

EDUCATING BILINGUAL CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS: EXPERIENCES OF AUSTRIAN EDUCATORS

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Abstract. The article analyzes the peculiarities of bilingual children's education in preschool institutions. The main research method is interviews. After analyzing the experience of Austrian preschool teachers, it was determined that bilingualism is a natural phenomenon that promotes children's linguistic and cognitive development, improves problem-solving skills, flexibility in thinking, and adaptation to new situations. Educators also face challenges in teaching bilingual children related to limited vocabulary and language mixing. These phenomena are often temporary and can be overcome if the child receives appropriate support both at school and at home. Austrian preschool teachers most often use visual and multisensory tools, creative activities, flexible language combinations, and an individualized approach to each child when teaching bilingual children, and they consistently collaborate with the children's parents.

Keywords: bilingualism, preschool education, child language and cognitive development, teaching methods

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic diversity is an important feature of European identity, which is why the European Union's (EU) language policy aims to preserve linguistic diversity and strengthen cultural identity and social integration (Extra & Yağmur, 2012).

Bilingualism, in a broad sense, is the use and speaking of two languages. When communicating in two languages, children realize that each object can be named with two different words (Chilla, Fox-Boyer, 2016). The concept of bilingualism has a much broader context than simply knowing two languages. It encompasses not only language knowledge, processes, skills, and language regularity, but also social, cultural, and cognitive aspects.

According to Galijasevic (2022), bilingualism (and/or multilingualism) is still considered undesirable in many European countries, especially with regard to minority languages. This is linked to the assumption that language diversity can have a negative impact on learning success and is associated with lower social class. However, there is also another view – bilingualism is seen as a valuable resource and an elite phenomenon. The Austrian Federal Constitution identifies equal opportunities as one of the main objectives of education, which is why great attention is paid to early language education. Primary school teachers are encouraged to help children, especially those whose native language is not German, to improve their language skills (Galijasevic, 2022).

In the 20th century, it was believed that monolingualism was the norm and that bilingual children were less gifted and therefore unable to achieve high results in science. According to Beardsmore (2003), this assumption was based on rather biased information and data. In the mid-20th century, research methods were improved to allow for a more accurate assessment of the cognitive and language abilities of bilingual children, but they did not change the general opinion about bilingualism, which continued to be treated as a potential obstacle to language development, and successful multilinguals were considered exceptions to the rule (Beardsmore, 2003).

According to Sánchez-Pérez & Manzano-Agugliaro (2021), attitudes towards bilingualism changed radically in the 21st century. Knowledge of two languages has come to be seen as a great advantage that has a positive effect on various areas of child development. There has been a shift from negative assessment to recognition that bilingualism can have a positive impact on a child's cognitive development, tolerance, and respect for other cultures. Despite numerous studies on bilingual education conducted between 1969 and 2018, there are still gaps in the global development of this field of research (Sánchez-Pérez & Manzano-Agugliaro, 2021).

Today, more and more children around the world are growing up in bilingual environments due to migration and globalization processes. Understanding how bilingualism affects children's development is extremely important for the well-being of families and educational institutions in order to successfully integrate children into society. Although there is not much research on the impact of bilingualism on the development of preschool children, several foreign authors have explored this topic, for example, Bialystok (2017) found that bilingualism can have a positive effect on children's cognitive abilities, such as executive function and attention control; Baker (2011) summarized and interpreted existing scientific works by presenting a detailed analysis of bilingualism theories, research, and practice; Cummins (2005) explored how bilingual students transfer knowledge and skills from one language to another, particularly in bilingual education programs.

Scientific problem. The study aims to refute the still existing misconceptions about bilingualism, e.g., that it can hinder language acquisition processes in early childhood, promote social exclusion, or cause language disorders. The article attempts to answer questions about the impact of bilingualism on the natural development of preschool-aged children and the most effective methods for educating bilingual children.

The aim of the study is to analyze the education of bilingual children in preschool institutions based on the experience of Austrian educators.

Objectives:

1. To reveal the opinion of Austrian preschool educators on the impact of bilingualism on child development.
2. To identify the methods used in Austria for educating bilingual preschool children.

RESEARCH METHODS AND ORGANIZATION

The idea to analyze the education of bilingual children came to one of the authors of the article while interning at an Austrian preschool that educates bilingual children. According to Blaschitz & Dorostkar (2021), multilingualism and intercultural education have been considered the most important didactic principles in Austria for more than three decades. The country's education system is characterized by great linguistic diversity, which is particularly evident in preschool institutions. According to data from the Austrian Statistics Department (2023), as many as 32.5% of primary school children do not speak German, and in Vienna this figure reaches 58.7%. Kindergartens are considered an extremely important link in preparing children for school and strengthening their skills in the national language (Blaschitz & Dorostkar, 2021).

Given the growing relevance of multilingualism and the challenges posed by linguistic diversity not only in Austria but also in our country's pre-school educational institutions, this article describes the experiences of teachers who educate bilingual children. The aim of the study was to find out what impact bilingualism has on children's linguistic, cognitive, and social-emotional development, what challenges Austrian teachers face, and what methods help to improve bilingual skills in preschool age.

Research methodology. After analyzing scientific literature, a qualitative study was chosen, using a semi-structured interview method. The study assessed the linguistic development, cognitive abilities, and social adaptation of bilingual children. The criteria and indicators used in the study were selected based on scientific research proving their importance in assessing children's language, cognitive, and social development processes (Diez-Itza et al., 2025; Kumarage et al., 2024; Cummins, 2005).

According to Diez-Itza et al. (2025), one of the main indicators in assessing children's language development is vocabulary size, which reflects a child's ability to communicate effectively and understand the linguistic environment. An expanding vocabulary not only indicates broader communication opportunities, but also contributes to the development of a child's cognitive abilities, social relationships, and learning success (Diez-Itza et al., 2025).

Another important indicator is the child's ability to form a correct sentence. According to Kumarage et al. (2024), this reveals the child's understanding of sentence structure, word meanings, and the ability to convey thoughts coherently through active speech.

Cummins (2005) emphasizes that cognitive abilities such as attention control, working memory, and problem solving are essential for successful language transfer. They form a common cognitive base that enables learners to achieve higher literacy and academic achievement in both languages.

The BiMo policy recommendations book (2020) highlights that a key factor in the educational success of a bilingual child is their social adaptation. This is described as the student's ability to smoothly integrate into a new linguistic and cultural environment, establish and maintain relationships with peers and teachers, and actively participate in the life of the school community (BiMo policy recommendation book, 2020).

The interview questions were formulated taking into account the aim and objectives of the study, i.e., the impact of bilingualism on children's language development, cognitive abilities, and social adaptation. The study was conducted in February–March 2025 in two pre-school institutions in Austria that educate bilingual children. Data collection was organised remotely, with questions sent to informants in writing by email.

Research ethics. Before the study began, the administrations of Austrian nurseries x and y were informed about the purpose of the study, the methods used, and the intended use of the data. The ethical aspects of the study were also discussed to ensure transparency and the rights of the study participants. The study participants were informed in advance about the use of interview data and the assurance of confidentiality. The teachers' consent to participate in the study was obtained by email before the interviews began. Five preschool teachers who currently work with bilingual children aged 1 to 6 voluntarily answered the interview questions. To maintain complete anonymity, the informants were given codes: P1, P2, P3, P4, P5.

Significance of the study. The study expands scientific knowledge about the impact of bilingualism on the linguistic development, cognitive development, and social integration of preschool-aged children. The analysis of Austrian teachers' experiences helps to better understand the needs of bilingual children, facilitate their learning and adaptation in the education system, and contribute to the development of more effective methods for teaching bilingual children. The insights of educators aim to reveal the benefits and challenges of bilingualism to parents and contribute to a more positive attitude towards multilingualism and intercultural education. The findings of the study may be useful to education policymakers in improving the integration of bilingual children. It is important to note that in order to analyze the problem in greater depth, it would be useful to examine the experiences of preschool teachers in other countries who work with bilingual children.

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The research data was obtained from teachers with practical experience in educating bilingual children, so their responses revealed not only the challenges and solutions of everyday practice, but also the most effective teaching methods. The research data obtained during the interviews was divided into five categories: the influence of bilingualism on a child's language development; the impact of bilingualism on a child's cognitive abilities; the social and emotional adaptation of bilingual children; teaching methods for bilingual children; and cooperation with children's parents.

In accordance with the principles of thematic analysis, the research data was systematically analyzed. One of the main themes analyzed was language development, which is closely related to the influence of the environment and the context in which the child grows up. According to Hoff (2021), a child's language development is closely related to the influence of the environment and everyday language use. Bilingual children grow up in a bilingual environment, so it is natural that their language development has specific characteristics. The process of language acquisition depends on how often and in what context both languages are used, both at home and in educational institutions. The pace of language development may vary, especially if one of the languages is used significantly more often than the other in the environment (Hoff 2021). During the study, teachers were asked to describe how bilingualism affects a child's language development. Teachers provided insights into the changes and challenges faced by bilingual children in their daily educational activities (Table 1).

Table 1.
The influence of bilingualism on child language development

Subcategory (frequency of statements)	Supporting statements
Limited vocabulary (4)	<i>It takes longer to build up vocabulary. If the family is supportive, children learn faster (P1); ...bilingual children initially have a limited vocabulary in the second language, which grows over time due to intensive language use in the environment (P2); ...the vocabulary of one language is richer, while that of the other language suffers (P5); It takes time for a child to accumulate enough words... (P4).</i>
Language mixing (3)	<i>This is a common phenomenon among bilingual children, especially when they are just beginning to learn a second language. Code-switching may also be observed among bilingual children (P2); ...mixing languages is a normal phenomenon. If children know when to use which language, it is not a problem (P1); Children switch languages spontaneously when speaking... (P3).</i>
Communication characteristics (3)	<i>Often, bilingual children do not understand what is expected of them... (P1); Some bilingual children feel alienated or isolated if their language skills are not strong. Others feel superior because of their ability to speak several languages (P2); Other children imitate bilinguals and try to speak their language (P3).</i>
Sentence formation (2)	<i>The development of sentence structure, or syntax, requires additional support for bilingual children... (P2); ...the most difficult thing for children who do not speak German is the most difficult sentence structure (P5).</i>

Based on the insights of informants, it can be seen that bilingualism has an impact on a child's language development. According to educators, code-switching is a common phenomenon. It has been observed that children spontaneously switch from one language to another within the same sentence. However, this phenomenon is not considered a disadvantage – on the contrary, educators perceive it as a natural adaptation strategy that allows children to communicate more successfully.

Another problem is limited vocabulary, especially in the second, less frequently used language. This imbalance is considered a temporary stage of language development. Teachers note that the process of vocabulary acquisition takes longer, but it accelerates if the child's language development is actively supported by the family and the educational institution. Challenges in sentence structure and grammatical expression are related to differences in the grammatical structure of languages. In terms of communication characteristics, an interaction between children's language skills and emotional well-being was observed. Weaker language skills often lead to feelings of insecurity or exclusion, while children who are fluent in both languages feel more confident and sometimes even superior to others.

Therefore, it can be said that the language development of bilingual children is a dynamic process. Phenomena such as language mixing, limited vocabulary, or inaccuracies in sentence structure are common, but they should be treated not as disorders, but as natural aspects of the development of bilingual children.

In addition to linguistic development, cognitive aspects of bilingualism are also important. Although this term was not mentioned directly, the statements of educators reflect the flexibility of thinking, attention control, and problem-solving skills that are characteristic of bilingual children (Table 2).

Table 2.

The impact of bilingualism on cognitive abilities

Subcategory (frequency of statements)	Supporting statements
Cognitive flexibility (4)	<i>Bilingual children often have more flexible thinking. They adapt more easily to new situations because they are used to changing languages and cultural contexts (P2); If they don't understand something in one language, they quickly switch to another, looking for ways to express their thoughts. Their thinking seems to be more flexible... (P3); Bilingual children are adaptable... (P4) Most bilingual children are very curious, eager to learn, adaptable, active, and motivated (P5).</i>
Attention (4)	<i>Often has a shorter attention span. Easily distracted (P1); Bilingual children often have better attention span... (P2; P4); I rarely notice better attention control... (P5).</i>
Problem solving (3)	<i>...they adapt more easily to new situations because they are used to changing languages and cultural contexts (P2); Bilingual children are used to looking for several solutions at once (P3)...they often demonstrate very good problem-solving skills. They know how to react quickly if they don't understand, ask for repetition, use gestures, and try to explain in another language. (P4).</i>

Educators note that bilingual children are often able to adapt more quickly to new situations, understand the logic of tasks, or switch their attention between different activities. These abilities may be linked to the constant switching between two language systems, which develops not only linguistic but also cognitive processes such as working memory, self-regulation, and planning. Based on the statements of educators, it can be argued that bilingualism has a clear link to the development of children's cognitive abilities. Several key areas stand out where this link is particularly noticeable: concentration, flexibility of thinking, and problem solving. When it comes to attention control, some responses noted that bilingual children may be more easily distracted or have a shorter attention span, but at the same time, it is noted that they are often able to concentrate, especially when tasks are clearly structured or presented verbally. Flexibility of thinking stood out as one of the most prominent characteristics of bilingual children. Children are able to switch languages quickly, apply different communication strategies, and look for alternative ways to express their thoughts. In the area of problem solving, it is clear that bilingual children tend to respond creatively to challenges. If they do not understand words or a task, they take the initiative: they ask for help, switch languages, use gestures, or observe those around them. Children's curiosity, activity, and ability to quickly master new material suggest that these cognitive processes are effective and that bilingualism may be an important factor in supporting them.

In summary, bilingual children often demonstrate the ability to adapt quickly, respond, focus on a goal, and flexibly solve emerging difficulties. These cognitive strengths are important factors in the educational process and are closely related to the child's ability to adapt to their social environment.

The educational experiences of bilingual children involve processes of cultural transition, identity formation, and integration into a new linguistic community. An analysis of the informants' insights revealed that bilingual children face various social and emotional adaptation challenges in the educational environment. These challenges and strengths are revealed in areas such as communication, emotional security, self-esteem, belonging to a group, and emotional expression (Table 3).

Table 3.

The social and emotional adaptation of bilingual children

Subcategory (frequency of statements)	Supporting statements
Integration into the group (5)	<i>It depends on the group. When children are well integrated into the group, there are no problems. Cooperation between parents and teachers is important (P1); ...bilingual children often help other children understand different languages and cultures, which can strengthen friendships (P2); Usually, other children react with curiosity and openness. Bilingual children are interesting to their peers. (P3); Some children feel withdrawn at first.... However, if they are helped and there is a good atmosphere in the group, they usually integrate quickly (P4); ...it is not difficult for a child to integrate into a group if most of the children are bilingual (P5).</i>
Communication difficulties (4)	<i>Often, bilingual children do not understand what is expected of them... (P1); ...some children feel insecure or confused in new situations because they do not understand what is expected of them (P2); Some children feel withdrawn at first, especially if they are not yet completely confident in their language skills... (P4); There are also those who are more withdrawn and less communicative... (P5).</i>
Social advantage (3)	<i>...feel superior because of their ability to speak several languages... (P2); Other children imitate bilinguals and try to speak their language (P3); Some are proud that they speak two languages... (P4).</i>

Emotional pressure (3)	<i>Some feel alienated or isolated if their language skills are not strong (P2); Some are proud of it, while others hide the fact that they speak a different language at home (P4); Not in kindergarten, but it may happen in some families (P5).</i>
Expression of emotions (2)	<i>Some children may experience stress due to language difficulties or social isolation. Some children feel obliged to act as intermediaries between different languages and cultures, which can be an additional emotional challenge (P2). It all depends on how linguistic diversity is perceived in the environment (P4).</i>

An analysis of social and emotional adaptation reveals that bilingual children have very different experiences in educational settings, ranging from withdrawal to leadership, from emotional pressure to pride. These experiences depend on a number of factors, including language skills, group atmosphere, family expectations, and teacher sensitivity. The social and emotional experiences of bilingual children are closely related to language development, emotional well-being, and educational success. According to educators, bilingual children integrate well into the group, especially if the environment is open and accepting. Children's emotional experiences are often closely related to their acceptance or rejection of their linguistic identity. For example, pride in the ability to speak several languages can indicate a positive emotional relationship with one's linguistic origins, while, conversely, avoiding revealing which language is spoken at home can signal a sense of shame or fear of being excluded.

The results of the study show that the successful integration of bilingual children into the educational process requires not only linguistic support, but also carefully considered teaching methods that respond to the emotional, social, and cultural needs of children (Table 4).

Table 4.
Methods of teaching bilingual children

Subcategory (frequency of statements)	Supporting statements
Language mixing (4)	<i>I often tell stories in two languages or play role-playing games that use different languages (P1). We maintain a linguistic environment in which children can freely use both languages; Bilingual children switch between languages more often (P2); I allow children to use both languages. If they want, they can answer in their own language—the most important thing is that they understand the activity (P3). Mixed-language books work very well for me. Bilingual stories: We read the same story in both German and the children's native language (P4).</i>
Variety of methods (4)	<i>...songs, repetition, work in small groups. Vocabulary development integrated into everyday activities (P1); ...Variety, including language promotion through language,... active behavior, supports the development of children's phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (P2); Games that allow language to be integrated are very helpful ... (P3) ... integration of language into everyday games (P4)</i>
Individualization (4)	<i>It depends on whether the child is open, quickly connects with other children, or is more reserved (P1); ...I use active language methods to encourage all children to speak... (P2); I do not pressure the child to speak a certain language, but I try to incorporate it naturally into everyday activities (P4); I do not artificially encourage the learning of a weaker language, but I try to create situations in which it would be used more often (P5).</i>
Creative methods (4)	<i>I connect language with my body and speak while using two of the children's sensory systems (P2); ... songs, movements, rhythms (P3); I use stories and read books in two languages (P3); ...role-playing games... Children learn much more when they move, create, and experience (P4); Staging fairy tales, songs, poems (P5).</i>
Visual aids (3)	<i>Visual aids... (P1); ...I use my face, facial expressions, and movements to visualize the content of the language and make it easier for children to access new words and language structures...; ...Diversity, including language promotion through ... visual aids ... (P2);...picture stories. Digital learning tools are also very helpful today (P5).</i>

According to the interview data, teachers working with bilingual children use various methods to ensure language progress, social integration, and accessibility of educational activities for all children, regardless of their linguistic background.

Teachers do not limit themselves to traditional forms of language teaching, but use creative strategies, methods, and techniques tailored to children's needs, which strengthen both their linguistic and social skills: mimicry, gestures, pictures, songs, movement, and games, thus activating different senses and encouraging linguistic engagement.

One of the emerging trends is the use of visual and multisensory tools, as it is important for children not only to hear language, but also to see and feel it. Such a multisensory environment is particularly effective for bilingual children, as it helps them to link abstract language elements with concrete experiences, making them more active, better at remembering information, and more confident in using both languages. According to Polium & Jongnuntawat (2024), multisensory education is particularly beneficial in the learning process of preschool-aged children, as it stimulates different channels of cognition and helps them memorize information more effectively. These methods involve the

activation of various sensory systems—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile—and help bilingual children understand language structure through visual experiences, facilitating the acquisition of new words and sentence structure rules. It also increases children's motivation, encourages active participation in activities, and builds linguistic confidence, which is important not only for learning a second language but also for developing a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity (Polyium & Jongnawat, 2024).

Another strategy that emerged from the teachers' statements was a flexible approach to language use. Teachers emphasize that it is important to allow children to use both languages freely and not to be afraid of mixing them. Teachers also stressed the importance of an individual approach in order to adapt to each child's temperament, language skills, and emotional state. Recognizing the uniqueness of each child ensures greater self-confidence and more natural involvement in language activities. The aspect of creativity was also emphasized—creative methods such as role-playing, bilingual storytelling, songs, and dramatizations. These methods not only activate language, but also strengthen children's emotional involvement, help them to become more confident and develop their communication skills.

Dawolo et al. (2023) note that the linguistic and emotional development of a bilingual child is closely related to their immediate social environment, especially their family. It is precisely the influence of family members that can have a strong stimulating or inhibiting effect on bilingualism. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the role of parents and their cooperation with educators as one of the key factors determining the successful linguistic and social integration of bilingual children (Dawolo et al., 2023).

Bilingualism is common in Austria, especially among migrant families, so it is particularly important to find effective ways to teach a second language. This is important not only for the integration of the child, but also for the entire education system. Hetland & Lunde (2021) note that similar challenges arise in other European countries, such as Norway, where better language teaching solutions are also being sought. However, the formal language teaching environment is not the only factor determining the success of a bilingual child. Language acquisition is also closely related to the family context, especially the extent to which parents are actively involved in the process. Not only are the first language skills formed at home, but also the child's emotional relationship with language, so family support can have a strong impact on both language development and the child's self-esteem.

Analysis of the research data shows that active parental involvement, speaking with children in their native language, cooperation with teachers, and a positive attitude toward bilingualism strengthen children's linguistic, emotional, and cultural development (Table 5).

Table 5.
Cooperation with parents

Subcategory (frequency of statements)	Supporting statements
Impact on a child's language (4)	<i>It is important that the native language is spoken at home... (P1); Cooperation with parents is very important. We help parents understand how they can contribute to their child's language development (P2); When there is linguistic stimulation at home and in the educational institution, vocabulary develops quickly and confidently.... (P4); It is important to find out parents' expectations and attitudes towards language learning... (P5).</i>
Support for child integration (3)	<i>Cooperation between parents and teachers is important, especially when it comes to integrating children into groups (P1); If we cannot communicate in the same language, I often bring the child's parents along so that the child can get confirmation (P1); It is particularly important to encourage parents of bilingual children to continue using their native language, as this strengthens the child's linguistic competence and cultural identity (P2); It is important that the native language is spoken at home (P3).</i>
Negative family influence (2)	<i>Parents expect rapid progress (P1); Sometimes pressure is felt from parents. This shows that parental expectations can have an emotional impact on the child (P3).</i>

The study data revealed that cooperation with parents is one of the key factors influencing the success of bilingual children's education. The analysis highlighted several subcategories: assistance with child integration, impact on language development, and negative family influence. First of all, it is important to assess the influence of parents on the child's language development. Educators note that family communication in the native language at home has a significant impact on vocabulary development, language structure acquisition, and overall language activity. It is not only important how often the language is used in the family, but also how parents view bilingualism – whether they support it or restrict it. A positive attitude on the part of parents, communication with educators, and interest in language development help to create a favorable environment for linguistic progress. On the other hand, the study also revealed negative aspects of family influence. Some parents place high expectations on their children and expect rapid progress. Cooperation between parents and teachers is also important for the smooth integration of the child into the educational group. This cooperation helps the child feel safe, understand their environment, and gain confidence.

Therefore, parental attitude and involvement are important factors in the development of a bilingual child. Both positive and negative family factors have a significant impact on the child's integration, language development, and emotional well-being.

An analysis of teachers' responses reveals that the education of bilingual children is not limited to the linguistic sphere—it is also closely related to cognitive abilities, social integration, and emotional well-being. Teachers emphasize a holistic approach to the child, where language teaching is naturally integrated into everyday activities through movement, music, games, and various sensory tools. This educational strategy not only helps children to master language structures more easily, but also stimulates thinking, strengthens emotional response, and promotes social participation.

In summary, from a linguistic development perspective, bilingualism is viewed as a complex but natural process, accompanied by phenomena such as language mixing or limited vocabulary. These challenges are not considered shortcomings, but rather stages that can be overcome through the targeted application of differentiated methods. Educators emphasize that free use of language—even if the child mixes languages or uses gestures—is an important indicator of emotional security, helping the child feel accepted and understood. In the cognitive sphere, children's ability to think flexibly, adapt quickly to new situations, solve problems effectively, and apply various communication strategies is highlighted. Bilingual children often have better working memory and stronger language processing skills, especially when information is presented in a multisensory way. This shows that bilingualism not only does not hinder cognitive processes, but can even strengthen them. Social and emotional aspects are also closely related to a child's linguistic experience. Educators point out that a supportive linguistic environment helps children feel accepted, reduces stress, promotes self-confidence, and helps form a positive bilingual identity. Conversely, when a child's language or culture is ignored, signs of emotional withdrawal and reduced engagement are noticeable. Educators attach particular importance to cooperation with parents. They see the family as an essential partner in the child's language education process. Parental involvement is associated with more consistent, effective, and overall favorable language and emotional development in children.

The experience of educators reveals the multifaceted nature of bilingual education – language teaching here is closely linked to aspects of cognition, social integration, and emotional security. This approach is based not only on a variety of teaching methods, but also on active family participation in creating a favorable environment for the child's comprehensive development.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the study data, Austrian preschool teachers view bilingualism as a natural and positive phenomenon that has a multifaceted impact on child development. The participants in the study emphasize that bilingualism promotes children's linguistic and cognitive development, improves problem-solving skills, flexibility in thinking, and adaptation to new situations. Educators also face certain challenges in teaching bilingual children, related to limited vocabulary, sentence structure formation, and language mixing. These phenomena are often temporary and can be overcome if the child receives appropriate support both at school and at home.

An analysis of Austrian preschool education experiences has revealed that in order to achieve a positive impact of bilingualism on the development of preschool-aged children, it is important to ensure adequate language stimulation and a safe, supportive, and engaging learning environment. Austrian preschool teachers most often use visual and multisensory tools, creative activities (songs, role-playing games, storytelling), flexible language combinations, and an individualized approach to each child in the education of bilingual children. Teachers also emphasize the importance of consistent cooperation with parents.

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