

## Preschool Bilingual Education: Agency in Interactions between Children, Teachers, and Parents

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<b>Preschool Bilingual Education: Agency in Interactions between Children, Teachers, and Parents</b>		
<b>Author:</b>	M. Schwartz (Ed.) (2018)	
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*Preschool Bilingual Education: Agency in Interactions between Children, Teachers and Parents*, edited by Mila Schwartz, explores bilingualism, second language (L2) learning and the development of agency in interactions among children, teachers, and parents in childhood education. It also explores the implementation of bilingual models based on theoretical approaches of how child bilingualism and L2 learning are promoted and supported in interactions. The book has twelve chapters, including an introductory chapter written by the editor. In the introductory chapter, Schwartz introduces the theoretical approaches (e.g., agency, sociocultural, and translanguaging) discussed in the chapters. The chapters are divided into three parts based on overarching topics: (1) Teachers' Challenges in Navigating Bilingual Spaces in Their Classrooms and Practical Decisions, (2) Creating Language-Conducive Contexts to Engage Children in Language Learning, and (3) Children as Language Experts and Models. The chapters are based on empirical studies that use, for example, classroom observations or interviews conducted with teachers, children, and parents to discuss teachers' beliefs about language use and parents' choices for bilingualism.

The first part of the book investigates teachers' beliefs about language use and the implementation of models of language separation and flexible language use. The model of language separation is described as providing instruction in the L1 and L2 without using both languages at the same time, whereas in flexible language use, the L1 and L2 "are introduced simultaneously" in preschool classrooms (p. 57). In Chapter 1, Santovac and Radović examine

teachers' strategies (e.g., translating, using gestures) for motivating children's L2 acquisition in a bilingual model based on language separation in Serbia. Grounded in both quantitative and qualitative approaches, this chapter shows the ways in which teachers motivate children to develop their L2 learning through gestures, vocal variations, and praise. In Chapter 2, Misfud and Vella examine teachers' beliefs about language separation and flexible language to teach English as a second language (ESL) in early childhood settings in Malta. The chapter illustrates that teachers' beliefs frame language practices in classrooms, highlighting that, while some teachers follow the institutional language policy (language separation), other teachers allow for flexible language use (depending on interactions and children's linguistic repertoire). In Chapter 3, Lugossy examines the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs about language use and practices in preschool settings in Hungary. Although the teachers claimed that they supported English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, the author observed that they inadequately scaffolded it, focusing on the product of learning (e.g., learning "sufficient vocabulary", p. 119), rather than the learning process (e.g., meaning-making in EFL). Instead, the teachers mainly used the L1 to support the children's L2. The author suggests that preschool teacher training programmes in the observed context need re-examination to improve foreign language teachers' professional development.

Part 2 includes studies that investigate children's L2 learning and the role of early childhood education in child bilingualism (when one language is a minority language). Chapter 4 (Protassova) highlights the role of translanguaging in developing Russian immigrant children's Finnish (L2) in a bilingual setting in Finland. Theoretically, this chapter combines Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural approach with translanguaging to examine interactions between teachers and children. In Chapter 5, Mård-Miettinen, Palviainen, and Palojärvi examine the role of team teaching in bilingual education (Finish as a L1 and Swedish as a minority language in Finland) in preschool classrooms in Finland. The chapter indicates that, in team teaching, teachers use either single-leadership (one teacher instructs and the other is a participant) or co-leadership (both teachers lead activities). Team teaching improves child bilingualism by scaffolding learning (e.g., repeating words and using body language) and code-switching. Chapter 6 (DePalma and Zapico-Barbeito) focuses on revitalizing and promoting Galician, a minority language in Spain, through school-based planning, which views schools as agents for revitalization. The chapter suggests that school-based language planning can improve the status of Galician by using it as the language of instruction and introducing it with different subjects (e.g., art and literature) to demonstrate its modernity.

Andúgar and Cortina-Pérez examine teachers' reflections on their strategies for promoting ESL learning in Chapter 7. Based on an analysis of 32 semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers, the chapter highlights that teachers' strategies (e.g., scaffolding) increase children's language motivation by creating a stress-free environment and encouraging children to take risks during interactions. The chapter also points to the role of playful activities in EFL learning as enabling children to negotiate meaning in interactions. In Chapter 8, Alstad and Tkachenko investigate teachers' beliefs about English language practices in preschool classrooms. This chapter indicates that teachers structure classroom activities through both direct intervention (e.g., translating vocabulary into L2) and indirect interventions (e.g., guiding children in peer interaction). The chapter also demonstrates that the physical classroom environment supports children's L2 learning depending on the materials available, including books, labels, and charts

on walls that draw children's attention to written language. Fleta-Guillén (Chapter 9) looks at children's and teachers' strategies (e.g., translanguaging and scaffolding) for ESL in preschool classrooms in Spain. It shows that teachers scaffold children's ESL by using verbal and non-verbal expressions (facial expressions and gestures), and that children indicate their understanding of interactions by switching between the L1 and L2.

Part 3 explores the role of peer interactions in L2 learning. Theoretically, this part adapts the view that a more knowledgeable peer can extend a novice peer's learning (Vygotsky, 1978). In Chapter 10, Mourão examines the role of peer interaction in EFL learning in a preschool setting in Portugal. The chapter indicates how peer talk that is collaborative, symmetrical in participation, and multi-party allows children to successfully develop their L1 and L2. Schwartz and Gorbatt (Chapter 11) focus on the role of peers in developing linguistic and cultural competence in the L1 (Arabic) and L2 (Hebrew) of bilingual children in Israel. The findings of this chapter indicate that expert peers mediate novice peers' language use by translating words into the two languages and clarifying words' meanings.

Although this book has up-to-date research on young children's language learning, the book would benefit from additional chapters on learning an L2 and ESL/EFL learning in non-western countries (e.g., Turkey, Oman, Saudi Arabia, etc.). It would be a strength to have a chapter examining childhood L2 and ESL learning in these settings with languages from different families in order to extend our knowledge of the models (i.e., language separation and flexible language use) and strategies used to promote L2 and ESL learning, as well as bilingualism, in preschool classrooms.

Despite the limitation mentioned above, researchers and teachers in early childhood education would benefit from *Preschool Bilingual Education*, which includes different theoretical and methodological approaches to the implementation of strategies that develop bilingualism and ESL/L2 learning. The book indicates that teachers can promote and support ESL both through language separation and flexible language use (e.g., translation and code-switching). Several chapters provide models and strategies for improving an L2 (e.g., Finnish and Hebrew) and revitalizing minority languages (e.g., Galician).

## Reference

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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