

# Beyond Words: Investigating the influence of gestures on early second language acquisition in an Italian-English bilingual preschool

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## *Abstract*

*Research has demonstrated that gestures accompanying speech could significantly impact the acquisition of children's native language as well as early second language acquisition. This article presents a pilot study that focuses on the effects of gestures on early vocabulary acquisition in English as a second language for very young learners in a bilingual environment using a natural and affective-humanistic approach. In the case study illustrated in this article, 9 children with an average age of 4 were exposed to 24 target words through verbal training (VT) and gestural training (GT) over 7 weeks. Results showed that gestures had a significant influence on memorization, expressive and receptive language skills, and communicative abilities. These findings suggest that gestures can be a valuable tool for early second language teaching, benefiting both teachers and pupils.*

**Keywords:** early second language acquisition; gestures; bilingual teaching; English as a second language; multimodality.

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