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MULTILINGUALISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Teaching Chinese and English in Hong Kong Kindergartens: Pedagogical Approaches in Early Bilingual Education

Dienstag, 14.30 – 15.30 Uhr

With the support from the government and parents' aspirations, the coverage rate of preschool education in Hong Kong has been as high as 95%. "Cognitive and Language Development" is one of the four developmental objectives for young children set out the curriculum framework. Statistics from the 2006 By-census shows that 95% of the Hong Kong population is of Chinese ethnicity. As a former British colonial background and an international gateway to Mainland China, Hong Kong aims to maintain itself as biliterate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, English, and Putonghua) society, with both Chinese and English being the official languages. While Cantonese remains mother-tongue of most children in Hong Kong, English acts the auxiliary language. This unique sociocultural context presents an array of challenges to educational researchers and curriculum experts in developing the language competence of the preschool children. The presentation reviews various pedagogical issues that need to be considered which include differences in the languages to be taught, drill practice vs innovative approach, child-centered vs teacher-centered approach, language competence of teachers, and the effects of parents and home environment. Research directions as to further development of language development as the preschool level are suggested.