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Designing an AI-Based Programme for Emerging Bi- and Multilinguals

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While artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have started being integrated into language education programmes offered at universities, secondary and elementary schools, little do we know if and how they could be introduced for language learners on the pre-school level. Just as with other types of information technologies, application of AI in early childhood education programmes raises many questions among doctors, educators and parents. This presentation will focus on early stages of designing an AI-based project aimed at early bilinguals and multilinguals aged 4 to 7.

For this research and development project, a small group of experts in language learning, early childhood education and AI technologies conducted a pilot study in which they surveyed and interviewed educators working on speech development of emerging bi- and multilinguals in state-funded and private preschools. Participants of the study were asked to assess their attitude and skills related to AI, as well as to reflect on a newly designed AI-based programme for speech development in a multilingual and multicultural context.

The presentation will discuss preliminary results that speak for the necessity 1) to carefully align speech development curriculum of the native language with the curriculum for developing a second (third) language, 2) to apply CLIL technologies by integrating the study of the world (i.e. topics related to geography, history, and science) with speech development classes, 3) to design AI-based language activities that would develop children's intercultural competences, creativity and critical thinking skills, and 4) to counteract negative attitudes towards AI among educators and parents.

The discussion of factors that support or hinder designing the content and form of the AI-based programme for bi- and multilinguals will be of interest to early childhood educators, language teachers working with young learners and those involved in developing technology-based educational applications for children.

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Keywords

artificial intelligence, early childhood education, language acquisition, bilingualism, multilingualism

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