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# Problems in Collaboration between Multilingual Children with Teachers in the Italian Republic

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## Abstract

The relevance of the research is due to scientists' attention to studying various areas of bilingualism in the field of the Humanities in accordance with the trends of social and linguistic policy of the world community, defining it as essential multilingualism representation in education and intercultural communication. The lack of teachers' competence concerning interaction with bilingual children and their parents, as well as the parents themselves, creates a lot of complex contradictions: the teacher's lack of preparedness for learning and cooperating with a bilingual student and his family, the lack of specialists in schools for psychological and pedagogic support and assistance towards a bilingual child.

In this regard, the article is aimed at revealing bilingualism, being a multidimensional phenomenon having not only a proper linguistic nature, but also social determinism and conditionality of cultural, social and psychological facets. These circumstances significantly change the educational environment of any educational institution in the context of integration of a particular country, in our case, Italy (the region of Sicily) into the information and cultural space.

Methodological basis represented by the ideas of anthropological, cultural, psycholinguistic, competence-based and system approaches, the concept of professional development of a specialist, involving the method of reflexive analysis and synthesis of problems.

The article reveals the possibility of developing a new social-and-cultural as well as linguistic model of bilingual school students' development using innovative teaching methods.

The research materials provide important information in the field of modern linguistic education and the developing humanistic pedagogical systems variability.

**Keywords:** olodynamic model, collaboration, bilingual children, bilingualism, multilingual children, educational environment.

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## **Introduction**

1.1. Relevance of the question. The attention of scientists studying various areas of bilingualism is an absolute trend research and a practical field of humanitarian knowledge through the trends of social and linguistic policy of the modern world community, defining it as essential the manifestation of multilingualism in education and intercultural communication. Bilingualism is a multidimensional phenomenon that has not only a proper linguistic nature, but also a social determinism and conditionality of cultural, social and psychological facets. Studying this phenomenon is important not only in theoretical research, but also in bilingual practices in education. The development of the world community in recent decades has more and more clearly placed the priority of the human person at the center of the education system. In these conditions, the key figure is the teacher as a universal values bearer and a creative personality developer. The complexity and ambiguity of the changes taking place in our society face teachers with the need for value self-determination, require to implement democratic and humanistic principles in teaching, causing serious changes in the system of training future specialists as educators. In these difficult conditions, the need for a more subtle approach to an individual becomes acute, there is a need to turn to it and help young people become subjects of their own life, awaken the desire and interest in self-determination, self-realization, self-reflection, master the communicative culture and develop constructive behavior and useful leisure skills which will ensure harmonious development of both society and an individual. In their works, scientists emphasize that modern teachers are faced with the need to solve not only traditional, but also such urgent and complex psychological, pedagogic and social tasks in a multicultural society as analytical.

In this regard, the lack of teachers and parents' competence concerning interaction with bilingual children and their parents, generates a lot of complex contradictions: the teachers' unwillingness to learn and cooperate with a bilingual student and his family, ignoring child's cognitive and emotional processes, the lack of specialists in pedagogic and psychological support concerning bilingual children and providing them with social and psychological assistance and support at schools (steakhalders, tutors). These circumstances significantly change the educational environment of any educational institution in the context of integration of a particular country, in our case, Italy, the region of Sicily, into the information and cultural space.

1.2. Modern tendencies. Several decades ago, a famous psycholinguist Francois Grosjean stated that half of the world's population is bilingual (Apukhtin, 1977). And nowadays it is already possible to speak more about bilingualism than multilingualism. For instance, in Italy, the situation is developing in such a way that if earlier cases of bilingualism were exceptions, now the situation is changing radically: due to the increase in migration flows and the spread of the fashion for learning languages from early childhood,

monolingualism is already becoming an exception in Italy (Kasenova & Musatova, 2017). More and more attention is being paid to the development of national languages, language sovereignty, language human rights, and the regulation of relations between groups of linguistic majority and minority, enshrined in the country's legislation. Special laws define the status and scope of using a language. Throughout the Italian territory, there are linguistic minorities that are "an ethnic and linguistic extension of the countries bordering Italy" (Khutorskiy, 2003). According to Article 6 of the Constitution of the Italian Republic, "the Republic protects linguistic minorities through appropriate measures". According to the State law No. 482 from 1999, The Italian Parliament recognizes the existence of 12 linguistic minorities located in the territory of the Italian Republic: Friulan, Ladin, German, Slovenian, Occitan, French, Franco Provensalian, Albanian, Greek, Sardinian, Catalan and Croatian (Chelysheva, 2003). This law allows the official use of these languages in public institutions, their teaching at educational institutions, and broadcasting TV and radio programs on the state channels of the RAI network. The Constitution of the Italian Republic declares equal rights of citizens regardless of their language and ethnicity, and guarantees the protection of linguistic minorities through appropriate norms (Shevlyakova, 2019).

As the influx of international migrants to Italy continues to increase, the problem of bilinguals is particularly relevant. And, of course, the attitude towards bilingual families in the country is very ambiguous, from both the society and teachers who are not ready to teach such students. Therefore, it is possible to analyze and study this problem from various scientific positions, concerning both Russian scientists and international researchers.

### 1.3. Conceptual framework of research.

According to dictionaries, the concept of bilingualism is considered as "bilingualism", the possession of two languages. From the point of view of psychology, bilingualism is a method and means of the cognitive process, an important element of personal development and culture management, the structure of modern communication, and from the point of view of pedagogical science, a factor that affects the educational process of teaching a student, which makes it possible to develop effective methods and techniques in a non-native language in order to achieve the student's success at school. The social-and-linguistic theory presents various types of bilingualism: coordinative, subordinate, mixed (based on the psycholinguistic aspect of the interaction between two language systems in the mind and the bilingual's language competence); group and individual (by the number of bilinguals); mass (both by the number of bilinguals and by social significance in society); early, adolescent, and youth (based on the age at which the individual learned a second language); balanced and unbalanced (according to bilingual competence level) same as equal, dominant bilingualism; individual and mass; symmetric and asymmetric (according to the characteristics of the social-and-role and functional equality of the two languages); passive and active

(according to the prevailing speech skills and types of speech activity concerning a bilingual); natural and artificial (the way of mastering second language); unilateral and bilateral (the type of collective bilingualism, being the basis of competence in the two languages if both contacting sides or only one of them); intragroup and intergroup (characterization of internal and external relations in a social group); contact and non-contact; cultural (at the prevailing situations of bilingual communication); national (for ethno-linguistic basis of the bilinguals); functional (according to the characteristics of the dominant areas of communication in which a bilingual uses a second language); initial - residual, progressive - regressive (as a characteristic of language change stages) (Rimondi, 2017).

Bilingualism is a complex phenomenon being the subject of research in linguistics and sociology, as well as methods of teaching foreign languages (Bulgarova, Bragina, Novoselova, & Zolotykh, 2017). Given the fact that bilingualism occurs where different cultures integrate, it is important to determine its role. In particular, bilingualism provides the process of enriching an individual with cultural values of diverse ethnic groups. However, it should always be borne in mind that bilingualism can sometimes create certain contradictions in both children and adults' personalities, since different languages and cultures reflect different attitudes towards similar phenomena within a particular society (Bolotov & Serikov, 2003).

### **Purpose and objectives of the study**

For identifying the main problems of bilingual education in the modern world and scientific justifying the relevance of Titone oleo dinamiche theory, according to which learning is built around the concept of a person and an open system of relations in the "The World and Me" dyad based on cognitive and emotional relationship towards diversity principles that enriches speech-thinking activity in teaching bilinguals with psycholinguistic and social-and-cultural positions, making it possible to develop students' personal and social skills efficiently.

### **Literature review**

Scientists assume that in the next 10-20 years, the majority of the world's population will be bilingual or multilingual. This complicates the already difficult task of teachers - more and more often they will have to work with a multicultural, multi-level in its composition and level of knowledge, motivation to teach the audience. The multicultural composition of school children requires a deep, meaningful and instrumental mobility from teachers. A teacher needs to know several cultural concepts in order to conduct a lesson in a class where up to half of the bilingual students can work simultaneously, it is necessary to have a high stress resistance, at least two languages – native and perfect English, meaning the need for an innovative teacher (Bezhenar, 2015).

Science shows that natural bilinguals have some advantages over monolingual children, which should be taken into account by teachers: a deeper understanding other cultures, and developed cognitive abilities, concentration, memory, orientation in space and a tendency to use languages more creatively. They begin to think analytically earlier, breaking words into components and having an increased sense of phonology. But all this will only appear if the teacher helps the child cope with the difficulties that inevitably arise among bilingual children.

Modern schools require a different level of psychological, pedagogic, social and cultural support for bilingual students and their parents. The work involves activities in the following directions, interrelated and complementary to each other:

- determining the child's social status in a group of mates, familiarizing them with national characteristics and involving them in the cultural practices of the country;
- early diagnostic, preventive, corrective and developmental work to prevent maladaptation in studying and behavior;
- studying the features of the child's psychological state and emotional sphere, which must be taken into account in the process of support;
- counseling and psychological-and-pedagogic knowledge concerning parents and teaching staff in solving emerging problems;
- developing interethnic tolerance, forming the ability to trust and empathy concerning both children and teachers.

Numerous studies devoted to the psychological characteristics of bilingual children (Dictionary of Sociolinguistic Terms, 2020) show that they have a higher level of control over linguistic processes, which is represented in the ability to apply two different linguistic systems accurately, intuitively understanding the languages structure and functioning. Most bilingual children start to read earlier than monolingual ones. An intuitive understanding of the language structure helps bilinguals in the future and in learning other languages. Some abilities of bilingual children are associated with better executive control, responsible for attention, concentration and non-essential information suppression compared to monolinguals. They are better at concentrating on important information, analyzing it and identifying the most important things with no difficulties. Bilingualism encourages the developing creative abilities and divergent thinking, i.e. the ability to consider many possible solutions to the same problem.

Bilingualism positively affects the developing all types of memory, as well as cognitive skills, analytical and logical thinking. Children who speak two languages perform better at short-term and long-term verbal memory tests, as well as visual and spatial ability tests.

A positive effect of bilingualism on the mental and emotional condition of a child was also proved. Such children are more confident, emotionally positive and often more successful in learning activities. Bilingual children are more open in communication, often becoming experts in areas where knowing two languages is required, i.e. they are open to international communication. (Zimnaya, 2004).

Anyway, the analysis of the literature shows that almost all the theories concerning the considered question are related to the social and psychological characteristics of personality development. Thus, the theories of psychological humanism of Allport (2002), Maslow (1970), Rogers (1975), and other scientists put emphasis on the uniqueness of student's personality. At the neuro-psycholinguistic and cognitive levels, such approaches are characterized by an attempt to understand the student taking into account his personality. In the field of cognitive psychology Anderson (2002) developed a model for acquiring skills that later turn into procedural knowledge. Another key point in the developing the theory of bilingualism was the awareness of the role of the affective filter of a student (Keshavarz & Astaneh, 2004), as well as the theory of students' motivation and emotions Pyriev (2015), which play an important role in determining individual's success/ failure in studying.

### **Methodology**

The methodological basis of the research - the ideas of the anthropological: Berdyaev (2003), Zenkovsky (2002), Lossky (1991), Lestgaft (1951), Rogers (1975), cultural: Bondarevskaya (2000), Gazman (1995), Maslow(1970), psycholinguistic: Zalevskaya (2009), Eco (1990), competence-based: Bermus (2005), Bolotov (2003), Khutorskoy (2003) and system-based approaches: Blauberg, Sadovsky and Yudin (1970), as well as specialist professional development concepts Bolotov (2003), Akutina (2020), Zimnaya, (2004), Khutorskiy (2003) in which the methods of reflexive analysis and problem synthesis were involved.

The object of research - bilingual education in Sicily.

The subject of the research is the collaboration between bilingual children and their families and school teachers.

In the modern educational space, the task of training competent teachers in an innovative format is based on olodynamic theory, based in its historical development on different theoretical and methodological prerequisites and according to which bilingualism corresponds to the level of competence sufficient for effective communication in different languages, while using more than one language code. Therefore, the olodynamic model of Titone (1973, 1995) focuses on the development of «Self» personality, while integrating the following three areas that interact in a single order: habits and behavior determined by the environment; cognitive processes determined by the mental and innate characteristics of the subject; personality structure, i.e., the dynamic organization of human psychophysical systems that encourage

thinking (internal personal factors) and behavior (interpersonal and social factors). Titone defined the following aspects of the dynamic development of the «Self»: existential experience of the listener/speaker; worldview; attitudes (atteggiamenti); affective components; unconscious/subconscious verbal communication sources; intentions and communicative decisions; linguistic self-awareness.

The model of Titone is based on the humanistic concept that each person has personal way of learning a language and special learning needs. Therefore, individual characteristics determine the need for individualized training (1995). According to Titone, learning revolves around the concept of personality and is an open system of relationships between the «Self and the World».

At the end of the XX century new tendencies in students' education appeared, rooted in social pedagogy, which aims to develop the skills necessary for successful socialization in society, the ability to navigate in everyday situations, deal with emerging non-standard tasks based on the assigned and social values developed using the acquired knowledge, skills, life and educational experience, that is social competence. The study of sociological and psychological and pedagogical literature on the research topic leads to the conclusion that social competence is regarded by many scientists as an integral part of socialization process and helps an individual to cope with changes in social roles, requiring the ability to collaborate and engage in the process, as well as easy interoperability, preparedness for changes, self-determination, social responsibility for the consequences of the actions and a qualitative characteristic of the process.

Based on the theoretical analysis of the "social competence" concept, we come to the conclusion that social competence is a set of specific personal qualities, abilities, social knowledge and skills that ensure the integration of a person into society and are expressed through the productive performance of various social roles.

Currently, such concept as "behavioral competence" (action competence) has become widespread, which, in contrast to "communicative competence", defines a linguistic act as a way of interacting with other subjects aimed at achieving certain goals.

This perspective is closely related to humanistic psychology and pedagogy of Zenkovsky, (2002), Sokolova (2012), Lesgaft (1951), Akutina (2020), Maslow (1970), Zalevskaya (2009), Bolotov (2003), Bermus (2005), Allport (2002), who consider the learning process as a whole, built on empathy, tolerance, and congruent behavior. Learning and motivation involve the revision of relations relationships between the «Self and the World» in which the student is considered as a responsible person, and the teacher's task is to intensify the proceso creating the psychological comfort and reducing barriers to natural learning and acquiring social skills concerning communication, teaching and interaction with others. Consequently, the attitude towards the role of participants in the learning process changes: the student and the teacher are partners who develop common goals based on high moral principles, ready for personal self-development, and if parents are included in this educational process, it gives a chance to understand and effectively solve

the problems that arise. The relationship of language, speech, thinking and communication is studied on the basis of the general principle of variability, which emphasizes the need to take the personal world of the student into account.

## **Results**

Research methods:

- theoretical methods: synthesis and analyzing the scientific literature devoted to the question; studying legal documentation;
- empirical methods: interviews, surveys, observing the educational process at schools in Sicily.

The experimental base of the research - schools of Sicily

Stages:

During the first stage, the author analyzes the philosophic, sociological, pedagogical and psychological literature, the legal framework on the research question, and the theoretical search for substantiation of the conceptual apparatus and research field concerning the problems of bilingualism and bilingual education in the context of world experience. The initial research positions were developed and the problem of bilingual education in Sicily was studied. At this stage, the relevance of the research and the practical significance of the problem were proved, and a working hypothesis formulated.

At the second stage the sociolinguistic model organizing the educational process at school was formed, the performance criteria and pedagogical conditions of implementing the model in the educational process was identified, positive impact of a special bilingual educational environment on the education, training, student's personality development in the "teacher-child-parents" triad was revealed; the results were demonstrated and the conclusions made.

As part of the research, 63 people – parents who raise bilingual children were interviewed. The respondents gave completely different answers. Some of them can be seen below (we want to make sure that the response style remains the same as in the author's version):

"My son speaks and writes Italian perfectly, better than his classmates. Doesn't use the dialect at all, but since he has a double surname, it happened that they simply lowered the grade and once even made retake Italian in the summer. As it turned out later - by mistake. As for studying here (as a program) – makes me cry – mostly Italian and religion". (S. M.).

"There are no problems at school if they see that the child needs help, the teacher will work with him separately" (A.D).

"If Sicily, then everything will depend on the teacher; on this island, everything is eventual, asucky and no regularities" (O.V.).

"My son is 7 years old, he knows four languages. Teachers got it! Not diligent, distracted, does not listen to lessons and teachers. But, all tests and exams are "excellent"! And here I want to say, teachers, we're getting sick of it! Well, ok, let it be, always tosses and turns...but the material is absorbed. What are the problems?!(O.A.)

"In Italy, bilinguals are treated well. But you make sure that the child knows Italian well. Teach him to read books (a lot). School teachers will never help you with this" (K.R.)

"The teachers supported me in communicating in my native language. Even asked how they (children) ask to let them go the toilet, for example, in Russian, in order to react immediately" (M.X.).

"A speech therapist helps us. Our class teacher doesn't want to get into our problem" (E.T.).

We also interviewed bilingual children. 50 students of different ages took part in the survey. Let's look at some answers: "At primary school, I was the slowest reader and the teacher was always angry with me. I was confusing the letters and spelling. The teacher said "what can be unclear here?". I was always worried, and never wanted to read aloud in front of everyone. Now I read faster than anyone in the class and write very well" (D.M.).

"I hated writing dictation because I made a lot of mistakes" (N.G.).

"I lacked the help from the teacher" (F.A.).

"My teacher supported me and praised me" (A.N.).

"My teacher told me that I needed to read a lot and so I will quickly master the Italian language" (K. L.).

"I felt uncomfortable in class. The children often made fun of my pronunciation, but the teacher did not pay any attention to it. Sometimes I wanted to run away from the classroom and never return there" (C. B.).

*Teachers* were reluctant to engage in discussion of the problem. Only a few respondents expressed their opinion: "bilinguals have better developed language memory and social characteristics", "sometimes it was difficult to explain any task", "migrants prevent Italian children from learning Italian fully in the classroom", "I understand that bilingualism expands cultural boundaries and it requires a lot of effort and self-improvement", "parents do not always meet the teacher's requirements, which makes it difficult for the child to study the material".

After conducting the research on the problem, we are considering, a socio-cultural model for organizing the educational process in a school where bilingual students study was conducted.

## **Discussions**

A well-founded holistic socio-cultural concept of collaboration, taking into account the specifics of bilingual education, is based on a set of methodological approaches, regularities, pedagogic principles, functions, stages of pedagogical interaction and includes the following structural components (concepts): value-oriented; meaningful; criteria-based; technological; organizational and managerial; reflexive and effective. The content component, focused the forming teachers' preparedness for successful interaction with bilingual students and their parents, performs a system-forming role and ensures the ordering and integrity of the model, the functioning and development of its main elements in close interaction and collaboration, based on the achievement of harmonious dialogic relations. The result is the possibility of developing a new socio-cultural and linguistic model in which the Italian educational system can successfully fit in and provide important information in the field of modern linguistic education and developing variability of pedagogically based systems.

The following principles of bilingual education are highlighted:

- the principle of didactic cultural conformity,
- the principle of cooperation in training and self-education,
- the principle of interactivity in multicultural bilingual education,
- the principle of taking the psychological individual characteristics of bilingual children into account,
- the principle of tolerant interaction.

The criteria for the effectiveness of an educational organization are the following: personal criterion of the educational process subjects; the activity criterion aimed at effective motivating the interaction in the "teacher-child-parent" triad; the organizational and managerial criteria and professional-and-methodological criteria. The effectiveness of the model is determined by the results of examinations, control sections and the final state of graduate certification; the results of competitions and contests among schoolchildren; teaching staff certification materials; testing results; professional characteristics of the head of an educational organization.

Pedagogical conditions ensuring the effectiveness of the developed model are as follows:

- implementing the concept of integrity of the educational organization, which includes the following indicators of managerial efficiency: health of both the individual and the entire team, expediency, innovation, manageability of the developing environment, resources and results of pedagogical and personnel efficiency;

-forming the pedagogical staff's motivational readiness for the innovation; developing a system of attitudes towards conscious, purposeful and systematic creation of conditions for effective pedagogical support at the educational organization aimed at bilingual students' successful development;

- selecting constructive traditional and innovative forms, methods and technologies for organizing the implementation of quantitative and qualitative measurement methods in monitoring as well as correct interpretation of data monitoring taking into account various influences and relationships between indicators and using high-quality tools and modern software for processing and analyzing monitoring data.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the theoretical analysis and the detailed comprehensive studying various methodological approaches make it possible to state that specially organized training programs and interaction between Italian school teachers and bilingual students and their parents in terms of ideas about the intelligence and social activity structure, lead to the conclusion that the two language systems contribute to the developing flexibility of thinking, intellectual activity and social success. Specially created bilingual educational environment of the school, which includes a set of spatial-subject, material, multicultural factors as well as social components, interpersonal relationships interconnected and complement and enrich each other, have a positive impact on the education, training, and development of the bilingual student's personality, and help to build relationships in the "teacher-child-parents" triad competently.

The complexity of a bilingual child language environment develops the ability to understand meanings more clearly, construct certain images being is the main indicator of intellectual development activity as well as unconventional, divergent thinking, activating creative abilities, and also affecting the successful social adaptation of bilinguals in a modern multipolar society. Therefore, the innovative methods and technologies for teaching and developing bilingual students reveal the possibility of developing a new socio-cultural and linguistic model, which the Italian educational system can successfully fit in and provide important information in the field of modern linguistic education and humanistic pedagogical systems variability development.

The practical significance of the research is that the main provisions and conclusions of the article can be used in research and teaching practice when considering the phenomenon of bilingual educational environment.

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