



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

DIPARTIMENTO
DI PSICOLOGIA
"RENZO CANESTRARI"

PhD Program in Psychology

Seminar "Harmonious Bilingualism"

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Acquisition and Multilingualism at the University of Erfurt, Germany

21/09/2026, 16:15 – 18:45

Auditorium, Piazzetta Pasolini, Bologna

Abstract

Despite growing linguistic diversity, misconceptions about bilingual development remain widespread. Many families are still advised to reduce the use of one language, while educators and practitioners often lack evidence-based guidance on how to support bilingual children effectively. These misconceptions can generate unnecessary concerns, influence educational practices, and ultimately affect children's well-being, family relationships, and educational opportunities.

Rather than a traditional lecture, this seminar adopts an **interview format**, in which the speaker responds to the most common questions that parents, educators, and professionals ask about raising bilingual children. Throughout the session, participants will also be invited to ask their own questions, which will be addressed by drawing on the latest scientific evidence in bilingualism, language development, and education. The discussion will translate research findings into accessible, practical guidance while dispelling common myths surrounding bilingual development.

The seminar explores current evidence on bilingual development from infancy through adolescence, addressing the cognitive, educational, and socio-emotional dimensions of growing up with two or more languages. Particular attention will be given to the conditions that foster **Harmonious Bilingualism**, highlighting the complementary roles of parents, schools, and the wider community in creating supportive multilingual environments.

The seminar will address the following questions:

1. **Can two languages coexist harmoniously within a family, and what conditions make this possible?**
2. **How can parents, schools, and communities work together to create environments that support bilingual development and family well-being?**
3. **What are the main opportunities and challenges associated with bilingualism, and what does current scientific evidence tell us about common myths and best practices?**

Suggested reading:

De Houwer, A. (2020). *Harmonious Bilingualism: Well-Being for Families in Bilingual Settings*. In *Handbook of Home Language Maintenance and Development*. De Gruyter.

De Houwer, A. (2015). *Harmonious bilingual development: Young families' well-being in language contact situations*. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(2), 169–184.

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