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## JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

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ISSN: 1305-578X

*Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(Special Issue 1), 268-289; 2021

### Reflections of bilingualism on preschool education: An ethnographic case study<sup>1</sup>

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#### APA Citation:

Yalçın Su, F., & Çetin, A. (2021). Reflections of bilingualism on preschool education: An ethnographic case study. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(Special Issue 1), 268-289.

Submission Date: 12/09/2020

Acceptance Date: 03/11/2020

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#### Abstract

This study was conducted with the aim of identifying reflections of bilingualism on preschool education. Ethnographic case study design was adopted in this descriptive research. It was carried out with the participation of eight preschool teachers who were teaching at different village schools and 13 pre-school students in the South-eastern Anatolia during the educational year of 2019-2020. The research data were collected using observation, interview, document analysis and researcher's diary and analysed through content analysis. The research results showed that bilingualism at school, in the classroom and among peers was adopted as a culture. It was seen that bilingualism had negative reflections on the exercise of the preschool educational programme in terms of subjects such as understanding of activities and following of instructions and completing them. It was determined that bilingualism reflected on the teacher as making more effort and feeling incapable in some situations. Bilingualism has been shown to make some students popular among peers.

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*Keywords:* preschool; bilingualism; school culture; classroom culture; peer culture

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#### 1. Introduction

Culture consists of the moral and material elements valued, shared, and transferred to each other and future generations by the members of a society (İçli, 2012, p.104). Culture involves all of the knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, traditions, and the talents and habits acquired by the person as a member of the a society (Tylor, 1871). While culture determines our behavioural patterns and beliefs, it shapes the way we learn and teach on the other hand. Culture takes place in the heart of anything done in the name of education (Gay, 2014). According to Redfield (1943), an anthropologist, education is the process of transfer and renewal of culture (Tezcan, 1978, p. 7). The individual is adapted to the society cognitively, affectively and physically by education (Yücel, 2010, p. 10).

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<sup>1</sup> This particular study has been generated from an unpublished master's dissertation entitled "Reflections of bilingualism on preschool education: An ethnographic case study" (Thesis Number: 624428).

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Cultural transfer and information acquisition are ensured through language. At this point, language becomes an indispensable tool not only for communication, but also for the process of learning and teaching (Pearson, 2007). According to Atkinson (2013), language is important for social actions, and language plays a role firstly in adaptation of the person to the social environment. The person learns through language how to behave by adapting to the social environment (Atkinson, 2013). People in places where different languages are spoken learn a common language beside their native language and become “bilingual”. According to Mackey (1982), bilingualism is the use of two or more languages by a person alternately.

Children begin the socialization process in their family, long before starting school. In this process, the child begins to learn his social roles by joining different groups, which forms part of his personality development (Tezcan, 1985). Later, the child starts school and joins the school culture. Stolp and Smith (1995) define school culture as meaning patterns involving the norms, values, beliefs, traditions and myths transferred by the organization members from the past to the present. According to Deal and Peterson (1999), school culture comprises the values, rules, behavioural patterns and traditions forming from establishment of the school.

The second culture joined by children at school is the classroom culture. Classroom culture is a broad concept involving the classroom experiences, the teacher and the students (Shannon, 1995). Therefore, classroom culture involves the values, attitudes, rules, understandings and activities formed by the students and the teacher together in a classroom, and all the characteristics held by that classroom. Any behaviour, attitude, mentality, and the language used in the classroom form the classroom culture. Classroom culture defines the character of the interaction of the children in the classroom, and involves several arrangements with a potential to affect the students’ motivation, learning and social performance (Koca & İlhan, 2017).

The third culture faced by children is the peer culture. Corsaro (2012) defines peer culture as the set of regular routines, works, values and anxieties produced by and shared with each other by children. The cultural practices in these regular routines, works and values prepare the children for their future life and shed light on their process of change. Peer culture is strengthened through games, behaviour and various activities acquired by children as a result of their interaction with their peers (Kantor & Fernie, 2003). Since these interactions can realize through language, it is possible to say that the languages used by children is also an important component of peer culture.

Preschool education is an educational process that offers children rich stimulant environmental opportunities for their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive and language development, that develops them in the same direction as their cultural values, and that forms a basis for their future educational steps (Katrancı, 2016). The existing literature showed that most of the behaviour adopted in the preschool period form the habits, and moral and value judgements in their adulthood (Koşan, 2015; Susar Kırmızı et al., 2019). Therefore, the culture formed during preschool is deemed important.

When the culture at home and the culture at the educational institution of children are different, teachers might misinterpret the children’s behaviour and adopt instinctive reactions and a disciplinary style conflicting with the norms of the society (Delpit, 1991). Besides, when children with a different native language start school, they have difficulty in understanding the language of education and there occurs a problem of communication (Yılmaz & Şekerci, 2016). Teachers also have difficulty at schools and classrooms with children with a native language different from the common language (Akdağ, 2014). In Turkey, particularly in the rural areas of the Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia regions are children that begin taking preschool education with no knowledge of Turkish (Kesmez, 2015; Koşan, 2015). Since these children are also illiterate, the communication that they develop with their teacher is

wondered. At the same time, bilingualism is the most important difficulty faced by most of the preschool teachers who teach in these regions (Çetin & Yalçın Su, 2019; Akdağ, 2014; Yağan Güder, 2019).

Previous research shows that bilingualism may have reflections in education on the school environment (Susar Kırmızı et al., 2019), on the classroom environment (Çabuk Er, Karageyik & Tokgöz, 2018; Shannon, 1995) and on peer relationships (Gözüküçük & Kıran, 2018). However, no research study is found in literature about what these reflections are. Also, previous studies are not beyond the measurements of standard scales and they are superficial (Erşan, 2011; Kol, 2006). This approach silenced the children's voice and gave secondary information about them. However, descriptive studies, ethnographic research in particular, provides an opportunity to look through children's behaviour and relationships in their natural environments (Yanık & Yaşar, 2018; Corsaro, 2015).

Elimination of the difficulties caused by bilingualism firstly requires the knowledge of what these difficulties are. This situation and the other mentioned situations were assessed as a lack in literature and decided to research by the researcher.

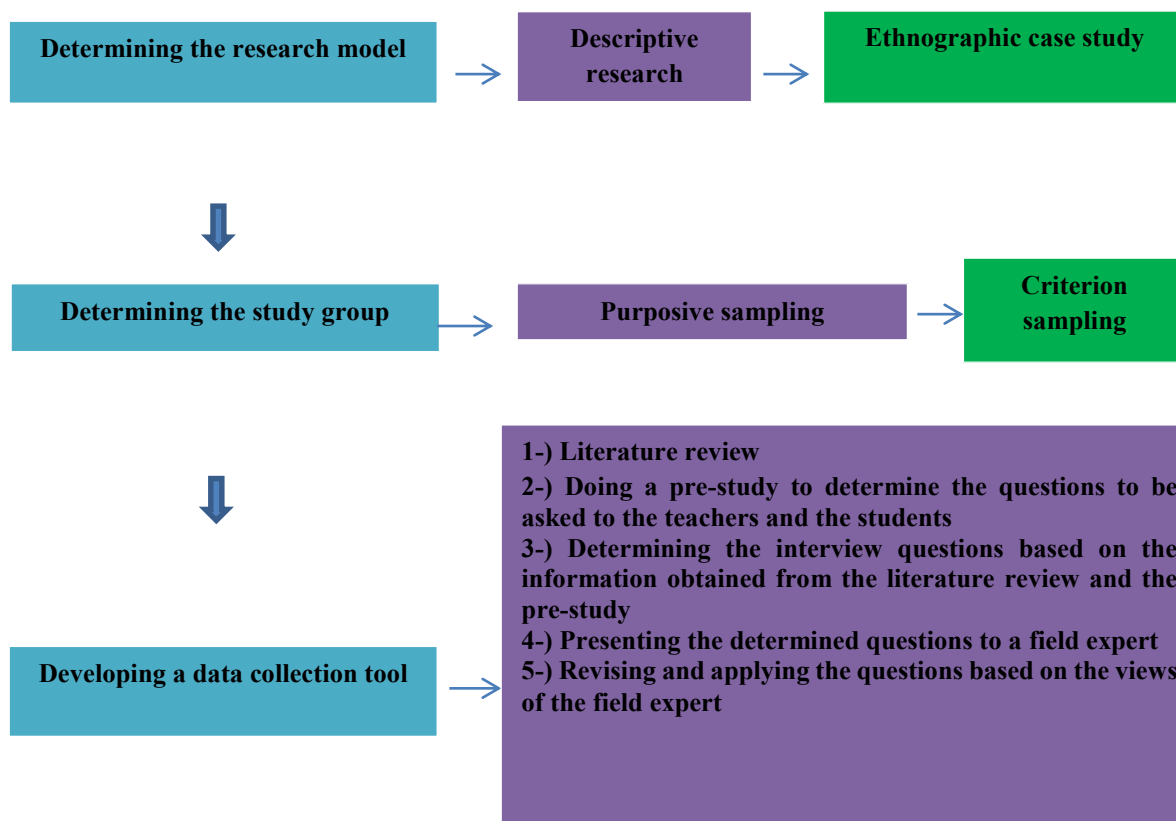
Purpose of this research study is to examine the reflections of bilingualism on preschool education. Responses were researched to the following questions for this purpose:

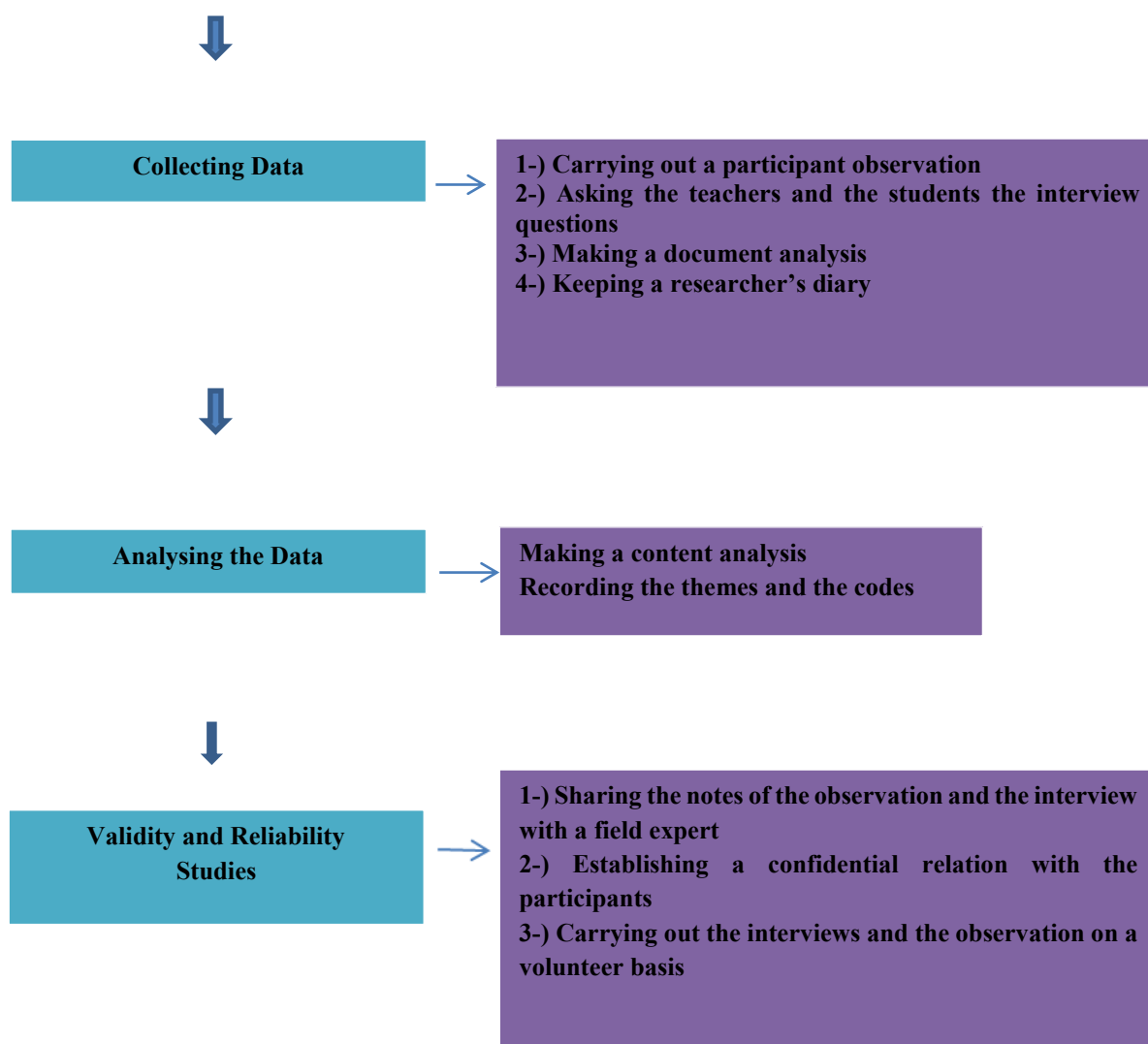
- 1-What are the reflections of bilingualism on school culture in preschool education?
- 2-What are the reflections of bilingualism on classroom culture in preschool education?
- 3-What are the reflections of bilingualism on peer culture in preschool education?

Findings to be obtained as a result of this research study are expected to form a basis for studies to be done to extend preschool education in regions with a different native language by finding the advantages and disadvantages caused by bilingualism in preschool education.

## 2. Method

In this section, information is provided about the model, the participants, the data collection tools, the data collection process and analysis, and the validity and reliability of the research study as well as the ethical actions taken in the research. The process of research is presented in Figure 1.





**Figure 1.** The process followed in the operation of the research

### 2.1. Research Model

In this research study, ethnographic case study, as a descriptive research pattern, is deemed appropriate. Case studies provide an opportunity to present, in an integrated and meaningful way, the event and the phenomena studied (Çetin, 2017). Ethnography comprises any scientific effort made to understand and describe the culture of a group of people or of a society. Researchers who make an ethnographic study portray the events and the phenomena in a society that they have previously determined (Mc Graw, Hill, Gezon & Cottak, 2016). Since this research study aims to identify the reflections of bilingualism on the school culture, on the classroom culture and on the peer culture, the model of ethnographic case study is preferred.

### 2.2. Participants

The research study was realized at a village school in the South-eastern Anatolia region of Turkey during the 2019-2020 academic year. Participants of the research study consisted of the preschool teacher who

taught at the school subject to the research and 13 students of her as well as seven preschool teachers who taught in different villages of the same district. Participants of the research study were determined by using the method of criterion sampling, as a method of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling provides an opportunity to select and research in depth information-rich situations based on the purpose of a study. It is preferred when it is desired to study in situations that have certain characteristics, that meet certain criteria or that are special (Büyüköztürk, et al., 2018). It was taken as criteria in the research study that the students spoke both Turkish and Kurdish, and that the teachers were preschool teachers, taught in preschool classes with bilingual students and actually worked during the 2019-2020 educational year.

### *2.3. Data Collection Tools*

Several data collection tools were used in this research study. That is because a single data collection technique is not adequate for ethnography. Therefore, complicated cultural characteristics of the group, which was researched by using the methods of participant observation, interview, document analysis, and researcher's diary, tried to be understood. At the same time, it was aimed to confirm the information by using more than one data collection techniques (Le Compte & Schensul, 2010). The researcher became a participant observer in order to have a broader point of view besides observing the students' behaviour, daily routines and communications. The observation process was carried out between September and December 2019. Two techniques of interview were used in the research, one being unstructured and the other being semi-structured. During the unstructured interview, the students were asked questions based on the course of events occurring during the observation. A semi-structured interview was made with the preschool teachers. Open-ended questions were prepared to be asked to the teachers as a result of determining the points wondered and deemed important based on the observations and the interviews made with the students. The interview questions were prepared by the researcher by reviewing the literature and observing the purposes of the research. All of the seven teachers interviewed were graduates of the department of Preschool Teaching. Three teachers were male (T3, T4, T5), and four (T1, T2, T6, T7) were female.

This research also used all kinds of printed and visual sources in order to reach more information about the cultures at the school. A printed text containing information about the history of the school was reviewed in order to know the school culture, the teacher's subjective written views about the students, the teacher's daily plans prepared to be applied in the classroom, and her photographs taken during the activities were reviewed for the classroom culture. The researcher took photographs during the course of the research and increased the visual documents.

### *2.4. Analysis of Data*

The technique of content analysis was used for analysis of the data in this research. It can be said that the technique of content analysis is more appropriate since massive data is obtained in case studies (Patton, 2014). The raw data in this research comprises seventy-three pages of observation notes, twenty-eight pages of research diary, records of interviews made with eight teachers and nine students, and sixty photographs. The data were itemized firstly in the research. Then, the analysis of the data started and codes began to be built. Accordingly, the data were read and evaluated several times by the researcher and pre-coded. It is noteworthy that the concepts used in the literature were taken into consideration while creating the codes. At the last stage, the codes were brought together to find common aspects; thereby, the themes that will form the outlines of the research findings were identified. The inductive analysis method was adopted in this particular research as it focused on the data-driven structure; subsequently, themes and codes were created respectively (Patton, 2014). For the reliability of the coding, the supervisor, as the second coder, coded on the randomly chosen data and inter-coder

consistency was measured. In the cases of disagreement, the codes and themes were finalized after discussion by the researchers.

### 2.5. Validity, Reliability and Ethics in the Research

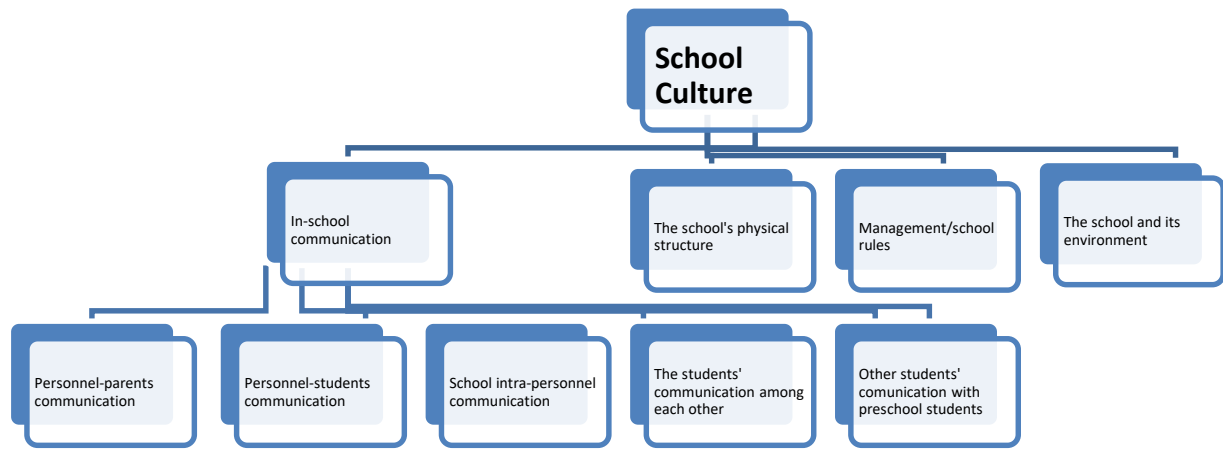
Several criteria were determined to be followed for the studies to become reliable in the descriptive research of researchers. These criteria are making long-term observations and interactions in the field, using multiple data collection tools, obtaining peer assessments, doing contrary cases analysis, explaining the researcher's prejudices, obtaining participants' approvals, sharing the researcher's draft report with the participants, making detailed descriptions, and having the data checked by another person by way of external check (Glesne, 2012). Attention was paid in this research to these criteria in order to ensure validity and reliability.

The written permission of the Provincial Directorate of National Education was firstly obtained to be compliant with ethical rules in the research. Then, the teacher of the class to be observed was informed about the subject of the research, and it was made sure that she was voluntary. Also, real names of the students and the participant teachers were hidden, and nicknames were used.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. School Culture

The first question seeking for an answer in the research is what the reflections of bilingualism on school culture are. The findings obtained from the analysis of the observations, the interviews and the documents are provided on Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Reflections of bilingualism on school culture

Communication at the school occurs through Turkish, the official language of the Republic of Turkey, and through Kurdish, the native language of the local community. Some of the personnel know both of the languages and communicate in both of the languages since they are from the locality where the research is done. Since particularly the teachers who are from the west of Turkey and appointed to the region where the research is done do not know Kurdish, they communicate in Turkish, the official language. In the event that both languages are known, the person who speaks first determines which of the languages will be used for communication. A conversation continues in Turkish if it has started in Turkish, and continues in Kurdish if it has started in Kurdish. Attitude of the administrators determines which language will be dominantly used for communication at the school. Observation examples of different persons at the school are as follows:

Ahmet's father came. Both the principal and the deputy principal greeted the parent in Kurdish. The deputy principal had to leave. The principal and the parent talked completely in Kurdish. The parent obtained information about his two children attending the secondary school. The school employee also spoke in Kurdish to the parent. (15.10.2019)

Another phenomenon observed is that the teachers who knew Kurdish preferred Kurdish in subjects that they did not want the teachers who did not know Kurdish to understand. This situation frequently occurring in the teachers' room also reflected on the observation notes.

The parent of a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student came. His style and dressing were very different from those of the people from this village. He asked us about the 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. After his leave, the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher and the school employee talked in Kurdish about this parent. (23.09.2019)

It was determined that both of the languages were intensely used in communication among the students. The students used in the classroom more the language that they used more in their daily life and they were engaged with more. As a result of the interviews made with the preschool students, it was determined that they preferred Kurdish more at home. Also, they stated that they firstly learned Kurdish, and then they learned Turkish from their elder sister or brother. As a result of the interviews made with the preschool students, those except one said that they spoke Kurdish in their environment. An example from the observation notes is as follows:

The researcher:

- Which language do you use in your immediate environment, I mean with your mother, father and your brother? Turkish or Kurdish?

Alya:

- My grandma doesn't know Turkish. She speaks Kurdish. She only knows Kurdish. My parents know both of them. But they speak Kurdish more. (30.12.2019)

As a result of the review of the observations, interviews and documents, it was seen that bilingualism had no effect on the physical structure of the school. No sign, rule, introductory material or hanged visual at the school are Kurdish. Looking physically at the whole school, it is seen that all applications are Turkish in accordance with the laws and regulations. The following is the direct citation taken from teachers' views and document analyses associated with the subject:

*I don't think that bilingualism has any effect on the physical structure of the school. (T7, T4, T13-25.12.2019)*

It was found that bilingualism during preschool had serious reflections on the school rules. It was seen that since students did not know the official language of education (Turkish), they could not understand the rules and therefore, they had difficulty in obeying the rules. Some direct citations from teachers' views associated with the subject are as follows:

*When the children are told about the school rules, they don't understand them. This, naturally, causes problems in obeying the school rules. (T3, 23.12.2019)*

*Since the child doesn't know the language of education, it affects negatively the teacher-student communication. For example, you tell the child to wash his hands, but he doesn't understand it. He looks at my face. And I look at him. You can't establish communication with the child. Therefore, it gets difficult for him to understand and satisfy the school rules. (T2, 19.12.2019)*

It is seen that Kurdish is actively used for the school – environment communication. Most of the parents who come to the classroom speak in Kurdish both with their own children and the other children. And the students prefer speaking in Kurdish with the parents who speak in Kurdish with them. Since the teacher does not speak Kurdish, the parents prefer Turkish to speak with the teacher. Some other parents

prefer Turkish for their children to speak Turkish better. This situation was recorded on the observation notes as follows:

A parent came at that point and she said that her little daughter wanted to come to school (...) She speaks in Kurdish with her own child. She also speaks in Kurdish with the children in the classroom. She called Çiçek and Ayşe a few times. She also chatted with Mehmet and Ahmet for a short time in Kurdish. The woman said “I think you have learned some Kurdish” to the teacher. The teacher said “No, some things, like yes and no”. After the woman said “3 years have passed, you need to have learned now”, she added “Kurdish is difficult, maybe you understand it, but it is difficult to speak it”. At that moment, Mehmet said “I know it”. The woman said “You know it, of course” to him. After staying for some more time, she left with her daughter. (15.10.2019)

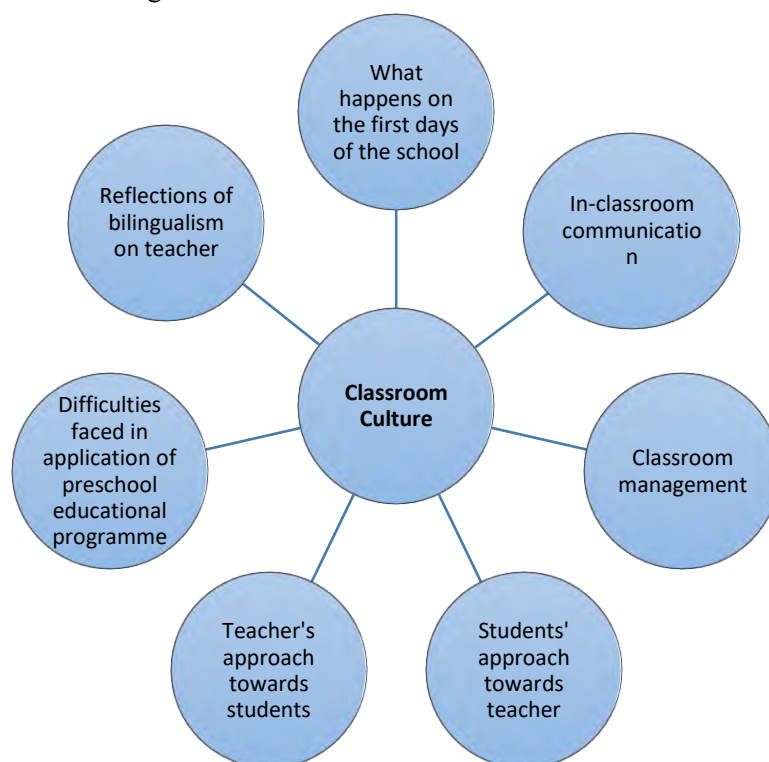
As seen in the observation notes, the parents have a perception that the teachers who have come here need to know Kurdish. The teacher, not reacting to the parents who have come to the classroom speaking in Kurdish with each other, stated during the interview that she had actually been annoyed with it. She told her annoyance as follows:

*For example, parents come. 2 – 3 parents come. They speak to me in Turkish, and they speak in Kurdish with each other. Then, you feel annoyed* (the teacher of the classroom subject to the observation, 30.12.2019)

Bilingualism, not causing problems in the teacher-parent communication most of the time, sometimes became an obstacle for communication. Since some parents do not know Turkish and the teacher does not know Kurdish, communication is not possible. In this situation, the teachers and administrators working at school who know Kurdish help.

### 3.2. Classroom Culture

The second question that the research seeks an answer for is what the reflections of bilingualism on classroom culture are. The findings obtained from the analysis of the observations, interviews and documents are presented on Figure 3.





**Figure 3.** Classification of the Data Collected in the Section of Classroom Culture

### First Days of the School

It is a remarkable situation that the difficulty caused by bilingualism was intense on the first days of the school. Since the students did not know Turkish and the teachers did not know Kurdish, it caused an obstacle for communication. Besides, unhealthy communication made it difficult for the students adapt to the school. The students who had attended the preschool and adapted well the previous year and the students who knew Turkish played a role in solving these problems. In addition, this situation made the teachers feel incapable. The teachers tried to eliminate this problem by receiving help from the persons who knew Kurdish (students, parents, servants, teachers, administrators).

It was observed that those who cried on the first days of the school spoke in Kurdish while crying and expressed themselves in Kurdish. The other students played a role as a translator between the teacher and their friends. An example from the observation notes associated with the subject is as follows

A new girl has joined the classroom. Her name is Ayşe. Her elder sister and elder brother left her in the classroom. She started to cry some time later. The researcher asked what happened, and Ayşe uttered some Kurdish words. When the researcher did not understand, Alya translated “Teacher, she says she wants to go home”. When the researcher said some words to distract Ayşe’s attention and stop her crying, she always responded in Kurdish. It was understood that she sometimes said “Abi” (“Brother” in Turkish) and “Na!” (“No!” in Kurdish). (11.09.2019)

The interviewed teachers stated that they had problems on the first days of school since the students did not know Turkish. An example from the interview notes is as follows:

*Children learn Turkish some time later, but adaptation problems occur until they do it. (T6, 09.12.2019)*

It was observed in relation with classroom communication that the students spoke more Kurdish on their early days in the classroom, they spoke less Kurdish and more Turkish in the process of time. It was seen that the students who actively spoke in Kurdish with their friends, but could not speak Turkish avoided communicating with their teacher. These students do not speak to the teacher unless they need to have the teacher’s permission or inform the teacher about something.

Another remarkable point associated with classroom communication is that the students took care to speak in Kurdish with each other, but speak in Turkish whenever their teacher was there. It seemed like they established a rule as “Speak Turkish if the teacher is there, Kurdish if teacher is not there”. The observation notes contained this situation.

Mehmet was building a stable and a garage with toy blocks. When Burak touched the toy blocks, Mehmet said “Öğretmenim!” (“Teacher” in Turkish) to complain. At that moment, Burak objected “Naa! Ahmet” (“Noo!” in Kurdish) and they continued talking in Kurdish. (30.10.2019)

The teachers participating in the research stated during the interviews that bilingualism caused difficulty for teachers. Some of the teachers participating in the research stated that they banned languages other than Turkish in classroom. Some other teachers said that they were not understood by their students. Citations from the observation notes are presented below:

*It causes trouble, both for the student and the teacher, to think that one is not understood. (T6, 09.12.2019)*

*I feel like I am in another place. I can’t understand my students, which negatively affects me psychologically. I don’t think bilingualism has any benefit. (T3, 23.12.2019)*

Some teachers deem it as an advantage that the students frequently speak Kurdish in their communication with their teacher. T5 and T6 stated as follows that they learned Kurdish words since the students communicated that way.

*The teachers teach the students Turkish, and the students teach the teachers things from their own language.* (T5, 11.12.2019)

*I have learned one or two words from the children. This is a nice advantage.* (T6, 09.12.2019)

The students who always preferred Kurdish on the first days of school had difficulty in understanding and applying the classroom rules. Since the rules were not understood immediately and completely, it prevented quality use of time. However, this difficulty diminished over time. Sometimes the students warned in Kurdish their friends who did not obey the classroom rules. Since this caused dual conversation and complaints of the students, noise occurred in the classroom. The observation associated with the subject is as follows

Ahmet said “Kareçi” to Alya. Upon Alya’s complaint, the teacher and the researcher asked “What does it mean?” They said a lot of irrelevant things. They were not understood. When the researcher called Alya and asked her “What did Ahmet say to you?” she said “He said ‘Witch’”. The researcher asked “How did he say it?” And she said “He said ‘Kareçi’, and then he said ‘Dirty’”. (21.10.2019)

It was observed that the students, like the parents, expected their teachers to know Kurdish. It was contained in the observation notes as follows:

The researcher asked Ayşe if she had finished her food. She said “Yes”. At that point, Alya asked “Teacher, do you know Kurmanci (Kurdish)?” The researcher said “I don’t. Why do you ask?” Alya said “Because you need to.” The researcher asked why. Alya said, about Ayşe, “Because she does not understand when you speak like this”. (13.09.2019)

Students who later learn to speak Turkish sometimes unwittingly say something to the teacher in Kurdish. When the teacher did not understand those Kurdish words or sentences, the students sometimes laughed at the teacher. This reflected on the observation notes as follows:

The children chat in Kurdish during lunch. Gül said some Kurdish word to the researcher, but the researcher only understood “mom” in the beginning. When the researcher asked “What does it mean?” the children laughed and said “eggplant”. Ali explained “Teacher, she said ‘Mom, give me some eggplant’”. (23.10.2019).

The researcher and the participant teacher generally endeavour to understand the students. The researcher, in particular, tries to learn the meanings of the Kurdish words used by the students by continually asking “What does it mean?” or “What is its meaning?” That is because the students frequently come to the teacher and the researcher and tell about what happened at home, and sometimes use Kurdish words. The teacher needs to learn the meanings of these Kurdish words in order to understand the events told by the student.

Within the process, the teacher learns, by communicating with the students, the meanings of some Kurdish words. And she bans in the classroom those, among the learned ones, meaning inappropriate, swearing and so on. The teacher, always trying to understand the students, sometimes fails to do so. When the students say some Kurdish word, the teacher usually asks its meaning and receives its answer, but sometimes her question remains unanswered.

It is seen that bilingualism has negative reflections on the exercise of the preschool educational programme in terms of subjects such as understanding of activities, following of instructions and completing them. While this was deeper on the first days of the school, it gradually diminished. As the students’ skill of speaking and understanding Turkish developed, bilingualism became no more a problem. The interviewed teachers and the teacher of the observed classroom stated that they had

difficulty in applying the preschool educational programme and spent too much time. The most remarkable situation observed in the process was that the students almost never spoke Kurdish during science activities and they only preferred Turkish.

During activities, some students do not understand the questions asked by the teacher about the activity. In this situation, either they look at the teacher's face or utter a Turkish word they know. The following observation notes support it.

The researcher took ten red pencils and asked Ayşe “What colour are the pencils in my hand?” But Ayşe looked at the researcher's face and said nothing. The researcher, pointing at Mehmet's t-shirt, asked “What colour is your friend's t-shirt?” Ayşe answered “Cold”. (16.09.2019)

Since, during song teaching as a Turkish language activity, some students did not understand Turkish, it caused the teacher to spend too much time for the activity. The observation note associated with the subject is as follows:

Since some students did not understand Turkish, it took time for the teacher to teach the song in her daily plan. That was because the students who did not know Turkish had difficulty in understanding. (12.09.2019)

The students new at school had difficulty in understanding the instructions in the game and movement activities. Therefore, they had difficulty in applying the rules in the games, and these students became the first to be eliminated in the elimination games. Although the teacher explained the rules again and again to those who did not understand, they did not understand them.

The interviewed teachers and the teacher of the observed classroom stated that the teaching-learning process for accomplishing the desired objectives and the determined achievements lasted more than the necessary since the students did not understand Turkish. Therefore, they said that some activities did not realize due to the lack of time. They also said that bilingualism affected the selection of methods and techniques. Some direct citations from the interview notes are as follows:

*The teaching process lasts more than the necessary. The children get confused. We have to work in a limited area in terms of selection of methods.* (T3, 23.12.2019)

*Since the teacher makes effort firstly to teach Turkish, achievements may not be applied on time. Since the teacher spends too much energy and she is not understood, she gets too much tired in every respect.* (T5, 11.12.2019)

Reflections of bilingualism on the teacher vary by their bilingual status. If the teacher only knows Turkish, she has difficulties such as negative effects on psychology, feeling lonely, feeling oppressed, difficulty in communication with parents and students, feeling incapable. When teachers know Kurdish, it reflects on them positively in the eyes of parents. Since the servant working at the school knows Kurdish, he sometimes becomes more effective on the preschool students than the teacher. These situations faced by the teachers make them feel incapable. Experiences, thoughts and feelings of the interviewed teachers from the interview notes are presented as follows:

*When the students speak in Kurdish, I sometimes feel lonely. I say “Where am I?” (She laughs.) The most important difficulty is communication with the parents and the children. But it is a different culture for me, and I learn it.* (The teacher of the observed classroom, 30.12.2019)

I feel like I am in another place. I can't understand my students, which negatively affects me psychologically. (T3, 23.12.2019)

### 3.3. Peer Culture

Reflections of bilingualism on peer culture were observed during free time games, breakfast and activities. Bilingualism is seen as the factor determining friendship relations, groupings in games, becoming popular in a group, and deciding what to play. Bilingualism also affects the student being open to communication or not.

Bilingual students have more options in forming groups, playing games and choosing games. In a game or classroom activity involving Turkish learning, Turkish-speaking students form a group within themselves and easily play the game involving Turkish learning. Also, in activities and games, Turkish-knowing students become popular in the classroom by translating the teacher's words. He becomes the person sought in games. Non-Turkish-knowing students do not understand game rules and get eliminated at the beginning, which causes sadness and feeling of failure. The following observation notes are provided as examples of this:

In the free time, Leyla started the game of building a house from cushions. She called Ali and Alya. Ahmet also wanted to play, but she did not let him. Ahmet started to play with the puzzle cushions with numbers on them. Çiçek and Mira came near him. Ahmet is managing the hopscotch, and they are speaking in Kurdish. (19.09.2019)

They played musical chairs. Gül and Lale apparently did not understand; they became first to get eliminated. (13.09.2019)

When the students started school, they brought their village games into the classroom. Since they spoke in Kurdish in these games, they preferred to speak in Kurdish also when playing in the classroom.

It can be said that language preferences of the students are affected by friend effect, desire to join a group and attract attention. The students who had also attended the preschool the previous year drew the researcher's attention during observation. That is because while these students, except Ahmet, preferred to speak only in Turkish the previous year, they mostly spoke in Kurdish with their friends this year. It depends on the components of classroom culture and peer culture that the students who previously spoke in Turkish between each other spoke more Kurdish over time. That is because while all students spoke Turkish the previous year, all of the new-comers this year prefer Kurdish. The new students changed both the classroom culture and the peer culture. While Ahmet never spoke Turkish the previous year, he mostly preferred Turkish this year. This is supported by the following notes of diary and observation:

Ali also attended last year, and I did not hear him speak in Kurdish. This year, generally, he mostly speaks in Kurdish when he does not speak to us. I don't exactly know what relates to this, but all new-comers speak in Kurdish. I think they are affected by the new ones. Alya and Burak are also like Ali. (Diary, 05.11.2019)

The students generally prefer Kurdish for their daily routines. They argue in Kurdish during games. They warn each other in Kurdish. They express their joy and anger in Kurdish. Below are some observation notes which support these findings:

They were racing in a pair. Ali won the race. Alya went near him and said something Kurdish to him. When Mehmet won, Burak shouted "Kizbassa! Kizbassa!" They became happy and hugged each other. Ahmet also hugged them. (05.11.2019)

Burak said that he wanted to go out to the garden. When I said that we can go out, he became happy and started to shout "Kizava! Kizava! Teacher Fatma zava!" Alya said to me "Teacher, you are not a man, you are a woman". (06.11.2019)

Alya got angry and took the toys from the hands of Leyla and Gül by grouching in Kurdish. (17.10.2019)

Short interviews were made with the students who attended the preschool classroom with the aim of understanding which language the students preferred more in their peer relationships, and the connection between the language that they used between each other within the classroom and the language that they used in their immediate environment. Most of the students stated that they expressed themselves better in Turkish. All of the interviewed students told that they spoke in Kurdish with their family at home. They showed as a reason for it that their relatives such as mother, father, grandmother and grandfather spoke in Kurdish with them. Most of the students said that they preferred to establish communication with their friends in games.

#### **4. Discussion**

In this section, the findings are discussed in the direction of the research objectives. In this research, it was concluded that school culture is very much affected by bilingual personnel working at the school. While, in informal environments (chats, bilateral conversations) at the school subject to the research with bilingual students receiving education, communication is established in the native language (in Turkish or in Kurdish), communication occurs in Turkish in formal environments (in the classrooms, during ceremonies, during meetings).

The teachers working at the school subject to the research have different native languages. However, it was seen that this did not cause problems in terms of team spirit, institutional commitment, and communication among the personnel. It was seen that there existed a sincere communication and a strong bond of friendship between the personnel who were native speakers of Kurdish and the teachers who did not know Kurdish. There is a close relationship between organizational culture and communication. Symbols such as values, norms, history and traditions, which are the components of organizational culture may be interpreted by the way of communication (Çelik, 2000, p. 52). Karadağ and Özdemir (2015) found that elements such as effective communication, team spirit, sincerity, and institutional commitment to be the strengths of school culture. Sergiovanni (1994) adopts the idea that creating a feeling of community plays a key role in creating a successful school. In this research, it can be said that even if the teachers had different native languages, since they were aware that they were together for common values, norms, traditions and a common future, they could form a school culture.

Looking through the findings of the research study, it is seen that the bilingual personnel and the bilingual students sometimes preferred Kurdish, and sometimes they preferred Turkish. In societies which contain multiple languages, individuals choose a language depending on the situation that they are in. Choice of language varies by the persons that the individuals speak to, by the environment that they are in and by the subject of the conversation (Cengiz, 2006). In this context, it can be stated that the bilingual personnel and the bilingual students at the school subject to the research preferred a language according to the situation that they were within.

According to another conclusion of the research, it was seen that the native language that was spoken in the environment which the school existed in frequently reflected on the communication established between the personnel working at the school and the parents. Since school and society are like mirrors which look at each other, they reflect each other (Yigit & Bayrakdar, 2006). In this direction, the students who attended the school subject to the research and their parents took their native language, Kurdish, to the school. Those who knew Kurdish communicated in Kurdish, and those who did not know Kurdish started to learn it.

Teachers, during the first hour of a new duty, start to deeply review the expectations, the norms and the rituals in order to learn what it means to be an accepted member of a school (Deal & Peterson, 1999). In this research, it can be said that the teachers started to get used to bilingualism, which affected the

school culture as a component of the school culture, and tried to learn the second language for the sake of adaptation.

One of the most important factors that determined the effect of bilingualism on the school culture at the school subject to the research is the attitudes of the administrators, and the other is that the teachers were bilingual. The teachers, the servants and the students develop their own attitudes according to the attitudes of the administrators. Communication develops either in Kurdish or in Turkish according to the attitudes of the administrators. Communication is established in Turkish if the administrators prefer Turkish when speaking. According to Çelik (2000), school principals keep alive the key values and the cultural meanings of the culture which is established at the school. Karaköse and Kocabaş (2000) argue that the behaviour of the school principal against the teachers and the other personnel has an important place within the school culture, and that the behaviour of the teachers and the other personnel against each other shapes the school culture. According to Stolp and Smith (1995), establishment and direction of the school culture are in the grip of the school principal.

It was found that bilingualism during preschool had serious reflections on the school rules. It was observed that since the children did not know the language, they could not understand the rules, and therefore, had difficulty in obeying the rules. This finding of the research is supported by the finding of the research carried out by Mercan and Özbütün (2016) that since the native language of the refugee children was different, it caused problems within the process of adaptation to school.

In the findings of the research, it was revealed that the students approached the Kurdish-knowing teachers more temperately and they felt closer to these teachers. As similar to the result of the research, Yılmaz and Şekerci (2016) found that students were more comfortable and they expressed themselves more easily when communicating with teachers who knew or tried to speak their native language. They determined that children embraced more quickly the teachers who spoke their language, they felt closer to them, and they easily established communication with them. In this direction, it can be said that language difference is very important in approaching the school and the teacher.

In this research, it was concluded that the students spoke in Kurdish in their immediate environment with their family members and relatives. Şişman (2018) found the result, in his research, that children with different native languages did not correctly and properly the official language of education outside the school. Results of the research carried out by Kan and Yeşiloğlu show that bilingual children use their native language at home and in their social environment, and they use the official language when they come to school. As similar to these results, it was found that the primary school students and the secondary school students who received education at the school subject to the research communicated in Kurdish with the preschool students.

In this research, it was found that the students expressed their anger, fury, sadness and happiness, shortly their feelings, more in their native language. Supporting the result of this research, Yazıcı (2011) states in his study that children will express their feelings, thoughts, sadness, fury and happiness best in their native language. It was seen during the process of research that the students took care to speak in Turkish with their teacher. It was observed that while they preferred more Kurdish at the beginning, they spoke more Turkish over time.

Another result obtained in the research is that it was determined that since the students who always preferred Kurdish did not understand what their teacher told, they had difficulty in communicating, obeying the rules, developing life skills, and doing the activities. This situation lasted longer or shorter depending on the students' knowledge of Turkish. This result of the research is supported by the results of the research carried out by Susar Kırmızı et al. (2019).

The result in this research that the teachers had communication problems with the students due to the lack of knowledge of the native language frequently on the first days of the school, and then from time

to time is supported by the result of the research carried out by Yılmaz and Şekerci (2016). Yılmaz and Şekerci (2016) stated as a result of their research that when students with a different native language started school, they particularly had problems of inability to establish communication, withdrawing into themselves, and lacking self-confidence and socialization skills. There are various research studies that support the idea that difference of native language causes problems in teacher-student communication (Akdağ, 2014; Özdemir, Civelek, Çetin, Karapınar & Özel, 2015; Karadağ & Çakan, 2018; Karataş & Kınalıoğlu, 2018; Kardeş & Akman, 2018; Taşkaya et al., 2015).

Another finding of the research is that the students who did not know Turkish refrained from communicating with their teacher. Supporting this result of the research, Mercan Uzun and Bütün (2015) found as a result of their research associated with refugee children that refugee children did not communicate with their teacher, and they could not express themselves. When it is considered that the process of education lies on the teacher-student communication and interaction, it can be said that students who do not know Turkish will have difficulty in acquire the skills and the knowledge expected to be acquired at school.

It was determined in the research that the students who played a role as a translator between their teacher and their friends became more self-confident and more popular. This situation may contribute positively to the students' social and emotional development. Doyé states that a child who receives education of a second language at early ages develops positively not only socially and personally, but also culturally, and the child will gain awareness about languages and cultures different from his own language and culture. A child who has a language different from his native language will develop his advanced thinking skills by gaining awareness about which language to use in what situation and by learning to decide to communicate when, with whom, in what situation and in which language. When he particularly moves from one language to the other in social communication and continually changes his spoken language, he will have flexibility of thinking, which will strengthen the child skill of movement and creativity (Çetintaş & Yazıcı, 2016). Tran, Arredondo and Yoshida (2015) found, in the research in which they developmentally reviewed the relationship between bilingualism and cultural effect, that an individual's cultural background and bilingualism brought an advantage cognitively.

It was seen in the findings of the research that when the teachers had communication difficulties, some students served as a translator, and that some teachers explained the students the instructions and the rules by using body language and sign language. This result of the research is similar to the result of the research carried out by Yılmaz and Şekerci (2006). Yılmaz and Şekerci (2016) determined in their research that teachers used, in solving the problems faced in education of students with a different native language, the in-classroom methods of using translator students, communicating with sign and body language, trying to learn the native language of the child, banning the use of native language within the classroom, making use of visual and auditory materials, and using body language when teaching imperatives.

According to a result of the research, it was revealed that since parents also did not understand or speak Turkish, it caused an obstacle for communication. According to Demirbaş (2014), since families do not know the native language of the country that they live in, they can not establish the necessary communication with their children's education and school. According to Yağan Güder (2019), that may be because, since a parent thinks that he cannot express himself adequately to the teacher, he prefers no communication with the teacher and he thinks he will have the fear and worry of prejudice and exclusion by teachers.

In the research, it was found that the teachers had different approaches towards bilingualism. Some teachers imposed no restrictions on the students about language, and they even started to adapt to the culture and language of the students. Other teachers banned the languages other than Turkish within the

classroom. They did so with the aim of eliminating the problem of the inability to understand each other caused by the language difference and of improve the teacher-student communication. Different attitudes of the teachers towards bilingualism might have formed a basis for the different culture shaping in the classroom. A teacher is deemed as the source of authority in a classroom. Therefore, teachers have the potential to form and guide the culture in the classroom (Shannon, 1995). A teacher of a classroom of bilingual students needs to guide the culture of this classroom in a way that will support the students in every respect. Teachers need to have the ability to work with students from different cultural and linguistic origins. They need to be able to help students continue their difference within the classroom and to lay a bridge between the students' daily life and the classroom (Major, Kearney, Birch and Corney, 2004). That is because language difference may cause the teacher to misjudge the students, and the student to misjudge the teacher (Delpit, 1991). It may cause a negative classroom culture to develop. It can be said that it is a situation needing to be researched, in terms of advantages and disadvantages, by sociologists and psychologists that teachers adopt different practices in the classroom associated with bilingualism.

According to the result of the research, since the parents did not know Turkish, the children generally started to learn Turkish not in the family, but at the educational institution. This means that when the children who live in these regions cannot benefit from the early childhood educational services, they start primary school without having a full command of Turkish, the language of education (Koşan, 2015). In this sense, it can be seen very important for children to receive preschool education in order for them to learn Turkish.

It is seen that bilingualism has negative reflections on the exercise of the preschool educational programme in terms of subjects such as understanding of activities, following of instructions and completing them. As a result of the research carried out by Ağgöl et al. (2018), it was revealed, supporting this result of the research, that bilingualism caused problems in implementing the preschool educational programme. Results of the research carried out by Çetin and Yalçın Su (2019) also support this result of the research. Özdemir, Civelek et al. (2015) found the result in their research that students' lack of knowledge of Turkish obstructed the implementation of the educational programme.

It was detected that the reflections of bilingualism on the teacher were making much more effort to realize the process of teaching-learning and feeling incapable in some situations. Results of the researches of Akdağ (2014), and Çetin and Yalçın Su (2019) are similar to this result of the research. In the research of Karataş and Kınalıoğlu (2018), similarly, it was determined that teachers who had problems due to bilingualism felt incapable and became less willing to work.

According to the conclusion of the research, it was established that the effect of bilingualism on peer culture was significant. Bilingualism is seen as the factor determining friendship relations, groupings in games, becoming popular in a group, and deciding what to play. Bilingualism also affects the student being open to communication or not. Language supports socialization, and communication supports learning a language (Atkinson, 2013).

According to the findings of the research, it was seen that the peers preferred Kurdish whenever they were free. It was concluded that they communicated in Kurdish whenever they played freely, during breakfast and in the absence of the teacher. The finding was obtained that it was deemed as a reason for speaking in Turkish that the teacher was around and he established communication with the students. As similar to the result of the research of Belet (2009), in this research, peers were liable to establish communication with each other in their native language. This situation may be interpreted that the students brought their habit of speaking in Kurdish with their families and relatives in their environment outside the school into the classroom.



According to the findings of the research, it was seen that the students took care to use Kurdish and Turkish in appropriate situations and warned each other in this respect. Cekaite and Björk-Willén (2012) obtained, in their research, that the peer culture of the preschool and primary school students was related to the linguistic aspects and situations of their social relationships and behaviour. It was observed that the students, as a member of group, attached importance to the use of language and also felt responsible about the linguistic skills of their friends.

Another finding that was obtained as a result of the research is that bilingualism affects groupings in games. It was seen that those who knew Turkish and those who did not know Turkish played in different groups in the games that were played in the classroom. It was observed that those who knew Turkish preferred more Turkish in the games that they set. Those who did not know Turkish played their games sometimes on their own and sometimes in a group of two or three. It can be said that this resulted from the fact that those who did not know Turkish withdrew into themselves and therefore, they preferred their friends who they thought understood them.

It can be said that since the students who could speak both of the languages easily established communication both with their teacher and their friends, they became more self-confident. It can be interpreted as withdrawing into oneself that when the students who did not know Turkish tried to establish communication with their teacher, they gave up establishing communication since they saw that they were not understood by the teacher. It was seen in the research that the students who knew Turkish were the decision-makers in the games that they played with their friends. It was determined that the students who knew Turkish had a voice in matters such as what game to play and who could join that game.

It is thought, based on all these facts explained, that language in multilingual environments has an effect organizing socialization among peers. Students form a social connection between them by the way of language. A teacher who attaches importance to language used as a tool of socialization needs to pay attention to what language students prefer where and when (Shannon, 1995).

## **5. Conclusions**

### *5.1. Recommendations*

In this section, recommendations are provided that were made based on the research findings and results.

As a result of a common study by the authorities of the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education, a course may be added to the educational programmes of Preschool Teaching that includes multilingualism, multiculturalism, and adaptation.

Preschool teachers may be provided in-service training after being appointed to a region with a bilingual structure, and activities may be carried out that will catalyse their adaptation such as teaching the language and the culture of the region, and providing psychological and social support.

Children at the age of preschool may be provided Turkish courses before starting preschool. They may be taught Turkish at least to the extent that they can express their basic needs and themselves.

Teachers may concretize the activities that they apply by making use of visual materials. In this way, while students learn some more Turkish, teachers teach the acquisitions and concepts in a shorter time.

Teachers may improve children's skills of speaking and understanding Turkish by giving weight to family participation studies.

The psychological and social effect, occurring on children within the adaptation process, of starting school without knowing Turkish may be researched by researchers.

The reasons why students intensely use their native language in educational environments, its effects on education, and its reflections on students' success may be researched.

Possible effects of permitting/not permitting students, by teachers, to speak their native language in their classroom may be researched.

## 6. Ethics Committee Approval

The authors confirm that ethical approval was obtained from Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University (Approval Date: 05/12/2019).

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## Okul öncesi eğitime iki dilliliğin yansımaları: Etnografik bir durum çalışması

### Öz

Bu araştırma, iki dilliliğin okul öncesi eğitime yansımalarını tespit etmek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada nitel araştırma desenlerinden etnografik durum çalışması kullanılmıştır. Araştırma 2019-2020 eğitim-öğretim yılında, Türkiye'nin Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgesindeki bir köy okulunda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, araştırma yapılan okulda görev yapan okul öncesi öğretmeni ve 13 öğrencisi ile aynı ilçenin farklı köylerinde görev yapan yedi okul öncesi öğretmeni oluşturmuştur. Araştırma verileri katılımcı gözlem, görüşme, doküman analizi, araştırmacı günlüğü kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda okulda, sınıfta ve akranlar arasında iki dilliliğin bir kültür olarak benimsendiği belirlenmiştir. İki dilliliğin okul öncesi eğitim programının uygulanmasına; etkinliklerin anlaşılması, yönergelerin takip edilmesi ve zamanında bitirilmesi gibi konularda olumsuz yansımalarının olduğu görülmüştür. İki dilliliğin öğretime yansımaları ise daha çok çaba sarf etme ve bazı durumlarda kendini yetersiz hissetme şeklinde olduğu tespit edilmiştir. İki dilliliğin akranlar arasında bazı öğrencileri popüler yaptığı görülürken bazı öğrencileri ise içine kapanık bireyler olmasına neden olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* okul öncesi; iki dillilik; okul kültürü; sınıf kültürü; akran kültürü

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