

Promotion of social-cognitive competences through bimodal-bilingual education

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The development of social-cognitive competences like Theory of Mind (ToM) and Emotion Understanding (EU) interacts with language acquisition. Knowledge of lexemes for mental states and syntax like complement structure and the ability to take part in various interactions are an important precondition for ToM and EU (e.g. Schick et al. 2007).

International and own studies have revealed that deaf children are particularly at risk of lagging behind in the development of these skills as the access to both languages – spoken language and sign language – is limited due to hearing impairment or the communication skills of parents (e.g. Becker et al. 2018, Maridaki-Kassotaki & Antonopoulou 2010). For these reasons bimodal bilingual education has to take into account that children need not only support to acquire both languages, but also in the areas of development of ToM/EU that are closely linked to language acquisition.

The European partnership ProToM combines 4 research institutes and 7 schools. The goal is to develop a multilingual evidence-based training program to promote ToM and EU as well as the associated bimodal-bilingual skills in deaf children. The program is strictly theory-based and follows the different stages of development of ToM and EU (Peterson et al 2005, Pons et al. 2004). It has a modular design that provides different approaches to accommodate diversity among the pupils in bimodal bilingual education.

To test the effectiveness of the program, two interventions are carried out at primary schools and the extent of the change in competencies is measured by a pre-post-test design. Teachers and children are asked to evaluate the modules. The program and the results of the first intervention will be presented.

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