acquire the language before adolescence (De Houwer, 2009). Sequential bilinguals first come into contact with one language and then with the other, while simultaneous bilingualism (also called “infant bilingualism” or “bilingual first language acquisition”) takes place when a child is raised with two (or more) languages together from birth. There are not exact boundaries, even if the age of three is generally used as a marker.

3. Critical Periods for Language Acquisition

The critical period hypothesis was first proposed by Penfield and Roberts (1959) and then developed by Lenneberg in 1967. They claimed that after the early ages of life, which represent a sensitive period within which the effects of environmental stimulation and brain structure and function are maximized, languages can not be acquired at native-like levels.

More recent studies suggest that this temporal window actually consists of “multiple sensitive periods” (Knudsen, 2004), during which brain areas related to language acquisition develop at different times and the brain plasticity progressively decreases.

The more the age of acquisition increases, the more difficult it is to master the L2. This mainly affects phonetic and morphosyntax.

Fig.1 below, derived from Daloiso (2009b: 99), synthesizes the main linguistic features related to the age of acquisition of the language.

Fig. 1: main linguistic features related to the age of acquisition

<i>First period (0-3 years old)</i>	
Linguistic features:	Native-like accent High development of linguistic skills High grammatical competence
<i>Second period (4-8 years old)</i>	
Linguistic features:	Native-like accent High development of linguistic skills High grammatical competence Interferences between the two languages can occur
<i>Third period (more than 9 years old)</i>	
Linguistic features:	Foreign accent Syntactic difficulties Difficulties related to the acquisition of functional words Interlanguage fossilization is more likely to occur

Source: Daloiso, 2009

Ellis (1995) states instead that native-like accent can be acquired only if the child is exposed to languages up to the age of six.

Even if there are not exact age boundaries, it is generally accepted that during the first years of age children excel in “sensory acuity” and, thanks to their ability to perceive and recognize sounds, they can succeed in having a native-like accent.

Young children have been proven of being able to acquire a native-speaker like level with apparently little effort thanks to their higher brain plasticity, their advanced computational abilities and their huge memory capacity. (Daloiso, 2009).

Further investigations on early bilinguals focusing on the storage of different languages in the brain and memory processes will be explained further below. A brief overview of the brain development during the first years will be first provided.

4. Brain Flexibility

In the 1920s and the 1930s most of the studies on bilingualism concluded that it had a negative effect because it risked overloading a child's mental capacity. However, more recent researches have rejected those results, since those studies were based on unreliable research techniques (e.g. children's IQ was often tested in only one language, which was unsuitable).

Studies involving brain waves scanning show that bilingual brains have more "plasticity" or flexibility and are more open to new concepts. (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004).

Throughout lifetime all the brain areas undergo the same stages, namely (Goswani, 2004):

- A. neuronal density rapidly increases and there is an explosion of synapse formations between neurons in the nervous system (also known as exuberant synaptogenesis). This phase is particularly important because if processes are not used or inhibited they will fail to develop normally later on in life
- B. a synaptic reorganization takes place. This process is concerned by both environmental inputs and child's answers to stimuli
- C. neuronal channels are covered by myelin. This results in the completion of the brain development

During the three phases previously described brain plasticity decreases and specific cognitive functions are located within certain regions of the brain.

Brain areas develop at different times: visual and auditory regions develop first, so that a child will show good visual abilities at the age of 3/4 and he

will be able to articulate the language (since the brain regions specialized in the processing of orofacial movements have almost completed their development at that age), but he will show difficulties in planning a talk (higher level thinking is controlled by the frontal lobe, which is a late-developing region of the cortex).

5. Bilinguals' Brain

How different languages are represented in the bilinguals' brain, from the point of view of the storage of information as well as of cognitive processes, is still matter of debate between neurolinguists.

It is today believed that different languages are organized into distinct modules which separately process linguistic, meta-linguistic, pragmatic and emotional dimensions. Every module is split into different sub-systems, each one referring to one of the acquired languages (De Bot, in Kaplan, 2002). Studies on this topic led to thinking that the age of acquisition is crucial in order the sub-systems within the same module to interact directly. These interactions are modulated by the following neuropsychological principles (Daloiso, 2009):

- a. Language mode: every sub-system is activated only if a sufficient number of neural impulses are sent to the brain areas designated to process them. The number of neural impulses necessary to activate a language increases in case this is rarely used. Factors which can speed the process are:
 - the age at which the language is acquired/learnt
 - the frequency the individual is exposed to the L2 and uses it;
 - learner's positive emotional involvement;
 - the accuracy of the linguistic input;
 - the intellectual predisposition;
 - how much time passed after the last activation of the language

b. Direct access: children who acquire languages between birth and the age of 8 have a direct access to the sub-systems where languages are processed (Spivey, Marian, 1999). No translations are needed in order the languages to be processed.

Early bilinguals' lexical and conceptual levels are directly linked, while late bilinguals usually need translation from the L1 in order to link the L2 lexicon to the conceptual level.

5. 1. Storage Systems of Compound, Coordinate and Subordinate Bilinguals

The distinction between “simultaneous” and “sequential” bilinguals is also partially linked with Weinreich's (1953) tripartite discrimination between *compound*, *coordinate* and *subordinate* bilingualism, which is based on bilingual storage systems. Storage of languages in bilinguals' brain is still a much debated topic.

Weinreich theorizes that for a compound bilingual the two languages share information at the conceptual level but they are independent at the lexical level. If both languages are learnt in the same context, as in case of simultaneous bilinguals, the child is more likely to develop a compound system. The learning of an L2 in a cultural context which is different from the one of the L1 acquisition (as it happens in case of consecutive bilinguals) would instead result in a coordinate bilingual memory organization (Hamers & Blanc, 2000), i.e. the two languages would share neither the meaning-based representational system nor the lexical level.

Lambert, Havelka & Crosby (1958) have compared coordinate bilinguals to their compound counterparts and found out that they can:

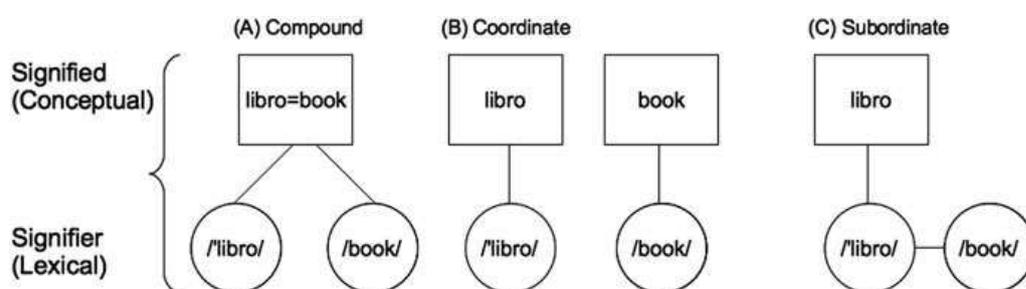
- a. make more semantic distinctions between a word and its translation
- b. have two relatively independent association networks for translation equivalents.

On the other hand, for a subordinate bilingual, the L2 is a translation of the L1 word. The conceptual level is not shared by the two languages but is linked to the L1 only. This architecture normally occurs during the early stages of L2 learning and, since bilingualism is a dynamic process, could develop into a compound bilingual structure.

and Osgood (1954) thus revised Weinreich's typology by distinguishing between coordinate and compound bilingualism only.

In order to better understand Weinreich's distinction, Fig. 2 representing the three storage systems is provided below.

Fig. 2: Three bilingual storage representations



Source: Heredia & Cieřlicka, 2014

According to Heredia & Cieřlicka (2014) “the acquisition or learning context is a crucial determinant of bilingual language organization”. It depends in particular on how much the two languages are close to each other from a cultural and a linguistic point of view and on the difference of the contexts in which they are learnt. Macnamara (1967) suggests that the more distinct the contexts are the more likely it is that the bilingual will develop a coordinate storage system.

However, even in case the L1 is acquired in a monolingual household and the L2 at school, this would not automatically result in a bilingual coordinate representation because the cultural-linguistic proximity of the two languages has to be taken into account as well.

5.2. Memory Processes

Fabbro (2004) distinguishes between two types of long-term human memory, namely:

a. explicit (or declarative) memory: it involves conscious recollection of information and concepts. It can be divided into:

A. episodic memory, which stores past experiences;

B. semantic memory, which refers to general world knowledge.

Explicit memory is the main responsible for the storage of words and their meanings.

b. implicit (or non-declarative) memory: it is used unconsciously and allows us to replicate cognitive and motor processes previously experienced without explicitly thinking about it (e.g. riding a bicycle).

Recent studies have highlighted the fact that children have only implicit memory until the age of 8/10 months. The development of the explicit memory is quite protracted and it reaches full maturity after the age of three.

The implicit memory shows some peculiar characteristics, i.e.:

- know-how is randomly acquired (without explicitly focusing on it);
- what was committed to implicit memory cannot be developed through verbal explanation but only through practical experience (this concerns speaking a language fluently as well);
- what was committed to implicit memory is used without thinking;
- implicit learning is improved for experience.

Since implicit memory prevails in early childhood, different aspects of language are implicitly acquired, especially phonetic, phonological and morphosyntactic aspects.

A form of implicit memory is procedural memory, which is responsible for the acquisition of phonology and syntax and is housed in the subcortical cortex and in other areas which are involved in the somatic and auditory

perception and in the movement (Broca's area, which is responsible for the production of the speech and for grammatical processing).

Broca's area is myelinated between the ages of four and six; during this time frame children learn to put words in the correct order and to make plurals and describe events in the past. Agreement errors often occur in this phase because the connection with the Wernicke's area (which is responsible for the understanding of language and the processing of vocabulary and is myelinated during the first two years) is a slow process which limits the speed of the development of grammatical accuracy.

Neural correlates of implicit memory develop before those which are in charge of the storage of explicit information. Because of this certain structures of the language are previously acquired if compared to the capacity of remembering life events.

Both declarative and non declarative memories are influenced by the emotion experienced during learning. Emotionally neutral events are more likely to be forgotten.

While acquiring a language the child associates procedural memories which are involved in the language acquisition process with unconscious emotional memories, which influence personality traits.

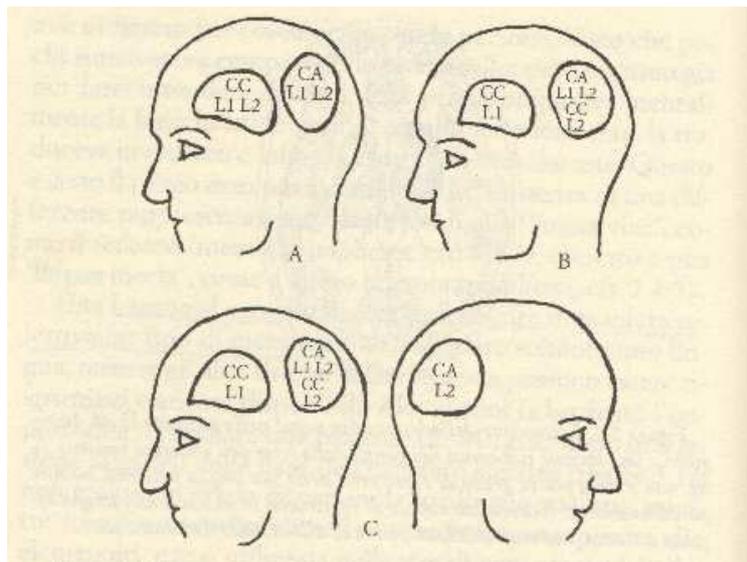
The acquisition of the L1 is mainly influenced by the mother-son relationship. Emotional memories which are linked to the language acquisition/learning differ in relation to the age of acquisition and to the context in which it took place.

Studies on the impact of the age of acquisition and the learning processes on the brain have shown that L1 closed class words (i.e. functional words) are housed in the left frontal lobe, while L1 open class words (or content words) activate a network of brain regions mainly in the posterior portion of the left hemisphere, even if the right hemisphere is stimulated as well.

Fabbro (2004) highlights the fact that if the contact with L2 takes place after the age of 8, L1 and L2 open class words activate the same areas of the brain, but L2 closed class words activate the brain regions in the posterior part, as open class words do. If L2 is acquired before the age of 8, instead, functional words (which are the most important grammatical elements) behave like L1 closed class words, so they are both located in the left frontal lobe.

Figure 3 below shows the brain areas recruited for processing closed and open class words (which will be referred to as “CC” and “CA”, namely) in individuals who acquired the languages before the age of 7 (A), between the age of 7 and 16 (B) and after the age of 16.

Figure 3



Source: Fabbro (2004: 94)

Fabbro (2004: 95; self-translated) states that:

“This means that if a language is acquired after the age of 8 it will be less represented in the procedural memory systems. On the other hand, if a language is acquired before the age of 8, closed class words, the most important grammatical elements, are organized in the same brain regions as L1. [...] The different development of memory structures makes it impossible for L2, if acquired after the “critical period”, to be stored in the

procedural memory system. The way L1 and L2 are organized in different memory systems of the brain will influence the way the two languages will be used all life long. The phonological and grammar skills of L2 will be limited and its use will be less spontaneous.”

During an experiment Wartenburger et al. (2003) used functional magnetic resonance¹ to investigate the influence of the age of acquisition and of proficiency levels on the neural correlates of grammatical and semantic judgments in three Italian-German bilingual groups. The first group was composed by bilinguals who had acquired both languages in early childhood and were highly proficient in L2 (EAHP: Early Acquisition High Proficiency); the second one was formed by bilinguals who had learned German after the age of six but showed high competencies in this language (LAHP: Late Acquisition High Proficiency); the third group consisted of late bilinguals who came into contact with German after the age of 6 and were low proficient in the language (LALP: Late Acquisition Low Proficiency). Results pointed out that subjects who had learnt German after the age of 6 showed greater activation as compared to the EAHP group during grammatical (but not during semantic) processing, even if they were high proficient in that language and the EAHP and the LAHP did not differ in any behavioural performance measurement. In particular, “more extensive activation was found in Broca’s area as well as in other areas” (Wartenburger et al., 2003). Researchers have suggested that:

“This greater activation in L2 despite the highly similar performance might be related to underlying compensatory mechanisms by using additional brain activation”

¹ The functional magnetic resonance (fMRI) has been, together with the PET technique, widely used in the last years to investigate which areas of bilinguals’ brain are involved while performing a task. It is based on the measure of blood flows.

and that the age of acquisition seems to affect the neuronal processing mechanisms of grammatical judgments more than proficiency (Wartenburger et al., 2003).

Further studies have also shown that individuals who are able to master different languages have greater verbal working memory if compared to monolinguals with the same degree of education (Papagno & Vallar, 1995). According to Papagno & Vallar, these results “suggest a close relationship between the capacity of phonological memory and the acquisition of foreign languages.” This helps them carry on cognitive tasks involving comprehension, reasoning and learning.

5.3. Further Advantages of Bilingualism

Many studies have demonstrated that polyglots show higher metalinguistic awareness than monolinguals. Since the age of two children are aware of the fact that communication can take place in more than a linguistic code and that the same object can be labelled in different ways.

Due to the fact that they are aware of language differentiation they are able to choose which language to speak to whom and in which circumstance.

Recent researchers have also shown that bilinguals appear to have an increased communicative sensitivity.

6. The Role of Adults in Early Bilinguals' Language Development

According to Barron-Hauwaert (2004: 25),

“young children are not necessarily “better” language learners but use different strategies by utilizing their in-built cognitive and biological advantages. So an early start could benefit bilingual children and establish patterns for the future.”

She also explains that they take an advantage from the fact that they are more verbally stimulated by older individuals.

Parents' choice of the language to use at home plays a fundamental role for the development of bilingualism in young children.

Interaction with parents and other adults is crucial because, through the observation of older individuals, children learn ways of behaving (also from a linguistic point of view).

Studies in the psycholinguistic field (Kuhl, Andruski et al., 1997) revealed that children acquire languages by:

- mutual contagion: they are able to imitate ways of behaving, even complex ones. Recent studies suggest this may be mediated by mirror neurons. Response to other people's sounds is first unconscious, and then voluntary. Through the imitation of linguistic sounds the child can bear in mind and then control oro facial movements which underlie the production of words;
- vocal accommodation: children tend to make their pronunciation as close as possible to that of their interlocutor.

Schwartz & Verschick (2013) have referred to parents' choices as "family language policy". According to Piller this choice is often made unconsciously, depending on factors such as "the first interaction between the couple, compensation and identity". An overall cost-benefit analysis, parents' attitude to languages, their preferred identity, languages spoken by extended family, friends, siblings, other relatives and caregivers can also play their part on the language choices made by the child, which can vary as the context changes.

According to King & Fogle (2013: 196-197):

"family language policy is not simply the result of parental ideologies and strategies, but rather a dynamic process in which children play an active role of influencing code choice and shaping family language ideologies".

To sum up, parents' decisions are affected by both general and local/specific factors, which influence the use of conscious, subconscious and spontaneous strategies (Lanza & Svendsen 2007).

Due to the importance of parents' choices, early childhood bilingualism has been classified on the base of the language spoken by the parents to the children and to the language of the community (Baker & Wright, 2017; Piller, 2001). These will be deeply discussed in the following paragraph. The one person-one language approach, which resulted being the one mainly used by the families who took part to the survey, will be in-depth discussed at first.

6.1. Types of Early Childhood Bilingualism on the base of Family Language Policies

- *One person-one language approach (OPOL approach)*: each parent uses exclusively his own native language to speak to the child. This is a popular strategy used by mixed couples because it is regarded as the best method to raise children as simultaneous bilinguals.

The French linguist Grammont coined this term at the beginning of the 20th century. In his book "Observation sur le langage des enfants" he claimed that the separation of the two languages at birth would have resulted in the acquisition of both of them by the child. By pursuing this method the learning would take place without effort and avoiding as much as possible confusion or mixing of languages (Grammont, 1902). His theory was first rejected because of the common belief that the contemporary acquisition of two languages could overload the child's brain, so few studies² on the OPOL approach have been done until the 1980s, when the term began being frequently employed, with slight modifications, within linguist circles, books and articles.

It has to be highlighted that the original term "person" has been substituted by the word "parent" in the last years, shifting the attention to parents' influence only (Barron-Hauwert, 2004). The use of the word "person" by

² See, as an example, Ronjat's "Le Developpement du langage: observe chez un enfant bilingue" (1913)

Grammont implied that whoever could assume the role of a linguistic model for the child.

Some examples of this shift in focus are Döpke (1992), who refers to it using the expression “one parent-one language principle”; Romaine (1995), who employs the term “one parent-one language method” instead of “approach”; Hamers & Blanc, who talk about “Grammont’s one parent-one language rule”.

As previously stated, the OPOL approach is today generally viewed as a successful method, but researchers have recently pointed out some weak points of Grammont’s approach.

Hamers and Blanc (2000: 51), for example, claimed that Grammont’s one parent-one language rule “lacks in psycholinguistic proof” and it is “adopted as a proven rule rather than as a hypothesis”. They supported their remark with results collected by two studies which compared families using the OPOL approach to others who did not and found no differences between them (Bain & Yu, 1980; Doyle et al., 1977).

Barron Hauwaert (2004) asserts that this strategy is hard to put into practice because it assumes that both parents interact equally with the child, which is almost impossible.

In her book “Bilingualism”, Romaine describes different types of family on the base of the languages used and defines “Types 1” those consisting of parents who:

“have different native languages with each having some degree of competence in the other’s language. The language of one of the parents is the dominant language of the community. The parents each speak their own language to the child from birth.” (Romaine, 1995: 193).

Romaine adds that, in case one of the languages is a minority and it is used by one parent only, this method results in a linguistic advantage only in terms of comprehension, because the children will be able to understand

both but, on the other hand, they will be more likely to speak only the language of the community where they live.

In order to support the acquisition of the minority language too, Arnberg (1987) and Baker (2000) have suggested that it would be more appropriate for the child to be talked to by both parents in the minority language only. Arnberg (1987: 87) suggests that:

“the best results will be achieved if both parents use the minority-language when addressing one another. In this way hearing spoken language the child’s exposure to the minority language is increased.”

She also points out that this strategy can be difficult to pursue, especially outside the home, when interacting with other people in the community. This family language policy has been labelled by Baker and Wright (2017) as “home language different from the language outside the home”.

- *Home language vs community language*: much variation can be found within this category. The parents may be native speakers of different or of the same language and they can decide to speak both idioms or only one to their child. The main point is that the child is exposed to one or more languages at home, which differ from that spoken outside. In case parents speak different languages to the child, this often results in multilingualism.

Other approaches may be:

- *Mixed language*: the parents speak both languages to the child. This often results in translanguaging with other bilinguals but not with monolinguals. However the child could be asked to separate the two language codes in some domains (e.g. school). Piller (2001: 67) highlights the fact that this strategy is often ignored and suggests this could be due to the fact that “it is often associated with lower-status speakers”.
- *Delayed introduction of the 2nd language*: in case the language spoken outside has a higher status compared to the one spoken at home, parents may delay exposure to that dominant language in order the child to have a

strong basis in the heritage language before being exposed to that of the community. This is, according to Piller, the least documented method, probably because it does not take into consideration the critical period in language learning.

Piller (2001) advances the idea that the “one parent-one language” and the “home language vs community language” approaches are more positively evaluated than the last two strategies mentioned because “elite bilinguals” (children of middle-class international couples, academics, expatriates...), who are usually the focus of research, are raised using the first two strategies.

As can be seen, the OPOL approach is still viewed, despite the previously cited remarks, as the most successful route to raise children bilingually. It has to be underlined, however, that the context in which the child grows up plays a fundamental role as well.

Döpke (1992) stresses that two main factors in order the children to achieve a balanced mastery of both languages are parents’ and children’s “consistent adherence” to one-parent - one language approach.

She shows as an example the case of Fiona, the daughter of a German-Australian couple living in Melbourne, focusing on the fact that the acquisition of German was supported also by the frequent visits of German-speaking relatives and friends, as well as reading German books, listening to German music and organized trips to Austria.

Döpke (1992: 190) concludes that:

“the children acquired the minority language in those families where the interaction with the minority language-speaking parent was a generally rewarding experience for them. Where, however, the interaction with the majority language-speaking parent proved to be more enjoyable for them that with the minority language-speaking parent the children were not interested in using the minority language actively.”

The strict adherence to the OPOL approach is therefore more likely to result into productive bilingualism if it is supported by positive and enjoyable experiences.

However, the maintenance of the heritage language may be obstructed by political contexts which ostracize minority languages.

7. Summary

As stated at the beginning of the chapter, the definition of the term “bilingualism” is not easy task. For the purposes of this work the chapter mainly focused on distinctions based on the time of acquisition of languages.

An early approach to foreign languages is today considered as the best way to facilitate the learning of them, especially thanks to the higher neurological capacity that children have during the first years of their life.

Studies have shown that people who are exposed to more languages during the first years of their life can achieve native-like accent, do not need translations in order languages to be processed and seem to have higher metalinguistic awareness if compared to monolinguals.

The manage of languages seems to be easier also thanks to the fact that phonology and syntax are handled by procedural memory systems if acquisition takes place before the age of 8, resulting being a more spontaneous procedure. Furthermore, polyglots seem to have greater verbal memory capacity than monolinguals.

This sensitive period within which the effects of environmental stimulation and brain structure and function are maximized must be supported by interaction with adults because children mainly acquire language through vocal accommodation and mutual contagion.

For this reason, family language planning plays a crucial role for the acquisition of languages. The OPOL approach is, despite some critics, the most used today and it is also considered the most successful. It must,

however, be supported by positive and enjoyable experiences and by political contexts favorable to minority languages.

Chapter 2

Bilingual Education

1. What is “Bilingual Education”?

A widely quoted definition of bilingual education is provided by Lotherington (2004: 706), who claims that it is

“education in which two languages are used instructionally”.

“Bilingual education” is actually an umbrella term which includes a variety of different educational models in which two languages are used through the school curriculum. The main differences depend on the purposes bilingual education is pursued for. The ultimate goals which underlie the choice of a model rather than another affect the times of language instruction, the place students’ mother tongue has in the curriculum, the attention towards cultural aspects of the language.

Taking this into account, García (1996) distinguishes between *additive* and *subtractive* bilingualism. The first term refers to those situations in which a second language is added without replacing the student’s mother tongue. Subtractive bilingualism, on the other hand, typically occurs in assimilationist contexts when individuals lose their own language and culture to take on the host society’s way of life, as a result either of school programs or societal pressures or individual choices. Additive programs have been referred to as “strong”, while subtractive have also been labelled as “weak” (Baker & Wright, 2017). Strong bilingual programs aspire not only to bilingualism and biliteracy, but also to enrichment education, which has been defined by Baker & Wright (2017: 427) as:

“a form of bilingual education that seeks to develop bilingualism, thus enriching a person’s cultural, social and personal education.”

In the next paragraph, weak and strong forms of bilingual education will be described. A brief mention to monolingual educational programs in which

bilingual students may be enrolled will also be given. Immersion and dual language programs will be further discussed, together with the advantages of bilingual education. At the end of the chapter some relevant aspects of bilingual programs in pre-schools will be treated.

Since the terms “L1”, “L2”, “foreign language” (FL) and “heritage language” (also called “ethnic language”) will often occur throughout the chapter, definitions of these expressions, derived from Balboni (2008), will be here provided.

- A. L1: this term refers to the individual’s mother tongue. It is the language with which the child is raised, the one he/she speaks and hears in the familiar context.
- B. L2/FL: the difference between the two expressions concerns the context in which languages are learnt. L2 is present in the context surrounding the learner, which typically occurs, for example, in case of migration. In this case, the L1 of the child is referred to as “minority language” and the language of the society as “majority language” by Wright & Baker (2017). Generally speaking, majority language is the official language of a country and it is commonly spoken by most part of the people of a territory, while minority languages are used by a minority of the population. FL, on the other hand, is not present outside the educational context and the teacher is, therefore, the primary source of content.
- C. Heritage language: it is the language present in the linguistic background of an individual for being the language spoken by a parent or by the migrant community they are part of, even if they have not acquired it as L1. It can be regarded as an “ancestral”, home or native language.

2. Types of Bilingual Education

Figure 1, derived from Baker & Wright (2017: 199), synthesizes monolingual, weak and strong forms of education for bilinguals.

Fig. 1

MONOLINGUAL FORMS OF EDUCATION				
<i>Type of Program</i>	<i>Typical Type of Child</i>	<i>Language of the Classroom</i>	<i>Societal and Educational Aim</i>	<i>Aim in Language Outcome</i>
MAINSTREAMING/ SUBMERSION	Language Minority	Majority Language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
MAINSTREAMING/ SUBMERSION with Pull-Out Majority Language Instruction Support	Language Minority	Majority Language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
SHELTERED (STRUCTURED) IMMERSION	Language Minority	Majority Language	Assimilation	Monolingualism
SEGREGATIONIST	Language Minority	Minority Language (forced)	Apartheid	Monolingualism
WEAK FORMS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION				
<i>Type of Program</i>	<i>Typical Type of Child</i>	<i>Language of the Classroom</i>	<i>Societal and Educational Aim</i>	<i>Aim in Language Outcome</i>
TRANSITIONAL	Language Minority	Moves from Minority to Majority Language	Assimilation/ Subtractive	Relative Monolingualism
MAINSTREAMING with Foreign Language Teaching	Language Majority	Majority Language with L2/FL lessons	Limited Enrichment	Limited Bilingualism
SEPARATIST	Language Minority	Minority Language (out of choice)	Detachment/ Autonomy	Limited Bilingualism
STRONG FORMS OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION				

<i>Type of Program</i>	<i>Typical Type of Child</i>	<i>Language of the Classroom</i>	<i>Societal and Educational Aim</i>	<i>Aim in Language Outcome</i>
IMMERSION	Language Majority	Bilingual with initial emphasis on L2	Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism & Biliteracy
MAINTENANCE/ HERITAGE LANGUAGE	Language Minority	Bilingual with emphasis on L1	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism & Biliteracy
TWO WAY/DUAL LANGUAGE	Mixed language Minority and Majority	Minority and Majority	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism & Biliteracy
MAINSTREAM BILINGUAL	Language Majority	Two Majority Languages	Maintenance, Biliteracy and Enrichment	Bilingualism

Source: Baker & Wright, 2017

2.1. Monolingual Forms of Education

As can be seen in the Figure 1 above, both “*submersion*” and “*submersion with pull-out majority language instruction support*” and “*structured immersion*” programs are devoted to language minority students in order them to acquire the majority language, which is the only means of teaching at school.

The main difference is that, while students who experience submersion (also known as “sink or swim”) are simply put into mainstream classes without being supported by any forms of assistance, the other two previously mentioned programs include further instruction in the L2.

In “*submersion with pull-out majority language instruction support*” programs this is provided through “*extra-classes*”, which last until students achieve an adequate level in L2.

Students who undergo a “structured immersion” program attend instead majority language classes before being enrolled in mainstream monolingual ones. In both cases, the aim is the students to acquire the L2 as soon as possible, therefore little consideration is given to the quality of the education and to their mother tongue (García, 1996).

Segregationist programs (which are quite rare nowadays) distinguish themselves from the previous ones for the fact that minority language students are instructed in their mother tongue in order to exclude them from the majority language society around.

2.2. Weak forms of Bilingual Education

As can be seen from Figure 1 above, Baker & Wright (2017) identify three main weak forms of bilingual education, namely:

1. *Transitional*: minority language students progressively shift from monolingual teaching given in their mother tongue to bilingual education provided both in L1 and L2. Once bilinguals, the majority language becomes the only vehicle for instruction. At the beginning majority language is taught as an L2, usually by the same bilingual teacher (García, 1996).
2. *Mainstreaming with foreign language teaching*: in this case, the program is addressed to majority language students who are taught a foreign language by a language teacher for around half an hour per day. Baker & Wright (2017) pinpoint that this program can result in both low and high language proficiency. For example, it has been found among the Canadians that English background students are usually not fluent enough to talk French to their French speaking fellows even after 12 years of French teaching through this program. On the other hand, Scandinavian and Slovenian usually manage to reach high levels of proficiency in

English. According to them, the language outcomes are strictly linked to personal motivation and to the status of the language target of learning.

3. *Separatist*: the curriculum takes place in the minority language only. This is deliberately chosen by minority language groups who decide to promote monolingualism in order to protect their own culture. This kind of programs are quite rare.

2.3. Strong Forms of Bilingual Education

Bilingual education programs which led to bilingualism and biliteracy have been referred to as “strong”. Among these, *immersion* programs have received great attention in the last years and they are generally viewed as successful thanks to the satisfactory results of the experimental projects in Québec, which started in 1965.

In addition to immersion, *maintenance/heritage language*, *two way/dual language* and *mainstream bilingual* programs will be closely discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1. Immersion Bilingual Education

Immersion is often used as an umbrella term which includes different ways through which bilingualism can be sought.

Potowski (2007: 1) claims that

“language immersion is thought to be the most successful of several programs types that teach languages”.

Artigal (1996) distinguish four variables on the base of which immersion programs can be classified, namely:

1. *Age at which the FL is introduced* as a vehicle of instruction. Programs can therefore be divided into:
 - *early immersion*: the FL is used since the beginning of education, usually since pre-school;

- *middle (or delayed) immersion*: education is first provided in L1 and FL is introduced later, usually with students aged from 8 to 11;
 - *late immersion*: instruction in FL starts when children are older than 12
2. *Amount of time of instruction in FL*. On the base of this, a further distinction has been made between:
- *total immersion*; the FL is the only means of instruction and interaction at the beginning. After two or three years it is reduced to 80% and it is kept at this rate for the next three or four years, then the amount of time spent using the L2 is cut down to 50%;
 - *partial immersion*; about 50% of instruction is provided in the FL throughout all the schooling period.
3. *Whether the language learnt is present in the extra-scholar context or not*; in this case we can distinguish between:
- immersion in a *language which can be found in the social context* (such as Catalan immersion programs in Catalonia);
 - immersion which takes place in a *foreign language*;
4. *The percentage of FL native speakers in the class*; taking this variable into account, Artigal (1996) identifies three categories, namely:
- “*Canadian model*”: none of the students has the FL as his mother tongue;
 - “*Catalan model*”: the percentage of students who have FL as their mother tongue can range from 1% to 30%.

She also mentions the “dual” (or two way) program, categorizing it as a type of Immersion Bilingual Education. García (2011) and Baker & Wright (2017) look instead at dual language education as separate from immersion programs because of the different linguistic backgrounds of the students, who equally belong to two different linguistic groups. This form of bilingual education will be deeply examined in the following paragraph.

2.3.2. Dual Language Bilingual Education

According to Collier & Thomas (2004), dual language programs can be divided into:

- *one-way*: these school programs are attended by students who share the same heritage language, even if they are not equally proficient in it. They cite as an example schools which enroll Hispanic-American students with diverse English and Spanish linguistic levels;
- *two-way*: both majority and minority language students are integrated in bilingual classes, so children with different backgrounds are schooled together through the two languages. A language balance of students of about 50%-50% is attempted but, in case of imbalance, it is preferable minority language students to exceed in order to avoid the shift to the higher status language, which is likely to occur in such cases. (Baker & Wright, 2017). The two languages are taught separately by alternating either days or half days or teachers.

Torres-Guzmán (2007: 52) pinpoints the goals which underlie dual language programs, which are, namely: 1) “academic achievement in both the majority and the minority language, 2) development of bilingual/biliterate skills, 3) positive cross-cultural attitudes”.

It has to be noted that dual language programs represent for some students and their families a way to keep the heritage language and culture alive. In order to prevent linguistic loss in minority language students and loss of interest from majority language children, it is therefore necessary to implicitly convey the idea that minority language is to be treasured and to increase cultural awareness.

In order the program to be successful, high involvement by parents, pedagogical equity, active teachers’ participation are also required (Alanís & Rodríguez, 2008).

Torres-Guzmán also explains the fact that dual language programs have developed practices which take into account both linguistic, pedagogical and sociocultural aspects. Figure 2 below recaps the main features pinpointed by Torres-Guzmán (2007: 52).

Figure 2

LINGUISTIC FEATURES	PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES	SOCIOCULTURAL FEATURES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict language separation • Equality in language distribution • Avoidance of simultaneous translation • Language taught through content • Whole-language instruction • Goals of bilingualism and biliteracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation of cultural diversity • Culturally relevant teaching • Mix of language minority with mainstream students • Cooperative group learning structure • Parental Involvement • School/Community Support Structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic achievement for all the children • Developmental level team teaching structures • Thematic organization of units of study • Teachers as monolingual models

2.3.3. Maintenance/Heritage Language Bilingual Education

This form of bilingual education differs from the dual language one for the type of children who attend this program, who are usually minority language speakers only. The attempt is to make children bilingual and biliterate, even if more concern is given to the preservation of the ethnic language and culture.

2.3.4. Mainstream Bilingual Education

This kind of program occurs in contexts where the population is already bilingual or multilingual. An example is the trilingual education in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg or the bilingual one in Singapore.

This is also a form of enrichment bilingual education which aims at raising bilingual and biliterate children.

3. Effects of Bilingual Education on Cognitive Skills

According to Caldas (2006: 12):

“while the belief that monolingualism is somehow preferable to bilingualism may seem narrow, quaint and outmoded, the belief that bilingualism hinders academic achievement seems to be more widespread”.

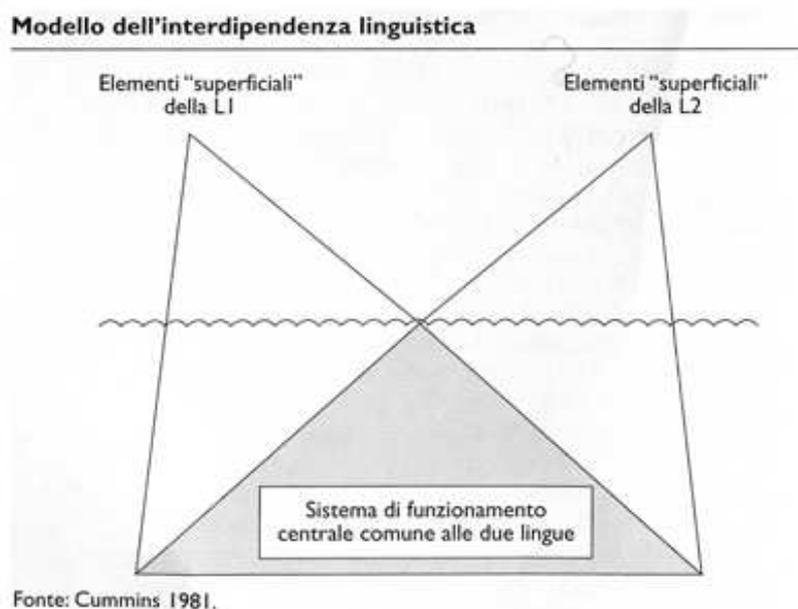
This occurs despite several findings have shown that balanced bilingualism can positively affect both the linguistic and the cognitive development of the child (Cummins, 1996).

Studies on this topic started during the ‘70s and showed that both majority and minority language children enrolled in bilingual programs which promoted additive bilingualism were likely to acquire a second language without the development of their L1 being compromised.

On the other hand, minority language students who did not have the possibility of being schooled in their mother tongue resulted losing their L1 competencies, which were replaced by the majority language ones.

Basing on these results, Cummins (1996) developed the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, according to which skills acquired in one language can be transferred to the other. Figure 3 below illustrates Cummins’ Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis.

Figure 3



It has to be noticed that not only effective educational programs are necessary in order cognitive skills to be transferred from a language to another, but constant exposition to the FL/L2 (either at school or outside school) and motivation to learn are essential so that this process takes place. According to Cummins (1996) the transfer is more likely to occur from the minority to the majority language thanks to the higher exposure to the L2 outside school and to social reasons which underlie the learning.

Proficiencies can be shared across languages and bilingualism can positively influence cognitive functioning only in case the child has reached a threshold level in both L1 and L2/FL.

Ricciardelli's study (1992), concerning the influence of bilingualism on Italian-English bilinguals' cognitive skills, seems to confirm the consistency of the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis. Data showed an overlap between standard cognitive results obtained in the two languages. This led to the conclusion that instruction in one language results in a development of

school skills which involve both languages. This excellence was found in those bilinguals who had acquired high level competencies in both English and Italian.

The idea that bilingualism can positively affect academic achievement has been supported by Lindholm-Leary (2012: 257-258) also. She emphasizes the fact that recent studies³ carried out in the USA among Spanish and English students attending both 90:10 and 50:50 dual language programs have shown that:

- A. “they perform at or above grade level on standardized reading and mathematic tests in English;
- B. they score similar to their statewide peers by about grade 5-7;
- C. non-native English speakers could close the achievement gap with native speakers students in English-only classrooms by about fifth grade;
- D. they achieve at or above grade level in reading (and math) tests measured in the partner language”.

Lindholm-Leary claims that students attending dual language programs outperform or perform as their peers attending monolingual schools at the secondary level as well, and, in particular, they are “less likely to drop out of school” (Collier & Thomas, 2004) and “more likely to pass the high school exit exam” (Lindholm-Leary, 2012).

Besides this, both non-native and native English speakers develop high levels of proficiency in both languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2012).

It has to be highlighted that the previously cited studies mainly involved economically disadvantaged Spanish students, showing that also those populations identified as at risk for academic difficulty can benefit from dual language programs.

³ See Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010

A study led by Balkan (1970) on French-English bilinguals showed that early bilinguals outperformed their late bilingual and monolingual peers on tests of numerical aptitude, verbal flexibility and general reasoning.

Titone (2000) claims that monolinguals score better than bilinguals on vocabulary size tests at early ages, but generally bilinguals succeed in covering the gap when they grow up.

Researchers are still questioning about the reasons which underlie bilinguals' enhanced cognitive functioning. Bialystock (2001) suggests that this may be related to their extensive practice of inhibiting one language, which may lead to a development of those brain regions which are involved in executive functioning, inhibition and control processes.

4. Bilingual Education in the Early Years

Interest towards early years' bilingual education programs by both parents and researchers has been growing during the last years.

According to Beacco et al. (2010: 45):

“As spaces for discovery and socialisation, pre-primary schools represent a basic stage in plurilingual and intercultural education, particularly for children from underprivileged and migrant backgrounds [...]”.

The authors of the “Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education” (2010: 44) have suggested that pre-schools could be the ideal setting for both children and teachers to experience “linguistic and cultural diversity and plurality”, thus including getting into contact with foreign languages, dialects, lifestyles of different cultures and reflecting “on languages, human communication and cultural identity, which are within children's reach”.

As stated above, children who attend “strong” bilingual education programs are more likely to experience linguistic and cultural plurality. Due to the general agreement on the positive effects of an early exposure to foreign

languages, there is now an increasing number of families who opt for this kind of programs because they see bilingual education as a means to promote the child's social, cultural and intellectual development.

Recent studies on bilingual pre-schools have shown that the success of these educational programs depend on many different factors, such as community support, parents' involvement, effective teaching practices. Even if all these aspects are important for student success at school in monolingual contexts as well, they play a crucial role in bilingual programs in order to convey the idea that the L2/FL learnt is of value, especially if a minority language is the object of learning. These themes will be further discussed in the next paragraphs.

4.1. Pre-school Bilingual Programs: New Challenges

Bilingual pre-schools meet today many different needs. Parents' decision to enroll their child in a bilingual program may be due to language maintenance purposes or mainly to the belief that early exposure can result in an advantage for the child in the future.

Bilingual pre-schooling programs aim at exposing children between two and six years to two languages. Children may be enrolled in monolingual early immersion models, which usually involve majority language speakers who want to acquire a foreign language. Dual language programs are instead usually attended by in whole or in part native speakers of one language who want to learn the language spoken by the surrounding community without losing their L1.

Whatever are the reasons on the basis,

“what parents may share is the common belief that young children “pick up” or absorb languages effortlessly, even though the research evidence points to advantages from starting young for acquiring a native-like accent in the L2, rather than for speed of acquisition per se” (Hickey & Mejía, 2014: 132)”.

Schwartz & Palvianen (2016) highlight the fact that global migration processes and the increasing number of multi-ethnic families are changing the shape of children attending bilingual programs, which were originally addressed to monolingual groups but they have to meet today the needs of more and more multilingual individuals. This is the case of an Arabic-Hebrew preschool in Israel, where a dual-language program was adopted at the moment of foundation in order to include children with either an Arabic or a Hebrew background. This is now mainly attended by the bilingual children of mixed couples (Schwartz, 2016). A similar situation has been highlighted by Palvianen et al. (2013) in a Finnish-Russian kindergarten in Finland. The Finnish population has undergone deep changes as a result of the migration waves from the former Soviet Union and this is reflected in the groups of children attending the pre-school, namely L1 Finnish speakers, L1 Russian speakers and Finnish-Russian bilinguals. As a consequence of this, teachers have adjusted their linguistic practices.

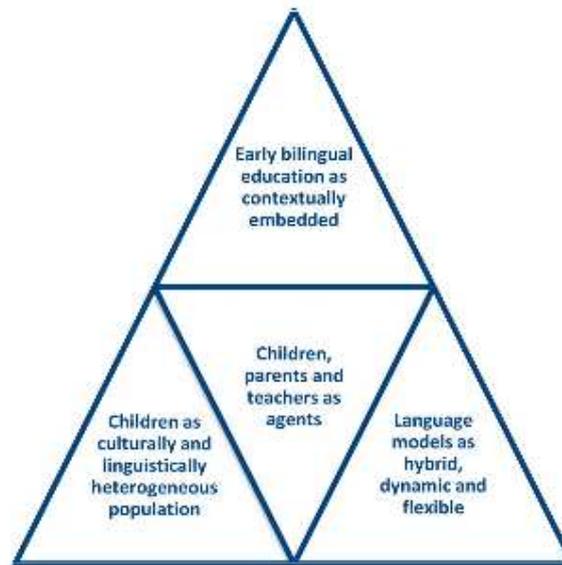
According to Schwartz & Palviainen (2016: 607) the presence of more and more multilingual children :

“is a typical feature of 21st century that has added another challenge but also richness to the complexity of bilingual pre-school education.”

Epstein (2011) has recently reiterated the idea that the success of education involves not only the school dimension, but families and the surrounding community as well. We have seen that this idea was shared also by Torres-Guzmán with reference to dual language programs.

On the base of the observations made by Epstein and other scholars, Schwartz & Palviainen (2016) developed a framework for research on 21st century preschool education for bilingualism, which is drawn in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4



Source: Schwartz & Palviainen (2016: 611)

As previously remarked, the role of parents is crucial in order the child to acquire the FL/L2, especially at early ages, when parents' influence is more likely to affect children's behaviour (and language usage as well) than during adolescence (Caldas, 2006). The involvement is strictly linked to beliefs regarding the maintenance of the heritage language and the community's view of bilingualism and minority languages.

4.2 Teaching Practices in Bilingual Pre-Schools

Maserkopf (2015) highlights the fact that parents tend to see pre-schools as a less demanding environment if compared to primary or secondary school, and they are, therefore, more inclined to choose bilingual education at early ages than after.

This is partially linked to the apparent ease of the underlying approach adopted in pre-schools, which is generally "play-based" and "child-centered" and focused on the development of communicative skills, in accordance with

the communicative approach. Fabbro (2004) mentions some activities to foster foreign language acquisition in young children, namely:

- role plays
- imitation games
- use of nursery rhymes
- hand puppet play
- storytelling
- use of audiovisual equipment

There are, however, also contexts in which a formal approach is mainly adopted, such as in Singapore, where education in pre-schools is much concerned on academic English and formal skills (Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2016).

Titone (2000) emphasizes the importance of a global view of the child's development when making pedagogical and educational decisions in the pre-school environment. He asserts that educational policies focusing only on the development of cognitive and linguistic skills would determine an unbalanced growth of the child. The child must therefore be encouraged to develop motor-perceptive and socioemotional skills as well as cognitive and linguistic ones. This is the reason why it is not enough for teachers working in a bilingual kindergarten to be a good linguist, they have to be good pedagogists as well (Meyer, 2000).

According to Lo Bianco (2010), few works since now have focused on a deeper understanding of bilingual teachers' work, their language practices and strategies adopted in order to develop bilingualism.

Schwartz & Palviainen (2016: 609) assert that:

“regardless of the socio-cultural context, it was found that the manifestation of language teacher's agency in the preschool setting was apparently in some cases unplanned and to a great extent pragmatically and contextually driven by the children's immediate needs”.

They argue that further data on teaching practices in bilingual contexts are required in order to better understand the distinctive characteristics of this educational environment and implement language models. Teachers' role is paramount in order to encourage cooperative learning and create stimulating and engaging activities.

Even if some features (i.e. ways of thinking and working) are shared between educators who are employed in different environments,

“research on preschool education for bilingualism should thus take into account the individual agencies of children, parents and teachers, and examine their interaction. Preschool education should also be seen as embedded in a certain sociolinguistic, educational and sociopolitical context. Additionally, the language models and practices applied in classrooms are typically not static but dynamic, re-negotiable and complex, and they should be examined as such.” (Schwartz & Palviainen, 2016: 610).

5. Summary

The chapter focused on different types of education for bilinguals. Much attention has been given to strong forms of bilingual education, which aim at bilingualism, biliteracy and enrichment.

As claimed before, full immersion is the most widespread model, also thanks to good results achieved in Canada, where this kind of programs started in the 1960s. There is not, however, a “best” model to reach bilingualism, since the success of it is strictly linked to sociolinguistic, educational and sociopolitical contexts as well. This is particularly true in the case of dual immersion programs which seek the maintenance of a minority language.

In the last part of the chapter pre-school bilingual programs have been discussed.

It is clear that both the role of teachers, families, children and surrounding contexts have to be taken into account when analyzing a bilingual program.

Moreover, researchers have highlighted the fact that the global migration waves, the increasing number of interethnic couples and the growing interest towards bilingualism are changing the linguistic groups attending bilingual programs. Schwartz & Palviainen (2016) call for new data on teaching practices in bilingual contexts in order to better understand the distinctive characteristics of this educational environment and implement new teaching strategies so as to pursue bilingualism. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, these aspects must be supported by a deep analysis on the role of parents and community as well.

Chapter 3

Italian Immigration to Germany

1. A Brief Historical Excursus on Italian Immigration to Germany

There is a long history of Italian immigration to Germany. According to Verwiebe (2011: 9)

“More than other national groups, Italy exemplifies the tradition of classical intra-European labour migration and, despite a return migration in recent years, Italians still constitute one of the largest migrant communities in Germany”.

Economic reasons were the dominant motives for labour migration in the past and still are today, even if there are some differences between immigration then and now.

If we focus on the movements from the end of the 19th century to this day, we can distinguish between two main immigration waves (Gjergji, 2015).

The first one dates back to post-United Italy (1870) and lasts until 1920. As a consequence of the social, political and economic instability which followed the Italian Unification, million people moved to other countries of what is today called Europe (mainly France, Germany, Switzerland) and to Argentina, Brazil and USA. It is estimated that more than 15 million Italians expatriated in that period. According to Gjergji (2015) this first migration wave was circular, meaning that migrant workers usually moved repetitively between home and host areas. This does not concern those who expatriated to South America in order to buy a piece of land and start there a new life.

During the period between the two world wars a drop in the numbers of emigrants can be noted. This was basically due to the adoption of restrictive policies by USA after 1924 (Immigration Act) and by the Fascist regime and to the Great Depression which followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929. In this

period as well, however, France and Germany were among the main destinations chosen by Italian immigrants.

The second migration wave dates back to the end of the World War II and lasted until the beginning of the '70s. 7 million Italians migrated to those countries which were undergoing rapid industrial growth, such as Switzerland, Belgium and, still, Germany and France. Many people moved to Venezuela, Uruguay, Canada and Australia as well.

Germany was one of the preferred destinations also because Italy was the first country signing a bilateral guest worker recruitment agreement with the FRG in 1955. This lasted until 1973, when German politics made clear that

“guest workers were not welcomed as prospective citizens and they were expected to return to their country of origin” (Bönke, Neidhöfer, 2016: 3).

However, this did not actually happen; many workers became a permanent part of German society, resulting that the FRG hosts today the second largest Italian community in the world (Pugliese, 2015).

From '70s to 2005 a trend reversal can be noticed: Italy developed in an immigrant country, even if a smaller part of population kept on relocating, especially to Northern Europe.

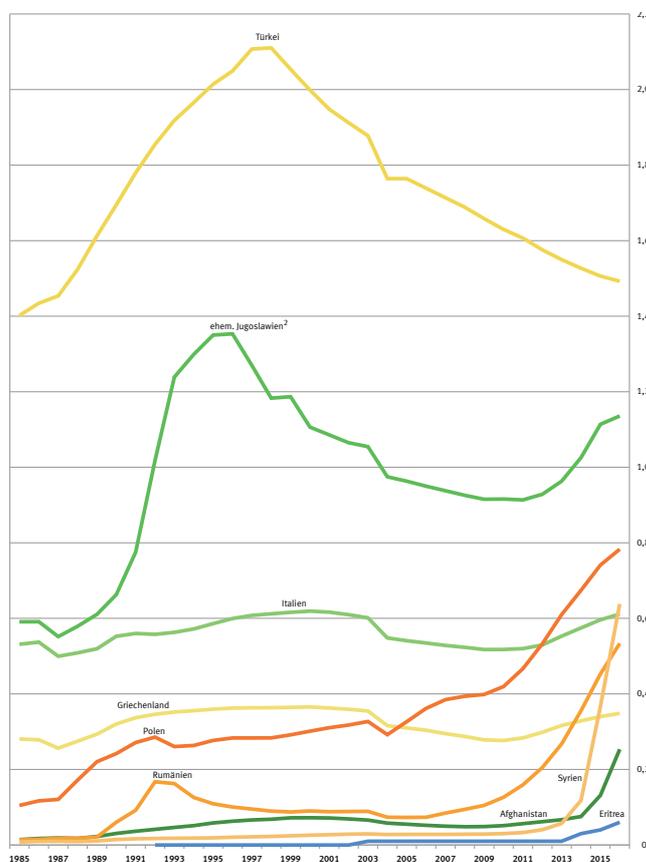
Rodolfo Ricci, during a conference on the themes “Migration, crisis, employment”, which took place in Rome on April 12th, 2016, claimed that the financial crisis resulted in a new turnaround from 2005-2015 in Italy, where immigration flows began to decline and emigration flows raised. According to the data released by ISTAT on 6th December, 2016, in 2015 there was a 8% increase of the number of Italian expatriates compared with 2014. The main destinations were Great Britain (17,1%), Germany (16,9%), Switzerland (11,2%) and France (10,6%). Gjergji (2015) suggests we are undergoing a third migration flow, which shows similar features to the two previous ones, namely:

- push factors (the exodus is mainly due to unemployment, growing impoverishment and inequality)
- main destinations (Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, France, USA, Argentina, Brazil and Australia are still the countries where most of the Italians decide to move)
- protagonists of the migration processes: younger generations as well as older ones are involved (even if the latter group moves to a lesser extent). The main difference is the higher level of education of today's emigrants (Istat, Annual report 2015).

Taking this into account, data concerning emigration to Germany from 2006-2016 will be discussed more in detail in the following paragraph.

1.1. Italian Immigration to Germany 2006-2016

Figure 1: Foreign population in Germany by citizenship



Source: Ausländerzentralregister

From Figure 1, showing the provenience of the largest migration groups to Germany from 1985 - 2015, it is possible to notice that the number of Italians (as well as that of other European and non European citizens) who decide to move to the Federal Republic of Germany has been steadily growing over the

last years, especially from 2009 to 2016. Haug (2015: 84) claims that this is mainly due to the fact that

“Germany labour market relatively quickly recovered from the Global financial crisis and is suffering less from the Eurozone crisis”.

According to the data spread by the Statistisches Bundesamt, i.e. the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, Italians were the second largest migrant group in Germany in 2006, after the Turks.

In 2016 Italian people represented the fourth largest migrant group after the Turks, the Poles and the Syrians. Data show, however, an increase of 14,4% of Italian inhabitants in Germany in the period considered.

Figure 2

Year	N° of Italians registered on the AZR
2006	534.657
2007	528.318
2008	523.162
2009	517.474
2010	517.546
2011	520.159
2012	529.417
2013	552.943
2014	574.530
2015	596.127
2016	611.450

Source: Ausländerzentralregister

Figure 2 provides an overview of the number of Italians registered on the Ausländerzentralregister from 2006 to 2016, i.e. the Central Register of Immigrants, divided per year.

In 2006 the average age of Italian inhabitants in Germany was 39,5, while in 2016 it was 43,4. It has to be remarked that, according to ISTAT data, there was an increase in the number of people aged over 64 who left the country to move, in most cases, to other European countries in order to “probably be reunited with their relatives” (Istat, Annual Report 2015: 4).

In 2015 Germany was the first destination chosen by them, followed by Switzerland and France.

It has to be noted that the data previously shown do not include those people with a migration background who got the German citizenship and children with a German mother or father, who become automatically German citizens at birth. If the other parent is not German, the child usually also acquires the foreign citizenship of the other parent by birth, resulting in multiple nationality. Since 1st January, 2000, German citizenship can be acquired also if both parents are foreigners, but just in case at least one of the parents has been legally living in Germany for a period of 8 years and has a valid *Aufenthaltsberechtigung* (i.e. an unlimited right to residence) or has had an *unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis* (i.e. an unlimited residence permit) for a period of three years. In this case as well the child will obtain dual citizenship, but he will have to choose which citizenship he wishes to keep between the age of 18 to 23 (*Optionspflicht*, i.e. option obligation).

Statistics may therefore not include those immigrants who acquired the German citizenship, “mixed” couples’ children (whose one parent is German) and the children of foreign people whose at least one parent has been legally living in Germany for a period of 8 years and has a valid *Aufenthaltsberechtigung* or has had an *unbefristete Aufenthaltserlaubnis*.

Although the statistics are not precise they can offer an insight into the Italian presence in Germany today.

According to the data collected by the Statistisches Bundesamt the median length of stay of Italian immigrants increased from 25 to 27 years between

2006 and 2016. Even if the Turks outnumber the Italians, the latter group is the first by length of stay (in 2016 the 64% had been living in Germany for more than 20 years), followed by Croats, Greeks and Turks. As a consequence of this, 25,7% of the Italians registered at the Ausländerzentralregister in 2016 was born in Germany (in 2006 this percentage was even higher, around 30%).

1.2. Integration of Italian Immigrants in Germany

Italian immigrants seem to be well integrated into German society: Haug (2011a: 150) reports that “most interviewees express the highest sympathy for Italians” and that “Italian migrants show the highest rate of interethnic friendships with Germans”: 67% of them has daily or several times a week contact with German friends (Haug, 2011: 142). She also highlights that “1/3 of the male Italians are married with a German partner” (2011: 141) and that “about 1/3 of the second generations, with Italian origin, have German-Italian parents. Of these [...], 77 per cent of the male and 55 of the females have German partners”. Moreover, “the statistics of marriage of the last years shows that 60 per cent of the male Italians and 50 per cent of the female Italians get married with German citizens” (Haug, 2015: 96).

Since Haug’s analysis and the statistics spread by the Statistisches Bundesamt do not take into account cohabiting couples, the percentage of German-Italian mixed couples could be even higher .

Besides this, it has to be remarked that many studies concerning the educational outcomes of immigrants found out that Italians are one of the immigrant groups that achieve the lowest educational levels (Algan *et al.*, 2010; Luthra, 2010; Bönke & Neidhofer, 2016).

The latest study led by Bönke, Neidhofer in 2016 confirms “previous findings regarding the low performance in terms of educational attainments of Italian immigrants in Germany, and more generally of second-generation immigrants” (2016: 22). The researchers inferred information concerning

education of children and of their parents through the analysis of data provided by A.I.R.E. (i.e. Anagrafe degli Italiani all'Estero) for 2013.

Additional data concerning the language spoken at home were derived from the SOEP⁴. Bönke and Neidhöfer suggest that reasons for this can be found in “the low starting point and the relatively high persistence within the native population”. They also highlight the fact that immigrants who speak only German at home outperform those who communicate using their parents’ language or both languages at home.

1.3. Regional Distribution of Italian Immigrants

With Germany’s post-World War II Italians relocated to the most industrialized regions of Germany, where they were generally employed in the industrial sector. Baden-Württemberg, Nordrhein Westfalen, Bayern and Hessen were therefore the main destinations chosen by them in the 60’s as well as in 2006.

In 2016 also the most part of Italians resides in the previously mentioned Länder and Baden-Württemberg is still the preferred one, but it has to be noticed that, while in these regions numbers slightly increased from 2006, something different happened in Berlin, where it has been registered an increase of 73% in the number of Italians inhabitants in the last 10 years. Berlin, the second-largest city in the European Union, distinguishes itself from the aforementioned destinations for being a metropolis which underwent a late, but massive tertiary restructuring, which led to the fact that “service sectors are much more important than construction and manufacturing” (Verwiebe, 2011: 8).

It has been the preferred destination for a growing number of intra-European immigrants since the 1990’s, experiencing the development of a “creative

⁴ Sozio-oekonomisches Panel: the socio-economic panel is a longitudinal panel dataset of the population in Germany. It is conducted every year by the German Institute for Economic Research in order to collect data for education planning and research promotion.

class”, which made it the “city of talents”, based around the media industry, software production, advertising and research (Krätke, 2004). According to a research led by Verwiebe (2011) among Italian, British, French and Polish migrants in Berlin which aimed at investigating the reasons behind the decision for crossing borders, “a strong economic motivation” was still identified for the Italians.

According to the Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg (i.e. the Statistical Office of Berlin-Brandenburg), in 2016 the city had a population of approximately 3,5 million people, with 68% of Germans, 13% of German citizens of foreign origin and 19% of foreigners. The 4% of this latter group was Italian (28167 individuals) and 6438 German citizens had Italian migration background. In 2016 Italians were the 5th migration community after the Turks, the Poles, the Syrians and the Russians in Berlin.

Haug (2005) brings attention to the higher educational level of Italian immigrants in Berlin compared to those who live in the industrial centers, most of whom were unskilled workers who moved to Germany during the last 60 years. Due to the lack of more recent data on the destinations chosen by graduated expatriates it is not possible to determine if the situation has changed or not in the last decade.

2. Summary

As previously stated, there is a long history of Italian immigration to Germany. Many Italians have settled in the FRG since the ‘60s and, for this reason, they represent now the first migrant group for duration of stay.

The decision of settling permanently in Germany seems to be confirmed by the new trend highlighted among people over 65 to expatriate in order, according to ISTAT data, “to be reunited with relatives”.

According to several studies led by Haug, who investigated the level of integration of Italian immigrants, Italians seem to be well assimilated within the German society.

On the other hand, many researchers have pinpointed the fact that first- as well as second-generation Italian immigrants achieve lower educational levels if compared to other migrant groups. Bönke and Neidhöfer suggest that reasons for this can be found in “the low starting point and the relatively high persistence within the native population” and the habit of using Italian only or both languages at home.

Haug claims that differences can be noticed between the Italian immigrants who relocated to the most industrialized regions of Germany and those who have moved to Berlin in the last years.

It has also to be noticed that, while in Länder which have always been the main destinations for Italians immigrants’ numbers have slightly increased since 2006, something different happened in Berlin, where it has been registered an increase of 73% in the number of Italians inhabitants in the last 10 years.

Chapter 4

Bilingual Education in Germany

1. Bilingual Schools in Germany: a Focus on Elementary Schools

According to an investigation led by the Verein für frühe Mehrsprachigkeit and Kindertageseinrichtungen und Schulen e.V. (FMKS, i.e. the Association for early multilingualism in day nurseries and schools) there were 287 bilingual Elementary Schools in Germany in 2014, equally divided into state-supported and private schools. There has been a noticeable increase since 2003, when there were only 80 bilingual school in all the country. This increased interest for bilingual education concerned pre-schools as well: the number increased from 340 to 1350 during the period 2004-2014.

Growing interest does not seem to be linked to immigration since, as Romaine (2009: 474) highlights,:

"Public institutions in the most powerful Western nations, the U.K., the United States, France, and Germany, have been monolingual for over a century or more with no significant movement toward challenging the hegemonic position of the majority language. Immigrants have not generally challenged the hegemony of these nations and have usually assimilated rapidly, and none of these countries has faced the linguistic challenges of Belgium, Spain, Canada, or Switzerland."

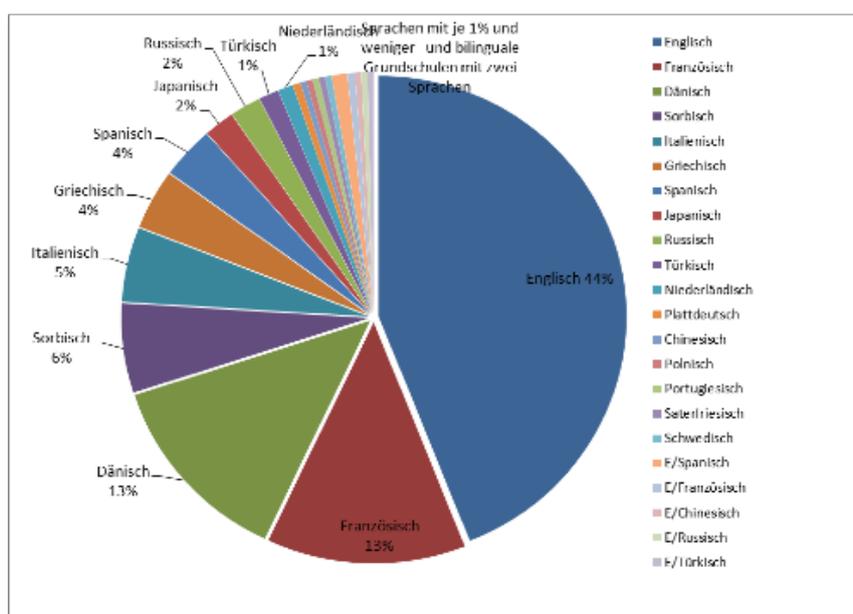
The previously mentioned survey includes all those schools where at least one subject is taught in another language than German. The term "bilingual school" combines here a wide range of different approaches, from schools which adopt a language immersion program (where at least half of the subjects are taught in another language for many years) to those which offer only some modules for few weeks or months.

As can be seen from Figure 3 below, which shows the language taught in the Elementary schools under scrutiny in percentage, English is the most taught

language (44%), followed by French and Danish (13%), Sorbian (6%), Italian (5%), Greek (4%), Spanish (3%), Japanese and Russian (2%), Turkish and Dutch (1%).

According to the survey, half of the schools offering a bilingual program lie in city states or metropolis such as Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne.

Figure 3



Source: Verein für frühe Mehrsprachigkeit an Kindertageseinrichtungen und Schulen

Schleswig-Holstein has the highest number of bilingual schools in Germany, but 36 out of 46 teach Danish as a result of the presence of a large community of Danish expats in Southern Schleswig.

Bilingual education in Elementary Schools is also provided in Berlin (38 out of 287), North Rhine-Westphalia (34), Hessen (28), Bavaria (27), Baden-Württemberg (25), Rhineland-Palatinate (23), Saxony (21), Hamburg (16), Lower Saxony (14) and in other Länder, though to a lesser extent.

If we focus on the teaching of Italian, we can notice that it only partially reflects the presence of Italian communities on the territory. Out of a total of 15 schools, 5 of them are in North Rhine-Westphalia, 3 in Baden-

Württemberg (the Land with the highest number of Italian migrants), 2 in Berlin and Hessen, 1 in Bayern, Hamburg and Lower Saxony, respectively.

2. Bilingual Kindergarten

As stated above, 1035 bilingual Kindergartens were labelled as “bilingual” in 2014. The FMKS highlights that, even if there is a slight difference between the percentages of Kindergarten and Elementary schools which adopt a bilingual approach (2% and 1,8%, respectively), the discrepancy is discernible. This is clear if we focus, for example, on the situation in the Saarland, where there are 185 bilingual Kindergarten but only four primary schools. The same circumstances can be found in Berlin or in Hamburg, where nurseries with languages other than German are 5 times more than primary schools.

The FMKS has pinpointed some reasons to explain this imbalance. The main ones are:

- A. Bilingual nurseries are easier to set up than schools;
- B. in many Länder kindergartens and schools are administered by different authorities, which often do not work together and do not pursue the same goals;
- C. Some parents are against bilingual schools because they fear that the teaching of a subject in another language could result in negative marks and hinder the schooling of their children (this concern is often shared by some teachers too);
- D. bilingual offer in nurseries is seen by parents as a “playful embellishment”, while once in school it becomes a too demanding challenge for the children.

The FMKS pleads for a seamless continuation of the bilingual education in order to keep the foreign language acquired by children alive.

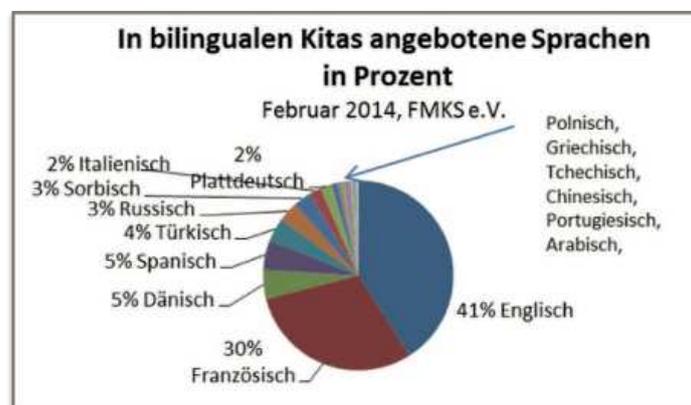
Advantages related to the cooperation between bilingual preschools and bilingual schools had been previously stressed by Wode (1998, 2009; Wode et al. 1999), who drew attention to:

- A. the continuity of education ensured by a cooperation between the two
- B. the fact that children can take advantage from the foreign language comprehension and speaking skills they have built up in kindergarten to develop reading and writing skills too
- C. the possibility of enhancing foreign language skills previously acquired

The association also highlights the fact that many Kindergartens adopt a language immersion program, taking advantage from the fact that through this is possible to trigger natural language learning. Immersion is described as an “alive, varied, authentic” method which “optimizes long-term cognitive functions”.

It would therefore be necessary, according to the FMKS (2014), to quickly and steadily increase the concern on bilingual nurseries and schools. They suggest all Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany should develop their own programs on it, taking into consideration not only “popular” languages such as English or French, which are mostly included in the German preschools, as can be seen from Figure 4 below.

Table 4: Languages included in bilingual preschools (in percentage)



Source: FMKS, 2014

Besides English, which is often the preferred one for being the most spoken language around the world, French is chosen as language of instruction by a large part of parents, especially in the Saarland, where the interest for the French language is linked to the closeness to France.

According to Maserkopf (2014), the choice of the kindergarten depends on many factors, such as:

- position of the institution;
- parents' needs/interests;
- the will of preserving a minority language (such as Plattdeutsch);
- the interest towards “unconventional” languages (such as Chinese);
- the prestige of a language (the fact that Turkish is underrepresented, even if 1.600.000 Turks live now in Germany, is linked to the fact that this language, as well as Arabic, has a problem of prestige and it is often disregarded by German society).

If we focus on the Italian language, instead, we can see that only 2% of bilingual preschools in 2014 were German-Italian (22 out of 1035, according to the FMKS database). More than one out of three were located in the Land Berlin, where there were eight bilingual kindergarten which taught German and Italian through immersion programs in 2014. These were all functioning in 2016 (when this study took place) as well, but other day care centers with the same linguistic combination have been opened meanwhile, so a more accurate estimate is not possible.

3. Bilingual Education in Berlin: the SESB program

Berlin is the Land with the second highest number of bilingual schools. 17 out of 38 offer English as L2, but it is possible to choose among the learning of other 11 languages. This is also thanks to the program “SESB Staatliche Europa-Schulen Berlin”, a special offer funded by the State of Berlin in order

to give everyone the possibility of having access to bilingual education programs, regardless of the parents' income.

The program started in 1992 with 160 students divided in six Elementary schools. It was possible to choose between three different language combinations: German-English, German-French and German-Russian. Today more than 6000 students take part to the program, which involves 17 Elementary Schools and 14 Secondary Schools, 3 of which are Gymnasiums. The remaining ones are Integrierte Sekundarschule (ISS)⁵.

Students' parents can choose among 9 different languages, i.e. English, French, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish.

French is the most represented one (4 out of 17 Elementary Schools and 2 out of 14 Secondary Schools). Italian is taught in 2 out of 17 Elementary Schools (Finow Grundschule and Herman Nohl Schule), in a Gymnasium (Albert Einstein Schule) and in a ISS (Alfred Nobel Schule). It is therefore present in 4 out of 31 schools, in the same percentage as English and Greek.

Students are randomly selected by a lottery system. When possible, students with different citizenships and mother tongues are mixed together in the classrooms in order everyone to be aware of different cultural identities. Intercultural topics, such as customs, everyday life and feasts, as well as events concerning the Europe Day and the European idea, are thematized in classroom by mother tongue teachers.

Both languages have the same importance, therefore 50% of the lessons are taught in German and 50% in the partner language. Subjects which are provided in a language other than German are taught taking into consideration the educational programs of the other European country.

Subjects are distributed as follows:

⁵ The ISS is a peculiar school type which has been introduced in the educational system of the Land Berlin since 2010 and substitute the Hauptschule, the Realschule and the Gesamtschule. Further information about these secondary school types are provided in the following footnote.

Figure 5

	Grundschule (Elementary School)	Weiterführende Schule (Secondary Schools)
German	German language Maths	German language Maths Chemistry Physics
Partner language	Partner Language History Geography Social Studies	Partner language History Social Studies Geography Biology Political Science
German or partner language, equally distributed	Science Music Sport Art	Ethics Music Art Sport

Source: www.berlin.de/sen/bildung/schule/besondere-schulangebote/staatliche-europaschule

A foreign language (English or French) is added at 5. Jahrgangsstufe.

Students can do their final examination in both languages after the 10. and the 12. or rather 13. Jahrgangsstufe⁶: those who obtain the MSA receive a B2 level certificate of the “partner language”, while a C2 level certificate is acquired after the Abitur.

Besides the aforementioned language combinations included in the SESB Chinese, Japanese and Swedish are taught in Berlin as well.

⁶ In order to better understand the German school system a brief explanation is here provided. After kindergarten children start attending Grundschule (Elementary School) at the age of 6. This lasts 4 years, except for schools in Berlin and Brandenburg, where the duration is of 6 years (from 1. to 6. Jahrgangsstufe). Then students can enroll either at Hauptschule (until 9. Jahrgangsstufe) or at Realschule (which lasts until 10. Jahrgangsstufe) or at Gymnasium (which goes on until the 12. or the 13. Jahrgangsstufe). Only if a student attends the Gymnasium can take the Abitur (i.e. the school leaving exam) and enroll at University. Students who attend Realschule and decide not to continue their studies and to leave school after the 10. Jahrgangsstufe must obtain the MSA (Mittlerer Anschluss).

4. Summary

Berlin, which has today the second highest number of schools that offer bilingual education and is a fertile ground for it also thanks to the SESB program, was in 2016 the Land with the highest number of German-Italian pre-schools. Moreover, the learning of Italian can be carried on until the secondary school in Berlin.

Data collected by the FMKS have shown that the offer of the Italian language in schools reflects only partially the presence of Italian communities on the territory.

Since the prestige of the language has been highlighted by Maserkopf to be one of the factors which underlie parents' choice for bilingual education, the status of Italian within the community of Berlin was also object of investigation investigation in this study, as well as other decisions which underlied parents' choice for the bilingual kindergarten where this survey took place.

Due to the fact that the FMKS has claimed that one of the reasons of the imbalance between bilingual pre-schools and elementary schools is that bilingual offer in nurseries is seen by parents as a “playful embellishment”, while once in school it becomes a too demanding challenge for the children, intentions to continue bilingual studies have also been questioned.

Part 2: Case Study

Chapter 5

Family Language Policies

1. Introduction

As data collected by the FMKS show, the number of children being enrolled in bilingual programs keeps increasing in Germany. This is clear in particular in Berlin, also thanks to the SESB program and the new attitude of some migrants' groups, who want now their children to master both the community and the home language and to develop bicultural identities, in contrast with what used to happen in the past, when expatriates wished their children to take on the host society's way of life to be better integrated (Balboni, 2000).

Even if Germany hosts today the second largest Italian community in the world and there is a long history of Italian migration in the FRG, no research seems to have been done regarding parents' attitudes towards bilingual Italian-German education yet.

Since Fisherman (1991) states that school-programs must be supported by language practice at home in order the minority language to be maintained and

“children language acquisition depends in large measure on the language practices to which they are exposed” (Spolsky, 2007: 10),

both inputs at school (see Chapter 5) and at home will be analyzed. Spolsky (2004) highlights the fact that language policy consists in three components, namely: *language practices*, *beliefs about language* and *language management*. Language practices have been defined as the linguistic choices people make when speaking (the variety of the language used, for example). Beliefs about language include instead values assigned to a language, while language management concerns the

“explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims to have authority over the participants to modify their practices or beliefs” (Spolsky, 2007: 10).

In case of migration this pattern of factors can result either in attempts to maintain the heritage language or to replace it with the host society’s one.

These three components, as well as children’s outputs, will be analyzed both in the school and in the family domain.

This chapter will mainly focus on family language policies, which can strongly affect children’s behaviour (and linguistic choices as well), especially at early ages.

This study explores the following questions:

1. What are linguistic inputs children receive at home and their outputs? How supportive is the German-Italian bilingual language environment at home?
2. What are parents’ attitudes towards the dual language program the children are enrolled in?
3. What are parents’ attitudes regarding Italian and their Italian-related expectations for their children?

2. Participants

A survey among 20 families who decided to enroll their children in a German-Italian pre-school in Berlin for the school year 2016-2017 has been conducted.

3. Instrument

A questionnaire was used to investigate the aspects previously stated. Parents had the possibility to fill the questionnaire either in Italian or in German. An English version is here provided, with an explanation of the reasons underlying the choice of the questions.

Sections of the questionnaire will be discussed in more detail throughout the following paragraph.

The questionnaire is made up of a total of 28 questions. Multiple choices were widely used, even if short open answers and rating questions were included as well. The questionnaire is structured as follows:

- Section 1 Questions 1-3: general information about parents' linguistic background;
- Section 2 Questions 4-18: linguistic inputs children receive at home and their outputs;
- Section 3 Questions 19-24: level of confidence/interest in the methods adopted by the school children are enrolled in;
- Section 4 Questions 25- 28: level of interest in Italian language.

3.1. Section 1

In order to infer the linguistic background of the families, parents are first asked which member of the family fills in the questionnaire, what his/her mother tongue is and what his/her partner's mother tongue is.

The first question is asked in order to understand, within the mixed couples' group, whether the child's outputs can be influenced by the gender of the parent using the minority language. The "adherence" to the language/ languages spoken by the parents (Q 9 and Q 10), how often code-switching occurs (Q 11 and Q 12) and the language used with siblings (Q. 13), will therefore be analyzed taking this into account.

1. This questionnaire has been filled by
 - a. mother
 - b. father
2. What is your mother tongue?
3. What is your partner's mother tongue?

3.2. Section 2

Questions asked in the second part of the questionnaire aim at investigating the linguistic inputs children receive at home and their outputs. Most of the questions in this section deal with language practices.

In detail, questions 4 and 5 examine whether the language spoken between the parents is different from the one used to talk to the child, in order to consider the variety of languages heard by the child at home and if there is an imbalance between Italian and German language. Question 5 aims also at evaluating whether the parents have made a conscious decision about the language used at home or not: this question can therefore be attributed to language management section rather than to the language practices one.

Since Arnberg (1987) and Baker (2000) suggest that, in case one of the parents is a majority language native speaker, it would be more appropriate for the child to be talked to by both parents in the minority language only⁷, the question probes whether parents do so.

Question 6 concentrates on the plurality of linguistic forms heard by the child, so it was explicitly asked whether dialects also are spoken at home⁸.

4. What language do you and your partner speak with each other?
 - a. Mainly Italian
 - b. Mainly German
 - c. Both languages, approximately to the same extent
 - d. Other

In case you answered “other”, please specify what language you speak.

⁷ See Chapter 2, section 6.1.

⁸ In the “Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education” (2010: 44) Beacco et al. state that “it is important that children experience [...]: plurality of modes of expression (languages, varieties, “dialects” and sociolects of others, both teachers and children)”.

5. Did you and your partner plan what language to speak at home with your children when you are all together?
- Yes, we speak mainly Italian
 - Yes, we speak mainly German
 - Yes, we speak another language
 - No, we use different languages, approximately to the same extent

In case you answered “yes, we speak another language” or “no, we use different languages, approximately to the same extent”, please specify what languages you speak.

6. Do you also speak dialect at home?
- Yes
 - No

In case you answered “yes”, please specify which dialect you speak.

Questions 7 and 8 are asked in order to examine if the language spoken by each member differs from the one spoken when both the father and the mother take part to the conversation (Q 5). They also mean to derive which family language policy⁹ parents decided to adopt and, in case of monolingual couples, whether both Italian and German are spoken at home.

7. What language do you speak with your child?
- Mainly Italian
 - Mainly German
 - Both languages, approximately to the same extent
 - Other

In case you answered “other”, please specify what language you speak with your child.

8. What language does your partner speak with your child?
- Mainly Italian

⁹ See Chapter 2, Section 6.1.

- b. Mainly German
- c. Both languages, approximately to the same extent
- d. Other

In case you answered “other”, please specify what language he/she speaks with your child.

Questions 9-12 focus on the children’s outputs. In particular, they are directed to examine if the children conform or not to the family language policy and if they have a “preferred” language. Questions 11 and 12 bring attention to how frequently children’s language choices do not conform to their parents’ ones in order to understand whether it occurs more often to the majority language or not.

9. What language does your child speak with you?

- a. Mainly Italian
- b. Mainly German
- c. Both languages, approximately to the same extent
- d. Other

In case you answered “other”, please specify what language he/she speaks with you.

10. What language does your child speak with your partner?

- a. Mainly Italian
- b. Mainly German
- c. Both languages, approximately to the same extent
- d. Other

In case you answered “other”, please specify what language he/she speaks with your partner.

11. How often does it happen that your child answers to you in a language different from the one you use with him/her?

- a. Often
- b. Sometimes

- c. Seldom
- d. Never

If it happens, what language does your child use?

12. How often does it happen that your child answers to your partner in a language different from the one he/she uses with him/her?
- a. Often
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Seldom
 - d. Never

If it happens, what language does your child use?

The following question is meant to investigate brothers and sisters' influence. The analysis of the results will be carried out taking into account the percentage to which both the majority and the minority languages are present. Within the bilingual families' group, the gender of the member who speaks the minority language will also be taken into account.

13. In case your child has siblings, what language do they speak with each other?
- a. He/She does not have any siblings
 - b. Mainly Italian
 - c. Mainly German
 - d. Both languages, approximately to the same extent
 - e. Other

In case you answered "other", please specify what language they speak.

Questions 14 and 15 describe whether the children's exposition to the two languages is balanced or not and in which kind of activities they are engaged. Within the monolingual families' groups attention will be brought to the ways parents try to stimulate their children in the language which is not spoken at home (if they do).

14. Please rate the following activities taking into account how often they are done by your child. Please refer to the table below when ranking the frequency with which the activities are done by your child.

	c; d; e; f; h; i	a, b, l, m, n, o, p, q	g
Often	more than once a week	every day	more than or twice a year
Sometimes	once a week	twice a week	once a year
Rarely	once a month	once a week or less	less than once a year
Never			

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. Dialogue with a parent who has Italian as his/her mother tongue				
b. Dialogue with a parent who has German as his/her mother tongue				
c. Contact with relatives, who have Italian as their mother tongue				
d. Contact with relatives, who have German as their mother tongue				
e. Contact with people outside the family circle who have Italian as their mother tongue				
f. Contact with people outside the family who have German as their mother tongue				
g. Holiday in Italy				
h. Contact with babysitters who have Italian as their mother tongue				
i. Contact with babysitters who have German as their mother tongue				
l. Reading of Italian books				
m. Reading of German books				
n. Watch TV/cartoons in Italian				
o. Watch TV/cartoons in German				
p. Listening to Italian music				
q. Listening to German music				

15. Does your child attend an extra activity? (i.e. Choir, sport...)

- a. Yes
- b. No

In case you answered yes, in what language is the activity provided?

Question 16 explores parents' opinions about the best ways to encourage children's language acquisition.

16. What do you think is the best activity in order the children to acquire a language?

Since Baker & Wright (2017: 89) claim that parents' attitude to mixing languages can affect the child's language choice, questions 17 and 18 focus on this aspect.

17. Does your child tend to use two different languages in the same sentence in everyday speech?

- a. Yes
- b. No

In case you answered yes, are you happy with that?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. It's all the same to me

Please specify in case your partner's attitude diverges from yours.

18. In case your child uses both languages in the same sentence, you...

- a. do not correct him/her
- b. rephrase the sentence correctly
- c. point out the mistake
- d. other

In case you answered "other", please explain what you do. Please specify if your partner acts in a different way.

3.3. Section 3

Section 3 of the questionnaire tries to portray parents' level of confidence/ interest in the methods adopted by the school where the children are enrolled,; the underlying principle is that the higher parents' involvement is, the more likely they will support their children during the learning process. Since explicit efforts made by parents to foster bilingualism, through both past decisions and plans for the future, are here questioned, this section mainly deals with language management.

Question 19 is meant to understand if parents' decisions concerning the enrollment of their children in the dual language pre-school were mainly driven by an understanding of the purpose and underlying principles of bilingual education and/or by the wish their children could keep the heritage language and/or by other factors (such as closeness to home or trust in teachers). Factors which Maserkopf (2014) identifies as determinant for the choice of a bilingual kindergarten were here included.¹⁰

19. Please indicate how much the following reasons have influenced your child's enrollment in this pre-school.

	Extremely influential	Very Influential	Moderately influential	Slightly influential	Not at all influential
Other children's/friends' experiences					
Possibility of talking two languages					
Possibility of being part of a multicultural environment					
Desire for my child to develop a bicultural identity					
Possibility of maintaining/ learning Italian					
Closeness to our home					
Trust in teachers					

¹⁰ See Chapter "Bilingual Education in Germany", Section "Bilingual Kindergarten"

	Extremely influential	Very Influential	Moderately influential	Slightly influential	Not at all influential
Interest in the program adopted to foster bilingualism					
Possibility of working together with teachers to define the educational program					
Other					

In case you answered “other”, please specify which reasons underlied your decision.

Questions 20 and 21 focus on the interest in the dual language program before and after the child’s enrollment in the pre-school. They were meant to understand whether the interest increased or decreased after having witnessed this type of bilingual education firsthand and if the wish to continue attending a dual language school (Q 24) may be related to satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the program at pre-school.

20. How high was your interest in the dual language program before your child being enrolled in this pre-school?

Not at all interested 1 2 3 4 5 Very interested

21. How high is your interest in the dual language program now that your child is enrolled in this pre-school?

Not at all interested 1 2 3 4 5 Very interested

Questions 22 and 23 ask the parents about other pre-schools taken into consideration. Answers will be analyzed focusing in particular on differences between monolingual and bilingual families, specifically:

- are only-Italian families more/less inclined to enroll their children in bilingual pre-schools than bilingual families?

This question added because, during an interview with one of the pre-school educators, I was told that Italian families used to be less inclined to enroll their children in bilingual programs because they feared this could result in a disadvantage in the acquisition of the L2 and the integration within the German society. The question helps thus understand whether this was also the case of the families who took part to the survey.

Question 23 is directed to investigate if families (only-German, in particular) were interested in other linguistic combinations as well.

22. Did you consider the idea of enrolling your child in a mainstream monolingual German pre-school?

- a. Yes
- b. No

23. Did you consider the idea of enrolling your child in another bilingual pre-school?

- a. Yes
- b. No

In case you answered “yes”, which one did you take into consideration?

Since Maserkopf (2015) claims that the imbalance between bilingual pre-schools and schools¹¹ in Germany is due to the fact that parents are more inclined to choose bilingual education at early ages and to interrupt it when children begin primary school because they think it would be a too demanding task for them, question 24 concerns parents’ attitudes towards bilingual education at school and their plans for the future.

¹¹ See Chapter “Bilingual Education in Germany”, Section “Bilingual Kindergarten”

24. Would you like in the future your child to continue his/her bilingual schooling in a dual language school (no matter what languages are taught)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know it yet

3.4. Section 4

Section 4 explores parents' level of interest in the Italian language, the reasons which underlie their decision to expose their children to it and their attitude towards literacy in the Italian language too.

Questions 25 and 26 are meant to derive values parents give to both the Italian and the German language and why they want their children to acquire them, because

“the different values assigned to standard languages and to heritage languages regularly explain decisions of parents as to what language to speak and encourage in the home” (Spolsky, 2007: 5).

25. How important is for you that your child acquires Italian?

Not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 Very important

In case you answered 4 or 5, why is it important for you that your child acquires Italian? (more than one answer is possible)

Because we want him/her to know my/our/my partner's language

Because we want him/her to be able to communicate with Italian friends/relatives

Because we want him/her to have better working opportunities in the future

Because he/she can benefit from acquiring two languages at this age

Other

In case you answered other, please specify why it is important for you that your child acquires Italian.

26. How important is for you that your child acquires German?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	Very important				

In the following question parents are asked about their attitudes towards literacy in the Italian language. This question purposes to explore whether the parents' mind changes when their children have to start primary school. Since educators of the pre-school under study usually suggest only-Italian families to enroll their children in mainstream monolingual German schools, answers will be analyzed focusing in particular on only-Italian families.

27. How important is for you that your child has the possibility of studying Italian at school?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	Very important				

Question 28 asks parents about what level of Italian they expect their child will reach in the future.

28. What level of Italian would you like your child to reach in the future?

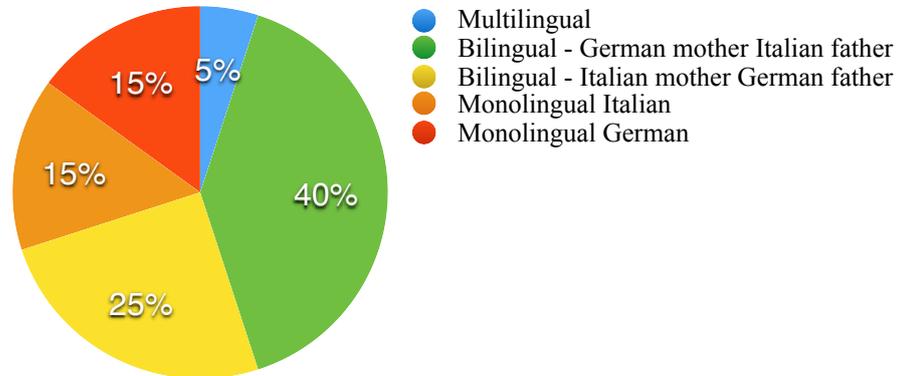
- a. We would like him/her to speak and write as a native speaker
- b. We would like him/her to be able to express himself fluently and correctly
- c. We would like him/her to be able to communicate without big effort. It does not matter to us if he/she makes mistakes
- d. We would like him/her to have basic knowledge of Italian language
- E. We do not care about the level of Italian he/she will reach.

4. Results

4.1. Section 1

20 out of 26 families took part to the survey. Parents' linguistic backgrounds are presented in detail in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Parents' linguistic background

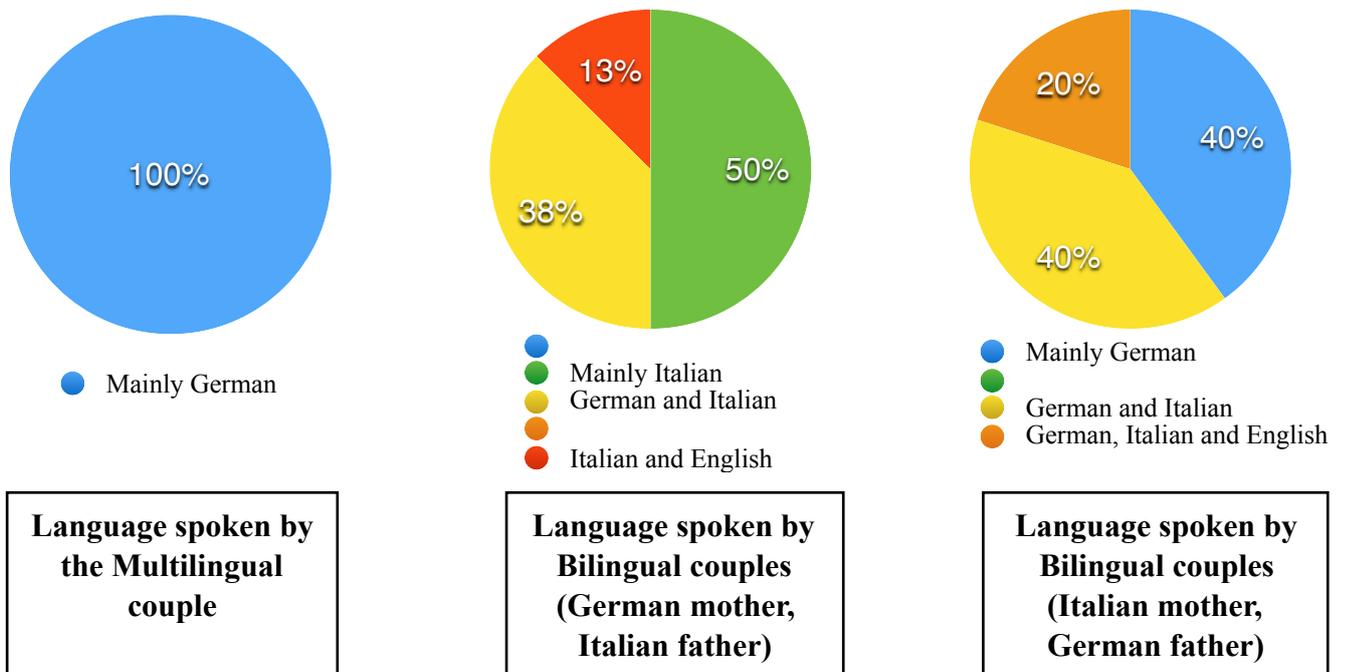


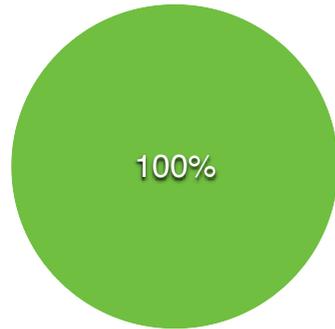
The multilingual family under scrutiny is composed by a bilingual German/Arabic mother and by a bilingual German/Italian father.

4.2. Section 2

Q. 4 wants to investigate the language/languages spoken by the couples. Results are presented in Table 2 below.

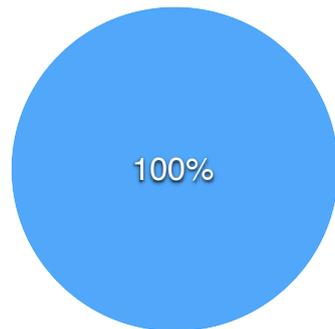
Table 2: Language spoken within the couple





● ● Mainly Italian

Language spoken by Monolingual Italian couples

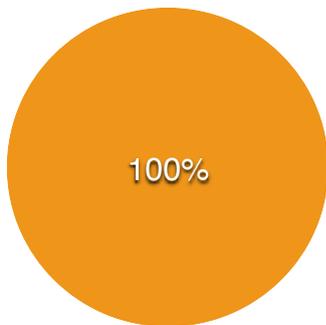


● Mainly German

Language spoken by Monolingual German couples

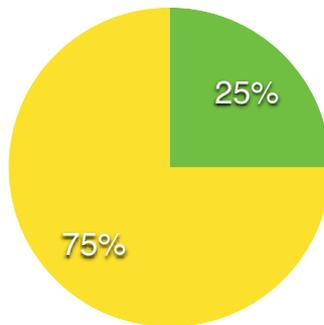
Q. 5 examines the language/languages spoken within the family when both parents and children are together. Results are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: language/languages spoken by both parents and children



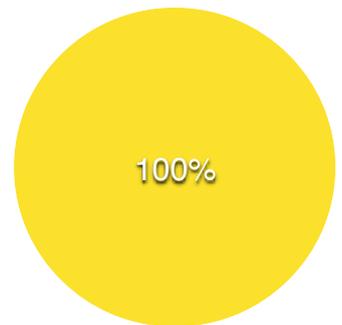
● ● ● German, Italian, Arabic

Language spoken within the Multilingual Family



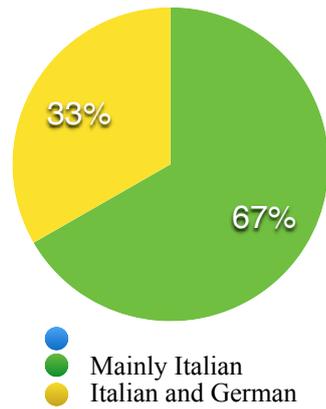
● ● ● Mainly Italian
● German and Italian

Language spoken within Bilingual Families (German mother/Italian father)

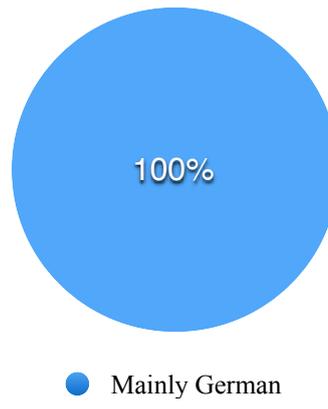


● ● ● German and Italian

Language spoken within Bilingual Families (Italian mother/German father)



Language spoken within Monolingual Italian Families



Language spoken within Monolingual German Families

It has to be highlighted that only one monolingual Italian family answered that both German and Italian are spoken within the family circle and they pointed out that Italian is the predominant one.

Q. 6 focuses on dialects. The results reveal that generally no dialect is spoken at home, except within the multilingual family, where Libanese and Roman are spoken, and within two monolingual Italian families, where Bolognese and Neapolitan are used as well.

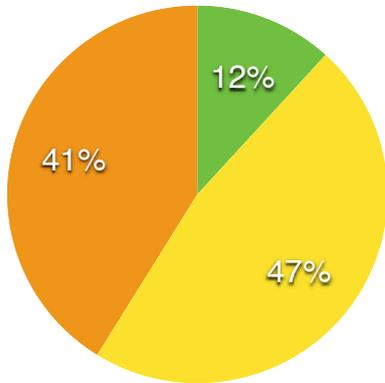
Q. 7 and 8 concentrate upon standard languages spoken by each member of the family to the child. Results show that every member speaks his mother tongue to the child, except for one monolingual Italian family, that uses German as well as a means of communication.

Similarly, answers to Q. 9 and 10 reveal that parents are talked to in their mother tongues by their children.

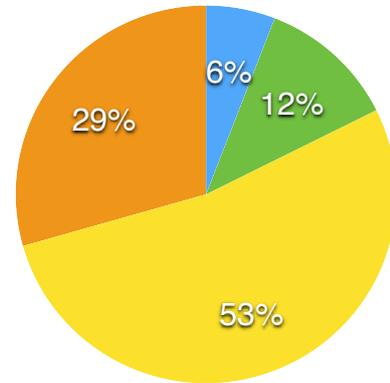
Q. 11-12 concentrate on how often parents are answered in a language different from the one they used to talk to their child. Table 4 below shows parents' perception of the frequency of language disagreement in case the children are talked to in German (a.) or in Italian (b.).

Table 4

● Often ● Sometimes
● Rarely ● Never



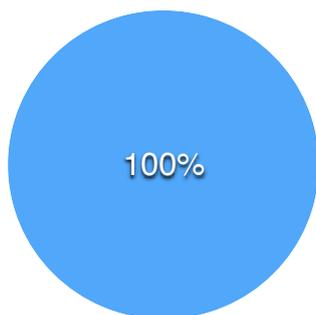
a.



b.

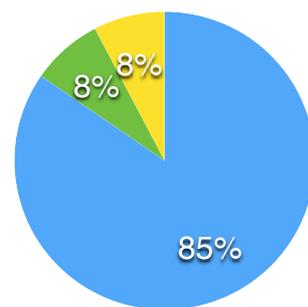
It must be underlined that no substantial differences are noted among the different groups, except for the multilingual family, where the child is said to switch often to German both if he/she is talked to in Arabic and in Italian. Answers to Q. 13, which brings attention to the language spoken with brothers and/or sisters, are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: language spoken with siblings



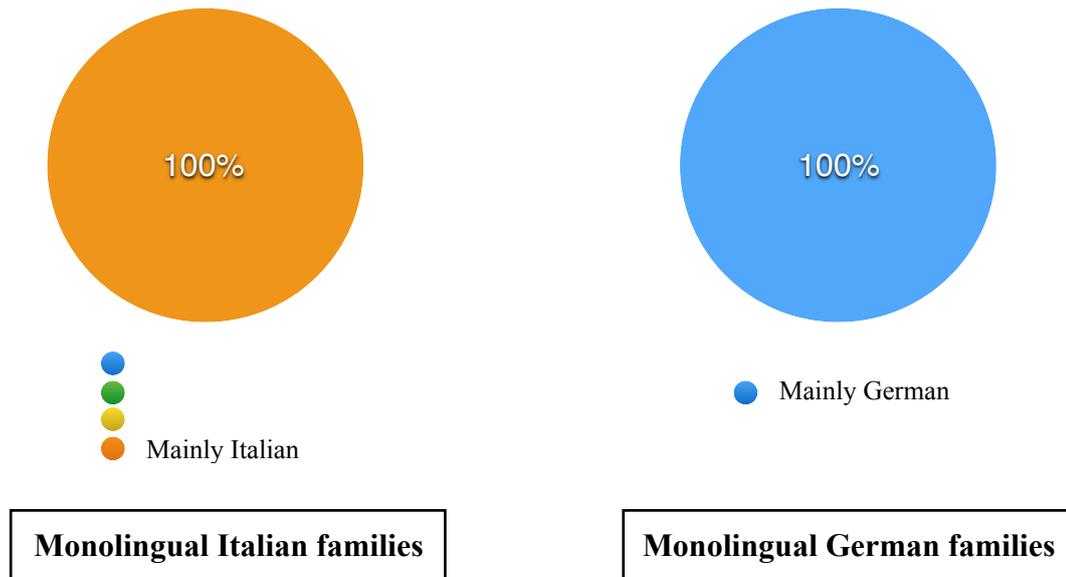
● Mainly German

Multilingual family



● Mainly German
● German and Italian
● No Brothers nor Sisters

Bilingual families



It is remarkable to observe that the only case in which both Italian and German are spoken with brothers and/or sisters occurs in the family where a German mother and an Italian father planned to talk Italian when they are together with their children.

Q. 14 investigates linguistic inputs children receive at home. The data collected are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Linguistic Inputs at home

- a.: dialogue with a parent who has Italian as his/her mother tongue
- b.: dialogue with a parent who has German as his/her mother tongue
- c.: Contact with relatives who have Italian as their mother tongue
- d.: Contact with relatives who have German as their mother tongue
- e.: Contact with people outside the family circle who have Italian as their mother tongue
- f.: Contact with people outside the family circle who have German as their mother tongue
- g.: Holiday in Italy
- h.: Contact with babysitters who have Italian as their mother tongue
- i.: Contact with babysitters who have German as their mother tongue
- l.: Reading of Italian books
- m.: Reading of German books
- n.: Watch TV/cartoons in Italian

o.: Watch TV/cartoons in Germany

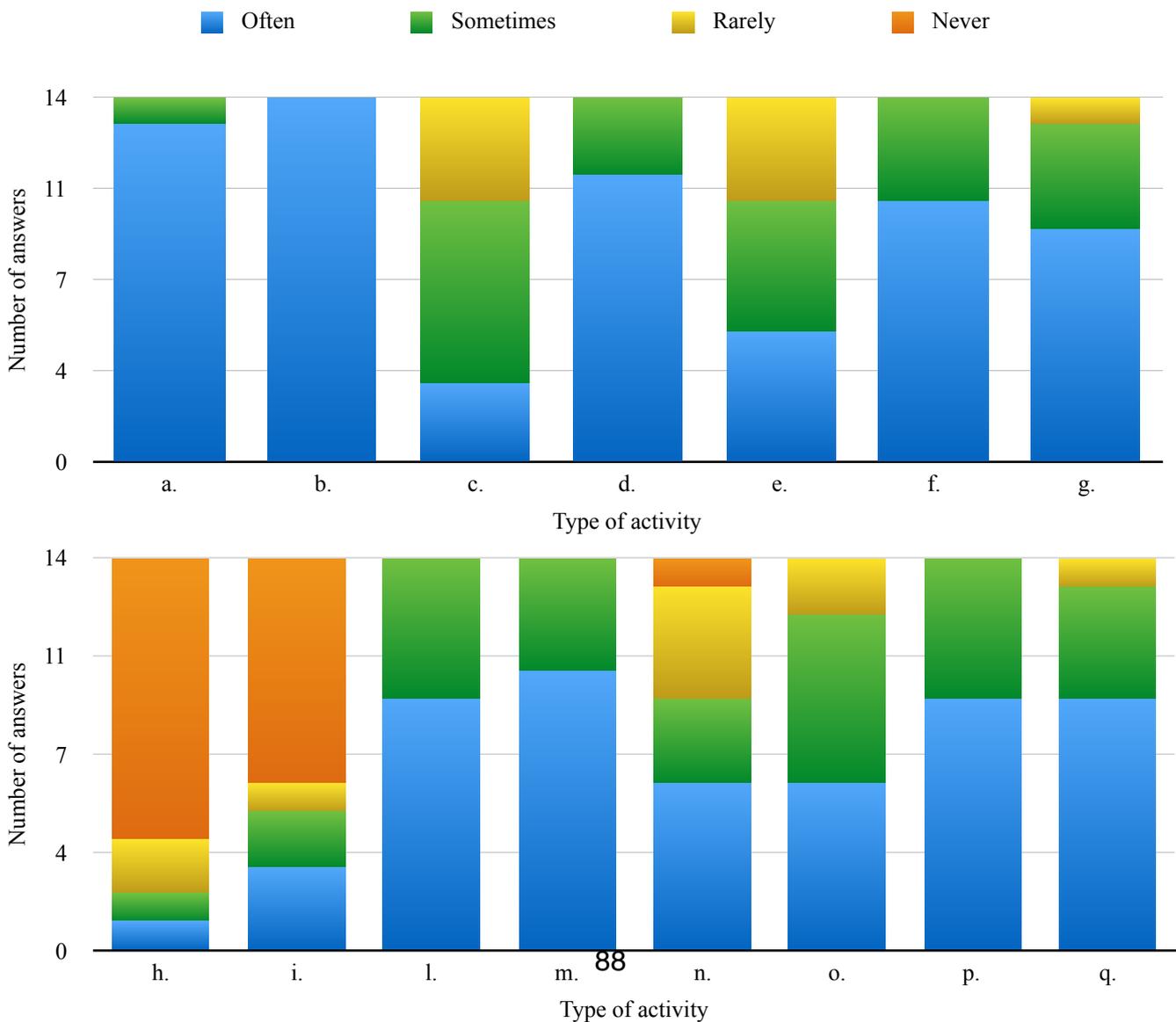
p.: Listening to Italian music

q.: Listening to German music

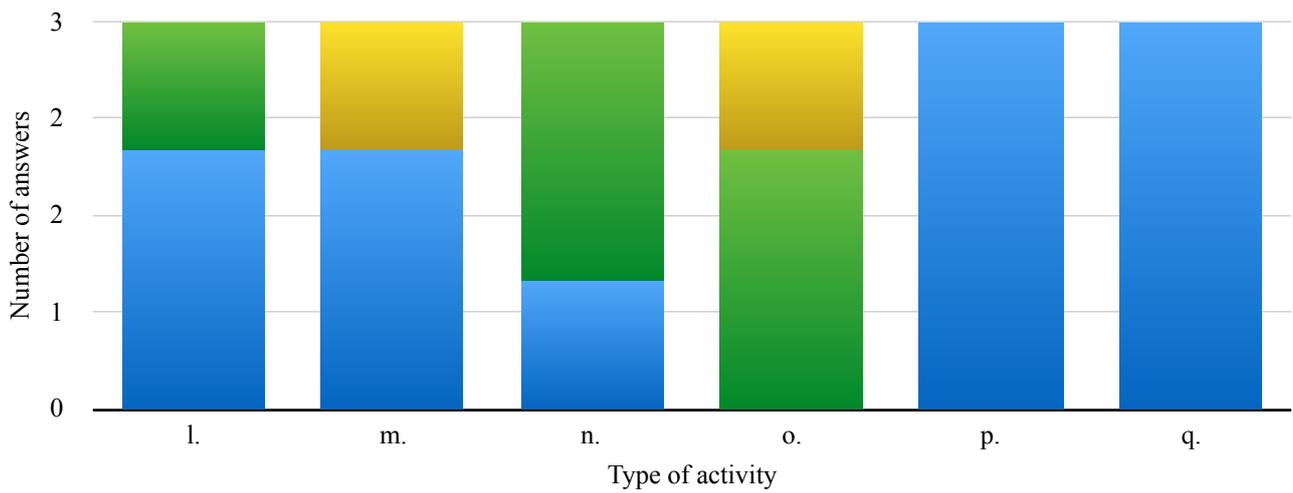
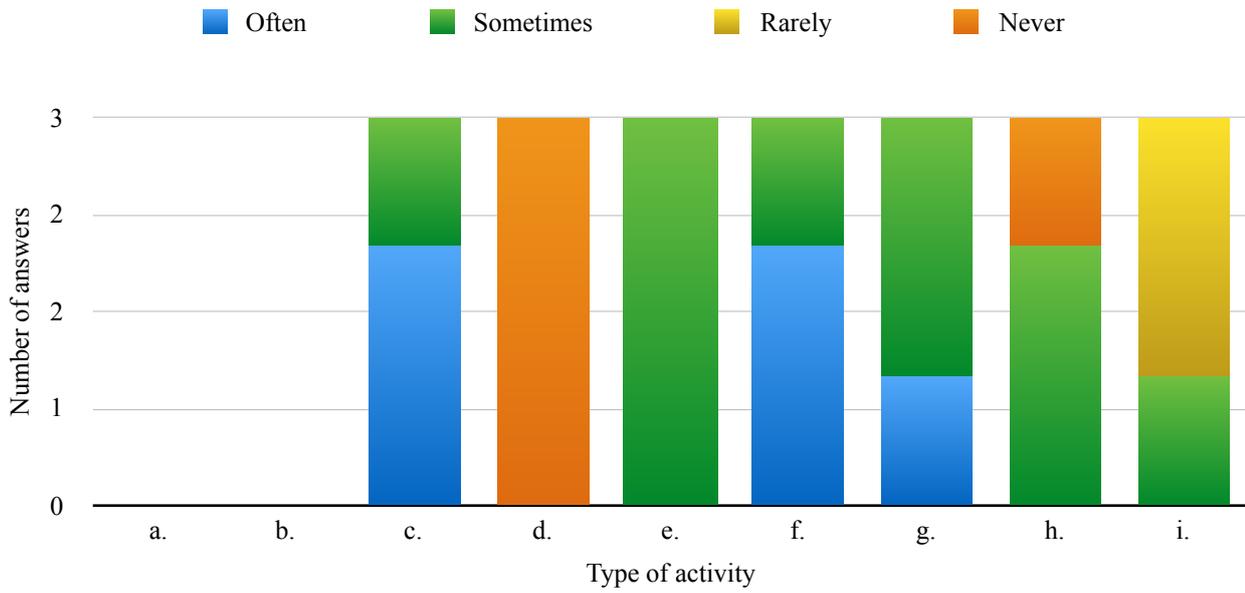
Parents were asked to refer to the table below when ranking the frequency with which the activities are done by their child.

	c; d; e; f; h; i	a, b, l, m, n, o, p, q	g
Often	more than once a week	every day	more than twice a year
Sometimes	once a week	twice a week	once a year
Rarely	once a month	once a week or less	less than once a year
Never	never	never	never

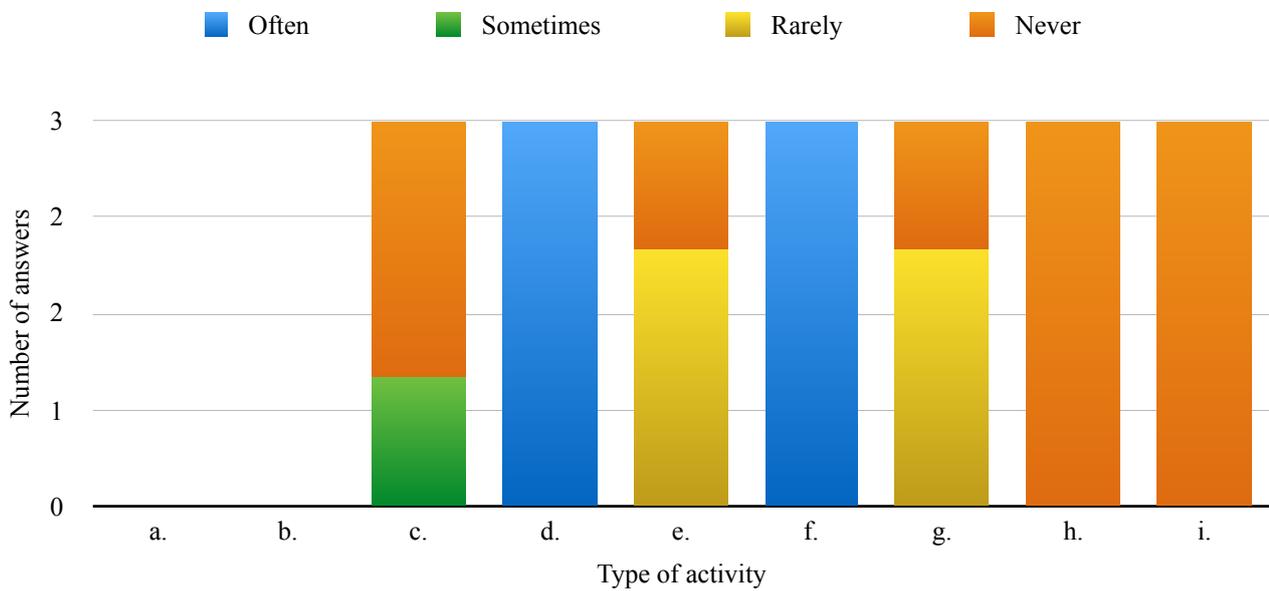
Bilingual families and Multilingual family

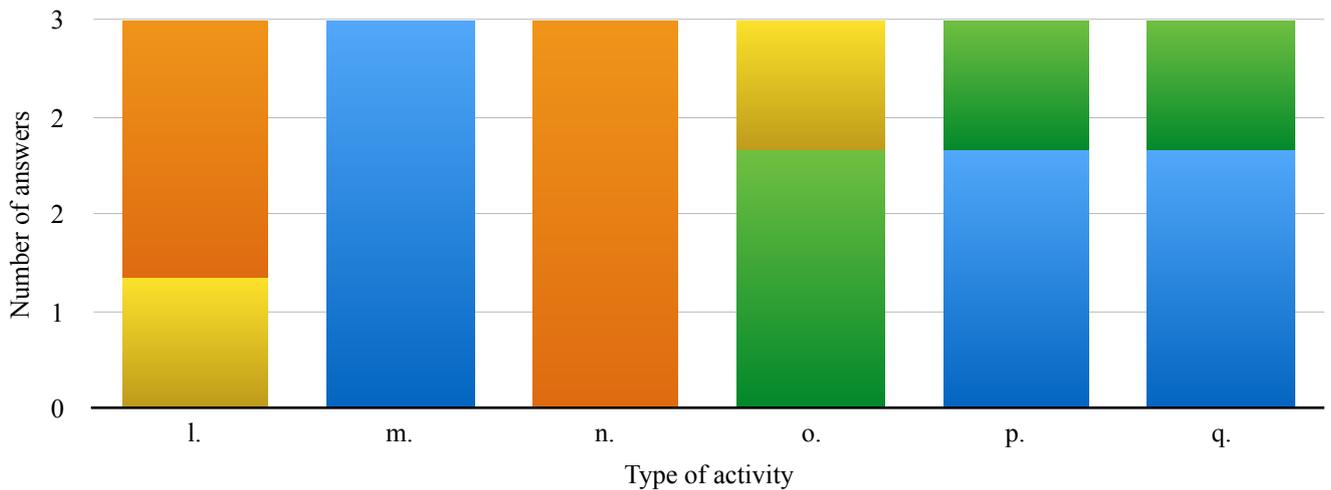


Italian Monolingual families



German Monolingual Families



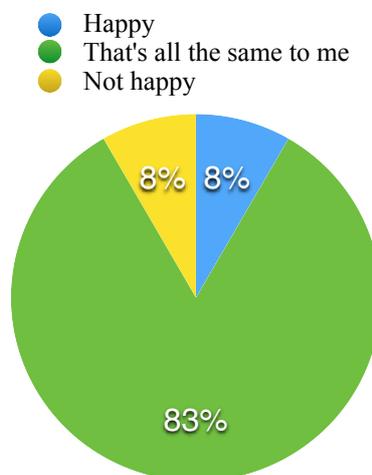


Q. 15 asks whether children do an extra activity and, if they do, in what language it is provided. The results show that almost all the children who attend an extra activity do it in German. Only in one case the child performs extra activities both in German and in Italian. The child is being raised in a monolingual Italian family.

Q. 16 investigates parents' personal opinions about the best activities in order the children to acquire a language. Most of the participants regarded "conversation" and "reading books" as the best activities. "Singing" and "music" were frequently mentioned as well. "Watching TV" was cited by only one family.

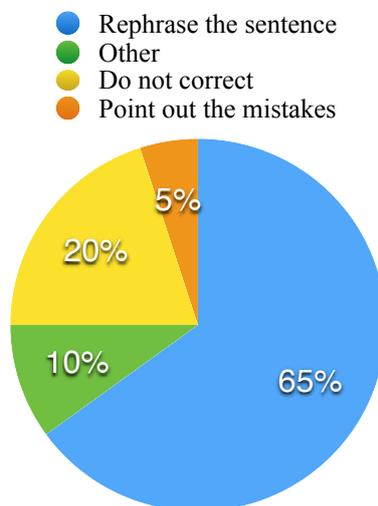
Q. 17 focuses on parents' attitude towards language mixing. Results are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Parents' attitude towards language mixing



Q. 18 brings attention to how parents correct their children (in case they do) if they use both languages in the same sentence. Answers to this question are reported in Table 8 below.

Table 8



Two families picked the answer “other” and then they specified that they “do not correct him/her if the words he/she uses in the other language are correct, but we rephrase the sentence correctly if they are not” and that they “act differently depending on the situations”, respectively.

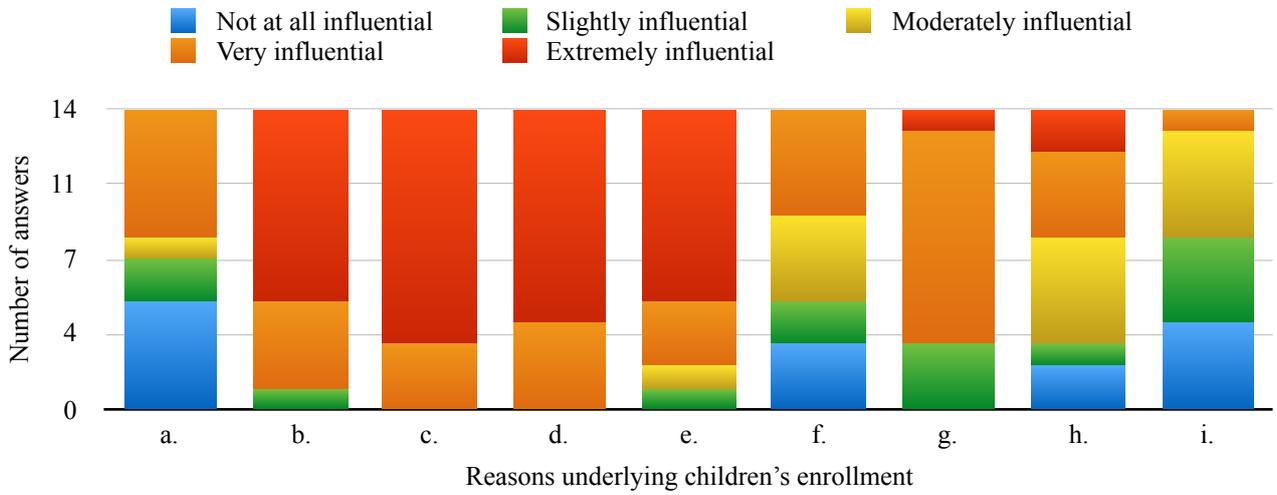
4.3. Section 3

Q. 19 investigates which reasons influenced the child’s enrollment in the Italian-German pre-school. Results are presented in Table 9 below.

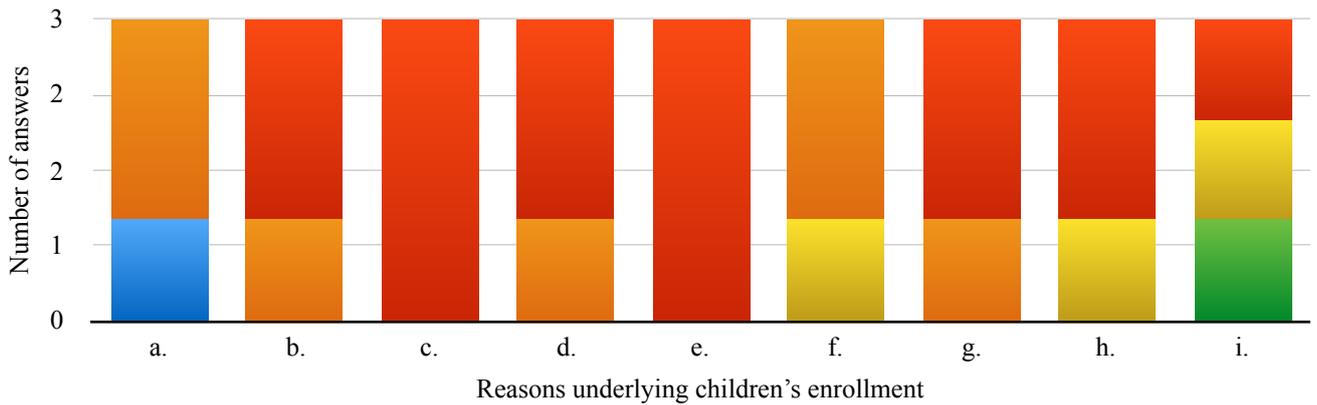
- a. Other children’s/friends’ experiences
- b. Possibility of talking two languages
- c. Possibility of being part of a multicultural environment
- d. Desire for my child to develop a bicultural identity
- e. Possibility of maintaining/learning Italian
- f. Closeness to our home
- g. Trust in teachers
- h. Interest in the program adopted to foster bilingualism
- i. Possibility of working together with teachers to define the educational program

Table 9

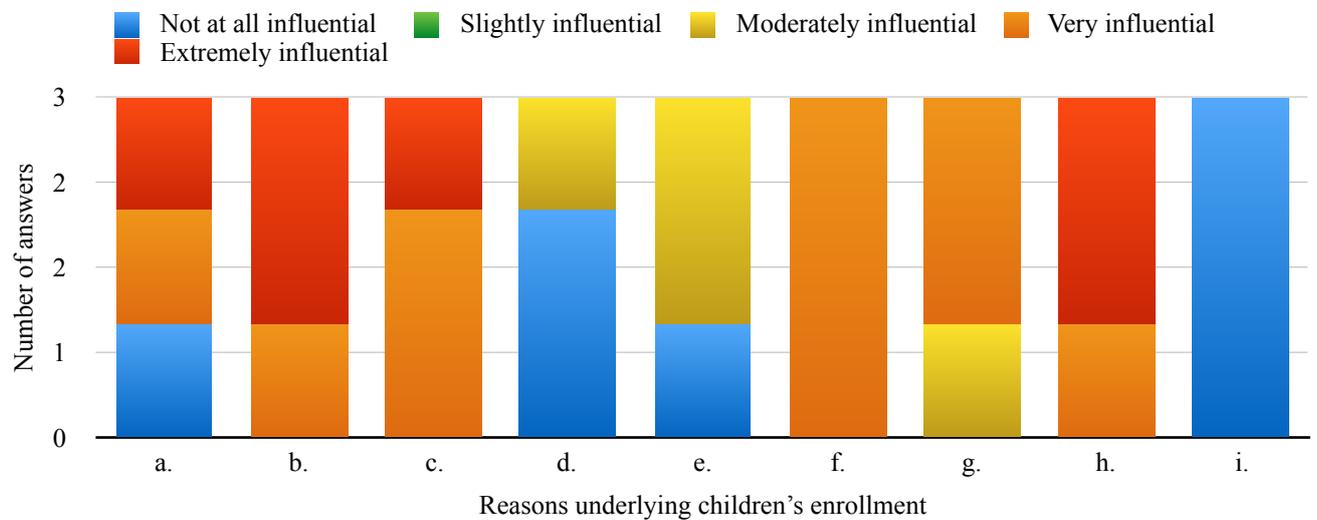
Bilingual/Multilingual families



Italian Monolingual Families



German Monolingual Families



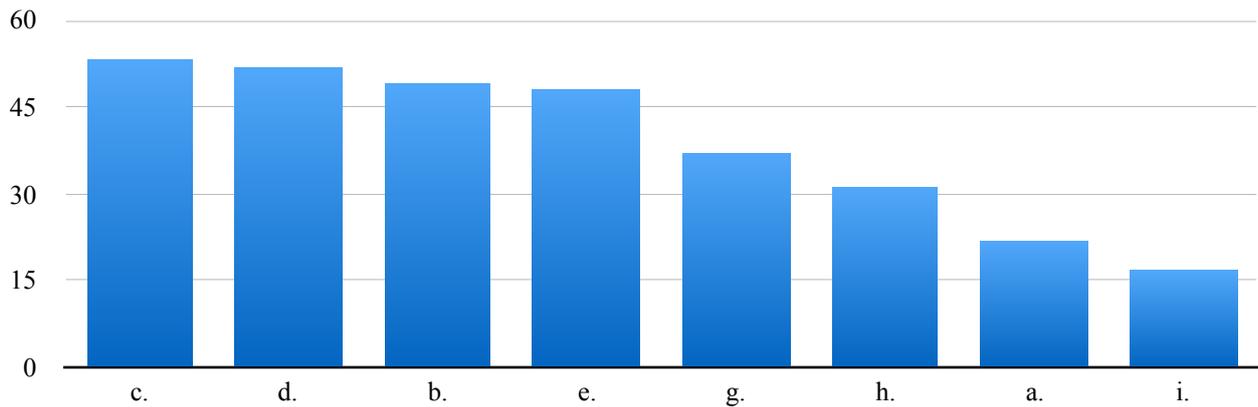
In order to measure as objectively as possible the main reasons underlying children’s enrollment for each group, a score has been assigned to each answer as follows:

Not at all influential	0
Slightly influential	1
Moderately influential	2
Very influential	3
Extremely influential	4

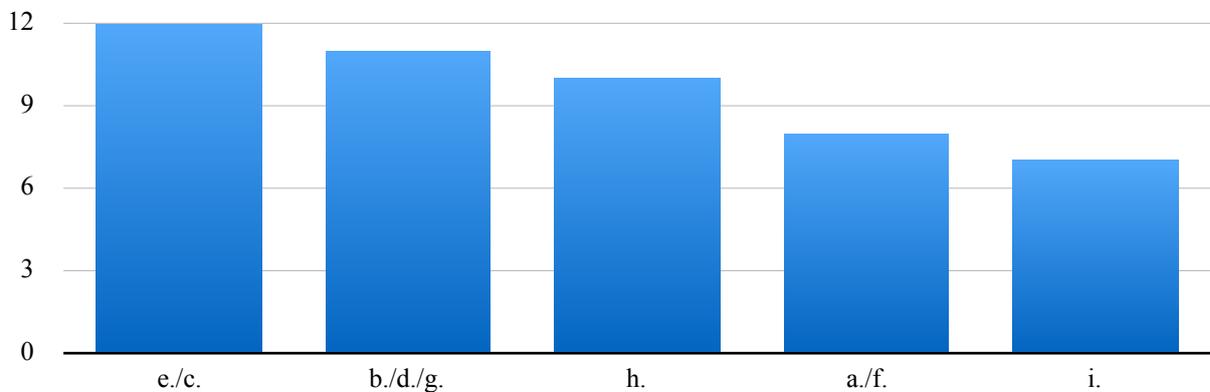
On the base of this, reasons underlying children’s enrollment have been ranked. Results are shown in Table 9.1 below.

Table 9.1.

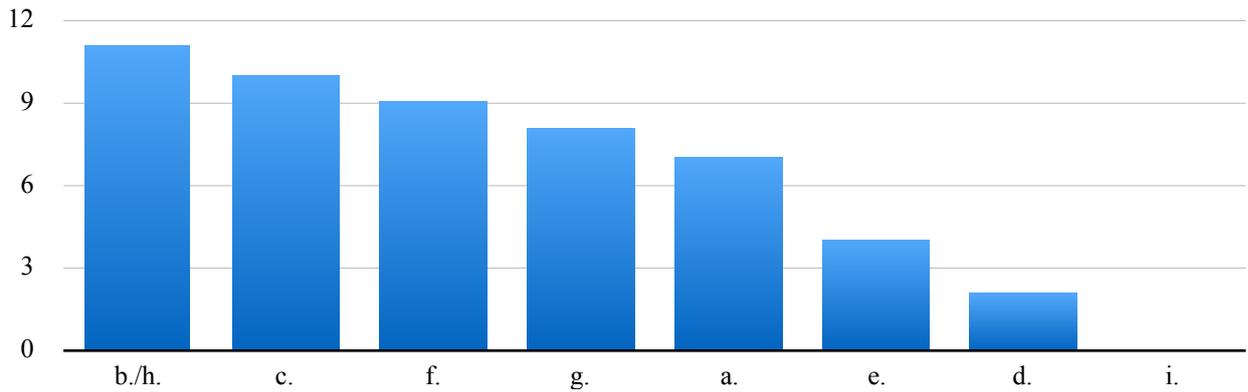
Bilingual/Multilingual families



Italian Monolingual Families



German Monolingual Families



Questions 20 and 21 concentrate on the level of interest towards dual language programs before and after the children’s enrollment in pre-school. Answers are shown in Table 10 and Table 11 below, respectively.

Table 10: interest before the children’s enrollment

● 5/Very interested ● 4 ● 3 ● 2 ● 1/Not at all interested

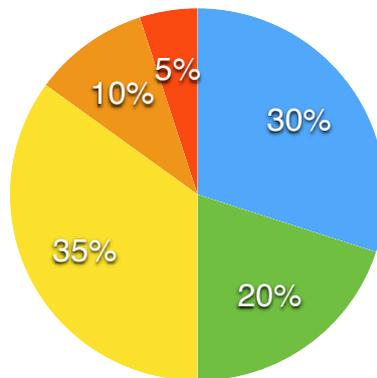
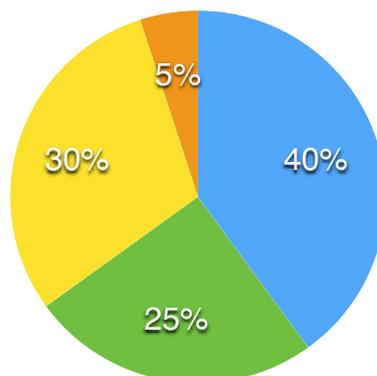


Table 11: interest after the children’s enrollment

● 5/Very interested ● 4 ● 3 ● 2 ● 1/Not at all interested



In detail, the interest towards the program increased in 4 out of 20 cases, it remained the same in 15 out of 20 cases (six families rated “5” both before and after the enrollment), it decreased in 1 out of 20 cases.

Among the families under survey, 8 said that they had taken into consideration the idea of enrolling their children in a German monolingual kindergarten (Q. 22) and 5 meditated upon sending them to another bilingual pre-school, but they were not interested in any other languages but Italian and German (Q. 23).

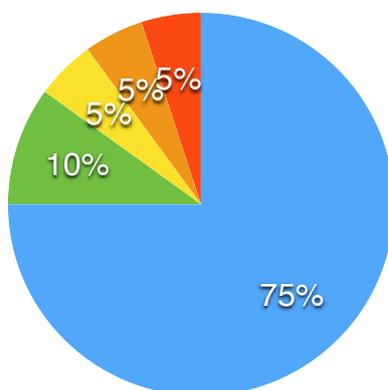
Answers to Q. 24 revealed that 17 families out of 20 want their children to continue bilingual schooling in future (no matter what languages are taught). A monolingual German family answered they are not inclined to keep on pursuing bilingual education as soon as the child leaves the kindergarten and two families replied they “do not know yet” whether they will choose bilingual or monolingual schools. It has to be highlighted that the family where a decrease of interest was remarked (Q. 20) belongs to the last mentioned group.

4.4. Section 4

Question 25 focuses instead on how important families feel their child to acquire Italian. Results are shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12

● 5/Very important ● 4 ● 3 ● 2 ● 1/Not important at all



As expected lower scores were given by monolingual German families. In particular, the family that rated it “3” was composed by a member of Italian ancestry.

Table 13 shows the main reasons why families feel the acquisition of Italian important.

Table 13

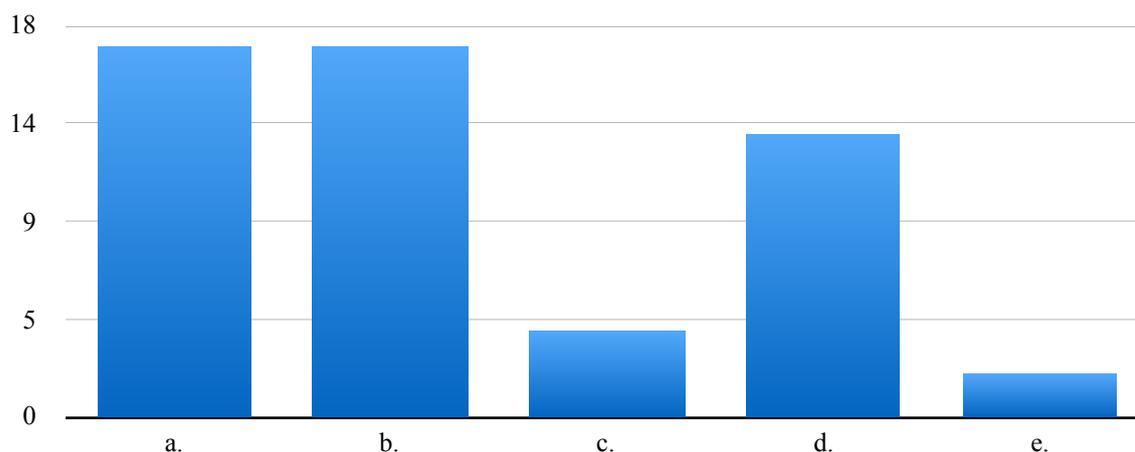
a - I want him/her to know my/my partner’s language

b - I want him/her to be able to communicate with Italian relatives/friends

c - I think the knowledge of Italian could give him/her better working opportunities in the future

d . Because he/she can benefit from acquiring two languages at this age

e - Other (Interest in the Italian culture)



Parents were then asked how important they felt their children to acquire German (Q. 26), and everyone replied “5” to this question.

Q. 27 focuses attention to the importance of getting instructed in the Italian language at school. Answers are shown in Table 14.

It is important to note that all the monolingual Italian families assigned a score of “3” to the importance of developing literacy in the Italian language too. Scores “2” and “1” were instead assigned by monolingual German families.

Table 14

● 5/Very important ● 4 ● 3 ● 2 ● 1/Not important at all

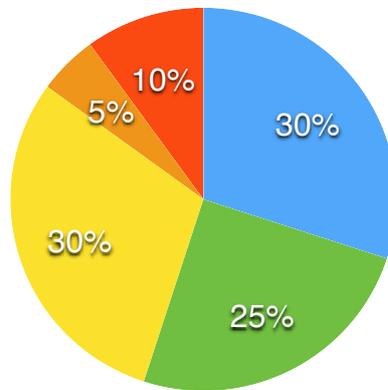


Table 14 shows the linguistic level parents want their children to reach in Italian.

a.: We would like him/her to sound and write like a native speaker

b.: We would like him/her to be able to express fluently and correctly

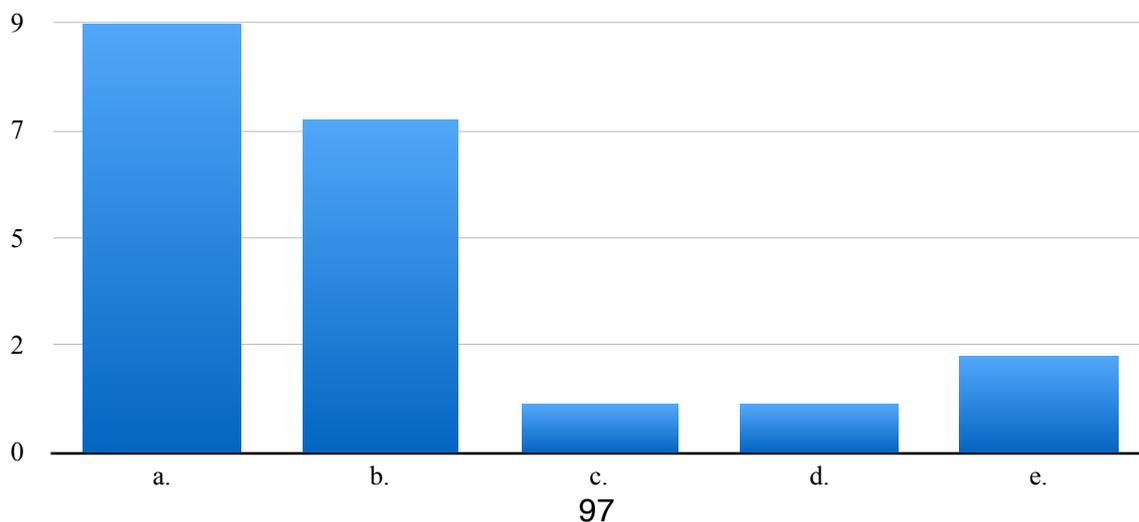
c.: We would like him/her to be able to communicate without big effort. It does not matter to us if he/she makes mistakes

d.: We would like him/her to have basic knowledge of Italian

e.: We do not care about what level of Italian he/she will reach

The three monolingual German families under scrutiny answered “d” (a family where a member has Italian ancestry) and “e” (two other families), respectively.

Table 15



5. Discussion

5.1. Linguistic Practices at Home and Outputs

On the base of the parents' mother tongues, families of the kindergarten under scrutiny have been divided into four main groups, namely: multilingual, bilingual, monolingual Italian and monolingual German families. Bilingual families represent the largest group.

If we focus on this category, data show that the gender of the minority language speaker seems to influence the language spoken within the couple but not as much the one chosen to talk with children. In families where the father is an Italian native speaker the languages mainly used within the couple are: Italian (50%), German and Italian (37%), Italian and English (13%). Within the same group, children are talked to both in German and Italian in 75% of cases and in Italian only in the remaining 25% of cases.

If we draw attention to bilingual families where the mother is the minority language speaker we can see that German is the predominant language spoken within two couples, both German and Italian are used by other two couples and English is added as well as a communication means by a family.

Both German and Italian are used to talk with children by the majority. Even if spoken among parents, English is not used as a means of communication with children. In the multilingual family, Arabic is spoken as well besides German and Italian. Two bilingual families declared to have planned to talk only Italian to their children when all together.

Parents seem therefore to be more inclined to expose their children to both Italian and German equally rather than give more space to the minority language or to add a third language as a means of communication. This may be due to the fear that adding a third language would be a too demanding charge for the child.

Monolingual families tend instead to use their mother tongue only while dialoguing. One monolingual Italian family tries to give space to German too.

If we focus on dialects, we can see that they are generally not used to talk with children, except by a few Italian native speakers (in particular, 2 out of 3 Italian monolingual families said they employ it) and an Arabic-German mother, who uses Libanese as well to communicate. It may be stated that sub-varieties of the standard languages are disregarded within the families under scrutiny.

With regard to the languages spoken by each member of the couple to the child, we can notice that all bilingual families tend to adopt the OPOL approach, even when parents established to talk the minority language only when all together.

Few space is given to the non-mother tongue in monolingual Italian families and no Italian is spoken at home by monolingual German families. So, even if parents value bilingualism, communication in the non-mother tongue is often not supported at home by monolingual families.

According to data, children seem to conform to the language spoken by their parents, even if a slight preference for German language can be remarked, especially in the multilingual family, where the child, as stated by both the father and the mother, often switches to German whether he/she is talked to in Italian or in Arabic. It has also to be remarked that the child of the monolingual Italian family, where space is given to German as well when talking to the child, was said to switch “sometimes” to German.

Concerning the language spoken with brothers and sisters, German is mainly spoken. The gender of the minority language speaker does not seem to affect children’s linguistic choices. On the other hand, the “home language vs community language” approach seems to lead to monolingualism among sisters and brothers as well, both in monolingual German and monolingual Italian families, at least at early ages.

If we focus on bilingual families, we can see that the exposition to the two languages generally seems to be balanced and the only case in which both

Italian and German are spoken between brothers and sisters is the case of a bilingual family where parents planned to talk only Italian (but only when all together). Further data are required in order to understand if a predominance of the minority language within the family circle in bilingual families and the use of the non mother tongue too in monolingual families can lead to equality between both minority and majority language.

If we examine the support both Italian and German children receive outside home and school and the domestic activities that may be useful to develop linguistic skills, data show that bilingual families more frequently have contact with relatives and people outside the family circle who have German as their mother tongue, even if they are in touch with Italian native speakers as well. More than half of the bilingual families who took part to the survey state to have holiday in Italy twice or more than twice a year. Within this group only few families have babysitters too. When it occurs, German speaking babysitters are more frequently employed.

At home, both German and Italian books are read approximately to the same extent. This is the activity parents claim to do most frequently, together with listening to music, which seems to be much employed as well. Watching TV/ cartoons is the activity least done at home: in these cases, German is the slightly preferred language.

Focusing on monolingual Italian families, none of those under scrutiny has German ancestry, therefore children never have contacts with German-speaking relatives, but they are often in touch with Italian speaking ones. On the other hand, they are more often involved in activities with German native speakers outside the family circle than with their Italian counterparts. Concerning babysitting help, in two families it takes place both in German and in Italian, in the remaining in German only.

The activity in which children are most often engaged is listening to music (in both languages to the same extent), followed by reading books (in this case,

story telling takes place slightly more often in Italian than in German). Here again watching TV seems to be the least frequently done activity at home.

In monolingual German families Italian language seems to be poorly supported. Among the ones under survey, a monolingual German family has Italian ancestry and the child is said to have once a week contact with Italian speaking relatives. In 2 out of 3 cases contact with people outside the family circle who have Italian as their mother tongue and holiday in Italy takes place “rarely”, as well as holiday in Italy. Children seem to be never left with either German or Italian babysitters. At home children are exposed to Italian mainly through music. Only in one case the child is read books in Italian. As stated before, here as well children are more often engaged in activities which do not include watching TV.

Findings suggest a gap between desire to foster bilingualism and actual practices within German monolingual families. Even if they show relatively high interest towards the possibility of speaking two languages and being part of a multicultural environment at pre-school, parents slightly encourage their children to talk Italian both at and outside home. This may be mainly due to the fact that they do not look as important the achievement of high levels of Italian language proficiency.

On the contrary, Italian monolingual families look very supportive towards their children’s efforts to improve their German (even if in this group there is not a predominance of German in activities in which children are engaged at home). Outside home, German is instead the most used language by the people both monolingual and bilingual families spend time with.

Data also show a coincidence between those activities which parents claim to be “the best” to develop children’s linguistic skills (namely: “conversation”, “reading books”, “music/singing”) and their practices at home.

Bilingual families seem to prefer reading books in both languages. Monolingual families under scrutiny are more likely to expose their children

to the parents' non-mother tongue through music. Watching TV looks to be a generally disregarded activity by both groups.

Other practices, such as ways of correcting mistakes/code-switching, have also been taken into account. Only the multilingual family states to look positively at language mixing, while the majority of parents looks neither happy nor disappointed with it. Only a couple claims to be discontented with code-switching. Families seem therefore not to be aware of the fact that code-switching is actually a very useful communication resource (Grosjean, 1982) and "a sign of the participants' awareness of alternative communicative conventions" (Greene and Walker, 2004), but, on the other hand, they do not look negatively at this phenomenon (according to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004) most bilinguals look at it as a sign of "laziness" or of lack of linguistic skills) and they do not seem to force their children to avoid it.

More than half parents tend to use what Lanza (2004: 262) calls "Repetition" strategy (65%) and the "Move on" strategy (20%), while the 5% points out the mistake. Two families picked the answer "other" and then they specified that they "do not correct him/her if the words he/she uses in the other language are correct, but we rephrase the sentence correctly if they are not" and that they "act differently depending on the situations", respectively.

Generally speaking, families adopt strategies which are "less directed toward negotiating a monolingual context" (Lanza, 2004: 265)¹² and they convey a positive attitude towards language mixing and to bilingual contexts.

¹² Lanza (2004) identifies five different strategies parents usually adopt as a response to their children's code-switching and classifies them depending on whether they are monolingual or bilingual-centered. "Minimal Grasp" and "Expressed Guess" strategy, which imply a reformulation of the sentence by the child, are seen as strategies that focus on monolingualism. On the other hand, "Repetition", "Move on Strategy" and "Adult Code-Switches" highlight more the role of the bilingual.

5.2 Attitudes toward Bilingual Education

Part 3 of the questionnaire aims at evaluating the degree of parents' involvement, the understanding and sharing of the principles underlying dual language education, which not only fosters the development of bilingual/biliterate skills, but also supports "positive cross-cultural attitudes" (Torres-Guzmán 2007: 52)¹³.

There are some differences between the groups. The major reasons bilingual couples decided to enroll their children in a German-Italian pre-school are, respectively: effects on self-image (desire for them to feel part of a multicultural environment and to develop a bicultural identity), development of linguistic skills (and, in particular, to maintain Italian), trust in teachers. Bilingual families seem however to have been only partially influenced by the type of bilingual program adopted by the kindergarten and by other factors external to the principles of dual language education, such as closeness to home, other friends'/children's experiences and the possibility of working together with educators to define the educational program. Similar results have been found among monolingual Italian families as well, even if, in this case, the maintenance of the Italian language was the most relevant reason together with the possibility of being part of a multicultural environment. The wish for their children to develop a bicultural identity and to acquire two languages were also significant aspects. Among this group too other factors external to the principles of dual language education did not play an important role and parents' decision was not drawn by the interest in the bilingual program.

On the other hand, monolingual German families under scrutiny were mainly attracted by the interest in the program and the possibility for their children to get in contact with two languages, even if this does not seem to be related to the fact that Italian was one of the languages acquired. Cognitive benefits

¹³ See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2. Dual Language Bilingual Education

related to the acquisition of two languages at early age were the most relevant aspect to them. Results show that their decision was also much influenced by the multicultural environment, even if they do not feel the development of a bicultural identity important, and by other factors such as closeness to home, trust in teachers and other friends'/children's experiences.

On the whole, parents were found to endorse the principles underlying bilingual education and to support slightly more the development of cross-cultural attitudes than that of linguistic skills.

Although the majority did not pinpoint concern for bilingual education as a crucial factor for children's enrollment, half of the families that took part to the survey showed an high interest towards it both before and after children's enrollment in preschool. Interest seems actually to increase after having experienced dual language education firsthand. This is confirmed also by the fact that 85% of the families under survey state they wish their children to be enrolled in a dual language program after pre-school, while before this experience 40% of the families had considered the idea of enrolling them in a mainstream German kindergarten. Parents seem therefore to understand the advantages that can derive from being bilingual and biliterate and to be inclined to encourage a seamless continuation of the bilingual education, in contrast with what Maserkopf (2015) states. This could be mainly due to the fact that since most of the couples under survey are bilingual, they are less inclined to fear that bilingual education could be a too demanding challenge than monolingual counterparts.

5.3. Attitudes regarding Italian and Italian-related Expectations for the Children

Even if 85% of them evaluated "5" or "4" their wish for their children to acquire Italian, only 55% of the families under survey rated "5" or "4" the importance of developing literacy in the Italian language too.

Findings suggest that many parents value bilingualism and understand the importance of being bilingual and biliterate, but literacy in the Italian language is not as much matter of concern, especially for Italian-dominant and German-dominant families.

Concerning Italian couples, this may be due to the belief that L1 literacy skills can be developed in the home environment. On the other hand, German couples claim not to wish their children to attain high proficiency levels in Italian and this could be the reason underlying their slight concern about their children being taught reading and writing in Italian language as well.

This may be also owing to the fact that most parents want their children to acquire Italian in order to develop skills enabling communication within the Italian-speaking community and for the cognitive advantages of being bilingual, but not as much for practical advantages related to it, such as better career opportunities. From this point of view results are in contrast with those found by Lao (2004) and Shannon and Milian's study (2002), that cite "better career opportunities" among the major reasons underlying the choice of bilingual education. For this reason parents may be less convinced to carry on the German-Italian education.

This is confirmed by parents' expectations concerning the level of Italian proficiency, which differ among the groups. As stated before, German monolingual families agree they do not expect their children to reach high levels of proficiency in Italian, while others would like them to attain high linguistic levels, but less than half of them want their children to both speak and write like an Italian native speaker.

6. Limitations and Suggestions for further Researches

The study shows some limitations, in particular:

- The sample group is small. This was mainly due to the fact that the study takes into consideration the practices adopted by the educators of the

preschool where the children are enrolled too, so the survey was restricted to the families of this kindergarten only. Further researches could focus on monolingual families, which are underrepresented in this study. Since data show that Italian couples under survey are less interested in children's enrollment in a German-Italian Elementary school than their bilingual counterparts, they may be asked whether they agree with the fact that development of literacy in L1 can ease the acquisition of the same skills in the L2 too or if they think that the enrollment in a mainstream German school could speed up and improve the acquisition of German. On the other hand, those interested in bilingual Italian-German education may be asked what level of literacy they would like their children to attain (e.g. if they would be satisfied with them having an Elementary-school level literacy or if they think this would be insufficient). Furthermore, studies including parents who have children that attend a dual language Italian-German program at Elementary or Middle or High schools may give different results. Moreover, studies focusing on monolingual families only may highlight parents' language proficiency levels in the non-mother tongue and ask about the strategies adopted to support it outside school, which has been in part investigated in this study as well.

- Disadvantages related to the questionnaire technique. All aspects were measured by parents' self-perceptions, and may therefore lack objectivity, such as, for example, the one related to code-switching, which would be better evaluated by the researcher himself.

Chapter 6

School Environment

1. Introduction

As previously stated,

“research on preschool education for bilingualism should thus take into account the individual agencies of children, parents and teachers, and examine their interaction. Preschool education should also be seen as embedded in a certain sociolinguistic, educational and sociopolitical context.” (Schwartz & Palviainen, 2016: 610)

This chapter will consequently focus on teachers’ work in dual-language programs and their role in order to support children developing bicultural identities alongside with linguistic skills. In particular, the following aspects will be investigated:

A. *language practices and strategies* adopted in order to develop, on one hand, bilingualism (which have been, according to Lo Bianco (2010), object of few works since now) and, on the other, enrichment because, as Genesee, Paradis and Crago (2004: 33) state,

“children’s identities and senses of self are inextricably linked to the language they speak and the culture to which they have been socialized.

They are, even at an early age, speakers of their languages and members of their cultures. Language and culture are essential to children’s identities”;

B. *attitudes towards bilingualism*, in accordance with Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan's (2000) remark that teachers’ awareness and appreciation of the goals and principles underlying bilingual programs are determinant;

C. *external factors*, which include both the status of Italian language in Berlin and influences from “above” (national linguistic policies) (Spolsky, 2007: 11). This last aspect has been previously discussed in Chapter “Bilingual Education in Germany” too. The impact of the increase of the

Italian community on the linguistic policies adopted by this pre-school will also be treated.

D. *children's outputs* at school will be described, even if to a lesser extent.

At first, some information on the school environment will be provided. Then, data collected through interviews to teachers and during a three months long observation will be discussed, focusing on the aspects previously mentioned.

2. Description of the School Environment

2.1. Setting

Data were collected in a bilingual German-Italian kindergarten in Berlin during the 2016-2017 school year. Before being transformed into a pre-school in 2006, this structure had been used as an aftercare school addressed to students who attended one of the two bilingual German-Italian Elementary schools since 1995. The area is not inhabited by an high percentage of Italian migrants but many Italian enterprises (in particular, restaurants), as well as the Italian-German Elementary school previously mentioned, take place there.

2.2. Staff

The staff is composed by: four Italian educators, two German educators, a German Sprachpädagogin, two German Bundesfreiwilligendienstleistende(r) (i.e. two people who do the federal voluntary service), a German or Italian trainee. All educators and the Sprachpädagogin accepted to take part in the interview.

2.3. Children attending the Kindergarten

Children's age ranges from 2 to 6. They are divided into two mixed age groups.

The headmaster referred that, since the number of families who want their children to attend the kindergarten is relatively high, multiple factors are taken into consideration before deciding who to enroll. These are, namely:

gender, age, language/languages spoken, parents' willingness to actively support the institution and Italian ancestry.

For this reason and because of the fact that the number of applications is high, this last criterion is much taken into consideration and children coming from German-only families without Italian ancestry are less likely to be enrolled.

On the other hand, bilingual families are preferred to Italian-only ones as well.

2.4. Elterninitiative

The kindergarten, as many other pre-schools in Germany, is an Elterninitiative (literally, a private parents' initiative). This means that parents manage the school, forming a registered association which aims at sustaining the kindergarten through work contribution. This implies that parents have decision-making power over the daily life, but they are financially supported by the city-state of Berlin.

2.5. Educational Approach

The main goal of the program can be summarized with the word "bilinguità", which was first used by Titone in 1989. As Balboni (2001) claims, bilingual people are not simply able of mastering different languages, but these shape their view of the world and coexist in their minds. Languages develop and change their identity and their sense of belonging to a community.

This is the main goal pursued by educators. Besides this, teachers aim at enabling children to acquire linguistic skills that can allow them being taught reading and writing in both languages, thus continuing the bilingual German-Italian education in one of the schools of the SESB program.

As stated before, the preschool collaborates with the two bilingual German-Italian Elementary Schools situated in Berlin and with the Italian Embassy. Both educators and teachers seem aware of the advantages related to a

cooperation between bilingual preschools and bilingual schools highlighted by Wode (1998, 2009)¹⁴.

In the so-called “Concept” of the preschool it is stated that educators adopt the “immersion method”, even if, because of this preschool features, it will be referred to as a “dual-language program” thereafter, in accordance with the distinction made in Chapter “Bilingual Education”.

Children are exposed to both Italian and German for the same amount of time during the day. Most of them are already bilingual when they enter preschool, even if both minority and majority language speakers are included as well. For some respects (as the type of child attending the kindergarten), the program shares characteristics with both dual language and mainstream bilingual courses.

Teachers adopt the OPOL approach and all members of the staff speak their mother tongue only to the children.

The language is explicitly said to stay in background and not to be the main focus of the program. All activities are therefore carried on in both languages, and children acquire them “in context”, as related to specific daily life situations.

3. Language Practices

Do you use any peculiar tools when you do an activity (e.g. props, technologies, music...)? Which are, according to you, the advantages related to them? Are there tools you are more inclined to use with children who are not proficient in your mother tongue? Which are, according to you, the ones children like most?

Educators said to use many different tools, depending on their personal inclinations, namely:

¹⁴ See Chapter “Bilingual Education in Germany”, Section “Bilingual Kindergarten”

- Songs; all educators agreed on the fact this is a helpful tool to ease the acquisition of new words and sounds, especially with children who do not have high proficiency levels in the language. Moreover, the use of paralinguistic strategies while singing helps them grasping the general sense;
- Books/Storytelling;
- Dialogue; in reference to this, an educator stated that *“many people think that if you talk Italian to your child he will naturally acquire Italian, but it is not as easy as it may seem, actually. [...] You can not just “talk” to him, [...]...you have to keep on repeating the same concepts, paying attention to always use the same words, to talk slowly, to talk watching the child in the eyes”*. They also pointed out the fact that they tried to speak their mother language only because they were afraid the use of both languages could be “too confusing” for children;
- Games/Board games; in particular, the game of “Memory”;
- Nursery rhymes; these were mainly used by Italian educators (e.g. Aldo Cambio story);
- Puppets; among the materials used by educators, the puppets “Martino” and “Lotte” were mentioned as well. An educator said *“I think they are fundamental to develop linguistic skills, especially with very young learners, because children are usually ashamed to speak a language they do not master, and these puppets help them loosening up. If they think they are communicating with a puppet instead that with an adult, they are more motivated to speak”*.

Educators applied the OPOL approach to Martino and Lotte as well. For that reason, Martino could speak only Italian and Lotte was her German native speaker counterpart. According to a teacher, they can be used to test both passive and active knowledge. She cited as an example two different tasks of an activity about body parts. Children were first asked “Where is Martino’s

eye?”, in order to test their knowledge of the word “eye”, and then “What’s this?”, while pointing at Martino’s eye. These were said to be useful tools with children from 2 to 6;

- Technologies; this tool was generally disregarded by educators. When asked about, a teacher said she does not like using this kind of materials because *“it looks like they hypnotize children”*. Only an educator looks at them positively and claimed to use often Internet, video, photos. She also invited children to take photos by themselves. When asked about the advantages of this kind of instruments, she said *“you can introduce technologies to children and trigger their interest for them by showing how some things work. For example, last year I showed them stop motion technique in order to explain them how cartoons are made. They were so curious we created a cartoon by ourselves. They were motivated to use the language because this activity arouse their curiosity. They created a story by themselves and also a song...and while doing it they developed their linguistic skills in the Italian language without explicitly focusing on it.”*

The activities highlighted by the educators under survey were similar to those suggested by both Fabbro (2004) and Coonan and Ricci Garotti (2001) to foster foreign language acquisition in young children during pre-school years. Visual reinforcement of concrete and abstract concepts (e.g. pictures, charts, film/video, gestures) was extensively used too.

As will be highlighted throughout the paragraph “Enrichment” as well, the materials used by educators were chosen in order to be “psychologically relevant” to the child. As Balboni (2001) claims, the interest for a specific object/language sample is the necessary condition in order to convey linguistic contents without them to be perceived as something artificial.

Teachers often drew inspiration from children’s suggestions. For example, after having being asked “how many legs do ants have?” by a child, a teacher

decided to do an activity about ants and then she commented “*you just need to listen to them and find out what interests them*”.

Even if, as it will be highlighted in the following paragraph, the interactional approach was the one mainly used by teachers, techniques based on the behaviourist approach were used and recognized as useful too (e.g. keep to memory songs and nursery rhymes).

What do you do when you get the impression that the child can not understand what you are saying?

Teachers used to facilitate children’s comprehension through the use of both linguistic and paralinguistic strategies, e.g. slower, clearly enunciated, simplified and repetitive speech, gestures, confirmation checks. Many of them also asked for the help of older children.

A teacher stated “*I never switch to German. If a child does not understand what I am saying, even after different attempts, I ask my German colleagues to talk with him or older children to translate what I’m saying.*”

This was partly due to the necessity of building up “situational authenticity”. As Balboni (2001) claims, it is essential that children feel the “necessity” of talking the FL. According to him, the necessity may be “created” through the presence of a puppet which can only speak the children’s non mother tongue (as was the case of Martino and Lotte).

However, the use of their mother tongue only did not always result in equal exposition to both languages.

Educators highlighted the fact that monolingual speakers usually look for a teacher who speaks their mother tongue. They specified that when beginning pre-school every child is assigned to a teacher who assumes the role of his/her lead person during the first period at kindergarten.

Teachers said to “be more emotionally bonded” to those children they have personally followed during this transition period. They suggest that, since

monolingual children are always assigned to a teacher who speaks their mother tongue, they are more likely to have a stronger connection with her and to avoid interactions with someone who does not understand them.

This was also due to the fact that, except for some activities, children were usually divided into two groups and both a German and an Italian educator were present at the same time.

This seems to partially affect teachers as well; for example, an educator stated that *“emotional bond is different with those children who can not understand what I say.”*

Interviews brought attention to the lack of fluency in the Italian language by German educators. This was been identified as a problem by them.

A teacher said *“sometimes I do not understand what the child is trying to tell me so I can not help him by suggesting the words he wants to say in German. It is frustrating for me.”* Similarly, a colleague said that the kind of relationship you establish with children *“depends also to the extent to which you can master your non mother tongue. When I see that a child is afraid not to be understood by me, I use some German words, in order him to feel more comfortable...even if I know I shouldn't.”*

An educator also referred about an episode which occurred with a young Italian child who could not talk German and used to have contact with Italian educators only. She said *“it happened once that none of my Italian colleagues was in kindergarten, I saw the child was there and I thought “what can I do now?”*”.

It has to be highlighted that this concern was mainly related to the fear of not being able to effectively communicate with the child in case a quarrel or a mishap occurred. This was remarked by another teacher as well, who stated *“I know I have to speak my mother tongue only, but if there is a quarrel, or a mishap, and I have to clarify the child something important and my German colleague is not close to me, I talk to him/her in German”*.

Italian monolingual children showing a speech delay or low proficiency levels in German were supported by a German Sprachpädagogin, with whom they worked individually. This kind of activities, however, took place for few hours a week. The teacher said *“I can see many progresses, but they do not always succeed in achieving their peers’ level, and this unnerves them.”*

It may be stated that the presence of both a German and an Italian teacher within the class, which aims at “recreating” the bilingual environment most of the children experience at home within the school domain as well, seems not always to be as successful with monolingual children too.

What do you do if the child uses both languages in the same sentence?

Most educators’ answers concerning attitudes towards code-switching can be partly ascribed to what has been called by Ochs (1988) the “Minimal Grasp Strategy”. According to Lanza (1997) this strategy highlights more the role of the monolingual and usually consists in a request for clarification or a statement (e.g. Hm? What did you say? I do not understand). In this case, even if teachers used to call for a response by the child, children were not negatively sanctioned.

Most educators led children to rephrase by telling them *“I’m sorry, I’ve heard a word I do not know...What’s this thing you’re talking about? I’m so curious!”*. A teacher commented *“this is a hard work, both for the child and for us, but it yields benefits”*.

While interacting with children they tended to negotiate monolingual contexts instead that bilingual ones, but in a playful way.

Which linguistic aspects do children find most difficult to acquire? How do you “correct mistakes”, if you do?

Teachers were aware of the existence of a “silence period”, during which children need time in order to process language before being able to produce

it, and of their interlanguage. They made accurate observations on interference of the mother tongue on second language learning and on progresses children made.

An educator told me *“it takes time, but if you keep on repeating the same concepts using always the same words, it works [...]. Sometimes I see that, when they are sitting alone playing, they repeat to themselves some words. Sometimes they just do not tell you the words you expect if explicitly asked, but I can see they use them while they think nobody is watching.”*

Most of the teachers claimed that children mainly speak German with their peers (similarly to what happens with siblings).

This results in some interferences in the Italian language in both German and bilingual children’s speech, such as:

- pronunciation of the r at the beginning of the word as [R];
- use of the auxiliary verb “avere” with reflexive verbs (ex. “Io mi ho lavato le mani”);
- clitic after the the verb “potere” (ex. “Non può lo fare”);
- use of “potere” instead of “sapere” or “riuscire”;
- past participle at the end of the sentence (ex. “Io ho i denti lavato!”);
- word for word translations of some expressions, such as “io sono finito” instead of “io ho finito”;

On the other hand, the main interferences highlighted among Italian children by the German Sprachpädagogin were:

- sentence structure;
- use of the verb “gehen” as a substitute of “fliegen”, “fahren” etc.;
- use of the auxiliary verb “sein” with reflexive verbs;

All educators never negatively sanctioned children when they made mistakes. They usually reacted by rephrasing the sentence and repeating it, sometimes twice, talking slowly to the children, who were never asked to repeat it (even if they often did it spontaneously). Teachers often tried to transform their

“linguistic mistakes” in a funny moment, by saying, as an example “oddio, sono finito!!! E adesso come farò?”, and inventing a funny story around it, in order the children to be more likely to remember the correct phrase without feeling “negatively judged”.

3.1. Enrichment

How do you convey both the Italian and the German culture throughout the program? Are both cultures equally supported?

All educators stated that both Italian and German culture are conveyed to the children, are looked as equally important and, as a consequence, equally distributed throughout the curriculum.

In particular, feasts belonging to both cultures are celebrated. These are, in detail: feast of the Epiphany, Carnival, Easter, Laternefest, St. Nikolaus, Christmas time.

During the Easter period children play Easter egg hunt, which is very common in Germany, and, during Christmas time, they make by themselves an Advent Calendar, which is a tradition not as much widespread in Italy. The day before Saint Nicholas’ Day children are asked to clean their boots. On the 6th of December the “Saint” comes to preschool and distributes and gives them their boots full of sweets back.

Among the celebrations previously mentioned the feast of the Epiphany is actually the only typical Italian one they celebrate. During Christmas time an Italian bagpipes player man came to pre-school to show children the instrument, explain them how it works and play some typical Christmas Italian songs. On another occasion, children were told about a legend related to “zizzilone”, a typical Sardinian instrument whose sound can not be heard by humans but only by animals, and for this reason it was used by bandits in order to scare the Carabinieri’s horses.

Italian culture was also the main focus of a music and a theatre course, each of which lasted two months. Both projects took place once a week and children attended them divided into three different age groups.

When the teacher responsible of these projects was asked which typical Italian culture elements she thinks these courses convey, she answered that *“both help developing Italian linguistic skills, because they are completely delivered in Italian. Actors who “teach” theatre course, for example, have decided to use characters taken from “Commedia dell’Arte”, you know, Arlecchino, Pulcinella[...]*this year. Last year, they told children a story about two mice which travelled to many different Italian cities and at the end they found themselves in Berlin. [...]They explicitly told me these *“stylistic choices” are done in order to focus on Italian cultural aspects as well.*”

When asked about children’s reactions during the theatre course, she referred that *“children were enthusiastic”* and that *“most of them had never heard about characters such as Arlecchino, or Colombina”*.

Concerning the music course, she referred that the teacher often used songs derived from the Tuscan tradition, especially old lullabies.

Music was the focus of another Italian educator as well. According to him, children like folk music and so, during his activities, he worked with 2/3 years old children using Tenores’ songs. This band was chosen because *“there is a bass guitar player, a baritone, a contralto and a solo voice. All together, they create the musical base. These different musical elements can be embodied by a shepherd (the solo voice), the wind (the contralto), a cow (the bass) and a sheep (the baritone).*” He also used a CD with *“a storyteller who tells a story about these four characters, with the Tenores’ songs as background music. With older children the same storyteller tells a different story, this time using the tarantella”*.

Children had the possibility of coming into contact with the Italian culture through cooking classes as well. The same courses were offered to students of

the Italian-German bilingual Elementary school too. The educator who provided this kind of courses stated that *“it is important to invent a story that can be associated to every plate...for example, I see that children usually like preparing tomato sauce, but they have difficulty remembering the ingredients, so I invented a “spaghetti western” story. The main characters were a spaghetti cowboy, an onion, a tomato and parsley [...]. When you narrate and make up stories, they are more likely to remember new words.”*

When asked if music or theatre projects were done in the German language as well, a German speaking educator answered *“[...]we do not feel it as much important...I mean, it’s not due to the fact that it is not important for us, I just think we do not feel as necessary to explicitly focus on it because we are “immersed” into it...every time we walk on the street, we go with the children to a museum or to theatre, they come into contact with German culture.”*

The same opinion was shared by another German colleague as well, who also claimed she didn’t *“feel as necessary to explicitly focus on it”*.

Another German educator mentioned “food” and “music” (especially those related to German celebrations as the Laternefest) as a means through which German culture is daily conveyed to children.

All majority language speaking teachers stated at the end, without being explicitly asked, there was an imbalance between activities focusing on Italian culture and their German counterparts.

Teachers’ answers suggest that more attention is given to develop activities focusing on the culture related to the minority language. This is partially due to economic reasons (some projects are financially supported by the Italian Embassy) but also to the fact that German educators do not seem to feel as necessary to do activities focusing on their culture as their Italian colleagues do.

In both cases, music is the means mainly employed.

4. Attitudes towards Bilingualism

What do you think about bilingualism/ dual-language programs?

All educators showed a positive attitude towards bilingualism and dual-language programs. An educator specified *“I think they are very important, they increase our sense of being part of the European Union...but, on the other hand, I do not understand those parents who enroll their children in a German-Chinese pre-school. It does not make any sense to me.”*

These words recall Balboni's claim (2001) about the “European linguistic model” which, according to him, disregards non-EU languages such as Arabic or Turkish, which, even if they are spoken by a large number of immigrants, are usually not represented at school.

All educators remarked the cognitive advantages related to the early acquisition of languages. A German teacher told me *“I was positively shocked when I first came to this preschool and saw how easily these children can switch from a language to another.”*

A colleague affirmed that she thinks that *“from some point of views, children are more receptive to others' needs...for example, they usually speak German among them, but if there is a child who can not speak German, they immediately switch to Italian, without us asking them to do it.”*

I personally noticed children's curiosity about other languages. The first day I entered the pre-school, a child made a Spanish, a French, an Italian and a German flag using building blocks and then came to me asking to pick the flags related to the languages I could speak. Then he went to a friend and told him “she can speak French!”. Some days after, during the morning circle, while counting in both Italian and German how many children were present, a child spontaneously asked me “how do you count in French?”. This gave a teacher the idea of asking “Does anyone can count in a different language?” and of keeping on the activity using other languages too.

Are families likely to enroll their children in a bilingual school after this program? What do you suggest them to do at the end of preschool?

Teachers' answers to this question seem to confirm what data collected among parents show and, in particular, that almost all families want their children to be enrolled in a bilingual German-Italian Elementary School but this tendency is lower among both monolingual Italian and monolingual German families.

This latter group is more likely to interrupt bilingual education after preschool. According to an educator, this is mainly due to the fact that *“it is difficult for German children to attend successfully a bilingual German-Italian school if the language is not spoken at home [...] Italian language can not be compared to the English one, which is easier to be exposed to, also through radio and music, it is something different”*.

During an interview, an educator claimed that the schools which are part of the SESB are not as much focused at majority language speakers but they are meant to give children of mixed couples the possibility of becoming literate in the minority language too.

Most educators shared the idea that mainstream German education would be better for those children who speak only Italian within the home environment. In this case, bilingual preschools are seen as a transition period in order to help families who just moved to Germany to integrate themselves in the new community.

They claimed that *“Italian families are often inclined to choose a community where their children can feel “at home”, but they do not take into account the difficulties children can have once at school...if he doesn't master German he risks “sinking”, and they added “you know [...],they risk being labelled as “problematic” children, because they do not understand and, as a consequence, they do not stay quiet [...] therefore we suggest parents to look at their children's future”*.

As an alternative, they advise parents to enroll children in a German only kindergarten and then, once the child finishes preschool, to continue the studies in bilingual schools in order him to become biliterate too. An educator explicitly said *“if both languages are spoken at home, I think you definitely have to develop your heritage culture and language at school as well, but in case it risks impeding you to integrate in the society where you have decided to live for the rest of your life, it is not worthy.”*

According to you, how does the German society perceive bilingualism?

All teachers agreed to the fact that bilingualism is generally positively viewed by the German society. This was said to be very common in the city of Berlin in particular. Only an educator highlighted the fact that the interest is mainly towards European languages and took as an example the Turkish language which, despite the presence of a large community, is generally disregarded. According to her, this has to do with the fact that the Turkish community is not as much integrated into the German societies as other migrant communities are.

Another educator claimed that bilingualism is encouraged from “above”, and is also thanks to that and to the fact that the SESB program is so widespread that bilingualism is positively viewed. She also added *“politicians want children who have a parent who speaks a minority language to preserve their heritage language and culture”*.

5. External Factors

Did the increase of the Italian community in Berlin influence your way of working?

All educators stated to have perceived the increase of the Italian community in the last years. When asked if there has been an increment in the number of applications during this period, all claimed that the number of requests has

always been high since the opening of the institution in 1995, but the number of Italian only families asking for apply has been growing in the last six years as a result of the huge migration waves in Berlin.

An educator said that *“there were some problems when the migration from Italy began to increase, because more and more monolingual Italian families asked us to enroll their children here, and this resulted in an imbalance between the two languages. Italian turned out to be the language mainly spoken among children This was mainly due to the presence of many 4 and 5 years old Italian native speakers, who assumed the role of “leaders” and changed the language spoken among peers.”*

At that time educators decided to increase the use of the German language by looking for German only people doing the voluntary service. German speaking educators were then asked to sit close to Italian children during breakfast, lunch and snack time. The number of activities done using the German language was increased, in particular the amount of time spent reading books written in the majority language.

German speaking teachers were those mainly affected by this change. This was also due to the fact that their basic knowledge of the Italian language did not often allow them to communicate with Italian parents.

Educators stated to have decided to switch back to the previous state of things and to favor the enrollment of children of bilingual couples with respect to their monolingual counterparts.

We may state that educators did not find a proper solution to the demographic changes which have taken place in the last years and reacted to them by suggesting Italian couples to enroll children in mainstream schools. This kind of program has been defined by Baker & Wright (2017) as “submersion” and, according to the researchers, usually leads to monolingualism. Teachers do not share this view and suggest that additive bilingualism can be fostered even if the minority language is spoken only at home.

What is the status of/the interest towards the Italian language within the German community?

All educators agreed that both Italian language and his speakers are positively viewed by the German society, thus confirming Haug's (2015) remarks about the integration of Italians within the German community.

They pinpointed the fact that many Italian-German associations in Berlin foster cultural-exchange between the two communities.

A German educator said *"I think Italian language is seen as something "cool" [...]. English is studied because is useful, but Italian is generally viewed as something "highbrow". I wouldn't say French or Spanish have the same "status" Italian has."*

They also said that most Italians show the will to preserve the language and want their children to keep on studying it and coming into contact with the Italian culture too.

Why do monolingual German couples want to enroll their children in this kindergarten?

Educators pointed out that there are many different reasons underlying German parents' decision to enroll their children in a German-Italian kindergarten, namely:

- *Italian ancestry;*
- *Interest towards Italian culture* (they state in particular that 1 - they often travel to Italy 2- they are interested in Italian food and music 3 - they like the language, and therefore, many study and can speak it);
- *Advantages related to the acquisition of two languages at early ages* (they cited as an example a German family who asked the African babysitter to talk only Swahili to the children, which were first enrolled in a German-Italian kindergarten and then to a German-English school.);

- *Positive experiences of friends*, who suggested them to enroll children there, are also an influencing factor.

According to teachers, none of these factors prevails on the others among monolingual German families. Data collected among teachers seem to confirm results deriving from parents' questionnaires.

6. Summary

Data collected through interviews and observation suggest that the language is mainly acquired by the children attending this kindergarten through concrete and engaging activities.

Generally speaking, teachers' view conform to the "interactional approach", according to which children acquire language not just by being exposed to it (as generativists assert), but also from interactions among language users.

Inputs' features are much important, and all teachers are aware of this and put the theory into practice. This is clear from the strategies used in order to facilitate children's comprehension, namely: the use of both linguistic and paralinguistic strategies, e.g. slower, clearly enunciated, simplified and repetitive speech, gestures, confirmation checks.

Techniques based on the behaviourist approach are used and recognized as useful as well (e.g. keep to memory songs and nursery rhymes).

The aim of the program is also to make children aware of the existence of different languages, way of speaking and living in order them to perceive multiculturalism as part of their being. Data show that exposition to Italian cultural aspects is felt as much important by Italian educators and strongly supported. It may be stated that they see their role as adding a second language and cultural affiliation to the children's repertoire.

Teachers show positive attitudes towards bilingualism and dual language programs. They share the idea that children can benefit from the exposition to two languages at early ages but they express their concern about the

possibility of failure at school of those children who are not exposed to both languages within the home environment too.

They think that the “home language vs community language approach” does not lead to an equivalence between the two languages and they agree to the fact that if an L2 learner is placed in German only classes, he/she will learn German better and faster without the L1 being compromised, in contrast with Krashen (1996) and Cummins (1996), according to whom instruction provided in L1 helps making the input in L2 more comprehensible and not being taught reading and writing in the L1 too may result in subtractive bilingualism.

It may be stated that this confirms Caldas’ (2006: 12) claim:

“while the belief that monolingualism is somehow preferable to bilingualism may seem narrow, quaint and outmoded, the belief that bilingualism hinders academic achievement seems to be more widespread”

Their answers also highlighted the fact that monolingual children are more likely to interact with teachers who speak their mother tongues, to whom they are generally more emotionally bound. This seems to partially affect teachers as well.

Data collected also show a positive attitude of the German community towards bilingualism (especially towards other EU languages speakers) and to the Italian language.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

Data collected among parents and teachers show that:

- a. the maintenance of the Italian language is generally supported by both bilingual and Italian families and by the surrounding community too, which shows great interest toward it and, generally speaking, to other European languages as well, also thanks to the SESB program
- b. both bilingual and Italian families assign the same value to the acquisition of both the Italian and the German language. The new trend among some migrant groups, who want now their children to master both the community and the home language and to develop bicultural identities can therefore be observed among the families under survey as well, in contrast with what used to happen in the past, when expatriates wished their children to take on the host society's way of life only in order to better integrate
- c. new migration waves resulted in an increase of Italian families requests for admission at this pre-school. This resulted in an imbalance, but a proper solution in order to face the demographic change of the population is yet to be found
- d. main reasons underlying parents' wish for their children to acquire Italian are: 1) desire to be able to communicate with the Italian-speaking community and 2) cognitive advantages of being bilingual, but not as much the belief that mastering Italian language will allow them to more successful career opportunities
- e. generally speaking, no gap between the exposition to the two languages is noticed in bilingual families, where different activities in both languages are done more or less to the same extent and the OPOL approach is adopted. Parents seem to be more inclined to expose their children to both

Italian and German languages rather than give more space to the minority language (Arnberg, 1987; Baker, 2000) or to add a third language as a means of communication (even if this is the language spoken within the couple)

- f. communication in the non-mother tongue is often not supported at home by monolingual families. German is supported by Italian families, mainly through listening to music, reading books and contact with native speakers outside the family circle. German parents, on the other hand, slightly support exposition to Italian outside school. This may be due to the fact that they do not value Italian language as much as the German one and do not expect their children to reach high proficiency levels
- g. parents' wish for their children to become biliterate in the Italian language is lower than the wish for their children to attend a bilingual program after pre-school
- h. despite the fact they show interest toward dual-language programs, monolingual families are more likely to enroll their children in mainstream German classes after pre-school. This is, according to the teachers, mainly due to the fact that:
 - Italian families think that exposition to Italian at school as well would result in low proficiency in the German language
 - German families concern about failure at school if the Italian language is not spoken within the home environment (this agrees with FMKS data)
- i. despite the fact teachers show positive attitudes toward bilingualism and dual language programs and they seem aware of cognitive and other advantages (such as increased communicative sensitivity) related to the early acquisition of both languages, they suggest monolingual families to enroll children in mainstream German schools. According to them the enrollment in the SESB program would prevent Italian children to acquire high linguistic skills in German and, therefore, to integrate.

They do not agree with both Baker & Wright (2017) and Cummins' (1996) assumption that not being schooled in both languages can result in subtractive bilingualism.

Generally speaking, they do not think children succeed in achieving a “threshold level” of German proficiency at pre-school.

Reasons for this have been investigated, taking into account some of those factors which, according to Daloiso (2009), can speed the process of acquisition, namely:

- age at which the language is acquired: since children are enrolled in the kindergarten usually at the age of 2, this factor is not as much relevant in this case
- frequency to which they are exposed to it: even if children are exposed daily to both languages, teachers highlight the fact that monolinguals tend to avoid situations in which they are asked to use the non-mother tongue. This is probably due to the fact that both an Italian and a German educator are always present within the group and because, according to teachers, they tend to play with peers who can speak their mother tongue. Moreover, at home they are usually “passively” exposed to the non-mother tongue
- positive emotional involvement of the learner: this factor was much taken into consideration by educators and different strategies were adopted in order to ensure children's comprehension and positive involvement (e.g. way of reacting to linguistic mistakes or code-switching, type of activities chosen, use of both linguistic and paralinguistic strategies).

Children are never negatively sanctioned, neither at home or at school. When possible, teachers try to transform their “linguistic mistakes” in a funny moment.

However, some teachers highlight the fact that both children and educators feel to be more “emotionally bound” to people who “can understand” what

they say. The lacking knowledge of Italian language by some German teachers has been seen as a problem.

- accuracy of the linguistic input: children have contact with native speakers of both languages both at home and at school, even if German only speakers are exposed to Italian to a lesser extent.

Despite the fact that some interferences in the Italian language by both German and bilingual children can be noticed (probably because of the peers' influence) and viceversa, all children develop communication skills in both languages, even if to different degrees. This is mainly due to the fact that:

- language is always context-embedded and most activities do not explicitly focus on it. Situations in which the FL/L2 is used are not seen as “artificial” because the presence of educators who adopt the OPOL approach makes the children feel the “necessity” of talking the FL/L2.
- generally speaking, teachers' view conforms to the “interactional approach”, according to which children acquire language not just by being exposed to it (as generativists assert), but also from interactions among language users. They are aware of the fact that inputs' features must be taken into account and adopt different strategies for the child to actively “produce” language, for example by adopting the “Minimal Grasp Strategy”.
- experiences at school are “psychologically relevant” and often draw inspiration from children's suggestions
- activities focusing on both cultures take place as well, even if more space is given to the one related to the minority language. Sub varieties of Italian are partially taken into account as well
- generally speaking, parents seem to cooperate with teachers. Both groups adopt similar strategies, such as the OPOL approach or the Repetition strategy and pay attention to foster bilingualism using different means.

- They both agree with the fact that music is one of the most effective materials for children who show low proficiency levels in one language
- children show great metalinguistic awareness. The awareness about the existence of different linguistic codes is shared among all linguistic groups
 - they appear to have increased communicative sensitivity, in accordance with what recent researches have highlighted

Further attention should however be given in order to:

- a. limit situations in which children can avoid speaking their non-mother tongues without the emotional bond with teachers being compromised;
- b. develop teaching policies which aim to allow children coming from monolingual contexts to develop linguistic skills in both languages in order to be enrolled in the SESB program;
- c. develop a working method which can face the demographic change taking now place within the the population of Berlin;
- d. find a strategy to help monolingual families to support the exposition to both languages within the home environment too (e.g. language courses for parents, specific materials...).

As previously highlighted, one of the limitations of this study is the small size of the sample group. Further researches may therefore extend the study to a bigger size sample group.

Attention may be given also to investigate if educators working in bilingual pre-schools feel the necessity of being trained for it.

Moreover, studies on positive effects of bilingualism on academic achievement have mainly focused on Hispanic students enrolled in dual language Spanish-English programs. Further studies may focus on Italian students enrolled in dual-language Italian-German programs in order to investigate if Italians' low educational outcomes highlighted by Neidhofer & Bönke's study (2016) may be related to subtractive bilingualism.

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