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**BILINGUALISM LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL
LEARNING DISABILITIES: THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL FACTORS**

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ABSTRACT

The present research deals with the bilingual language development and its relationship with the special learning difficulties. Bilingualism is nowadays a very common phenomenon as more and more children grow up developing two languages at the same time. Sometimes this simultaneous development of two languages occurs without difficulties and obstacles though other times it affects the learning skills of the child and therefore influences its social skills. Regarding the influence of bilingualism in the manifestation of special learning difficulties in children a number of articles have been written and a lot of research has been done. The purpose of the present research is to examine whether external bilingual-related factors may be related at the same time with the development of special learning difficulties.

The work is divided into two parts. In the theoretical part both bilingual language development and special language difficulties are analyzed. This analysis attempts to locate and to clarify the causes of special learning difficulties to bilingual students, as well as the external factors that affect in this direction. In the research part respectively, an attempt is made to prove empirically the role of these external factors in the manifestation of the special learning difficulties for bilingual students. For this purpose a study case was conducted with a sample of bilingual students belonging to different school levels. The sample consists of two 6 year old primary school students, an 18-year-old student and a preschooler at the age of four. The methods used in this work are the semi-structured interviews and observation. The research part of the work is completed by presenting the results of the research, the analysis and the conclusions drawn. The ultimate goal, therefore, of the present research work is the understanding of the role of external factors in bilingual language development in order to manage these factors properly and avoid as much as possible the language deficits that lead to learning difficulties.

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