

# Child Language Acquisition Focusing on Bilingualism

*A study among Norwegian-Spanish bilingual  
kindergartens in Oslo, Norway*

Livia Andrea Cabezas Serpa



Master's Thesis

Master of Philosophy in Special Needs Education  
Department of Special Needs Education  
Faculty of Educational Sciences  
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# Abstract

The following study investigates preschool teacher's experiences of addressing children from different background in order to support Spanish and Norwegian languages in bilingual kindergartens in Norway. The aim of this study is to look at the interactions and strategies preschool teachers applied in kindergarten for enhancing and measuring the progress of language and vocabulary development. The research sub-questions around the topic are as follows:

- How do preschool teachers mediate bilingual interactions to support language development in bilingual kindergartens?
- Which strategies do preschool teachers apply in bilingual kindergartens?
- What resource is used by preschool teachers for assessing language and vocabulary in bilingual kindergartens?

This research deals with bilingual kindergartens in Norway which is mostly attending by Spanish, Latin-American and Norwegian children where Norwegian and Spanish language is greatly used as a way of communication between kindergarten staff, parents and children.

The study was applied to six participants who work in bilingual kindergartens in the downtown of Oslo. Most of the participants speak both languages in their working place. Through the use of qualitative methods, such as interview and informal observation, I investigate their experiences and challenges relating to language and vocabulary development.

The first part of the theoretical framework presents several approaches to the phenomenon of bilingualism including cognitive and socio cultural studies by Vygotsky (1965) and Cummins (2000) that investigate the relation between cognition and cultural factors in the development of bilingualism, later followed by wide spectrum of professionals that investigated vocabulary instruction strategies and languages assessment in kindergartens.

The results are divided into three parts: view of bilingualism, strategy use and assessment of language and vocabulary development.

First, the results concluded that preschool teachers were highly positive towards bilingualism; they stressed the importance to expose children to natural environment surrounded by people who master both languages.

Second, the results concluded a diverse strategies used by preschool teachers and other staff in kindergartens, including the active use of both languages; weekly routines as playing, singing, reading books, indoors and outdoors activities; which correspond to an informal instruction of language. Besides this, the advantages to learn a new language in early years which provides the possibilities to understand culture differences and traditions, disadvantages and challenges they meet in their pedagogy activities.

Third, findings suggest that preschool teachers assess languages through observation process rather than making structured or systematic evaluation. All the participants apply strategies that not namely emphasize vocabulary development; the approach used is more focus in language development through social interactions rather than instructional strategies.

# Preface

This thesis deals with perceptions and experiences of preschool teacher regarding strategies for language and vocabulary development in bilingual kindergartens. The research took place in Spanish/ Latin-American and Norwegian bilingual kindergartens in Oslo. I am grateful for the Department of Special Needs Education, for allowing me to work with this project and for providing me with supervisor facilities in the conduction of this research.

I express my gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Kristin Pedersen for guidance, support, collaboration, and for providing didactical background on which this work is based. I also thank my second supervisor, Prof. Ivar Morken, for his remarks and advice.

My warm thanks go to Prof. Jorun Buli-Holmberg for reviewing the manuscript of this thesis. Prof. Buli-Holmberg also read the text in its early stages and gave me several insightful suggestions about improving the structure of the thesis, for which I am greatly thankful.

I wish to express my gratitude to my family for their sincere interest in my work. Most of all, I thank to my beloved husband André, without his support, this work would never have been completed. I dedicate this thesis to all of them.

Andrea Cabezas

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# 1 Introduction

Both staff in kindergartens, parents and the society plays an important role in the development of young children. It is relevant that kindergarten personnel gain insights about how to communicate with children who have different languages of expression. In this study the term bilingualism is used rather than multilingualism because the last term covers a broad range of practice and policy. At the same time, bilingualism embraces what researchers have referred to as multilingualism in terms of using more than one language, and /or languages varieties, in whatever combination.

In a bilingual setting, such as the bilingual kindergartens in Norway who has Spanish and Norwegian as a languages of communication; preschool teacher meet children from different characteristic; those who comes from families who raise their child simultaneously in two languages environment; parents who master/ not master the dominant or the minority languages or parents from different backgrounds who are willing their children to learn a language in young age. In order to address children with different features; preschool teachers may apply resources or create conditions so that they are able to enhance these languages. In fact, there are various methods; although there are not proven to be successful, that teachers may employ at all grades levels for enriching vocabulary, but in kindergarten settings, there are lack of recognized best practices for teaching vocabulary.

From this picture, the study tries to examine the approach that preschool teachers in bilingual kindergartens employ, the advantages and challenges they meet, strategies and assessment in order to measure the progress of language and vocabulary.

The research is carried out in a qualitative basis applying a semi structure interview to preschool teachers. This instrument will allow me to understand perception, interpretation and experiences that preschool teachers have on bilingual education.

## **1.1 Research problem and sub- questions**

The topic of this research is “Child Language acquisition focusing on bilingualism in kindergartens in Oslo, Norway”.

This study may lead to better understanding about how bilingual kindergarten staff meets children who has Spanish and Norwegian as languages of communication. Most of the children attending these bilingual kindergartens have Spanish, Latin-American and Norwegian parents. So the research question can be presented as follows:

How does preschool teacher address children with different backgrounds in order to support the language and vocabulary in bilingual kindergarten (Spanish/ Norwegian) in Norway?

In order to delineate important aspects of the research questions; this may be divided in sub-questions as follows:

How do preschool teachers mediate bilingual interactions to support languages in bilingual kindergartens?

Which strategies do preschool teachers apply in bilingual kindergartens?

What resource is used by preschool teachers for assessing language and vocabulary in bilingual kindergartens?

## **1.2 Expectation of the study**

Through this study I intended to provide an overview about preschool teacher practices regarding to bilingualism and gain deeper understanding about how they address children so that they may enhance their vocabulary and language. I became interested in how children acquire a second language through my own experience learning a language in adulthood. My motivation to conduct this research is gain insight and understanding in the field of early bilingualism. This means the approach the kindergarten staff performs when it comes to develop two languages: Spanish and Norwegian, their experiences, perceptions and challenges they enface in their pedagogical activities, the strategies they apply in development vocabulary as well as the assessment preschool performs in order to measure the progress of languages.

## 1.3 Organization of the thesis paper

The thesis is organized in five chapters; the introduction, the theoretical framework, methodology, data and analysis. These chapters are subdivided into smaller subtopics; the content of each chapter is briefly presented below.

Chapter 1 presents the introduction along with the research problem and sub-questions, the expectation, overview of Latin- American and Norwegian kindergartens and the outline of the study.

Chapter 2 contains theoretical framework and literature review about research findings in relation to cognitive, psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in the area of bilingualism, language and vocabulary.

Chapter 3 provides the significance aspects of research methodology. It starts by presenting design of the study, interview as a tool for data collection, sampling and relevant ethical issues.

Chapter 4 contains the data presentation and analysis, presenting and discussing in three categories the result of the instrument according to the theoretical framework such as view of bilingualism, strategy use and assessment of language and vocabulary development.

Chapter 5 concludes my thesis with the discussion of the findings, conclusions, summary of the data within the theoretical framework and suggestions for further study.

## 1.4 About the Spanish/ Latin-American-Norwegian bilingual kindergartens

The profile of these kindergartens is bilingual and bicultural; compose of people from different nationalities, especially Spanish, Latin-American and Norwegian speakers. Children and parents from these kindergartens have diverse linguistic and multicultural background, but most of them are from Spanish and Norwegian speaking countries. Bilingual and non-bilingual kindergartens apply the same Norwegian framework based on seven areas: “Communication, language and text; body, movement and health; art culture and creativity; nature, environment and technic; ethic, religion and philosophy and numbers, space and form” Kunnskapsdepartementet (KD), *framework for kindergartens*, p. 32-42. The main focus

of bilingual kindergartens is to enhance understanding in both languages by giving experiences about Spanish/ Latin- American and Norwegian culture. Thus, the annual plan includes activities such as celebrating national day of the countries children is represented. The activities vary from making flags, performing drama, music, song or games to inviting parents to be part of the celebration. Kindergarten's goal is to develop a sense of belonging to diverse cultures through the language. Therefore kindergarten routines are based on interaction for building language, identity and self-esteem.

## 2 Theoretical framework and literature review

This chapter intent to develop a theoretical framework based on theories and empirical research which are relevant in this study in order to answer the central question of this research: How does the preschool teacher address children with different background in order to support the language and vocabulary in bilingual kindergartens (Spanish-Norwegian) in Norway?

### 2.1 Bilingualism

Bilingualism has commonly defined and described in terms of categories, scales and dichotomies, which are related to factors such as ability, function and attitude to the language. The Oxford English Dictionary (2010) defines a bilingual as “speaking two languages fluently” or “expressed in or using two languages”. This definition could be interpreted in several ways according to oral, aural or literacy skills are considered, or in the context the language is employed. According to Baker (2001) bilingualism is the ability to use more than one language. This statement may raise confusion when the degree of proficiency in each language is discussed. Some experts maintain that some level of competency in two languages is sufficient to be called bilingual. Diebold (1966) cited in Engen & Kulbrandstad (2004) states that when a person understands expression of a new language means that he/she will become bilingual. This applies even if they are not able to say something in that language. Additionally, Haugen (1956) adds that bilingualism begins when the speaker of one language can develop complete meaningful utterances in the other language. A person might, for example have not productive control over a language, being a passive or receptive bilingual, but is able to understand utterances in it. Contrary to this point is Bloomfield (1993), who claims that a bilingual person must have native speaking competence in both languages.

Hornby (1977) cited in McLaughlin (1984) affirms that bilingualism is not an all-or-none property. Rather, it is an individual characteristic that may exist to varying degrees from minimal ability to complete fluency in more than one language.

In order to give a more nuanced definition; Baker (2006) listed some dimensions that should be taken into account when it comes to analyze bilingualism. These are ability, use, and

balance of two languages, age, development, culture, contexts and elective bilingualism. All these factors are involved in defining and measuring bilingualism. Moreover, there are other criteria for analyzing bilingualism in relation to individual's use and function such as the social interaction. An individual may have narrow or limited proficiency in languages but he/she manages in certain settings to communicate quite effectively showing sufficient interaction skills whereas others master linguistically but he/she is relatively ineffective in communication.

Vygotsky (1962) emphasizes the important role of social interaction in the development of language; considering the language acquisition as the center of inter-relationships for communication. The child has the opportunity to improve a language in daily interaction with peers, parents and/or teachers; that may be more knowledgeable linguistically and culturally. This constant participation is internalized and assimilated gradually and becomes part of the own child.

Vygotsky maintained that being able to express the same thought in different languages will enable the child to see his language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories, and this leads to awareness of his linguistic operations.

As it is seen above, definitions of bilingualism range from maximalist's perspectives; pointing that bilingualism means mastering two languages in a native level; reaching academic criteria, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to minimalist perspectives which deal with the competence of some words or phrases in another language; called also incipient or minimalism bilingualism.

## **2.2 Cognitive and socio cultural perspectives of bilingualism**

There are several studies conducted since the 1960s that have reported that bilingual children performed a significantly higher level than unilingual children on various measures of cognitive and linguistic abilities. At the same time there are some negative and intermediate positions that maintain the opposite in terms of how the language is presented to the child.



According to McLaughlin (1984), the child who has mastered two languages has a linguistic advantage over the monolingual child where the bilingual child becomes aware that there are two ways of saying the same thing. Besides the fact to learn a new language, one learns also a second culture that makes them likely to be quite different from those who stay monolingual. This is view positively by many and it may be seen as an access to valued forms of knowledge, access to affluent and prestigious vocational positions and high status.

Cummins & Swain (1986) suggest the positive association that bilingualism plays in relation to the intellectual skills, divergent thinking, the promotion to analytic orientation to linguistic and perceptual structures as well as the increase of sensitive to feedback cues. The findings of several investigations suggest that bilinguals may be more sensitive to interpersonal feedback and more adept at certain kinds of communication tasks. Early bilingualism leads to an analytic attitude toward language and toward cognitive tasks generally, therefore, acquiring a new language in young ages accelerate speed and efficient in processing a new language. Besides, children are more skillful with the respect to the acquisition of the phonological system and psychological factors like being more playful or being not afraid to make mistakes facilitate early influence than adults. However, children cannot be said to be better bilingual learner than adults because adults possess analytical skills that are positive for learning a second language.

Therefore, the successful establishment of bilingualism depends of psychological factors such as motivation, attitudes, willingness rather than physiological or biological ones (Chomsky (1959 cited in Hoffmann, 1991), McLaughlin (1984).

Bilinguals develop cognitive skills in greater extent than monolinguals; however this is not applied to all bilinguals. Thus, Cummins (2000) developed a threshold hypothesis where explain these differences; he stated that there are two threshold levels for bilingual development. According to this hypothesis bilingualism must reach the first level for avoid the negative cognitive disadvantages if an individual has not reached it, this implies low competences in both languages; contrary to those who master the language and may benefit of the cognitive development. Moreover, he views that there are a neutral area between the two thresholds where there are not noticeable advantages or disadvantages for the cognitive development. Cummins have been criticized because of having do not define limits for the different threshold levels, but he argues that there is not purpose to put limits since the level varies from situation to situation. This model (figure 1) shows that although the first and

second language are different; these are built up in a common foundation of knowledge, feelings, experiences related to events, actions, people, objects, opinions, ideas and the relationship between them.

TABLE 7.5  
The Threshold Hypothesis

	Type of Bilingualism	Cognitive Effect
Higher threshold ↑	1. Additive Bilingualism High levels in both languages	Positive
Lower threshold ↑	2. Dominant Bilingualism Native-like level in one of the languages	Neither Positive nor Negative Cognitive Effects
	3. Subtractive Bilingualism Low level in both languages	Negative

Based on Cummins 1979.

Figure 1 – The Threshold Hypothesis (Mc Laughlin, 1984, *Second-Language Acquisition in Childhood* p. 210)

However some have argued that bilingualism will necessarily have a negative effect on cognitive development because having; for instance, two labels for each concept will be confusing and result in retarded conceptual development. Some research seems to indicate that bilinguals suffered from a language handicap when measured by verbal tests of intelligence or academic achievement. This negative view was attributed to the academic under achievement of linguistic minorities due to the cognitive confusion it creates when the brain must process two languages simultaneously. In some cases this may cause identity crisis if the individual presents confusion, anxieties and struggles. However, it could be other aspects that affect the development of bilingualism such as social, economic or political conditions (Backer, 2007).

Additionally, studies based on immigrant workers children throughout the world do not show positive benefits from bilingualism. In fact, many of these children seem to have learned both of their language poorly. The advice of some educators is that such children should attain mastery in one language before being taught a second.

On the other hand, the resulting of bilingualism may be cause additive or subtractive forms; where the first implies that the bilingual is adding another socially relevant language to his repertoire of skills at no cost to his first language competence unlike from subtractive where the first language was gradually being replaced by a more prestigious second language (Lambert, 1972). This view seems to be similar to the proposal of Beardsmore (1986), who indicates, in other words, that an increase of someone's ability by using two languages corresponds to *ascendant bilingualism* whereas the decrease one is related to *recessive bilingualism*. The question may arise is: How proficient does a person need to be in both languages? There are several definitions based in these criteria of competence. Some authors such as Lambert, Havelka and Gardner (1959) named *balanced bilingualism* to those who has equal proficiency of the two languages and are totally competent in both linguistic codes. However, linguistic proficiency is something unstable that may depend of the use and function of each person. For instance; a Spanish child is able to understand a second language; either in his writing, reading, listening or speaking form; which Hoffmann (1991), denominated *receptive bilingualism* or in negative connotations *passive bilingualism*, on the other hand, if the child is able to speak and understand the languages as well as other forms mentioned before; this mean that he can be described in terms of *productive, active* or *functional bilingualism*.

Functional bilingualism is attributed to the use and level of competence for each code of language- *Bilingualism is not a phenomenon of language; it is a characteristic of its use* (Mackey, 1970, p.554, cited in Hoffmann, 1991). Bilingual children should be able to master languages, showing good communication skills, and positive identity in the society and their own language community. Skutnabb-Kangas (1984) cited in Hoffmann (1991) adds the issue of attitude; which implies that the individual is aware of his own bilingualism and have self-identification or identification by others. For instance, a Spanish child may be influenced by the Norwegian environment to maintain or loss the language. Cultural, social and motivational factors may make the child to identify and develop strong links with other speakers who share the same language.

Baker (2006), Engen & Kulbrandstad (2004), mentioned that functional bilingualism is defined within an individual's use of multiple languages. Instead of looking at bilingualism in the context of language proficiency as defined by academy criteria, as in balanced bilingualism; functional bilingualism looks at an individual's use of language among a variety of everyday domains, such as people and situations, where they can interact effectively in

both languages. Functional bilingual concerns “when, where, and with whom people use their two languages” (Fishman, 1965 cited in Baker, 2007).

## **2.3 Language Acquisition: simultaneous and sequential**

There are a number of possible routes involved in childhood bilingualism, for example children may acquire more than one language nearly simultaneously; sometimes simultaneous childhood bilingualism are called: infant bilingualism, bilingual acquisition and bilingual first language acquisition; or children may acquire one of the languages before the other, what it is also named as consecutive, successive, sequential bilingual or second language acquisition Backer (2006).

Padilla & Lindholm (1984) cited in McLaughlin (1978), suggest that a child should be considered simultaneous bilingual if he/she acquire two or more languages before the age of three. For some simultaneous and sequential bilingual children, one of their two languages is a minority language, meaning it is not widely spoken outside the home, and has little or no cultural, political or educational status in the broader society. For simultaneous bilinguals means that the parents who speaks that language is the primary and sometimes solitary source of that language, a situation referred to as “family bilingualism” (Lanza, 1997).

Sequential or successive bilingualism can occur in a pre-school or elementary school context, when the second language is introduced after 3 years old (McLaughlin, 1978). Here the language learned is different than what is used in the home. Children usually speak their first language at home with both parents, and their second language outside of home (nursery, elementary school, community, etc.). Learning a second language is quite similar to learn a first language; the only difference is the child speak one language before, therefore, it can be easy for the child who has develop the first language efficiently to learn a second one (Valvatne & Sandvik, 2007).

## **2.4 Languages learning strategies in first and second language acquisition**

### **2.4.1 First language acquisition**

Researchers have studied the individual differences of young children in acquiring first and second language. This approach addresses the linguistic environment and models of interaction that may affect language learning in children. The following examples illustrate the different paths the child use in develop his speech.

Ann Peters (1977) cited in McLaughlin (1984) carried a study to a boy Minh, whose parents were from a middle-class family living in Hawaii; the mother was originated from Vietnam and the father from United States. The mother came to United States at the age of 12; she spoke little Vietnamese to Minh and used the same language to communicate with friends and relatives. Both mother and father spoke to the child in English. Peter's started to study Minh at the age of seven months and around seven and a half months appeared his first utterances, little similar to adult speech; even though they were unintelligible, it sounded as if the child should mean something. Later, the mother realized the child was producing two kinds of speech: Analytic or referential; which corresponds to a gradual progression of language from one word, two word utterances to more complex strings or words; and the second one was Gestalt speech or expressive; which it begins even earlier than analytic speech. Gestalt speech corresponds to the tune a child learns before words; the melody from the adult speech become part of his repertoire and following he will try to reproduce phrases and sentences to his own before he had learnt forming words.

A similar research was applied by Nelson (1973) cited in McLaughlin (1984) to a group of children who shows analogous strategy: analytical; where children applied such strategy to name things, using nouns expressing the meaning of two-and three word utterances. On the other hand, the other group was more involved with other people; presenting affective and social expressions; which is related to gestalt style. In these studies the language strategy or style applied by the child was influenced by the mother's speech. In this point the social-class factors are important to mention; parents may provide different kind of input in the manner that the child will make use of strategies or styles for dealing with that input.

According with Peters (1983), there are some factors that may explain why a child use one strategy or other. The first is related to the function of language for the child; if children see language mainly as a way of talking about things, then they are probably employing an analytical or referential style; on the contrary if they see language mainly as a manner of interacting with others, they are probably employing a gestalt or expressive style. Second, the type of input children receive by the environment; for instance, parents from some cultures share diverse expectation and views to reinforce the language speech, some stimulate the child from the beginning of the life while other do not pay attention to children's speech considering a natural process that will come up on their own (Peters, 1983).

In brief, it is complex to provide a certain answer about what factors motivate the child to adopt one strategy or other. Probably there are some factors that limit how far a child will be able to go in terms of adult expectation and input speech which may make the child to shift from one approach to another.

### **The role of imitation**

Imitation is a fundamental process in language learning. According with Clark's (1978) cited in McLaughlin (1984), children do not build up syntactic competence due to analyze and interpret adult utterances but by imitating not complete comprehended utterances which will constitute a repertoire of linguistic structures from which children extract gradually information. This information is recovered as "store fragments" and reproduces it to others. She emphasize children learn utterances that contain several words or words package from the adult language, which it may not reproduce immediately but appears later in the child's speech; going through from one unit to other unit stage rather than going through one word to two word stages. In addition other authors have support this view, referring that strategy of imitating is unanalyzed by children at the beginning; then it is partly analyzed and concluded with analyzed forms called performing without competence.

This strategy is applied in kindergarten environment not only by imitating phrases but also by playing, manipulating and repeating phrases between the kindergarten staff and the child, supported by telling stories, reading books, interacting with peers, singing, rhyming, etc.

## **2.4.2 Second language learning**

Researchers have found variations about how individual children acquire successive second language depending of their first language, age, the condition of presentation, the opportunities to use the language, the social context, languages to be learned, the personality and certain learning styles disposition which it seems to reflect that there is not a single path to bilingual competence (McLaughlin, 1983). The following are sources of individual variation applied in second language acquisition.

### **Learning style variables**

Learning styles variables used in first language acquisition seem to maintain in second language acquisition. Thus, the use of the analytical strategy according to Vihman (1982) cited in McLaughlin (1982) may be because, certain language predispose the children to one approach or the other; which means that some children applied systematic analysis of morphological element while others apply gestalt manner because of the complexity of the input were imposed on them. Another possibility could be that children adopt Gestalt strategy when they are older because of they are more competent of sequence words together than younger children. Furthermore, older children have increased their vocabulary and memory ability and are more probably to employ imitated phrasal units in their first language development which may them developmentally predisposed to a gestalt strategy.

Another aspect to take into account is the neurological differences between individuals that highly influence how language is learned, along with other variables such as cognitive, developmental variables, situational factors and personality variables Peters (1983) cited in McLaughlin (1984).

### **Personality variables**

There is a close relationship between personality variables and language learning which it may that some people are better in learning a second language than others, however measuring personality variables is still quite primitive (McLaughlin, 1983). Strong (1982) carried out a study in kindergartens to 13 native Spanish speakers, learning English as a second language. The aim was to examine the connection between two variables: personality and second-language learning. The study found that three variables were significant in this

relation: talkativeness and responsiveness in Spanish and gregariousness in both languages. Besides this, he observed that the nature of the task, the social and cognitive studies they need to employ in dealing with it, and certain individual features were also presented in this interaction. However, no one study could explore all other variables that interact each other in second language acquisition, such as situational contexts, cultural background and learning styles. For instance none of the children in the study seems to be greatly motivated to interact with monolingual English children; on the contrary, they were more oriented to other Spanish-speaking children. Therefore the issue of personality should be analyzed in conjunction with parameters mentioned before.

### **Socio-psychological factors**

Studies in this point assumed that some children are associated with integrative orientation, as if they are more motivated to learn a new language and utilize multiple strategies unlike to children with segregate orientation which may not predict degree of second language because the attitudes and motivation are not towards the target. In studies of Wong Fillmore (1976) cited in McLaughlin (1984), Nora, a native Spanish speaker was observed in different environments: in the cafeteria, on the playground, in the classroom and in each context she was strongly identify with English –speaking children.

This may due to different factors: children of immigrant or migrant workers, the language status, the degree of immersion to the new language, and other components that may complex to measure and predict the human behavior. Thus, different factors confer differences in learning and the use of individual strategies.

## **2.5 Categories of early childhood bilingualism**

Studies derived from Romaine (1995) divided childhood bilingualism into four categories along the lines of native language of the parents, the language of the community at large and the parents' strategy in speaking to the child.

The one person-one language refers the parents who speak to their children their native languages from birth; and the language of one of the parent is the dominant language of the community. For example: mother speaks Spanish; father speaks Norwegian; the community language is Norwegian. This means each parent should only speak their native language with



the child with as little code-switching as possible. This has often been suggested as a successful strategy. However, it tends to imply incorrectly that it is only the family that influences language acquisition. Community influences are also important (e.g. pre-school, extended family, mass media). A particular example is when children are raised in multilingual cities, and the diverse language experience may add much variation to this strategy (Baker, 2006 & Romaine, 1995).

In the category; Home language is different from outside the home; both parents speak the minority language to the child. This means the child acquires one language in the home, and a different language formally or informally outside the home. An example of this would be a family in Norway whose father is a native Norwegian speaker but uses fluently Spanish with his child and a mother speaks Spanish, the community language is Norwegian. The parent's language may be the same as the local neighborhood, or it may be different. Another variation of this category would be that for example, both parents speak a language that is a minority language and adopt a modified one-parent-one language strategy. This may result in trilingualism in the child (Baker, 2006).

Mixed language is when parents speak both the majority and minority language to the children at home; code-switching and code-mixing is acceptable in the home and the neighborhood. The child will frequently code-switch with other bilinguals but not with monolinguals. The use of both languages is acceptable in the local community (Baker, 2006). An example would be mother and father speak Spanish and Norwegian; the community language is Spanish and Norwegian.

A final category, delayed introduction to the second language; where the parents delay exposure to the dominant language with the purpose to ensure a strong foundation in a heritage language before the dominant language outside the home becomes pervasive. Thus children are not exposed to the second language until they reach the age of around 3 years old.

## 2.6 Code-switching

Code-switching is a widespread phenomenon where people who can more than one language; use the language or their variant of the language in different context in order to communicate each other. Some people code-switch more frequently than others depending of the situation. This is a frequent behavior among bilinguals with a variety of valuable purpose and benefits. The switch of languages may happen within the course of a single conversation, whether at the word or sentence level or at the level of blocks of speech (Backer, 2006).

Studies among young bilingual children show that they were able to code- switch at the age of two, though with not the same level of sophistication as older bilinguals. The influence of the adult participant in the interaction was one of the deciding factors in the switches and mixes, rather than setting or topic. Thus, the two year-old child did display some degree of bilingual awareness (Lanza, 1992). Yet, the language-mixing/code-switching at this age could be attributed to dominance in one of the languages.

Attitudes towards code-switching vary across linguistic groups and languages; some research indicates as negative the code-switching as it may reflect lacking of language skills in one language. Grosjean (1982), states that languages mixing is viewed among monolinguals as “jargon or gibberish that insult to the monolingual’s own rule government language”. This negative attitude was transferred onto many bilingual informants; who look at code-switching as embarrassing and not very pure and they actively try to avoid it; and at the same time defensive reaction, associating code-switching with laziness or sloppy language habits. However, it tends to be those who are more fluent in a language that code-switch. Thus code-switching is a valuable tool, often used as a communicative strategy to convey linguistic and social information. In addition those who have high proficiency in languages could master the various strategies of code-switching. This form of communication is also considered very effective since it can cover a larger linguistic repertoire than those who can only communicate in one language (Engen & Kulbrandstad, 2004).

The use of both languages, in the form of code switching, is often influences by the linguistic context, languages status, language proficiency and the aim of purpose of the code switch.

## 2.7 Strategies in teaching vocabulary

Vocabulary refers the knowledge of word meaning and pronunciation important for the linguistic and social development of the individual (Biemiller, 2006).

Vocabulary involves talking about words that the child may have heard before in books, on trips, or in the kindergarten and sending children out to find more. The variety of vocabulary knowledge among children is evident; many studies show that studies vocabulary should begin early, even in preschool. According to Mezynski (1983) and Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) cited in Kame'enui & Baumann (2012), mentioned that there are some aspects that enhance vocabulary knowledge and comprehension for learners of all ages such as several exposure of the words being taught, amplitude of information-definitional and contextual; and engagement of active or deep processing by getting students to think about the words and interact with them. Young children hear and learn in conversation, and there is no need to teach words that are so strange that children may never encounter them, on the contrary, use with them productive words that they may employ in different contexts (Kame'enui & Baumann, 2012).

The development of vocabulary is an process that may be differentiate in two types active or productive vocabulary where the individual understand the language and is able to use it without help and passive or receptive vocabulary where the individual understand but is not able to use with autonomy.

Children start kindergarten with significant differences in early literacy experiences, Hart & Risley (1995) cited in Kame'enui & Baumann (2012); including differences in skills and exposure, which it will influence in further grades if children maintain lack of profuse vocabulary in terms of understanding and comprehension when they enter at the school.

A program based in the notion of "rich instruction" (Kame'enui & Baumann, 2012) was applied to young children in kindergarten in order to develop and enhance general vocabulary which consisted in engage children in active thinking about word meaning, how they might employ words in different contexts and the relationship among words. The vocabulary instruction was built up for several words from each of seven stories which took place after a story has been read, discussed and concluded. This approach enabled to evolve initial understanding about the story's use of the words. The vocabulary learning was assessed by

picture tasks where the children were asked to decide what picture represent a situation related by a target word. Besides this, verbal test was applied to children by asking to respond (yes or no) to four questions about each word. Additionally, repetition instruction was employed by repeating reading of a story book with explanation of target word meanings including activities such as concentration, yes/ no games, stop games, etc. The results of the study confirmed that learning words by interaction with different assessment provide a productive vocabulary, allowed children to respond to task that developed higher-order semantic processing, word knowledge, comprehension gaining with instruction that offered repeating reading of stories and emphasizing in word meaning practice or story reading only.

### **Reading storybooks**

Storybook reading are excellent resources for young children in terms to develop language and vocabulary. Books for young children are also frequently referred to as picture books because they content more pictures and illustrations than narrative information which may facilitate children's ability to remember specific and concrete information.

It is important that books contain appealing stories in order to hold children's interest and attention. In this setting the role of the adult is mainly an active listener, asking questions, sharing information and encouraging through praise and repetition so that they may expand their utterances.

Beck, McKeown & Kucan (2002) investigated the effects of two types of vocabulary instruction on word learning in kindergarten students; the embedded instruction condition where target words are presenting during storybook reading in a brief and efficient way and the extent instruction condition provides an intensive instruction to the students using different opportunities and interactions around words in several context. The results showed that embedded instruction provided partial word learning unlike to the extent instruction which offered deeper and cleaner word knowledge.

The conclusion is not merely children use the words they learn but the need to experience an abundance of language by creating languages participation opportunities. The "Word Wizard" approach may be applied to first grades at the school, which consists in encouraging children to use their vocabulary words outside the classroom and challenge them to find their words in books they read, television programs, video games or using with family and friends. When children learn new words, they are able to name situations and classify the environment.

Another variation of keeping vocabulary going is by posting a list of the vocabulary words outside the door of the classroom; which it will serve to remind students of their words and speak when they go beyond the room. Parents, teacher and administrator from other classroom should be also involve by receiving the list of words of the students and interact with them either in breaking time or special arrangement (Beck, McKeown,& Kucan, 2008)

Another important aspect in learning vocabulary is the degree the child is exposed to experiences either in the classroom, trips around the neighborhood , to the park, the zoo or other places where the child have the opportunity to expand their previous experiences.

### **Play**

Play and learning are interconnected as a part of the development of early year's education. Children in kindergarten-aged are active and learn through playing, dancing and using their body as a way of communication which enables them to develop linguistically, physically and socially.

Children identify play with pleasure, choice, and control (Fleer, 1999) and clearly delineate play from working in educational contexts. Lillemyr (2009) cited in Kame'enui & Baumann (2012), states that play is for children a way of being; however the opportunities to play can be limited as educators feel pressured to focus on academic curriculum and quantifiable evidence of learning outcomes.

There are several play pedagogies for increasing children's knowledge and skills, such as story drama, topic-oriented play, board/ digital games and outdoor play which may support and scaffold children's academic and social learning (Neuman, Kaefer & Pinkham, 2012).

According with Vygotsky (1962), children may learn more in play than in other so-called educational situations. Besides, he argued that play contributes to language development, conceptual meaning, and social skills; where children reach the zone of proximal development (ZPD) through the guidance of peers and adults which make them enable to symbolize the reality. Similarly, Piaget (1962) cited in Bialystok (2001) pointed out that play helps children assimilate new information and accommodate into their existing knowledge base.

## 2.8 Language and vocabulary assessment in kindergarten

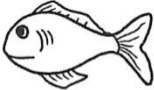



One of the methods preschool teachers obtain information of children's language level is through observation and documentation in different natural environment or settings. For instance, a preschool teacher may observe that the child has an extensive vocabulary when he interacts with peers but not with adults. Observation is a starting point for making conclusion or interpretation about the child situation; however, guides observation helps to ensure that observations conducted by kindergartens are performed in a systematic and objective manner. This allows identifying areas of strength and areas of need without putting constraints on children's behavior and activities, enabling them to behave naturally in different environments.

Notables researchers have provide insights in the development and assessment of vocabulary in young children in bilingual kindergartens. The approach in vocabulary instruction differs in schools, preschool and early primary years. Studies have shown that develop vocabulary size in kindergarten is an effective predictor of reading comprehension in the middle elementary years (Scarborough, 1998, 2001; Silverman & Crandall, 2010 cited in Kame'enui & Baumann, 2012). Hence the input that the child receives from kindergartens, including words for explanation, expressions, books, games, etc. should be appropriated in terms of age and maturity.

Vocabulary may receive little attention in kindergarten and first grades because the condition and method employ it. There is not difficult to test children's vocabulary orally on a one-to-one basis. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and the Expressive Vocabulary Test are well established. However, none of these methods are attainable for classroom teachers since it takes from 10 to 15 minutes per student. In kindergarten settings could be even more challenging since the inability to easily and directly assess vocabulary and vocabulary growth is higher.

Gail Kearns & Biemiller (2005) cited in Kame'enui & Baumann (2012) published a method for group assessment in kindergarten and first grades illustrating that "two-questions" method bring similar results to the method of PPVT. The method implies using two questions that could be responded by "yes" or "no" for each word meaning tested. Correct answer means that the child understood the meaning of the word. For instance: "Are cherries and peaches fruits" (yes or no). These questions are given to the child orally and they respond on a sheet

with a yes with means a smile face or not which means a frown face. Every item was represented by small picture. A sample is shown in figure 2. Although this method has the 25% probability of guessing both questions correctly, the level of precision is acceptable for observe children’s progress in classroom vocabulary.

	1.	☺	☹
		Yes	No
	2.	☺	☹
		Yes	No
	3.	☺	☹
		Yes	No
	4.	☺	☹
		Yes	No

1. ALONE	Y	Can a person find interesting things to do when he or she is alone?
5. ALONE	N	Is someone with you when you are alone?
2. FRUIT	Y	Are peaches and cherries fruits?
6. FRUIT	N	Are carrots and beans fruits?
3. SIGNATURE	Y	Would you write your name if someone asked you for your signature?
7. SIGNATURE	N	Would a red traffic light be a signature?
4. LUXURIOUS	Y	Would a rich person live in a luxurious home?
8. LUXURIOUS	N	Would a luxurious suit of clothes be raggedy?

Figure 2 – Assessing Vocabulary ( Kame’enui & Baumann, 2012, Vocabulary Instruction p.38)

On the other hand, in Norwegian settings KD have made a research about language stimulation and systematic assessment to children’s language in kindergartens (Hølgård, Mjør & Hoel, 2009). Following are some tools kindergartens apply for language development:

TRAS (tidlig registrering av språkutvikling i daglig samspill), which is an observational material and screening tool for assessing language development in different ages. The material consists in a manual and observation form for children of 2-5 years old and examines

three main areas: interaction, communication and attention; understanding of language and linguistic awareness and pronunciation, word and sentence production.

*Askeladden* is a language screening test for children of 2-6 years old consisting in nine subtests, with separate scores; the total of all subtests provides a language age. The aim of this test is to detect and look at causal factors such as semantic, phonology and syntax deviations or delays in relation to language development.

*SATS* (screening av toåringers språk), which means language screening for two years old which consist in ten objects from everyday life and a survey form for parents. The material is an observational and screening tool to assess language comprehension, interaction and attention in two-years old child.

*Language 4* is an observational material and screening tool which consist of a picture folder, a guide and assessing form. The picture folder is basically for conversation of different aspects in the child such as: interaction, attention, comprehension, sentence structure, pronunciation and glossary.

*Alle med*, is an observational material which assess the social competence from children of 1-6 years old related to language development.

*Lær meg norsk før skolestart!* Is an observational material which evaluates six areas: language use, conversation, reading time with conversation about texts and pictures, storytelling of the child, reading, writing and mother language.

*Stovnermodellen* (2008-09), is one of many local developed evaluation tools for assessing personnel work and systematic observation tools for language development in: attention, interaction and communication; participation in conversations and language comprehension.



# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to give an extensive view into the study's research methodology. The study is grounded in qualitative research which seems to provide a broad understanding about the phenomena of the study: How do preschool teachers address children with different background in order to support the language and vocabulary in bilingual kindergartens in Oslo? The study employs purposeful sampling, interview as a way to capture interviewee's perceptions which will be used as a data collection methods, qualitative data analysis; the validity and reliability of the instrument and ethical considerations.

## 3.2 Qualitative Research

According to Merriam (1994) qualitative research enables that the data is delineated more openly and emphasize a comprehensive picture made possible by reconstructing the case under study; facilitating to understand and interpret observations of pedagogical phenomena and courses of events. This design is widely applied in educational sectors as it examines insights, perceptions and understanding of how people perceive the world. The research situation is designed more as a dialogue, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject of interest (Denzin & Lincoln cited in Gall M., Gall J. & Borg, 2013). This means that qualitative research studies the phenomena in natural settings and process how participants interpret them. Therefore, the research situation is not standardized; rather it is represented to be as open as possible (Flick, 2011). Qualitative methods hold different approach; such as interviews, observation, analysis of the text and the use of visual media. In order to give answer to the research question, it has been chosen to use a qualitative research interview since it gives the opportunity to get a glimpse of the participant's thoughts and attitudes, which it would be difficult by using another method. In this study the qualitative approach will serve to understand the phenomena of bilingualism in early childhood taking account the background differences of the children, the collaboration between preschool teachers and parents, pedagogic aspect and assessment.

### **3.3 Selection of the sample**

People to be studied are selected according to their relevance to the research topic. They are not randomly selected to construct a statistically representative sample of a general population. The aim is not to reduce complexity by breaking it down into variables, but rather to increase complexity by including context (Flick, 2011).

The selection of the sample develops a deeper understanding of the phenomena, allowing studying a specific case that suit the purpose of the research. Moreover, the flexibility in this approach enables researcher to adjust methodologies as data are collected, Gall M., Gall J. & Borg (2003).

Participants in this study are pre-school teachers, from two bilingual kindergartens in Oslo; which makes in total six participants from both genders who has Spanish and Norwegian as language of communication. This means that half of the participants have Latin American, Spanish and Norwegian background.

#### **3.3.1 Selection of bilingual kindergarten**

The selected bilingual kindergarten has always been attended by children from diverse linguistic and multicultural background; most of them come from Latin-American/ Spanish and Norwegian background. Among kindergartens in Norway, there are not many bilingual kindergartens which have the main language Spanish and Norwegian. There are only two learning institutions who run bilingual kindergartens in Norway; it means in Oslo, which I came contact with, but only one was interested to participate. This private company runs two bilingual kindergartens; one with two sections and the other one with four sections. Thus, I conducted the research with two kindergartens where six preschool teachers participated in different days.

I contacted the kindergarten principal by telephone and e-mail. I told them about myself and the purpose of the research. All were positive to participate in the interview, thus, the principal let the preschool teachers know about the research and then they later gave me the last answer. The interview took place within the kindergarten. This was positive for the participant because it might contribute to a secure atmosphere and comfortable place when they know well.

### **3.3.2 Selection of Interview participants**

It was chosen six preschool teachers from two kindergartens in Oslo. This basically will give me a good starting for answer the research question about how the preschool teachers address children with different background in order to support the vocabulary and languages in bilingual kindergarten in Norway. I chose preschool teachers because they unlike to other staff in the kindergarten plan and are in charge of the pedagogical activity; and therefore they are good prepared answering and going in depth in aspects I'm interest in. I made contact to kindergarten principals and they gave forward the information to preschool teachers about the research; which they replied me positively and were interested to participate.

### **3.3.3 Strengths and weaknesses of the sampling**

The selection of the sampling influences the quality of the data in a research. In this study the strength lies in the flexibility that allow researchers to modify methodologies as the data are collected. (Gall M., Gall J. & Borg W, 2003).

The study applies purposeful sampling as a way to select and build up a sample that is satisfactory to the specific needs of this research. The sample is a group of preschool teachers from bilingual kindergarten who participate actively in the implementation of pedagogy activities jointly with other personnel. The advantage to address preschool teachers lies in the fact that they may provide kindergartens information about the pedagogy activities, plan, implementation, evaluation and development of linguistic aspects; specifically in relation to language and the vocabulary. Moreover, from their experience; they may contribute with relevant and professional information, which it helps to answer the research question and sub questions formulated in the research. Besides this, it is easy to administrate, due to the fact that the instrument address exclusively to preschool teachers which facilitates the analysis of data and consequently reduce time consuming; however the approach to only one staff of the kindergarten may bring some limitations in the collection of the data since the other members could have contributed with more details in the research.

On the other hand, the weakness of purposeful sampling is that is it difficult to generalize to other subject since the sample is not greatly representative which may represent imprecise results. There were not many kindergartens with bilingual profile that assemble the needs of the study. Those who participated belong to the same association which shares the same goals

and vision. This feature may result in bias. However, those who participated may represent a sample for further studies.

### **3.4 Methods for Data Collection: A semi structure interview**

Interviews have become an important tool to qualitative researchers that many qualitative methods rely or solely on them as the primary mechanism for data collection. The semi structure interview can be used as a guide (Flick, 2002), a foundation on which the interview is built but one that allows creativity and flexibility to ensure that each participant's story is fully uncovered.

This model of interview is used to collect qualitative data by setting up a situation (the interview) that allows a respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. Thus, this will allow me to understand the respondent's point of view, through open-ended questions rather than making generalizations about behavior. The means to access those experiences range widely, from open-ended unstructured approaches that may seem more a friendly conversation than a data-gathering interview (Seidman, 1991) to highly structured protocols with preset and standardized questions from which there is little variance.

### **3.5 Strengths and weaknesses in using semi structure interview**

The semi structure interview was applied to one respondent at time. The advantage to use this source of data is the flexibility and possibility to use open-form questions in order to obtain additional information from the participants. Moreover this instrument may use in conjunction with other methods either for validating or for giving more reliability (triangulation). The participants answer the same question from the instrument what it enables comparability of the responses. The instrument contains relevant questions regarding the pedagogic practices preschool teachers perform in kindergarten which it will facilitated the conduction of the interview. Applying the instrument to several participants may reduce effects and bias in the conduction of the interview as well as the facility of better organization of the data analysis.

However, employing this sort of instrument may lead in some limitations since the participants may provide inaccurate information about their practices. This means preschool teacher may confer slanted information or aspiration about what truly they would like to implement in the future. Therefore the support of other instruments would it give more certainty and validity in the research. Due to the lacking of time I have merely concentrated in conducting semi structured interview as a data collection tool.

What is more, doing interview implies a lot of transcription which was the most challenging and time-consuming element that the research comes upon due to some languages barrier between the participants and researcher.

## **3.6 The Process of Data Collection**

### **3.6.1 Pilot Interview**

Pilot study enables to disclose problems in advance regarding to ambiguities or difficulties may be present in the instrument, the extent of the instrument: too long or short, too easy or too difficult, etc., redundant questions and misunderstood in the research proper (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Moreover, it increases the reliability and validity of the research; providing a framework and research question of the instrument (Morrison, 1993 cited in Seidman, 1991).

The interview was made in English and translates into Spanish and Norwegian due to the multilingual backgrounds of the participants. The pilot interview was conducted to a preschool teacher from a bilingual kindergarten in Oslo who has the same mother language as the researcher. The pilot interview gave me insights about the approximate time it should be used for the whole interview, the ambiguity of some questions was modified and the use of taking notes and tape recording was tested and controlled.

### **3.6.2 Interview Process**

The interviews to preschool teachers took place in the kindergarten during the opening hours. The kindergarten was a known place for the participants, which can contribute to create a good atmosphere and lessen the asymmetric relation between the researcher and participant. Before I conducted the interview, I started with open questions in order to gain a comfortable

situation for both the participant and researcher. The participants chose the place where the interview would be taken place; thus all the interviews happened either in the office/group room or in an empty area.

The interviews were registered by tape recorder which makes it easier to have a face contact with the participant; however I took some notes in order to follow up or re- ask some questions. Using tape recorder has advantages such as the registration of the voice, break and hear many times exact vocabulary, however the use of tape recorder can perceive as a disturbing in terms of catch the conversation by recording. This was not a problem for conducting the research.

The participant knew in advance; through the kindergarten headmaster about the research of “Child language acquisition focusing on Bilingualism among Norwegian- Spanish bilingual kindergartens in Norway”. They got an informed consent letter (appendix 2) before the interview took place, specifying my interest and aim for interviewing preschool teachers, which was delivered to them in the kindergarten.

The participants spoke freely and open about the program they have in the kindergarten. I ended it up the interview by asking questions about if they have something to add and gave them the opportunity to go deeper to some questions. Four interviews were conducted in Spanish and two in Norwegian.

### **3.6.3 Challenges in the Process**

There were some challenges that emerged in the process of the research which fortunately have not made negative impact in the study. First, the process for gaining access to kindergarten was quite demanding due to the retard respond by one of the headmaster who seems to be interested in participate. Due to the delaying of response I decided to start the research with those who gave the formal consent. The contact to preschool teachers was firstly made by mail and later by telephone in order to confirm the appointment and concern of time and place. Moreover, some of the participants postponed the meeting in short warning because of incidental issues happen in the kindergarten. The interview was developed quite fluently between the interviewer and participants; even though the different languages spoken and background's diversity in the communication; however, it was in some extent challenging

when it came to transcribe the data. Another aspect was the feeling of excitement and anxiety to meet the participants which it vanished moderately in the course of the interview.

Overall, the interview gathered rich information from their participants who showed positive and willing approach to collaborate in this research.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The collection and analysis of data is the center of the research enterprise which comes in the form of words rather than numbers. Qualitative data analysis is basically an inductive way of organizing the data into categories by looking at patterns and relationship among the categories for further interpretation (McMillan J & Shumacher, 1997).

According to Miles & Huberman (1984) cited in Silverman, suggest that data analysis refers to the process of selecting, clarifying, abstracting and refining raw data which involve an organized gathering of information that allow conclusions designs, noticing patterns, explanations, proposition and verifying the solidity and strength of the study for further decisions. Additionally, in qualitative research is not basically coding the data but also to identify elements or patterns that link together with the theoretical scheme and the data analysis to note concepts or additional literature for narrow focus.

In this study the data was obtained by notes and tape recordings to later make the transcriptions. Next, the information was assembled into a computer database to identify significant phenomena, and determine that they share sufficient similarities and relationship for being as a part of the same construct or category. In this point, similarly to the interview, the data collection in this research was divided in three themes bases on the theoretical framework. All the categories are interlinked and provide information into each other. The categories are described and interpreted to make later the abstraction or conceptualization and discover the main findings from the category structure. Finally, it is described the phenomena and related with finding found lately (Gall M., Gall J. & Borg, 2003).

### **3.8 Reliability**

Reliability in qualitative research assume the possibility of replication; including the status and position of the researcher, situations and conditions, premises than are used, choice of informant and methods of data and analysis (Lecompte & Preissle,1993 cited in Fleer, 1999).

In order to ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the “usual canons of good science”, require redefinition in order to fit the realities of qualitative research (p. 250).

Stenbacka (2001) cited in Silverman (2005) argues that since reliability issues concerns measurements then it has no relevant in qualitative research. She considers an irrelevant matter in the judgment of quality of qualitative research. Kvale (1996) suggest that in interviews; participants give multiple interpretations, intentions and versions from the same reality which may difficult to ensure reliability. However, it is important to highlight the criteria of reliability which includes fidelity to real life, authenticity, detail, honesty, context and situation- specify, depth of responds and meaningfulness to the respondents (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000).

### **3.9 Validity**

Some qualitative research have argued that the term validity is not applicable to qualitative research, but at the same time, they have realized the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research.

Validity in interviews may have some biases in the concept of rigor when it comes with subjectivity, reflexivity, and the social interaction of the interviewing. In this point Mishler (1990) cited in Silverman (2005) added that “understanding” is more suitable term than “validity” in qualitative research. Although, the validity is a persistent problem in interviews for the persistent tendency to make errors, some practical way minimize perhaps the amount of bias such as the attitudes, opinions, and expectations of the interviewer and misperceptions or misunderstandings on what the participant is saying (Cohen, Lawrence & Morrison, 2000).

Additionally, Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that credibility can be addressed by persistent observation, methods like triangulation or other resources. The theoretical framework for this



study is based on different research in the cognitive and socio-cultural area including studies by Cummins, Vygotsky, and several professional in the area of vocabulary. Theories from these researchers give a perception to interpret and analyze the data, which may influence in the results and validity of the research. The study basically applies methods such interviews and informal observation which may not be sufficient for credibility and validity, therefore, the findings of this study are not generalizable.

## **3.10 Ethical considerations**

Most of educational research deals with human beings; therefore is important to understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of conducting research.

### **3.10.1 Informed consent**

Researcher necessitates obtain the consent and cooperation from other institutions or organizations in order to conduct an investigation. Informed consent is a procedure where participants are informed to participate voluntary in the study after being informed on the purpose and content of the study. Many researchers view informed consent as a dialog; where interviewer informs the intention of the study and specifies confidentiality and anonymity (Cohen, Lawrence & Morrinson, 2000). The informant consent in this study contains the research goals, procedures and issues to be discussed before to conduct the interview, so the informants have sufficient time to decide about their participation and eventually questions about the research.

### **3.10.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Researchers have the responsibility to ensure confidentiality and anonymity with the informants, by protecting private information that may affect the intimacy and vulnerability of the informants (Social science research ethics).

Regarding to the study, the phenomenon of this research concerns preschool teachers with different cultural and linguistic background. It was specified the anonymity of participants names and kindergartens by pseudonyms. Recording and notes was applied in the interview, the researcher specified also to delete the information when the study is over. Besides, not

personal data or private information as names, personal identity numbers or address were collected, used or stored during or after the conclusion of the research.

# 4 Data presentation and discussion

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter it will be presented the main findings in relation to the research questions. The aim is to gain insight about how preschool teachers address children with different backgrounds in bilingual kindergartens in Oslo. Thus, it will be discuss according early reviews of studies of bilingual education as well as concepts and approaches from different research that has contribute to bilingualism in Norway.

At the beginning of the study I wanted to address five themes in bilingual education and vocabulary including perception of bilingualism, the using of linguistic background, the community participation, pedagogy and assessment (Appendix 3). I found out that these themes were too broad and general and I narrow down in three themes such view of bilingualism, strategy use and assessment of language and vocabulary development. This allows focusing in aspects I consider relevant for answering the research questions in the study. All the questions are connected, the differences is that I address three themes rather than five in order to get better understanding in the area.

First, it is presented information regarding the bilingual kindergartens and participant's background by using cursive letter in the text. The data from the interview guide have been divided in themes in order to give a better overview of the research. I think it is difficult to split up the information in themes because they are connected to each other, however, this will give a better sequence and make it easier to illustrate the differences and similarities of participant's perceptions.

Second, it is presented the comment of the preschool teacher in relation to bilingualism, and later the analysis based on concepts and approach of different researchers.

Third, comes to the teaching strategy in language and vocabulary development, advantages, disadvantages and challenges in language interactions.

Finally, the assessment kindergartens apply in order to measure the progress of language and vocabulary, the advantages and disadvantages over it.

## 4.2 Interview Participants

The following shows details about the personnel and kindergarten; which the real names are not written in this research in order to protect the privacy of the informants. The profiles of the six participants will provide an overview about their educational background.

*Lena* is a preschool teacher, a bachelor in pedagogy with further education in Multicultural and International studies. She worked as a preschool teacher in the kindergarten for some months. She is in charge for the group of 7 months to 3 years old. She speaks Norwegian, Spanish and English.

*Sonia* is an English teacher and has worked for 4 years as a preschool teacher by dispensation. She is taking multicultural courses for developing her work in the kindergarten. She is in charge for the group of 3-5 years old. She speaks Spanish, Norwegian and English.

*Rosa* is a preschool teacher and start working in the kindergarten for some months ago. She is in charge of the group from 8 months to 3 years old. She speaks Icelandic, Spanish, English and little Norwegian.

*Gro* is a preschool teacher with a background in pedagogy and she have been working in the kindergarten for 4 years. She is in charge of the group of 3 to 5 years old. She speaks Bosnian, Norwegian and English.

*Romina* is a preschool teacher with the group of the youngest one of 7 months to 3 years old and she is working 3, 5 years in the kindergarten. She speaks Norwegian, English and little Spanish.

Max is a preschool teacher and has worked for 3 years in the kindergarten. He is in charge of the group of 3 to 5 years old. Languages he speaks are: Norwegian, English and a little bit Spanish.

After giving an overview about the background of the preschool teachers; it follows information about kindergarten placed in the east of Oslo.

*Kindergarten 1*: This is a private bilingual kindergarten established in 2003 and it is located in the east of Oslo. The kindergarten has two groups of 33 children and it is divided by ages in two sections: the youngest and oldest.

The youngest section is called A and is in charge by Lena, where there are 14 kids of 7 months-3 years old and the oldest section is called B and is in charge by Sonia; where there are 19 kids of 3-6 years old.

*Kindergarten 2:* This is a private bilingual kindergarten of 73 children with four sections. The sections are divided by ages: the youngest and oldest. The youngest section has two groups called A and B and is in charge by Rosa and Gro where there are 15 kids from 7 months to 3 years old each group. The oldest section has two groups called C and D and is in charge by Romina and Max where there are 24, 16 children from 3 to 6 years old respectively.

### **4.3 Views of preschool teachers regarding bilingualism**

This section aims to focus on the participant's perception about bilingualism and how these conceptions may influence kindergarten's practices. Therefore, participant's views of bilingual education will be presented and discussed in order to answer the research question.

#### **4.3.1 Presenting perceptions of bilingual Education**

The participant gave various interpretations of bilingualism by referring to different aspects. *Lena's* understanding of bilingualism included one who can speak two languages and be able to know two or more cultures. Children who learn a new language in early ages are fortunate because they have huge possibilities in work and studies. In a similar way, *Sonia* states that being bilingual means to develop a broad perspective about language and culture; learning to be more tolerant and respect the differences.

Lately in *Max's* words *being bilingual is someone who is able to speak two languages and allow them to speak in equal way; actively, stimulating both languages simultaneously.*

The following question was the opinion of the participants about what they emphasize in having a bilingual education.

Both *Lena* and *Rosa* commented that *the importance of being bilingual lies in the fact that children learn in natural settings surrounded by people who speak both languages and the advantage to be exposed to native people.*

*Sonia highlight that children who learn a new language in early age, tend to be good students in other subjects when start at school. Besides this they can learn languages easily. Similarly, Gro associated the question with the currently work they do in the kindergarten. What is special in this kindergarten is that children hear and speak their own mother language as much as they do with Norwegian language. The personnel play an important role because they use actively their mother language with children doing different activities and programs that enable them to interact in both languages.*

*Romina underlines that bilingual education demands continuity in order to have a good progress in both languages.*

For *Max* is important that children feel secure and safe, allow them to express their feelings in the language they feel comfortable, as a way to build up their identity.

### **4.3.2 Discussing perceptions of bilingual Education**

All the participants interviewed expressed positive views of bilingualism; mentioning the advantages to be exposed to two languages in natural settings. However, the views emphasize more in advantages of being bilingual rather than giving an understanding about bilingualism.

According to the literature presented in the second chapter, Baker (2001) states that bilingualism is the ability to use more than one language. In this statement concurred all the participants about being bilingual was the ability to speak two languages in daily life. Lena and Sonia mentioned the cultural factor involves in bilingualism. The fact of having language competence in two or more languages, allow a child to get knowledge of two or more cultures. This mean that children are able to understand the different traditions in every culture by showing feeling and attitudes, getting awareness, empathy and behaving in cultural appropriate ways. This leads that people respect others and tolerate the differences when it comes to religion, race, ethnicity, etc.

Vygotsky (1962) pointed out the strong relationship between language, culture and identity, where language is used as a strong cultural tool which contribute to students' cognitive performance and social adjustment.

However there are different sides from this subject, some argue that this may create confusion or conflict when it comes to identity. The child exposed to two environments may cause some

shortcoming in the development, social disorientation, even isolation and split personality. Yet, this assumption may be attributed to other causes such as social, economic and political conditions rather than mainly languages issues (Backer, 2007).

Additionally, it was addressed the value to learn a language in early years. Investigations of bilingual development in infancy reveal that from the very earliest days, there are differences in the ways in which bilingual infants with first language acquisition attend to the phonological structures of the languages they are exposed to, and use that structure to acquire each of their native languages, thus bilingual showed a developmental trajectory different from the monolingual infants (Chomsky, 1959 cited in Hoffmann, 1991), McLaughlin (1984).

Moreover, Chomsky (1959) through research illustrated that children acquire language with considerably speed and efficiency in comparison to their parents who struggle with phonological and syntactic interference from their mother tongue in their use of the second language.

There is no doubt that children have brain plasticity which enables them to acquire a language easily. This along with certain qualities that children possess such as being good mimics, lacking of inhibitions and above having excellent capacity for learning by playing.

However; unlike to children; adults maintain analytical abilities to abstract, classify and generalize to the extent that children are far from them due to the lack of brain maturity have not attained yet (Hoffmann, 1991, & McLaughlin, 1984).

Overall, the widespread belief that children learn a language faster than adults mentioned by some participants in this study may be discussed, on one hand, children may be linguistically more skillful than adults in terms of phonetic-auditory ability and also be more playful and uninhibited than adults but in another hand adults hold analytical skills important for learning a second language which may them to acquire a language in relatively little time unlike to the first language acquisition. An important psychological factor to mention is the motivation and willingness to learn a language rather than physiological or biological ones.

Additionally *Max* believed that both Spanish and Norwegian should be used equally throughout the day and the language learning should be a part of it in order the child get competence in both languages. This conclusion have different angles; for instance; the child may likely acquire a level of language if they are exposed to two environments, however the

language competence may not be attained in such degree for naming them as bilinguals; the child may have good receptive skills in listening and reading but a lacking of productive skills in speaking and writing. The exposition to two environments may facilitate language performance; however there are other factors that should be taken in account such as motivation, the context, the age, the use, the culture, etc. He also mentions in other words this assumption in terms of when, where, and with whom people use their two languages.

As far as the second point is concerned, *Lena* and *Rosa* mentioned the natural setting children should be exposed and the proficiency that kindergarten personnel should hold in both languages. KD (2010: 21) point out the important role kindergarten staff plays in the development of children; especially when it comes in the picture bilingual assistants. Bilingual assistants are good resource not only for children but also for parents and staff members. They contribute as a bridge between kindergarten and parents in terms of integrity, understanding and culture.

On the other hand *Romina* underlined the continuity in the use of languages. Kindergarten as she mentioned is a good start for developing two or more languages which it should be followed both in the kindergarten and at home. Once more, the linguistic aspect is more highlighted in this instance than other important factors mentioned before such as psychological, physiological, cultural, sociological and cognitive aspects which are often interlinked.

Most of the participants seem to have a partly idea of bilingual education when it comes to the question what is and what they consider important in bilingualism. Everyone seems to agree that bilingualism and culture are positive elements in the kindergartens pedagogical framework and they concurred that bilingualism is the regular use of two languages. This perception does not show a holistic view of bilingualism which refers not necessarily the use of two languages; but other factors such as the context where it is applied either at home or in the street, the frequency the language is used and the motivation and purpose that lead the child to speak in either languages.

Finally, it is important to say again that it is complex to provide a clear definition about bilingualism, considering the broad array of proficiency that is allowed for considering someone as bilingual. Several scholars from different academic field such as education, sociology, linguistic anthropology, education and others bring different perspectives,



assumptions and methods for studying the bilingual child which it could be demanding to make generalization about the topic.

## **4.4 Views of preschool teachers regarding strategies in Language development**

Preschool teacher applies diverse strategies and activities for language development in kindergarten. The following presents preschool teacher's experiences, the language approach they employ to meet children with different background, personal participation and resources in support language. Later, it is presented the discussion and conclusion in this field by the research.

### **4.4.1 Presenting the strategies in Language development**

Participants provided experiences in their working place mentioning that they shared similar routine activities in relation to non-bilingual kindergartens. Most of the kindergarten starts at 7.30 and closes at 16.00. The usually activities like playing, singing, reading books, visiting the neighborhood, museums, and libraries take place both indoors and outdoors kindergartens.

The participant gave their opinion regarding the way they work in kindergarten in order to develop both Spanish and Norwegian languages.

*Lena described the system of bilingual education in the school: The preschools teachers and assistants employ their own mother language with the kids. There is not division among the children group for learning both Norwegian and Spanish language. The kids have exposition to both languages and they interact actively and participate with their peers and the personnel. Besides this, the children are not pressed to learn utterances or words; at the contrary they are freely to express themselves.*

*Sonia says that they apply activities such as songs, games, small talks, etc. which are conducted in both languages as well as activities perform outdoors: go for a walk, visit theaters, go to ski, museum, watch movies, libraries, etc.*

Among other activities; the kindergarten applies every semester a new project, which is called "el gran viaje" (the great trip). This is about a simulation game where they have a journey to

those countries they have background of. This means that children learn and get insights about the food, animals, music, flag, song, instruments, recipes and other traditions typical of the country.

*Rosa, Gro and Romina* discussed that personal staff have certain tasks in the kindergarten. The kindergarten use to have gathering together with children where they do different activities such as singing, telling stories, talking about the season, etc. In *Gro*'s words, we protect the mother language with games and songs from Latin-American and Norway which are given by parents and assistant of the kindergarten.

*Max* gave an example about the work they have in the kindergarten. *At the beginning of the day we gather together "sharing time" (samlingsstund) and discussed how will the day be. We use a big mural where we hang pictures and words. For example: is the sun outside or not? Are clouds outside? Children visualize the words and verify if that is true. This helps children to get more concentration and focus for one thing. They use the language every day; speak with their peers in both languages. It is important they feel free to express themselves, giving them positive response rather than say: "you should speak in Norwegian or Spanish", when they mix the languages, we repeat the words or sentences in a friendly and correct grammatical way so that the child realizes his mistake.*

Additionally he added that children are not pressed to speak either in Norwegian or Spanish. *Children should be feel secure and feel free to express in any language.*

Most of the children have Norwegian, Spanish/Latin-American background; however there are two which come from Eritrea and Greece. The last one came nearly 3 months ago and learns rapidly the language. He might not understand, but he follows the routine given in the kindergarten.

When it comes to the questions about the advantages and disadvantages of using Norwegian and Spanish language; most of the participants stressed the significant in learning languages in early ages.

*Lena* pointed out that one of the advantages is that the kids learn two languages and meet different cultures. Also, they learn to respect and love the countries where the parents are from, identifying and appreciating the variety of nationalities, traditions and costumes that people have. Besides there are children that are able to communicate with their grandparents

and other relatives in their mother language; this help that the children develop a big perspective and tolerance about other cultures. Similarly, *Max* added that learning two languages reinforce identity; some activities to highlight is, sharing the culture with song and music for the countries children are from; this create self-esteem and acknowledgement. He suggested that the personnel should speak in both languages in order to understand the child. Those who do not master Norwegian should speak in Spanish to the children, as it is not confusing for the children in terms of phonetic or grammatical.

Children develop the language while they play, explore and interact with their peers, even though some of them do not speak at all or mix the language; they try to communicate and participate actively with others.

*Sonia* states that Norwegian and Spanish language comes from two different roots. *Some children have the facility to speak in both languages, whereas others select and speak the language they feel most comfortable with.*

*Rosa* mentioned that the benefit of using Norwegian and Spanish languages is that children develop the cerebral hemisphere making easier to learn a new language. She added that it might be a challenge to approach a child who only speaks Norwegian or Spanish at the beginning, or when the personnel speak only one of the languages. Similarly to *Rosa*; *Gro* states that *the personnel that cannot Spanish and meet children who only speak that language, might feel incompetent or frustrated for being unable to start a communication, but as we know there are other ways to communicate like body language. Besides this, children may have language preferences and have tendency to approach the personal who speak the language they feel more comfortable in.*

Language mastering from the staff varies in each kindergarten; according with their profile the personnel speaks 50% Spanish and 50% Norwegian.

Moreover, some preschool teachers demand interpreters in parents meetings. Some of them are new comer who do not master the language and cannot even English. *Gro* added: *I got often help from the assistants if there is something relevant in the kindergarten; when there is parent assembly I come in contact with an interpreter.*

Participants also mentioned that parents have different expectations in bilingual education. Some of them want the staff to speak more Spanish than Norwegian to their children;

however, they desire that preschool teachers focus more in Norwegian language when they are closer to begin first primary level for having a better transition and good starting at school. On the other hand, parents have quite different perception in the education system. They mentioned that education should have more focus in academic than ludic activities. Additionally, *kindergarten 1* and *2* underlined the close interaction between parents and kindergarten in the implementation of pedagogical aspects. One example would be, to highlight the United Nations day by sharing with parents and personnel: performances, games, music and songs from countries they are from.

#### **4.4.2 Discussing the strategies in Language development**

The participants addressed that the strategy used in bilingual kindergarten are not different than one in a monolingual Norwegian kindergarten. They apply the strategy to speak permanently in Norwegian and Spanish to the children. It seems like these kindergartens employ the one person-one language category (Romaine, 1995, Baker, 2006); which means that two languages are used throughout the day: one preschool teacher or assistant exclusively uses the community language (Norwegian), the other one, preferably a native speaker, uses only the target foreign language (Spanish) in all interaction with the children. This approach may provide security and stability to the child when he/she uses one language with a particular person. However the distribution of the two languages may be uneven, preschool teachers use their mother language but some of them mentioned that they use both languages since they master fluently. Thus, children received a combination of both languages on a regular basis. However, it may be inexact to conclude that children in these kindergartens have an equal balance in two languages experiences, even though they are exposed to two languages, it does not mean that the child responds equally, they may answer in the minority or dominant language; or even in either of the languages since they have not develop enough verbal skills.

Young children from seven months in these kindergartens have not developed verbal communication, but they have good understanding based on routines and repetitive activities performed every time. Therefore some children have receptive or passive vocabulary, because they understand instruction and activities but they have not develop speaking abilities, while other have active or productive vocabulary because they understand and are able to speak. Thus, early acquisition of two languages may go gradually and slowly since they are exposed

to two types of linguistic codes in relation to monolingual. This situation, as participants mentioned can create in parents some discomfort due to the slow speed the bilingual course works. There is rarely that bilingual become equally fluent in all situation in both their languages. There are factors that develop language faster than other, such as the child personality, ability, aptitude for language learning and social development, interaction with parents and peers.

On the other hand, some authors suggest that the age of language acquisition may influence in the growth of the vocabulary. Thus, those who learn before the age of three are considered simultaneous bilingual and those who learn after this age are considered as sequential bilingual (McLaughlin, 1978 & Padilla and Lindholm, 1984, cited in MacLaughlin, 1984). This means that children from these kindergartens are both simultaneous and sequential bilingual since they start from eight months to five years old. This early stage is a good start for developing children intellectually, socially and emotionally; activities like playing provide experiences for learning in different perspectives. Children learn a vocabulary through repetition and imitating adults, the process children acquire a language depend of the input they received by adults, personality and age. Some children use gestalt strategies because their speech contents more affective and social expressions, while others are more referential, meaning that they use strategy to name things, using nouns or expressing the meaning of two- and three word utterances (Nelson, 1973 cited in McLaughlin, 1984).

The activities used in kindergarten are based on intentionally planning learning goals in relation to the seven areas in the Framework for Norwegian Kindergarten (KD, p. 32-42). These areas are connected to each other and provide rich opportunities for development verbal and non-verbal communication. Participants mentioned the variety of indoor and outdoor activities they apply in the kindergartens such as role play, games, reading books, songs, rhymes, etc., which offer opportunities for observing, describing and exploring situations the child experience, allowing them to develop their vocabulary when they are exposed regularly and often with words identified in their environment (Kame'enui & Baumann, 2012).

When it comes to advantages and disadvantages of using the minority and majority languages; preschool teachers concurred that learning two languages enable children to learn two cultures and gain respect the country they are from. This statement may be illustrated by the project they implement "El gran viaje" meaning that they "travel unrealistically" to

different countries for learning the culture and traditions as an attempt to give them a global perspective of the world in order to widen their reference frame of the children.

It seems like these kindergartens have an integrated approach and positive attitude to linguistic and cultural diversity. One of the ways to highlight the diversity is the celebration of festive days such as the national days of Latin- American/ Spanish and Norwegian countries by hanging flags, maps, etc. which promote identity and respect from the countries they or their parents are from. Vygotsky (1962) states that language acquisition always takes place in cultural and interpersonal contexts. The processing of linguistic knowledge goes hand in hand with the processing of social knowledge with language socialization beginning as soon as an infant has social contact.

On the other hand, participants underlined the importance of parental and the staff input in incorporating Latin/Spanish and Norwegian elements into the daily activities in the kindergarten; parents provide storybooks, games, songs and other resources from their home country which reinforces ties between kindergarten and home. As participants mentioned, some parents demand that preschool teachers concentrate and use more Spanish than Norwegian in their pedagogical activities, whereas, using more Norwegian when they come closer to primary education. It seems basically that parents want that preschool teachers use the strategy of speaking the minority language to children more than majority. This is likely because children are not exposed to Spanish language as much as Norwegian. Parents may be afraid that the dominant language replaces the minority language (subtractive bilingualism) bringing as a consequence loss in linguistic and socio cultural aspects. On the contrary, parents want children develop Norwegian language when they are closer to school for avoiding a big gap and linguistic differences with other pupils. But, the exposure to languages is not the only factor to success in language development, but also factors like innate differences, social, motivation and rewards for learning languages. Cummins (1979) cited in Homel, Palij & Aaronson (1987) points out in the threshold hypothesis the effect that cognition and linguistic bring to bilingualism. For instance, children who attain low levels in both Norwegian and Spanish language have a negative effect in cognition (subtractive bilingualism); those who attain high level in both languages have positive effect in bilingualism (additive bilingualism) and those who attain proficiency in one of the languages, have neither positive nor negative effects in cognition. Thus, the bilingual child needs to make

progress in abilities up to a certain threshold in their first language, before these are conveyed to a second language.

Bilingualism may not necessarily lead the child identifying himself/herself with a culture or belong to a particularly language group. As bilingual children get older, they decide themselves to develop one or two cultures and languages which results, in some cases, to conflict or crisis of identity. If an individual experiences struggles or anxiety in the development of bilingualism may be cause to factors like family, social, economic, political condition rather than exclusively language. It is natural for the child or adult to have different identities in diverse contexts, without leading to conflict or confusion in social aspects, Backer (2007).

Another advantage mentioned was that young children learn easily languages as they learn to play and paint because they usually are not intimidate of making mistakes in the communication. Additionally, they obtain precise pronunciation without delaying unlike adult that often struggle with difficult sounds. However, very young bilingual children may learn slowly a language due to lack of analytical and memorization capacities which become adult to learn a second language superior than young children. Factors like motivation, attitude, ability and persistence contribute to with learning's process. Thus, there are many routes to become bilinguals, either in early or old ages with equally successful outcome (Hoffmann, 1991), McLaughlin, 1984 & Bialystok, 2001). In this point preschool teachers mentioned that learning is particularly based in playing rather than systematic instructions as used to happen in countries where parents are from. Parents probably relate language acquisition effectiveness with the exposure to instruction settings, where the child is assessed in different areas by grades and addressing less in playing.

As far as the challenges in using two languages in kindergartens are concerned, *Sonia*, *Rosa* and *Gro* mentioned that children have preferences to approach the personnel and peers when comes to the language's use. Some children tend to speak more in one language than other, then, when they demand something, they come close to those who master the language that he/she is comfortable with. This may create that one language become stronger than the other one. The communication may be limited when preschool teachers do not understand some children due to lacking of languages competence, which it would make a strong model of bilingual education difficult to implement, since these staff members lack linguistic and multicultural competency in the minority language. This situation may be seen negatively for

the language's reinforcement, however, as the preschool teachers mentioned textually; these situations is solved by using non-verbal communication.

On the other hand, correcting often children when they make mistakes or mix languages is sort of restraining language growth; preschool teachers can help maximize conditions by for instance repeating the correct word or utterances adequately without pressing them. Language mixing should be seen as a natural process where the child utilize linguistic resources for expressing his meaning as a means of purposeful communication strategy rather than considering as an incompetence or lacking of linguistic and cognitive abilities. According to Backer (2007) suggests that terms like interference or mixing have negative connotation and should be changed by insertion, which involves assertive use of language and thinking abilities. According to Baker, those who are exposed to two languages, have to use various styles or codes of speaking to different people under certain circumstances. The child must learn and master some rules for switching languages. In this way; children switch from one to another language when it comes to approach personnel or peers. This may lead a mixture of two languages in the speech, where one language interferes to another creating morphological confusion and syntactic mixing (McLaughlin, 1984). The child may use knowledge of the vocabulary of one language to generate words in the other language. Moreover, McLaughlin (1984) pointed out that a child who is exposed to two environments with switching and mixing, may it find demanding to separate the two codes in formal speech.

In short, it seems like these kindergartens do not apply an explicit vocabulary instruction because preschool teachers do not mentioned specific vocabulary lessons or instructional strategies in language development. They emphasized, among other means that interaction and play are resources for development vocabulary, which enabling children to learn indirectly words and utterances in familiar contexts. This means that preschool teachers do not apply structured or systematized way for development vocabulary such as vocabulary lesson, reading programs, instructional strategies or concrete examples about how to teach the meaning of words; which words to teach or how children are involved in active thinking about words meanings (Pinkham, Kaefer & Neuman, 2013). From the approach preschool teachers applied, it seems like vocabulary probably is the less area to be addressed in these kindergartens based on the results found in this study.



## 4.5 Views of preschool teachers regarding Assessment

Kindergarten teachers assess children in a variety of ways including informal observations, meet students one on one, standardized assessments, portfolios, rating scales or other measures that provide different types of information. Assessment is used for supporting learning and instruction and to identify children in need of further supports or services.

### 4.5.1 Presenting perceptions of Language Assessment

Relating the question about how the preschool teachers measure the progress of Spanish and Norwegian language, all the participants do not apply systematic evaluation to measure language and vocabulary. Their comments are as follows:

*Lena states that I do not apply evaluation tests, but we observe and follow up the learning process of children focusing in various aspects rather than mainly language.*

*Sonia shared that we employ observation guides in order to see the process of the seven points placed in the kindergarten Norwegian framework. We are concerned about the development of the child in diverse stages rather than give grades.*

*Gro applies observations in natural settings and see how the language is used, she does not believe in assessment or vocabulary measurement because children are different and evaluate children from that point will give us flows in the results.*

*Romina does not apply specific method for measuring vocabulary, but she is familiar with the resource TRAS, which means early detection of language development in daily interaction and other resources that not evaluate specifically vocabulary but aspects like social, emotional, physical linguistic conditions.*

*Max added he is quite skeptic about the kind of systematic assessment some kindergartens applies, which evaluates results and not process- every child are different and should not be limited in close test.*

## 4.5.2 Discussing perceptions of Language Assessment

Participants do not employ structured evaluations for measuring the progress of language and vocabulary. Instead they apply observation or guides in different domains like social, physical and linguistic aspects. It seems like they have negative perceptions in assessment in terms of labeling disabilities, deficits or stressing lack of languages proficiency. The purpose of evaluation is to protect the child with some kind of difficulties, language delay, stammering rather than categorizing the disability.

There are different methods to assess vocabulary, even though the child is very young, applying “two-questions” method where the child respond by “yes” or “no” for each word meaning tested (Gail Kearns & Biemiller, 2005 cited in Kame’enui & Baumann, 2012). These tests provide an overview about the child’s vocabulary development and anticipate physical, neurological, learning, emotional, cognitive or behavioral difficulties. The child might need a special education or intervention which is important to detect early. This may create a dilemma because they may be stigmatized as having language deficiency.

One of the participants remarked that they have implemented some evaluation instruments in their working places, but informal observations in natural situations are the most used as same as in other kindergartens. This approach is positive but could be not sufficient to learn more about the child’s strengths, progress, needs and challenges. The use of both informal and formal screening and assessment evaluate systematically children’s growth not necessarily in language and vocabulary but in other domains of development in early childhood.

Overall, vocabulary and language measurement is not applied in pedagogies practices, instead preschool teachers conduct informal observations addressing different aspects of the child rather than mainly focus in vocabulary. Research shows that vocabulary is neglected in most kindergartens. Most of them have limited tools for assessing which may have long-term consequences for literacy development and success in the school.

# 5 Conclusion

## 5.1 Summary of data

In my research, I have tried to illustrate how preschool teachers address children with different backgrounds; focusing on the vocabulary in kindergartens in Norway. Through the analysis of an interview which was applied to preschool teachers, I attempt to present a better understanding of bilingual education at the pre-school level, and how this understanding is interpreted through practice. The study presented some limitations which it gives a narrow picture and the need for additional research.

Firstly, the findings result from a sample of six preschool teachers which come from two kindergartens which share the same association company. Unluckily, there were not more bilingual kindergartens in Norway (Oslo) who met the profile I was examining; at the exception of one who was not interested in participate. The fact of interviewing kindergartens from the same association which share common pedagogical aims and vision, it might predict similar response among preschool teachers. Additionally; what was mentioned orally in the interview may not be reflected what is truly happening in the reality. Thus it is advisable the application of other methods such as structure observation in order to get more reliable results. Therefore this study should not be generalized.

Secondly, children who attend bilingual education with Spanish/ Latin-American and Norwegian profile are not a random sample of the population, but rather a group which parents tend to be self-selecting and more enthusiastic about becoming bilinguals.

## 5.2 Conclusions and suggestions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the approach preschool teachers address children from different backgrounds; focusing on the language and vocabulary in bilingual kindergartens in Norway. The qualitative research is applied in this study since it allows creativity and flexibility to the participants. In this sense; it was applied a semi structure interview to preschool teachers; focusing in aspects of perceptions about bilingualism, strategies in language development, language and vocabulary assessment. The findings

resulted from a sample of six preschool teachers from two bilingual kindergartens which has Spanish and Norwegian as a means of communication.

Preschools teachers of kindergartens I have interviewed expressed positive views of bilingual education. Cognitive and socio cultural aspect were highlight in bilingualism, like the advantages to raise a child in early years, the possibility of learning tradition and cultures and the respect and tolerance of the differences.

Kindergarten profile stated that 50 % of the personnel should speak one of the languages, however; some preschool teachers recognized the lacking competence in Spanish. All of them seem to apply the strategy one person-one language category; Romaine (1995), Baker, (2006); talking to the child either in Spanish or Norwegian. Although in some cases, both languages were used simultaneously. Different activities such as playing games, singing, reading stories, books, outdoor activities and other steady routines were mostly employed in interaction with children for language development. They follow kindergarten framework as non-bilingual kindergartens with the difference they perform activities in two languages. Strategies applied in these kindergartens were aimed to develop social, cultural, physical and linguistic abilities in a ludic and playful ways rather than systematic or structured. Thus, in relation to use strategies and measure language and vocabulary, all participants apply different resources as observation, but not specifically for vocabulary instruction and assessment. Researches have highlighted the importance of development vocabulary in early years and the positive influence in school; however it is still a complex subject to measure vocabulary due to human diversity and the styles applied.

Strategies in languages development including activities and routines that is basically related with cultural and traditions children are from strengthening bones of identity and belonging. Besides, parents and assistants played an important role in bilingual education by contributing strongly with linguistic and cultural differences in language development. They serve as a bridge between kindergarten and children in terms of inclusion and identity; highlighting the similarities and differences in a positive way, which contribute children gain respect and understanding for what is different from oneself. This does not mean one should stop with Norwegian traditions, but one can add other things as well.

Another thing discuss by the preschool teachers was the fact that some parents expect more academic instruction than playing. What is probably take in account is that play and learning

are interconnected as a part of the development of early year education. Play used to tend undervalue; but the concept of playing involve more than simple activities like exploring and learning new things, strength relationship with fun and enjoyment, language, games and rules, etc. it is important to create environments when instruction day is conveying with playing, allowing children to challenge themselves when they performing activities rather than causing anxiety, boredom, and failure.

Finally, due to the limited time and resources to conduct this study; I found an area that merit further research in order to shed more light on bilingual kindergartens; the study of receptive and productive vocabulary bilingual kindergartens, primary or secondary schools.

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## WEBSITES

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- <http://morsmal.no/index.php/no/4047-sprakferdigheter>
- [http://www.barnehager.oslo.kommune.no/oslobarnehagen/barnehagens\\_innhold/sprak\\_i\\_barnehagene/](http://www.barnehager.oslo.kommune.no/oslobarnehagen/barnehagens_innhold/sprak_i_barnehagene/)
- [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/bilingual?q=bilingualism#bilingual\\_\\_14.](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/bilingual?q=bilingualism#bilingual__14)

# 7 Appendices

# Appendix 1: Norwegian Social Science Data Services

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS  
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



Harald Hårfagres gate 29  
N-5007 Bergen  
Norway  
Tel: +47-55 58 21 17  
Fax: +47-55 58 96 50  
nsd@nsd.uib.no  
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Jorunn Buli-Holmberg  
Institutt for spesialpedagogikk  
Universitetet i Oslo  
Postboks 1140 Blindern  
0318 OSLO

Vår dato: 27.06.2013

Vår ref:34789 / 3 / AMS

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

## TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 19.06.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

34789	<i>Child Language Acquisition focusing on Bilingualism. An study among Norwegian-Spanish bilingual kindergartens in Oslo, Norway</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Daglig ansvarlig	Jorunn Buli-Holmberg
Student	Livia Andrea Cabezas Serpa

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.12.2013, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Anne-Mette Somby

Anne-Mette Somby tlf: 55 58 24 10

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Livia Andrea Cabezas Serpa, Strømsveien 79C, 2010 STRØMMEN

Avdelingskontorer / District Offices:

OSLO: NSD, Universitetet i Oslo, Postboks 1055 Blindern, 0316 Oslo. Tel: +47-22 85 52 11. nsd@uio.no

TRONDHEIM: NSD, Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 7491 Trondheim. Tel: +47-73 59 19 07. kyrre.svarva@svt.ntnu.no

TROMSØ: NSD, SVF, Universitetet i Tromsø, 9037 Tromsø. Tel: +47-77 64 43 36. nsdmaa@svt.uit.no



According to the notification form there will be obtained written consent based on written information about the project and the processing of personal data. The Data Protection Official finds the letter of information satisfactory according to the Personal Data Act.

When the project is completed, by 15.12.2013, the data material will be made anonymous by deleting directly and indirectly identifying variables and audio-recordings will be deleted. In order for the data to be fully anonymised, all directly identifying data, such as names/reference numbers must be deleted, and indirectly identifying data in the remaining material must be deleted or changed.



## Appendix 2: Informed consent

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### **“CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOCUSING ON BILINGUALISM”** ***A study among Norwegian-Spanish bilingual kindergartens***

**The researcher/institution:** postgraduate student Livia Andrea Cabezas Serpa; University of Oslo (UiO), Department of Special Needs Education; P.O. Box 1140, 0318 Oslo

**The purpose of the study:** A postgraduate dissertation paper in the field of bilingual education: ***Different aspects the preschool teacher and other stakeholders meet in the development of the vocabulary in bilingual kindergartens.*** The study will discuss about the use of different activities, tools, methods that preschool teachers and assistants use in order to support the vocabulary in bilingual kindergarten, collaboration among preschool teachers and parents and assessment procedures. The aim is to get knowledge in the field of bilingualism education and overview about the pedagogical support in language used in bilingual kindergartens.

**Procedures:** The study duration is from 15<sup>th</sup> August-15<sup>th</sup> December and the data is supposed to be collected in September. The number of participants will include preschool teachers and assistants from the only three bilingual kindergartens in Oslo. The participants will be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews and an informal observation to get acquainted with the school environment might be proposed if necessary. The informant will be asked for the permission for tape-recording, and the audio materials will be destroyed after the transcription.

**Possible benefits:** The kindergarten/ preschool teachers will participate sharing their experiences and improve their pedagogies and practices.

**Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of the data supplied by participants is a prime concern to this project; therefore the data collected should not be made available to anyone outside those involved in the project after the participants have been entered into the computer, by omitting the names and addresses of participants from the computer files. No personal data or private information as names, personal identity numbers or addresses will be collected, used or stored during or after the conclusion of the research.

**Participation:** The participation in this research will be voluntary having the right to withdraw from participation in any stage of the project, without entailing any negative consequences for them. Responding the informed consent is to be considered given in itself by the respective participant.

Finally the results of the research would be used as part of the Master degree thesis project and will be available to any of the interested parts.

The project is approved by Norwegian Social Science Data Services.

Reference: Dr. Jorun Buli-Holmberg, UiO; jorun.buli-holmberg@isp.uio.no +4748119059

Sincerely yours, Livia andrea Cabezas Serpa; UiO, Department of Special Needs Education; P.O. Box1140 Blindern, 0318 Oslo; +4791256322

Authorization: I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study.

Participant signature: ..... Date: .....

Researcher signature: ..... *LS* ..... Date: ..... *15-10-2003* .....

# Appendix 3: Interview guide

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

*Date:*

*Time:*

*Location:*

*School:*

### *1. Relating the concept of bilingualism*

- 1.1 How do you understand being bilingual?
- 1.2 What importance do you highlight in a bilingual education?

### *2. Using linguistic background (bilingualism)*

- 2.1 How do you work in order to develop both Norwegian and Spanish language/ vocabulary?
- 2.2 What are the advantages of using Norwegian and Spanish languages?
- 2.3 What are the challenges of using Norwegian and Spanish languages/cultures?
- 2.4 What activity and strategies do the preschool teachers in bilingual kindergartens do?

### *3. Community participation*

- 3.1 How does the kindergarten promote the parent's participation?
- 3.2 What are the challenges, advantages and disadvantages in their collaboration?
- 3.3 What is parent's expectation regarding to the language?
- 3.4 In what way do you facilitate that parents being understood and make them understand?

### *4. Pedagogy*

- 4.1 How does a typical day in a bilingual kindergarten go?
- 4.2 What are the usual activities and how is the responsibility distributed among the personal?
- 4.3 Do you have some pedagogy principle in order to support the language?

### *5. Assessment*

- 5.1 How do you measure the progress of the Spanish and Norwegian language and vocabulary?
- 5.2 What are the advantages and challenges in assessment?
- 5.3 What should young children be able to do at the end of the year?
- 5.4 Do you have some educational aim relating to the language?