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STEREOTYPES ABOUT BILINGUALISM

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Anotace:

Předmětem této bakalářské práce je fenomén bilingvismu, konkrétně určité stereotypy spojené s bilingvismem a bilingvní výchovou. Cílem práce je tyto stereotypy popsat, případné předsudky vyvrátit, nebo naopak potvrdit jejich pravdivost. Práce bude obsahovat obecné seznámení s bilingvismem, převážně u dětí, typologii bilingvismu, teoretické poznatky o bilingvní výchově a dále strategie výchovy v bilingvních rodinách. Budou též diskutovány stereotypy a mýty všeobecně zakotvené v našich představách o bilingvních dětech. Empirická část bude analyzovat mluvu bilingvních dětí do osmi let věku. Na jejich mluvě bude zkoumána pravdivost vybraných stereotypů a předsudků.

Klíčová slova:

Bilingvismus; dvojjazyčné děti; jazyková analýza; stereotypy

Abstract:

The topic of this bachelor thesis is the phenomenon of bilingualism, specifically stereotypes about bilingualism and bilingual upbringing. The aim of the thesis is to describe these stereotypes and either disprove the existing prejudices or, on the other hand, confirm them as relevant. The thesis comprises a general introduction in bilingualism, predominantly in children, typology of bilingualism, theoretical knowledge about bilingual upbringing and, finally, strategies of upbringing in bilingual families. Also discussed will be the stereotypes and myths which are generally part of our notions about bilingual children. The empirical part of the thesis will analyze the speech of bilingual children up to the age of eight. Their speech will be used to test the verity of selected stereotypes and prejudices.

Key words:

Bilingualism; bilingual children; language analysis; stereotypes

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1 Introduction

Bilingualism is a widely discussed phenomenon all over the word. Around 60% of the worldwide population are raised as bilingual speakers. The world is more connected than ever before, which raised the need of speaking more than just one's native language. The topic of bilingualism is examined often, but children who are raised bilingually less so. Linguists have to deal with the difficulty that children cannot yet share their feelings adequately and cannot explain how they acquired two languages. The research is therefore more difficult and gropy. For that reason, more linguists are interested in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) or successive bilingualism (acquiring a second language at a later age).

The aim of this research as a whole is to confirm or, vice versa, disprove stereotypes connected with bilingual children which are entrenched in our minds or can be found on the internet.

As part of my empirical part, I used a questionnaire which was filled in by parents of bilingual children. The questionnaire contains information about parents, their strategies of upbringing a bilingual child, and information about the child, mainly concerning the child's acquisition of speech. Furthermore, I used speech recordings of normal situations where bilingual children have conversations with family members. Some parents also wrote down some interesting moments in their children's speech in order to supply more examples for my research. The empirical part of this thesis is built on the recordings, which are transcribed, and the discussed phenomena are described in detail. The results of the questionnaires are mainly evaluated in the form of graphs and tables.

This thesis is not divided into the traditional theoretical and empirical parts, instead, the empirical part is embedded in the theory. By using this approach, the theory can be more easily connected to practice. After this introduction, there follows the second part of the thesis, which focuses on bilingualism, its classification, and some practical advice. This part also includes descriptions of the observed families and examples of what parents of bilingual children should avoid.

The third part of the thesis describes the first stereotype, which is how children acquire languages, their language development delay, dominance in language, interferences, and code choice. The fourth part focuses on cultural stereotypes. The purpose of this part is to find out whether children can be part of any culture, or whether

they are monocultural, or possibly bicultural. The penultimate part focuses on stuttering in children, and the last part is on bilingual children as translators.

The reason for this choice of topic is to encourage parents to raise their children bilingually and to demystify bilingualism. In my family, there are two bilingual children, and I can see how positively it affects them. On the other hand, my grandparents do not approve of the way how they are being raised. They believe these stereotypes and, for example, the children's code choice confirmed their beliefs even more. Even when I tried to convince them of the benefits of bilingualism, they did not take me seriously. Hopefully, this thesis convinces not just my grandparents but also other skeptics.

2 Bilingualism

In the last forty years, bilingualism increased rapidly as a world-wide phenomenon. Some of the reasons for this rapid rise are migration, spread of education, population growth, social changes, and interethnic marriages (the latter is particularly important for this thesis). Bilingualism is a pervasive phenomenon which will further grow in the future. Linguists from all over the world study it but they have not come with a single definition which would be universally applicable (Milroy 1). The opposite of bilingualism is monolingualism, which is defined by Lachout as follows: "Monolingualism is the ability of an individual speaker to speak only in one language, denoted as mother language (L1)" (17). Another relevant term is multilingualism, which is understood as a knowledge of more than two languages, whereas bilingualism is understood as the ability to speak two languages. Probably the most used definition of bilingualism is by the Danish linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas:

> A bilingual speaker is someone who is able to function in two languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the sociocultural demands made by an individual's communicative and cognitive competence by these communities or by the individual herself, at the same level as native speaker, and who is able positively to identify with both language groups (and cultures) or parts of them. (90)

Martin Lachout defines bilingualism as the "ability of an individual to use two languages mutually regardless of the communicative situation at that moment" (20). Leonard Bloomfield's definition of bilingualism is the "ability to use two languages as native-like" (qtd. in Lachout 21). However, it is hard to precisely describe what "native-like" means, every individual can understand it differently, and it is even more difficult to observe this in children (Lachout 20–21).

The last definition is from the French linguist François Grosjean, who emphasizes the lack of only one definition. He still proposes the following definition from the outset: "Bilinguals are those who use two or more languages (dialects) in their everyday lives" (*Bilingual* 3).

2.1 Classification of Bilingualism

This chapter also has to deal with many different divisions of bilingualism. To start with, Martin Lachout proposes a division into categories mostly one by one. Lachout's detailed division is based on many various factors of bilingualism. He sorts speakers into categories according to how they learned their second language, and their

proficiency level. Bilingual people belong to every given category, which is convenient because it provides a more accurate description of every single bilingual person.

1. **Period of Adoption**
   a. Simultaneously – parallel acquisition of two language codes starting from birth.
   b. Successively – acquisition of the second language code after mastering the first language.

2. **Level of Competence**
   a. Symmetrical – both languages are on the same level.
   b. Asymmetric – one language (usually the first acquired language) dominates the other language.

3. **Dominance of Language** (note that one language is always stronger, and that the dominance can change)
   a. Coordinating – both languages are acquired at the level of mother tongue proficiency.
   b. Subordinate – the second language (L2) is weaker and is subordinate to the stronger language (L1).

4. **By Age**
   a. Infantile – acquiring both languages from birth.
   b. Adolescent – the second language is acquired at a later age, mostly in school.
   c. Belated – the second language is acquired in adulthood.

5. **By Environment**
   a. Primary – the language is acquired from one's family.
   b. Secondary – the language is acquired from an institution such as school.

6. **By Competence**
   a. Elite – a high level of writing competence, a lower level of speaking competence.
   b. Folk – a high level of speaking competence (35).

The already mentioned linguist Tove Skutnabb-Kangas divides bilingualism in the world population into four groups. Her division is based on parental pressure to became bilingual, on prerequisites, methods, and consequences. The emphasis is on groups of children, not on individuals.

1. **Elite bilinguals:** people who decided to become bilingual themselves or their parents decided for them. Bilingualism for these children is voluntary, they have been encouraged to acquire a second language. The methods of acquisition are the so-called "natural method" (the children are in a situation in which they have to communicate in the foreign language) and teaching. Elite bilingualism has been thought of as a positive phenomenon.

2. **Children from linguistic majorities:** a group of children who learn a foreign language in school or children from a linguistic majority learning a minority language (e.g., English-speaking Canadians are taught French).

3. **Children from bilingual families:** families in which the parents have different mother tongues. Children are under pressure from their parents, not from the society, to become bilingual. If the child fails, they may have a less satisfactory relationship with one or both of their parents.

4. **Children from linguistic minorities:** these children are under a strong external pressure to become bilingual (their parents teach them the minority language, but the society speaks the majority language). If the children acquire the majority language, they have a greater chance to assimilate. This group of people is composed of immigrants and represents the most widespread form of bilingualism (75–79).

Skutnabb-Kangas also proposes an alternative division which is interested more in the bilingual individual rather than in bilingual groups. I personally prefer this classification because it does not strictly label a person as part of one coherent group but describes a person as an individual.

1. **By origin** (sociological area): a necessary use of two languages mostly in the family.

2. **By competence** (linguistic area): understanding, speaking, reading, writing.

3. **Based on function** (sociological area): alternative use of two languages.

4. **Based on identification** (social psychology): the speaker's own identification with both languages, communities, and cultures (82–89).

2.2 Simultaneous Bilingualism

In my bachelor thesis, I focus on simultaneous bilingualism, which is why I include here several more definitions of simultaneous bilingualism. Linguists would

mostly agree that simultaneous bilingualism occurs up to the age of four, after which the term successive bilingualism is used. Dornyei points out the importance of the factor of simultaneousness, which is what distinguishes bilingualism from multilingualism: the term bilingualism applies "as a result of a language learning history whereby the acquisition of at least two languages happen simultaneously or overlap considerably in childhood" (15). In practice, this form of bilingualism mostly occurs as follows:

> To acquire two languages together, the family usually adopts an approach by which the child receives two languages inputs, mostly mother's and father's L1. The second language does not have to come from one of the parents, it can come for example from caretakers who matter in the life of the young child. (Groesjean, *Bilingual* 165–164).

In contrast with simultaneous bilingualism, there is successive bilingualism. When a child starts to acquire their second language as late as around the age of five, we already talk about successive bilingualism. An important moment in the early life is school, where children start to socialize with their peers. "If the school language is different from what they speak at home, then they will acquire it, sometimes easily and sometimes with more difficulty" (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 166–167). Similarly, immigrants are also confronted with the language of their new country. According to Grosjean, for children to integrate more quickly, they should be put in a "sink or swim" situation (when they learn the new language without any help). Some immigrants however study the new language before leaving their home countries.

2.3 Bilingual Children

Children who speak more than one language are quite common nowadays. We have better resources, education, and opportunities to learn a language. Learning two languages simultaneously from birth is still more unique but it has been a perfectly normal phenomenon since ancient times.

As already mentioned, bilingual children can be found in intermarriages where each parent uses a different language. Children hear both languages from birth and they acquire them naturally when they start before the age of three. Children should be exposed to both languages equally. However, it is often not practically possible. Pearson reports that bilingual children have 60 to 65% exposure to one language and 35 to 40% to the other. The vocabulary in young age is not even, one language remains dominant even after the "lexical spurt," which is a rapid increase of the vocabulary (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 180).

Even when children are raised as bilingual, sometimes it may happen that they can understand both languages, but communicate only in one language. This phenomenon is called receptive bilingualism and such person is called a passive speaker. It most often occurs in immigrant families and occasionally in intermarriage families (Průcha 165).

Grosjean mentions that some people think that "the earlier a language is acquired, the more fluent a child will be in it" (*Bilingual*185). This assumption is a stereotype which needs to be elaborated on in more detail. People think that the child's brain is more malleable and that children are less shy. This is in fact not the case. Children are immature learners without fully developed cognitive skills which are important for generalizing, classifying, and the capacity for abstraction. The advantage of early learning is in an easier acquisition of the pronunciation and in the openness of the culture. Children acquire the language not by learning it but by using the method of "trial and error." Another advantage of young children learners is that they are not afraid to speak with anybody even if their language skills are poor. This is however not because they are not as shy as adults might be. Children use the language as they know it and they do not even realize they use incorrect forms. Children have a great advantage when learning another language at a later age too (Lachout and Janíková 24–25).

2.4 Bilingual Strategies

Parents may decide to raise their children as bilingual for many reasons. An understandable reason is when one parent has a different mother tongue. A common language is important for communication with all family members, and children also gain the privilege of another language. Another type of families with bilingual children are those which are able to communicate only in a minority language. Parents want to prepare their children for school, where they will need the majority language, and they often send them to preparation schools from a young age.

As to bilingual upbringing strategies, I will use Grosjean's division, which is a delineation of five commonly known strategies. Probably the best known is the strategy of "one person – one language," which was used by most of the families that I researched in this thesis. However, all these methods fulfill the purpose if they are used correctly.

1. **One person – one language:** each parent speaks their mother language.
2. **Home – outside the home:** the minority language is used at home by all family members and the other language is spoken outside the home.

3. **One language first:** only one language (mostly the minority language) is used at home until the age of five, then the other language (the majority language) is acquired, usually quickly.
4. **Language-time:** both languages are used, each at a specific time, for example, one language in the morning and the other in the evening.
5. **Free-alternation:** using the two languages interchangeably, depending on the topic, person, situation, and so on (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 205–208).

It should be noted that men and women use language differently, which applies to mothers and fathers as well. Mothers usually avoid slang and non-standard language means, whereas fathers do not. When the parents use different languages, the input of the language differs. One language input can be rather feminine, the other rather masculine. But it all depends on the input, which also means the frequency of use and the number of people with the particular language in the family (Cunningham 61–62). De Houwer conducts an ongoing research of how children are influenced by their mother's and father's languages respectively. She has not confirmed her hypothesis yet, but she believes that mothers have a dominant influence on the child's bilingual development (qtd. in Průcha 168).

In this paragraph, I would like to list some basic pieces of advice on how to raise a bilingual child.

- Each parent should speak to their child in the same language from birth.
- Each parent should strictly use only one language and should avoid code-switching.
- The child should be exposed to both languages equally.
- Children must feel comfortable in both languages, parents should not pressure them, and when the child sabotages one language, the parents should not force it but rather try to play games in the language or find some other speakers to become friends with the child.
- When the child manifests code choice or other language interferences, parents should not stop using both languages, on the contrary, they should continue speaking both languages and observe improvement (Lachout 111–113).

De Houwer has published the results of a very interesting research which was conducted on English and Spanish bilingual children. Even when the children acquired

both languages before the age of three, only 75% of them stayed bilingual. Almost everything depends on the input of the languages and one's relationship with the countries and cultures in which the languages are spoken. Another factor is the social status of the languages. Since English is more favored than Spanish, the children had a warmer relationship to English, while they felt that Spanish differentiated them in an undesirable way (qtd. in Průcha 169–170).

2.5 Bilingual Families Researched in This Thesis

This subchapter describes the families that were researched for the purpose of this thesis. All these families decided to raise their children bilingually from birth, which is known as simultaneous bilingualism. The following table presents an overview of each family, their languages, and methods.[1]

Children	L1	L2	Strategy	Mother's L	Father's L
Kevin	Czech	Italian	1 P 1 L	Czech	Italian
Georg	German (Austrian)	Czech	1 P 1 L	Czech	German
Adam	Czech	Serbo-Croatian	Serbo-Croatian only at home	Czech	Serbo-Croatian
Anička Zuzka	Czech	Polish	1 P 1 L	Polish	Czech
Karolína Christopher	German (Austrian)	Czech	Czech at home, German outside	Czech	Czech
Zuzana	German / Czech	Polish	1 P 1 L	Czech	Polish
Oliver	German (Austrian)	Czech	1 P 1 L	Czech	German
Edward	English	Czech	Father English, mother Czech / English	Czech	English

Table 1: Bilingual children, parents, and their bilingual strategies

Worth mentioning are the German-Czech siblings Karolína and Christopher, and the Czech–Serbo-Croatian Adam. Their parents use one language only at home and the other outside home. Adam's father has told me that he avoids speaking Serbo-Croatian in public because he attracts unwanted attention which might cause problems and sometimes even discrimination. Karolína and Christopher's parents speak German in public because they want to fit in and do not want for their children to feel different than others. The siblings also speak German between each other.

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[1] Abbreviation 1 P 1 L = one person – one language.

Zuzana's first words were in Czech and Polish. Then she lived in Germany and German became for her a stronger language than Polish. Even though her father talks to her only in Polish, she responds in German or Czech but never in Polish. She uses Polish only when the respondent is Polish-speaking (her grandparents, cousins, Polish friends, etc.), otherwise she avoids Polish.

When parents of bilingual children switch languages, it is not a very good example for the children. The parents should be strict and persist, because when the children see their parents switching, they might do the same, which slows down the development of the language and may prevent language differentiation as well.

The following speech records show the correct strategy how to lead bilingual children to use their languages and how to differentiate the languages naturally. Children may switch languages: this phenomenon is called language choice, where children move between one language and the other according to whom they talk to (Harding-Esch 84–85). Language choice does not occur within one sentence but in conversation with bilingual and less often with monolingual people, based on how the child is used to talk to them. The following example illustrates the language choice between Kevin and his father, who is Italian, and his mother, who is Czech.

> **Mother:** *Mohl bys cestou koupit někde mlíko?* (CZ: Could you buy milk on your way?)
>
> **Father:** *To bych asi mohl.* (CZ: I think I could.)
>
> **Kevin:** *Dove stai andando?* (IT: Where are you going?)
>
> **Father:** *Devo andare a lavorare.* (IT: I have to go to work.)
>
> **Kevin:** *È un peccato. Půjdem teda na ten bazén?* (IT: It's a pity. CZ: Are we going to the pool then?)
>
> **Mother**: *Půjdem až tak ve tři.* (CZ: We'll go at about three.)
>
> **Kevin:** *To nevadí. Ciao, pšapà.* (CZ: It's okay. IT: Bye, dad.)

The following example is that of Adam, who is used to speak Serbo-Croatian with his father. He probably spoke Czech all day and he automatically continued in Czech. After his father suggested that he did not understand ("What, again please?"), Adam switched to the correct language. The rest of the conversation continued in Serbo-Croatian.

> **Adam:** *Ahoj, tati.* (CZ: Hi, dad.)
>
> **Father:** *Ćao!* (SC: Hi!)
>
> **Adam:** *Já mám něco v botě.* (CZ: I have something in my shoe.)

Father: *Šta, ponovo molim.* (SC: What, again please?)

Adam: *Imam nešto obuća.* (SC: I have something in my shoe.)

Below is an example of compulsory language switching. The second language should not be forced, however, if it is in the interest of understanding and speaking to a monolingual person, it may be necessary to tell the child directly to "switch language." An interesting phenomenon is Karolína's translation for her younger brother, she probably knew that he did not know what the phrase meant in Czech.

Grandmother: *Děti, chcete si zahrát člověče, nezlob se?* (CZ: Kids, do you want to play "Do Not Get Angry"?)

Karolína: *To je dobrý nápad. Chris, das ist „Mensch, ärgere dich nicht."* (CZ: That's a good idea. GER: Chris, that's "Do Not Get Angry.")

Christopher: *Ja, bitte, bitte. Ich möchte spielen.* (GER: Yes, please, please, I want to play.)

Mother: *Mluvte česky! Slyšíš, Christopher, babička nerozumí.* (CZ: Speak in Czech! Do you hear me, Christopher, grandma does not understand.)

Christopher: *Ja, mamma, ich werde spielen Mensch, ärgere dich nicht.* (GER: Yes, mom, I will be playing "Do Not Get Angry.")

Mother: *Já vím.* (CZ: I know.)

Christopher: *Babi, já chci modrou.* (CZ: Grandma, I want to be blue.)

This example shows how parents should not correct their children. Do not force children to use a particular language, try to lead them indirectly. The best way is to say "What did you say," "I do not understand," or to wait with the answer until the child says it in the other language.

Mother: *A řekni ještě, kde bydlíš*? (CZ: And say also where do you live?)

Georg: *Im neuen Haus.* (GER: New house.)

Mother: *Řekni, v novém domě!* (CZ: Say, in a new house!)

Georg: *V novým domě. Líbí se tady v domě.* (CZ: In a new house. I like it here in the house.)

2.6 Disadvantages of Bilingualism

Some people think that when a child is exposed to two languages from birth at the same time, the child might be confused and disadvantaged, that the child is not able to learn either one of those languages fluently or cannot tell them apart. Code mixing and

code switching may intimidate some people who have little or no awareness of this normal phase of language development.

One the first negative views on bilingualism was expressed by Otto Jesperson, who influenced other linguists in their beliefs about the negative effects of bilingualism. He claimed that:

> It is, of course, an advantage for a child to be familiar with two languages, but without doubt the advantage may be, and generally is, purchased too dear. First of all the child in question hardly learns either of the two languages as perfectly as he would have done if he had limited himself to one… Secondly, the brain effort required to master two languages instead of one certainly diminishes the child's power of learning other things which might and ought to be learnt. (Jespersen qtd. in Romaine 99)

Many other stereotypes concerning bilingualism are now outdated and disproved by modern research, even though some lay people still regard bilingualism as disadvantaging for young children. Some linguists prior to the 1960s assumed that speakers who mix languages know neither language adequately. Even the famous American linguist Leonard Bloomfield (1887–1949) pointed out the inadequacy in both languages of English/Menomini bilinguals (Milroy 2–4). Another linguist, Cummin (1979), believed that "bilinguals have the competence in terms of some ideal bilingual speaker with perfect knowledge of both languages" (qtd. in Milroy 3). But in fact, bilingual speakers characteristically use each of their languages in different social contexts and would not be expected to use either of them in all contexts (Milroy 2–4). Saer (1923) assumed that Welsh-English bilingual children in rural areas had lower IQ. Yet another linguist, Darcy (1946), found that the mental ages of monolingual children exceeded those of bilingual children (qtd. in Grosjean, *Life* 221). This and many other theories formulated before the 1960s suggested negative effects of bilingualism. "On the level of intelligence and cognitive development, numerous studies found bilingualism to be a handicap" (Grosjean, *Life* 221).

Even before the 1960s, some linguists tried to prove the positive impact of simultaneous bilingualism, however, they were not taken very seriously. One of the pioneers in this area was Werner Leopold (1896–1986). He published one of the first studies on the simultaneous acquisition of two languages. All his studies are based on his daughter Hildegard, who acquired German and English simultaneously (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 164). After the 1960s and especially in the twenty-first century, researchers

found that bilingualism had overall a positive impact on the child, and they are doing their best to prove it by publishing books and sharing their knowledge on the internet.

The stereotypes about bilingualism may also originate from people who are not supporters of bilingualism for ideological reasons. Some people disapprove of bilingualism and multilingualism because they dream of one world language which would be used all over the world. For long-standing prominent nations, such as the English and French, bilingualism may not be a welcome phenomenon. In the past, they limited the teaching of foreign languages in schools and even now many Englishmen would prefer to use only one language. These people consider bilingual speakers as inferior because they come from less developed countries, which is a misconception (Myers-Scotton 10–11). Some people also do not consider non-standard dialect as an acquired language simply because it is not the standard dialect. But children are receiving the language they are given by their parents or the society. They can learn to use well-formed structures at school and then it is just up to them how they speak (Myers-Scotton 327).

2.7 Neutral Effect

Some linguists are supporters of a neutral effect theory, claiming that bilingualism has neither negative nor positive effect. For them, bilingualism has no effect on the child. In 1950, a research conducted in schools in Wales found out no difference between monolingual and bilingual children in a non-verbal IQ test. This research started an important stage between the late 1950s and early 1960s and exposed mistakes in previous research. It encouraged many parents to raise their children as bilingual and supported the learning of foreign languages in school (Baker and Jones 63).

One of the supporters of neutral effect is Barry McLauglin, who proposed a theory of mastering a second language. He argues that when the child has not mastered the second language yet and is already tested, then we can assume poor performance but when the language improves, then even the academic performance is better. McLauglin adds that family, environment, and socioeconomic status play a great role in language acquisition (Grosjean, *Life* 227).

2.8 Advantages of Bilingualism

Linguists and other researchers have found advantages of bilingualism which have a great impact on the development of children. Bilingual children are better at learning new languages and have a higher motivation than others.

As part of research of bilingualism, verbal and nonverbal IQ tests were administered to monolingual French Canadian and bilingual French-English Canadian children. Bilingual children had much higher scores than monolingual children. Further results of this test showed a greater cognitive flexibility, greater creativity, and more divergent thinking (Grosjean, *Life* 221). The authors of the research, Peal and Lambert, summarized the test in these words: "It is not possible to state from the present study whether the more intelligent child became bilingual or whether bilingualism aided his intellectual development, but there is no question about the fact that he is superior intellectually" (qtd. in Grosjean, *Life* 221–222).

Swain and Cummins in their research confirmed the positive effects of bilingualism. They also claimed that these children were more sensitive to semantic relations between words, a greater ability to react more flexibly to cognitive feedback, and also manifested a more divergent thinking (Grosjean, *Life* 223).

Lachout adds to the benefits of bilingualism a better understanding and recognition of other cultures. Bilingual people are more tolerant and open-minded, have more interest in learning a new language (89). Some bilingually raised children confirm that they are open to all kinds of cultures and life attitudes, which some people do not understand or approve of (Průcha 173).

3 Stereotype: Bilingual Children Do Not Acquire Any of the Two Languages

This chapter focuses on the stereotype about bilingual children not acquiring any of two languages properly. Normally it is not possible not to acquire at least one language. To succeed, parents need to choose an appropriate method, they need to ensure the right motivation and environment and take into account the child's nature. Stereotypes about bilingualism survive to this day mostly because of the language delay in bilingual children and their speech mixing and code switching. Some people may think that the bilingual child is not able to distinguish the two languages and is simply not smart enough to learn them simultaneously (Štefánik 71–73).

3.1 Language Development and Delay

Bilingual children must process two different languages and some of them need more time to process them both. That is why they start to speak later than monolingual children. When parents think about raising their child bilingually, they might search the internet, where they can find many discussions about language delay. "Bilingual children lag behind in language learning early on but catch up by age five" (Clifton-Sprigg). This claim and many similar ones can scare the parents who only look at the title of the article, even though the rest of the article tries to prove the opposite. Parents naturally want their child to be able to speak soon and not to struggle with language delay because their child and themselves may then be judged by others. Imagine that you know nothing about bilingualism and read this headline only and not the rest of the article. I think that it can influence some readers in a negative way.

Linguists who examine language development investigate also the nonverbal communication which appears before the first words. In the first instance, children communicate through gestures such as waving or pointing. Children understand approximately twenty words around their first year, they just cannot pronounce them. They are very sensitive to mimics, smile and sounds. These social interactions support the child's development. Monolinguals start to speak approximately between twelve and eighteen months and their average vocabulary is about fifty words, after they can combine word phrases. Around two years of age, children's vocabulary expands approximately to two or three hundred words. We cannot take these numbers very seriously because each child develops their speech differently. The development depends on the child's maturity, language input, and family environment. In general, girls speak sooner than boys because

they are more mature (Průcha 46–49). Bilingual children have the same stages as monolinguals; however, the development differs.

> During their first year, children learn to recognize a number of words. Around the end of the first year or the beginning of the second year they can produce a few words. By the end of the second year the child will usually have begun stringing words together. After that the vocabulary expands extremely rapidly and also the grammar of both languages the child is learning. (Cunningham and Andersson 51)

The development of the two languages may differ not only in the time when the child starts to speak but also in the child's proficiency. Whether or not children acquire both languages at the same time depends mostly on their parents. The largest influence on the acquisition have frequency, environment, lack of parental pressure, and predominance of one language (mostly the majority language). The amount of input is highly important, so parents should talk to their children as much as they can and continue to do so (Houwer 228–235).

Children	First Words	Easy Sentences	Grammatical Structure	Expansion of Vocabulary
Kevin	18 months	24 months	42 months	48 months
Georg	14 months	17 months	19 months	30 months
Adam	15 months	24 months	27 months	38 months
Anička	17 months	24 months	39 months	39 months
Zuzka	17 months	24 months	39 months	39 months
Christopher	22 months	24 months	39 months	45 months
Karolína	14 months	18 months	36 months	30 months
Zuzana	18 months	32 months	39 months	39 months
Oliver	35 months			
Edward	14 months	19 months	22 months	30 months

Table 2: Language development of bilingual children

Table 2 shows at what age the children under research developed their languages. The first column indicates their first words, which is about fifty words that the children can understand and pronounce. The second phase is a breakthrough because the children are able to say almost everything they need, their vocabulary is about two hundred words.

And then the third and fourth columns are developing gradually. The problem with the third and fourth columns is that the parents notice the acquisition of the grammatical structures and the expansion of vocabulary in the very beginning or, in contrast, at an advanced stage. For that reason, the range of the two columns is wide. All these numbers must be taken as approximate indicators, not as the exact times of language development. The development is gradual and does not happen overnight. [2]

Child can use individual words in both languages by 18 months

2 ch; 20%

8 ch; 80%

YES   NO

Child can use phrases and short sentences by 2 years of age
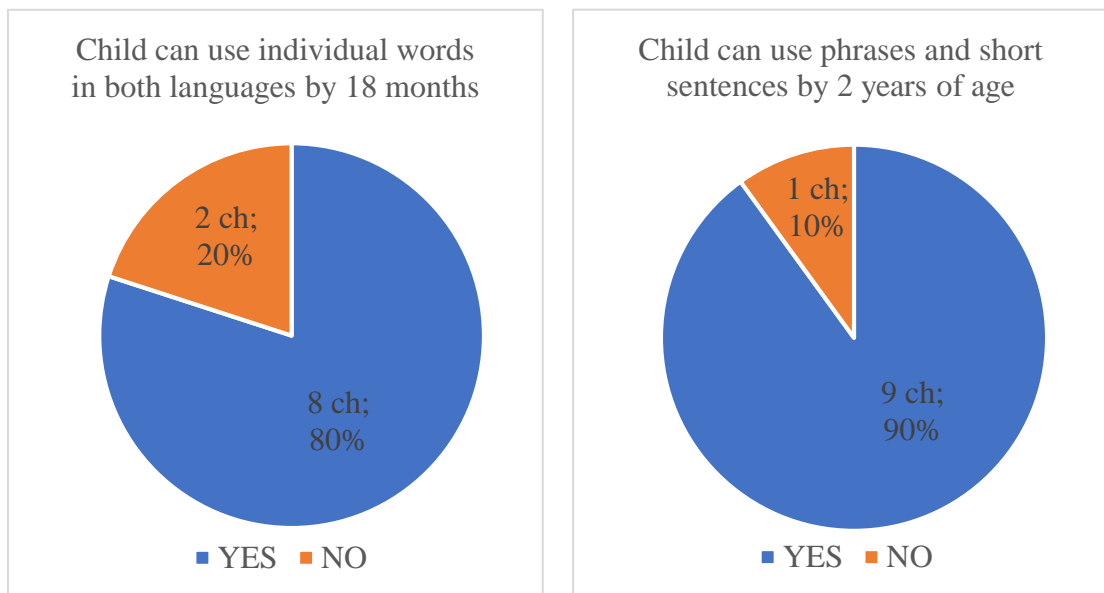
1 ch; 10%

9 ch; 90%

YES   NO

Figure 1: The child's acquisition of words in both languages by 18 months

Figure 2: The child's acquisition of phrases and easy sentences in both languages by 2 years of age

Figure 1 illustrates that most children had no difficulty to acquire language in a timely manner. It is a development of the first words. In scientific literature, eighteen months are given as a milestone. Only two boys started to speak later.

Christopher started to use words in both languages around twenty-two months and then he learned quickly both languages. Christopher's mother has said that when she realized Christopher's delay, she began to pay more attention. She started to sing more often and taught him amusing rhymes. It can be said that he skipped the phase of the first words and started with forming already basic phrases. His mother has also told me that many of her friends have children of the same age as Christopher. Some of them have told her that she should switch to German only. They have said that some children are not smart enough to acquire both languages and that she is damaging his language skills.

[2] Abbreviation ch = children

Luckily, she persevered and continued using both languages, and Christopher acquired them.

Another example of language delay is Oliver, who is now three years old. He can say only a few words and he rarely uses phrases. His mother was aware of his delay and she was trying to solve it by herself, just like Christopher's mother. In this case the problem of speech delay is much more complicated, and songs and rhymes will not solve it. His mother thinks that he might have some problems with hearing, but it is not confirmed yet. At any rate, the development of his language skills is insufficient, and in this situation, it is needed to visit language and other specialists, who can detect the causes of the child's language delay.

3.2 One or Two Systems Development

Linguists are still not sure whether children develop one system or two systems simultaneously. In other words, whether they have a single set of rules for one language or one set for each language (Cunningham 52). Currently, linguists tend to believe that there are two systems, but we cannot make any definitive conclusion. The discussion about one or two systems is important because it tells us whether or not the two languages share resources: "If systems are shared, this might result in cooperation (which would make learning two languages easier) or competition (which would make learning two languages harder)" (Pearson 95). First, let us focus on the one system development.

3.2.1 One System Development

Christina-May, a speech-language pathologist, describes the milestones for bilingual language development, which only applies to a simultaneously bilingual child. She distinguished two stages, which are further distinguished:

1. Undifferentiated stage*:* a single language system comprising both languages are formed and then the very same processes that a monolingual child develops occur in the bilingual child at the same time as they occur in monolinguals.

- **0–2 months***:* cooing
- **2–6 months***:* babbling
- **6–15 months***:* first words from both languages
- **1–2 years:** language blend (parts of words from both languages are blended into the same word)

- **2–3 years:** language mixing (words from both languages used in the same phrase and/or adapted to the grammar of one of the languages)

2. Differentiated stage (from 3 years): this is when the child differentiates between the two languages and uses them as separate systems, for different purposes and sometimes with different people (May 2018)

Saunders presents a similar description of the development stages of this phenomenon:

1. First phase (from first speech activity till 2 years): Children can use word phrases which are no longer than two words. They understand the language as one system of rules. The vocabulary is limited, so if they know a word in one language, they do not know it in the other language.

2. Second phase (from 2 years): Children's vocabulary expands very rapidly. They use languages according to the recipient. In this phase, code-switching occurs because they cannot distinguish the two languages from each other, even though they are aware of their separate existence.

3. Third phase: Children distinguish the two languages perfectly, both their grammar and vocabulary. Code-mixing can occur depending on their language skills in both languages. The third stage is the most complicated. Children are exposed to a society who can worry about their language development. Mostly the older generation can have a negative perspective on code-mixing. Also, some parents can start to worry whether the languages are as developed as they would like them to be. However, parents must be patient and persistently train the child in their second language or even in both languages. When training does not help, then a specialized linguist should be able to discover the cause of the speech problem (Saunders qtd. in Lachout 79–90).

Volterra and Taeschner (1978) propose the definition of the bilingual child's language acquisition. They delineate three stages according to the language system:

1. First stage: one lexical system that includes words from both languages

2. Second stage*:* two different lexical systems but only one grammar

3. Third stage: two lexicons but also two grammars (qtd. in Grosjean, *Life* 183).

Virginia Volterra and Traute Taeschner also comment on blending and compounding in early stages. They think that blending and compounding are typical examples of acquiring two languages as one system. As an example of this interesting phenomenon, they state the case of the two-year-old English-French bilingual Juliette, who blended the word *pickle* and its French equivalent *cornichon*. She came up with the mixture of *pinichon*, or, similarly, the mixture of French *chaud* and English *hot* into *shot* (qtd. in Grosjean, *Bilingual* 181–182).

3.2.2 Two Systems Development

The second theory of language acquisition is that the two systems develop simultaneously. A typical representative of this theory is Coral Bergman (1976). He argues that his daughter Mary acquired Spanish and English simultaneously with a clear distinction of the two languages at a very early stage (approximately fifteen months). So, he proposes his theory of an independent development: "As it is being acquired, each language is able to develop independently of the other with the same pattern of acquisition as is found in monolingual children learning that language" (qtd. in Grosjean, *Bilingual* 182). Also, Jules Ronjat reports that his son mastered the phonological system at about the same time and without any confusion (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 182–183).

Jurgen Meisel claims that "children acquiring two languages simultaneously can differentiate the grammatical systems of their languages from very early on and without apparent effort" (qtd. in Grosjean, *Bilingual* 182–183). He states that code-mixing is the same case as code-switching. He believes that children observe the morphology and the syntactic patterns of the particular languages. According to him, the languages develop differently, and it leads to cross-linguistic influence, such as interference and delay.

Another argument in support of the two systems theory is the children's reliance on factors such as phonetics, prosodic cues, context, and mainly the language spoken by a particular person. Children associate one person with one language. When this person switches their language of communication, the child might be lost and upset (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 183–184).

3.3 Dominant and Weaker Language

It must be pointed out that most children have a stronger and a weaker language. Children tend to prefer only one language, which is why parents must be strong and encourage them to speak the other language. Language dominance is given by the amount

of exposure in each language. The dominance can change repeatedly according to the environment, frequency of use, or preference in language (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 191–193).

Child has a dominant langauge
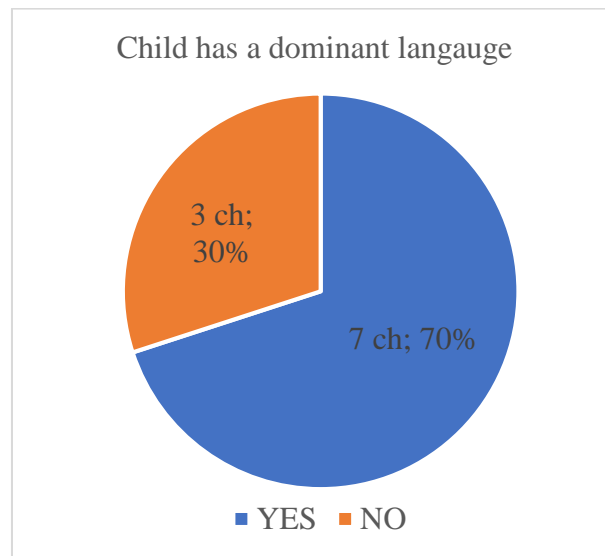
3 ch; 30%

7 ch; 70%

■ YES   ■ NO

Figure 3: Dominance in language

The mother of two sisters, Anna and Zuzana, filled in the survey that the girls do not have a dominant language. The reason is that they attend a Czech kindergarten, where they speak only Czech. However, outside the kindergarten, they have almost exclusively Polish friends and their mother speaks strictly Polish. At present, they are exposed to both languages equally. It is very hard to measure the dominance at young age unless it is obvious at first sight. We can expect that when they start attending school, the Czech language will be more used and becomes dominant but still the difference will be really small.

Dominant language depends on the state where the child was born
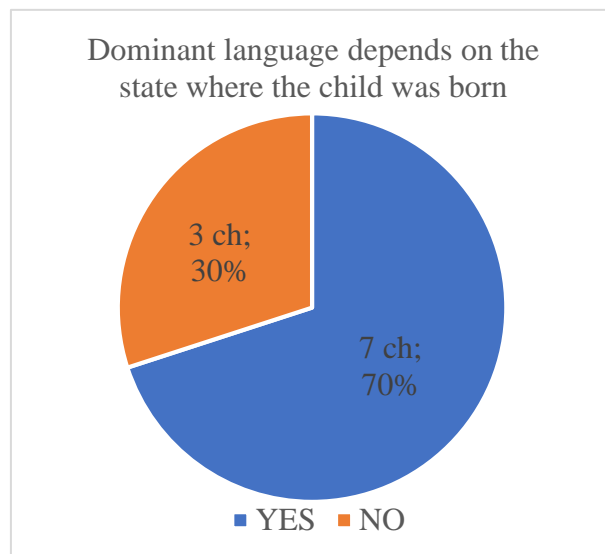
3 ch; 30%

7 ch; 70%

■ YES   ■ NO

Figure 4: The dominant language is the language of the state where the child was born and has lived most of their life

Figure 4 illustrates the dominance in language in dependence on the country where the child was born. Two respondents have a different dominant language and it be explained. The remaining seven children were born in the same country where they have actually lived all their lives. They are exposed to the language of their native state from birth and more often. They use this language to communicate with everybody from the same country and it is more natural for them. They hear the language on the streets, at the doctor's, and later in kindergarten. Some children attend special language nurseries and kindergarten, but these special services can be attended by monolingual children as well, and the caregivers may not know the child's language. To expose children to both languages equally is sometimes hard, in particular when the second language is not widely taught (Serbo-Croatian, Polish).

The two children who have a different dominant language than that of their native country have moved to a different country at an early age. Zuzana was born in Poland, where she lived only for a couple of months. Later the family moved to the Czech Republic, where she started to speak, but only in Czech. Even though her father spoked to her only Polish, she avoided Polish and used it only when necessary. When Zuzana was two and half years old, the family moved again, this time to Germany. Zuzana acquired German very quickly, German became her dominant language and it is still so until now. At the age of three, Zuzana started to speak even in Polish. Zuzana is seven years old now, her dominant language is German, her second language is Czech, both at a very high level, and Polish is the weakest language, because it is the least used.

Georg was born in the Czech Republic, where he also started to speak, primarily in Czech, less in German. When he was two years old, the family moved to Austria, where he was more exposed to German and his dominant language changed after three months. Now he is significantly better in German, his Czech is improving at a slower pace than German.

A change of the dominant language can be assumed when moving to a different country, changing the social environment, or when finding new friends. The dominance can change many times through life, even more so in childhood when children are more flexible. Also, when one language is developing rapidly, the second language can be under a great influence and may become suppressed.

Georg, a German-Czech speaker, has a dominant German. His Czech is under a great influence of German, mainly in grammar. Some of his sentences sound strange for Czech native speakers, but they are understandable. He follows German rules for word

order and verb inflection rules. Georg was on the phone with his Czech grandmother and here are two examples of grammatically incorrect Czech sentences.

> **Original:** *Já jedu <u>do domu</u> s mojí maminkou. Já jsem v aut<u>o</u>.*
> **Instead of:** *Já jedu domů se svou maminkou (S maminkou jedu domů). Já jsem v autě.* (I am going home with my mom. I am in the car.)
> **Based on:** *Ich fahre nach Hause mit meiner Mutti. Ich bin im Auto.*

> **Original:** *Já <u>hrál</u> s Annou ve školce.*
> **Instead of:** *Já si hrál s Annou ve školce.* (I was playing with Anna at kindergarten.)
> **Based on:** *Ich spielte mit Anna im Kindergarten.*

Another example, this time in Czech-Serbian: Adam's father has said that Adam had relatively little problems with acquiring grammatical structures, but he struggles with phonetics. These two languages have similar phonetic rules, except Serbian tends to have fewer long vowels than Czech. Adam said in Serbian Croatian *já* instead of *ja*, he used the Czech equivalent.

> **Original:** *J<u>á</u> htednem videti ovaj b<u>á</u>jku.*
> **Instead of:** *Ja htednem videti ovaj bajku.* (I want to see this fairy tale.)
> **Based on:** Já chci vidět tuhle pohádku.

Kevin, a Czech-Italian speaker, has a significantly better Czech. He talked to his father in Italian and he mixed in his sentence a Czech word instead of an Italian one, probably because the two words are phonetically very similar.

> **Original:** *Ha detto che dobbiamo <u>při</u>parare un grande spuntino.*
> **Instead of:** *Ha detto che dobbiamo preparare un grande spuntino.* (He said that we must prepare a big snack.)
> **Based on:** *Řekl, že si máme připravit velkou svačinu.*

Some people think that when one language (in most cases, the dominant language) affects the development of the second language, it is an error in the acquisition of the second language. But it is not true. Language interferences disappear after some time. Language interferences can include for example unnatural accent (most obvious), transfer of phrases and idioms, or transfer of grammatical structures (Lachout 82–83). Lachout also describes factors that can activate language interference:

- Interference caused by similarity between two languages

- Interference of complex and complicated language structures
- Interference caused by language polysemy
- Interference caused by emotions such as stress, tiredness, irritation, and many others
- Interference which depends on the current communicative situation, topic, or relationship with the recipient (82–83).

3.4 Code-Mixing and Code-Switching

Code-mixing and code-switching are probably one of the most discussed problems when raising a child bilingually. Before 1960, it was considered as a very negative phenomenon. Currently, we have more scientific evidence about the nature of mixing. Some parents even now believe that it is caused by a lack of acquisition of linguistic systems or an inability to distinguish between two languages. But as current research of using two languages simultaneously suggests, this phenomenon is normal and expected. Not every child goes through this phase (Grosjean, *Life* 147).

We should be aware of the existence of inconsistent definitions. Some linguists do not even use the term code-mixing, there exist many definitions and views because the phenomenon of code choice is often examined, both in children and adults. First, let us differentiate three terms which are very alike and sometimes not differentiated. The term interference has already been mentioned above, the other two are code-mixing and code-switching.

> Interference means deviation in the language currently being used due to the effect of the other language. Interferences have mostly no effect on understanding, but they can be recognized by monolingual speakers. Interferences may occur on all linguistics levels (phonology, lexicology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) and in a spoken as well as in a written form. (Grosjean qtd. in Morgensternová et al. 47)
>
> Code-mixing occurs when the speaker switches from one language to another during a conversation seemingly without discrimination … Code-switching is the intentional use of more than one language by bilinguals for symbolic, strategic, or communicative purposes. (Wassold and Jeff 234)

To sum up these three definitions, interference does not mean the same as code-mixing and both are different than code-switching. All the three help the fluency of sentences caused by a lack of competence of expression. Mixing and switching causes an

interruption of language structures. The difference between mixing and switching is that switching is intentional, often happens because of laziness or lack of language, and occurs even in bilingual adults. Interferences, mixing, and switching are expected and normal.

Code-mixing occurs in the early stage of bilingual upbringing (between two and three years of age). Habitually, children who mix languages do not use grammatical structures from the other language. Mixing is caused by:

- Communicative situation
- Inability to replace a missing lexeme with a synonym
- Topic (Lachout 85–87)

Children code-switch when they know that the person is also bilingual (in the same language) and when they do not focus as much as they would if they were talking to a monolingual. The reasons for switching are:

- The lack of language facility (mainly vocabulary)
- Being used to talk about certain topics in a certain language, hence a lack of appropriate terminology
- Using a fitting expression which is not readily translatable in the other language
- Continuing in the previous language
- Excluding someone from a conversation (Grosjean, *Life* 147–152).

Edith Harding-Esch a Philip Riley differentiate only interferences and code-switching. They do not use the term code-mixing because they believe it is the same as code-switching, only at a different age stage. According to them, in the first phase of code-switching, children do not realize their ability of speaking two languages and for that reason they do not understand when a parent tells them "say it in English, not in Czech." Between the ages of three to five, they start to realize their bilingualism. A lack of vocabulary, a non-existing synonym, or a resemblance of a word in both languages are the main reason for code-switching in the first phase. The second stage is more pragmatic, such as solidarity with the person they talk to, emotions, physical and mental state (81–87).

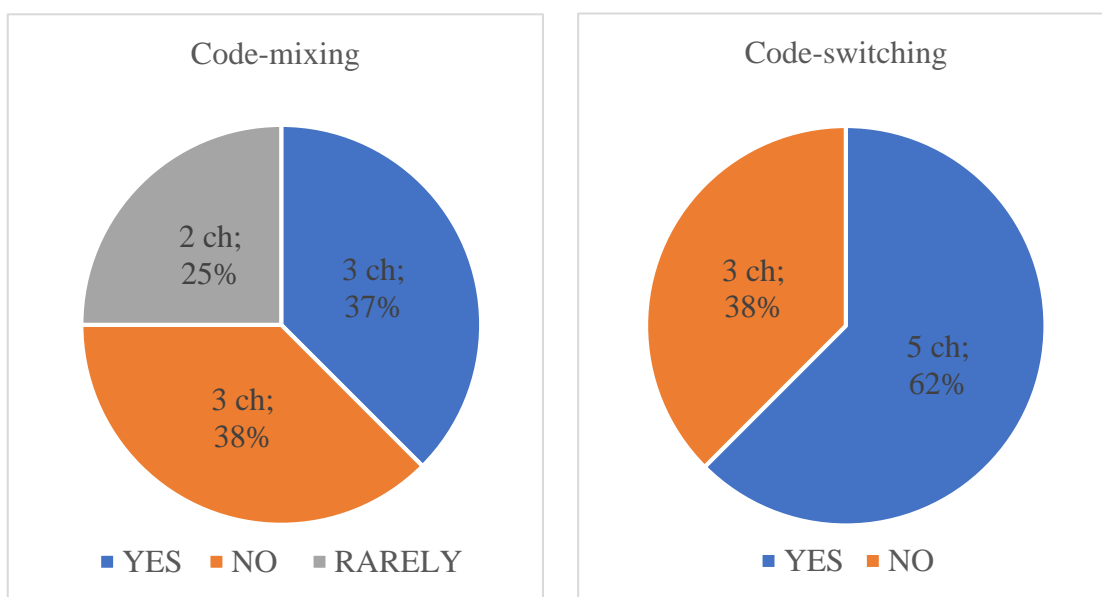| Children	Code-Mixing	Code-Switching
Kevin	NO	NO
Georg	YES	YES
Adam	YES	YES
Anička	RARELY	YES
Zuzka	NO	NO
Christopher	YES	YES
Karolína	NO	NO
Zuzana	RARELY	YES
Edward	YES	YES

Table 3: Children's code-mixing or code-switching

Figure 5: Number of children who code-mix

Figure 6: Number of children who code-switch

From table 3 and figures 5 and 6, it can be seen that not every child has to go through the phases of mixing and switching, but when the child shows the signs of mixing, then switching is more likely to occur too. Most of the children went through the mixing and switching phases, which shows that it is absolutely normal because the children do

not have any problems with communication and their parents do not report any other problems. Mixing and switching do not distinguish bilinguals from monolingual children.

Georg's dominant language is German, so when he code-mixed, he usually started in Czech and finished the sentence in German. He stopped mixing languages around the age of two, and he continued to use switching. His mother has said that it is obvious when he thinks about his speech because when he does not do so, switching occurs.

The conversation below took place when Georg was about two and half years old. He spoke in Czech with his mother, but he unintentionally used German. We can assume he knew the Czech word *auto* but the phrase *závodní auto a jeho malý dítě* was complicated to say in Czech and he might not have known the phrase *závodní auto*, which is why he mixed both languages. After this phrase, he automatically continued in Czech because he was not aware of the mixing.

Mother: *S čím si to hraješ?* (CZ: What are you playing with?)

Georg: *Brambory a auta.* (CZ: Potatoes and cars.)

Mother: *Jaký?* (CZ: Which ones?)

Georg: *To je Rennwagen und sein kleines Kind.* (CZ: It is / GER: a racing car and its little child.)

Mother: *Jo, no jo, tak to pak hlavně ukliď.* (CZ: Oh, I see, but clean it up then.)

Georg: *Já si hraju. Mami, koukej, auta!* (CZ: I am playing. Mom, look, cars!)

Another of George's code-mixing is for example *Já jdu ven den Wolf suchen* (CZ: I am going outside / GER: to find the wolf). The following examples are of code-switching when Georg was four years old. Georg was very excited for Christmas and he was boisterous that night. His mom confirms that on Christmas Day, he switched languages very often and he used Czech reluctantly, which is rare. He used the word *Schnitzel* instead of the Czech equivalent *řízek*, and even though he knew the Czech word, he did not use it because the German word was the first in his mind.

Georg: *Jooo, Vánoce.* (CZ: Yay, Christmas.)

Mother: *Stůj, smažím tu. Běž pryč.* (CZ: Stop, I am frying here. Go away.)

Georg: *Joooo, máma smaží… Hm… Schnitzel.* (CZ: Yay, mom is frying… Hm… / GER: Schnitzel.)

Father: *I gehe duschen.* (GER: I am going to shower.)

Georg: *Pa, Ma brät einen Schnitzel.* (GER: Pa [daddy], Ma [mamma] is frying schnitzel.)

Young Adam code-mixed and switched from the beginning till four years of age. Now he code-switches very rarely. Adam does not code-switch in Czech, only when he speaks in Serbo-Croatian, he helps himself with Czech. When he speaks to his grandparents from Serbia, he pays more attention to the Serbo-Croatian language and he does not code-switch. This example of code-switching shows a typical lack of vocabulary: *Videli smo da gori popelnice* (We saw a burning trash can). He used the Czech word *popelnice* instead of *kanta za smeće*. The following example is of code-mixing.

> **Adam:** *Danas smo otišli izvan.* (SC: Today we went outside.)
>
> **Father:** *Gde.* (SC: Where?)
>
> **Adam:** *Ne bih znao. Danas smo videli autobus devítku plynáček.* (SC: I don't know. Today we saw / CZ: bus nine on gas.)
>
> **Father:** *Doista*? (SC**:** Really?)
>
> **Adam:** *Da je crven.* (SC: It was red.)

In table 3 are shown two Czech-Polish sisters, Zuzka and Anna. Zuzka is older and she did not code-mix and switch because she spent more time with her mother, who devoted a lot of time to Zuzka's language skills. When Anna was born, her mother did not have that much time and for that reason, Anna code-switches. Also, her older sister could have influenced her. Zuzka and Anna have no problems with recognizing languages, between themselves they speak according to the situation. When they are at kindergarten, they speak Czech, however, when they want to tell each other something secretly, they use Polish. They might do it because they want to exclude someone from conversation but also because they feel special and by using another language, they become the center of attention. Their mother has said that when Anna does not know a word in one of the two languages, Zuzka knows it, and she often says it instead of Anna, or Zuzka tells Anna the word in the other language. The following example is a sample of how Zuzka helps Anna. You can also see them switching languages according to the parent.

> **Father:** *Máš už něco, co bys chtěla?* (CZ: Do you know what you want?)
>
> **Zuzka:** *Jo, máš přece vyfocený ty malý zvířátka.* (CZ: Yeah, you took the picture of those small animals.)
>
> **Father:** *To bys chtěla, dobře, a ještě něco?* (CZ: You want those, okay, and anything else?)
>
> **Zuzka:** *Nic, už nic.* (CZ: No, nothing else.)

Father: *Super, tak něco takového vymyslíme, jo?* (CZ: Great, so we will think about something like that, okay?)

Mother: *A ty Aňušu?* (PL: And what about you, Aňušu? [nickname for Anna])

Anička: *Já nie wie.* (PL: I do not know.)

Mother: *Nie wiesz co bys chciała?* (PL: You do not know what you want?)

Father: *Určitě tě něco napadne.* (CZ: You will surely think of something.)

Anička: *Sarenka a jelońka.* (PL: A fawn and deer.)

Zuzka: *Já chci taky vlastně dva jeleny.* (CZ: I want two deer too, actually.)

Anička: *Já chci taky dva jeleny a sarenka.* (CZ: I want two deer too and / PL: a fawn.)

Zuzka: *Srnečka.* (CZ: A fawn. [meant as a correction])

Anička: *Ano, dva jeleny a srnečka.* (CZ: Yes, two deer and a fawn.)

Christopher communicates most of the time in German, only when he speaks to his parents and rarely to his sister, he speaks Czech. The following example shows how emotions influence switching.

Christopher: *Já nechci na tenis.* (CZ: I don't want to play tennis.)

Mother: *Není důvod, proč bys neměl jít. Hezky půjdeš.* (CZ: There is no reason why you shouldn't go. You are certainly going.)

Christopher: *Mě to nebaví a nejdu.* (CZ: I don't like it and I am not going.)

Mother: *Je to zaplacený, takže rozhodně půjdeš.* (CZ: I already paid for it, so you are definitely going.)

Christopher: *Ale mami, Ich hasse es. Ich gehe nicht.* (CZ: But mom, / GER: I hate it. I am not going.)

Mother: *A dost, Christopher, běž se obliknout a jestli budeš vyvádět, tak uvidíš.* (CZ: Enough, Christopher, go change your clothes and if you make a scene, I'll show you.)

The last description of mixing and switching is the English-Czech speaker Edward. He mixed and switched from the beginning of his speech development. His mother has said that even her own Czech is sometimes quite odd and for that reason, she rather switches to English, then she switches back to Czech. Edward might follow her example and switch languages when he does not feel right or just wants to correct himself.

Edward said: *Já mám heřmánkový čaj s gingerbread man.* He knew that *gingerbread man* is not correct, that he mixed the two languages, but he knew the word *gingerbread man* from an English fairytale and it did not seem right to say the Czech equivalent *perníkový člověk* or *koblížkový člověk*, he knew it was odd and he purposefully used the English phrase. The fact that he used *gingerbread man* instead of *ginger* might be because he did not know that gingerbread is different from ginger, even though he knew that gingerbread man is just the name of a fairytale character.

When Edward had smallpox, his mother was on a business trip and his father was taking care of him. During his sickness, he spoke only in English. When his mother returned, he was still feeling very bad and it reflected on his communication, also he needed time to refocus on speaking Czech again. He switched more than usual. It proves how language is affected by one's mental and physical condition. When the child does not feel good, the language tends to be worse. Edward said: *Běž up the stairs to the bathroom a podívej se in the mirror.* He started speaking in Czech because it is the language of communication with his mother, then he switched to English, because he was used to speak English more those days. The rest of the sentence continues this pattern. The day after, Edward did not show almost no signs of switching.

4   Stereotype: Bilingual Children Do Not Belong to Any of the Two Cultures

Very often people think about bilinguals as someone who has no identity and no cultural attachment. Language has no power whatsoever to influence a person enough to make them feel that they lack any identity. Factors which can make an individual feels lacking identity may be for example the city where the individual was born, environment, family heritage, friends, tradition, or bad memories. Of course, language is also an important influencer because when one does not understand the language, one cannot fully understand the culture and people from that country. But every single person identifies with something. They can even identify with more than one culture simultaneously or change their identity many times during their lives (changes can happen within one day or during a longer period), it all depends on the individual (Štefánik 73–75). Everybody can choose freely which society they want to be part of, some bilingual children were raised to be part of both cultures, but as adults they decided to give up one culture in order to become fully like monolinguals in the other culture. Also, parents can choose to raise their children as monocultural because they want to get rid of bad memories, or to be fully accepted in their new country. However, again, this is an individual decision which must not be judged (Grosjean, *Life* 124).

When we talk about culture, definitions may differ. Some bilinguals feel bicultural just because they know the language, and some do not feel educated in the culture enough to count as bicultural. The description below provides some ideas of what the word *culture* might represent.

> The way how people maintain life and perpetuating the species, along with habits, customs, ideas, sentiments, social arrangements, and objects. Culture is the way of life of people of a society, including its rules of behavior, its economic, social, and political systems, its language, its religious beliefs, its laws, and so on. Culture is acquired, socially transmitted, and communicated in large part by language. (Grosjean, *Life* 157)

Haugen claims that not every bilingual person needs to be bicultural, and the other way around, not every monolingual person has to be monocultural. Examples are states such as Luxemburg or Switzerland, where almost everybody is bilingual, but they proudly report themselves as belonging only to one ethnic group, which means they are

monocultural. On the other hand, there are for example English-speaking Scots, who regard themselves as Scottish and English (qtd. in Grosjean, *Life* 157).

People who visit or move to a new country are expected to experience a "cultural shock." A cultural shock occurs when a person feels disorientated and unhappy in the new country. Children who are raised as bilingual and bicultural could skip this phase because they already know what to expect and how to behave, and mostly they even experienced the same kind of cultural behavior at home. Whether or not one becomes bicultural depends on the help of others, especially the society and one's family. Some parents who have integrated in a different community may not feel any need to learn about their culture. It is individual how newcomers feel, they might for example not like the country, have no contact with any members of the society, or feel as not fully integrated in the new country. Usually the way how parents feel is transferred to the children (Cunningham 93–99).

When parents want to maintain their native tradition, they should teach their children about the customs of the culture, try to go frequently for trips to the other country, read books, sing songs, view children's TV channels, teach the children about the history of the country and their family members. Children are also motivated to learn the behavior of the citizens of the country, they want to fit in and mainly be friends with the other children. They can learn just by observing others, or they can learn about the culture as adults (Cunningham 93–99). All languages differ, so they need to know the appropriate ways how to use language: "Each culture has at least some different views as to the 'proper' way to greet people, to offer them hospitality, or to carry on any conversation in general" (Fasold 178). For example, when you say to your guest, "Please, madam, sit," in most countries it means simply the offer to sit down, but in Australia it is used as a strict command mostly for dogs (Fasold 177–179).

The child prefers one culture over the
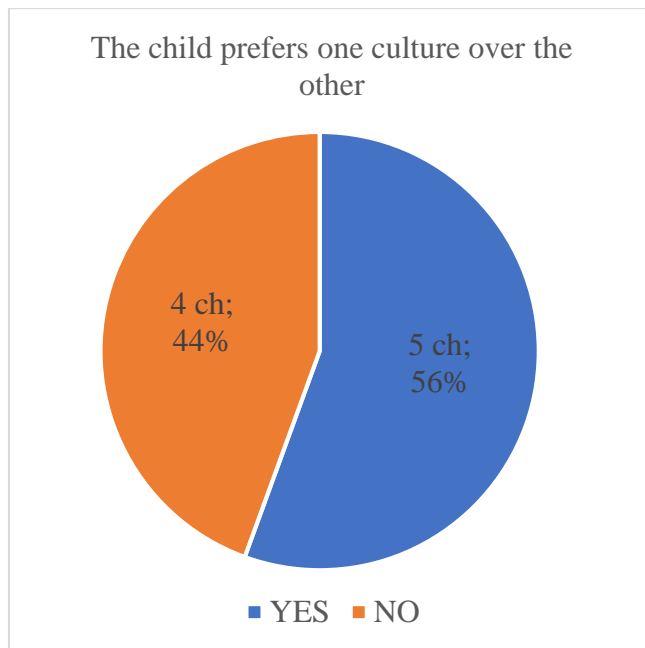other

4 ch;
44%

5 ch;
56%

■ YES ■ NO

Figure 7: Bilingual children preferring one culture over the other culture

None of the nine bilingual children feels like a person without identity, even though they are still very young to realize what culture or ethnicity means. Still, they have no apparent difficulty to find friends and to participate in free time activities. Figure 7 illustrates that four of the examined children fully understand only one culture, mostly the culture where they have lived most of their lives. Five of the children understand both cultures without difficulty and recognize the differences between them. We must take into account that all of these families are from the European continent, where cultures differ but not as radically as for example in Africa or Asia. These families do not deal with religious differences, family roles, clothing habits, eating habits, and many others. There are all sorts of differences, like greetings. Variants of greetings can be for example a kiss, hand shake, eye contact, or just saying the words. Loudness of speech, body posture, gestures, and many other differences can be observed by children at home from their parents. These are just a few examples of social behavior which must be taught or experienced, preferably by visiting the other country (Cunningham 100).

Zuzka and Anna belong to the group of bicultural children, partly because they spend a lot of time with their Polish grandparents, where they are exposed only to the Polish culture, people, and habits. They have a lot of friends in both countries, so they do not feel pushed away or different. The girls are aware of the differences in both cultures. The older Zuzka often tells her Czech friends in kindergarten about her Polish grandparents. She tells them how they go on Christian pilgrimages (unusual in Czechia) or other traditions. We can say she boasts her biculturalism.

Kevin's father is from southern Italy, moved to the Czech Republic fifteen years ago, and does not intend to move back to Italy. He still considers himself as Italian, but he does not want his son to be Italian because he disagrees with Italian politics and the way of life in Italy. He taught Kevin the language just to give him the advantage of being bilingual, they visit the Italian family once a year, but Kevin is still there like a tourist. Kevin's Italian is not as strong as Czech, but he understands and can talk about basic topics. When Kevin visits his Italian grandparents, he is nervous because his grandfather is standoffish, and Kevin does not like to visit them. The contact with the family is important, and when the child does not feel an emotional bond, then the interest in the culture is also weak. And because Kevin has not been taught about the culture, he learns on the spot. A very silly but illustrative example is that Kevin is used to adding ketchup in his pasta. However, adding ketchup in pasta in Italy is against all gastronomical rules. In Italy, this indicates that the food does not taste good. Once he asked his grandmother for ketchup, and he got scolded. Kevin has never asked for ketchup in Italy again after he experienced the bad reaction, but he uses ketchup every time in the Czech Republic. He still feels different from the rest of the Italian family. Kevin's mother, who is Czech, has a hearty relationship with her father, but her Italian husband does not have the same relationship with his father, and Kevin realizes the differences.

The English- and Czech-speaking Edward has lived most of his life in the Czech Republic, but he visits England quite often. He is bicultural but the Czech Republic is his home and Czech is also his stronger language for now. His parents need to live in the Czech Republic, but they would like to move to England because they believe that Edward would have a better life and more opportunities in England than in Czechia. So, they are preparing him, teaching him about the culture, school system, the way people think, and to be open-minded and patient.

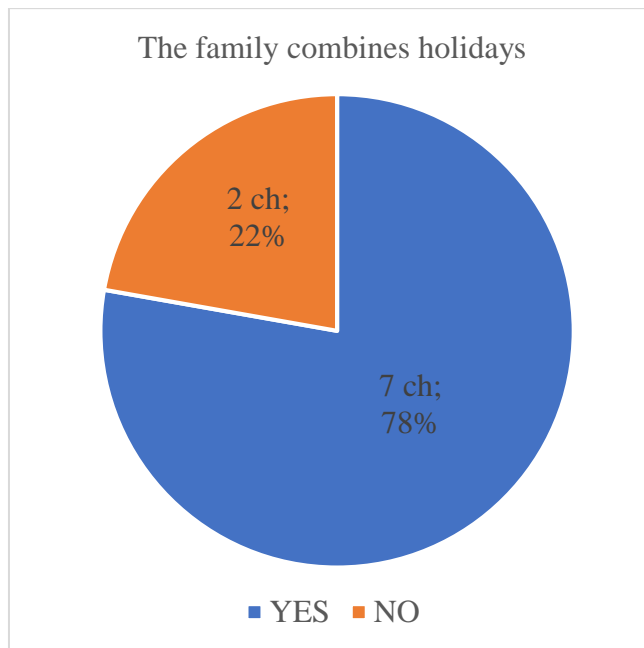The family combines holidays

2 ch; 22%

7 ch; 78%

■ YES ■ NO

Figure 8: Number of families who combine holidays

Every family must come to their own conclusion how they want to celebrate holidays. There exist many holidays which are not celebrated in every country, such as name days. It is hard to celebrate some holidays which the rest of the society does not know, however, traditions should be maintained. Even if the family does not celebrate them, the children should experience them and should know about their existence (Cunningham 103–104).

Edward, the Czech-English boy, can also be considered as bicultural. His languages skills are high in both languages and on equal level of proficiency. Moving between England and Czechia helps him understand both cultures and he feels comfortable in his own skin. As a baby, Edward lived in England, where he was exposed to English holidays and traditions, but his mother still taught him about Czech traditions. Now it is the other way around, Edward's family lives in Czechia, so they mostly celebrate according to Czech traditions, but they keep English holidays as well. For example, Christmas, probably all children's favorite holiday. On 24 December, the family celebrates Czech Christmas, on that day "Baby Jesus" brings presents and the family has a festive dinner in the evening. The morning after, 25 December, "Father Christmas" brings present from England. Along the same lines they spend Easter. Edward goes "na pomlázku" with his Czech friends, and Edward's parents also prepare "egg hunt" according to the English tradition.

Zuzana's Czech-Polish family does not combine holidays and traditions, but she is still a bicultural child. As has been explained in chapter 1.5, her family moves from

country to country often. Their holiday celebrations depend on the country where they currently live. When they lived in Germany, which was not a native country of either of the parents, they always celebrated either with their Czech or Polish family. In this manner Zuzana was directly acquainted with two cultures, and indirectly with German culture, because she heard about German traditions as well, and partly experienced them when she saw the preparations, theater plays in kindergarten, or decorations. Her mother confirms that Zuzana has no problem to identify herself with all the three cultures, but Polish culture is probably the least familiar one, because she spent there the least time.
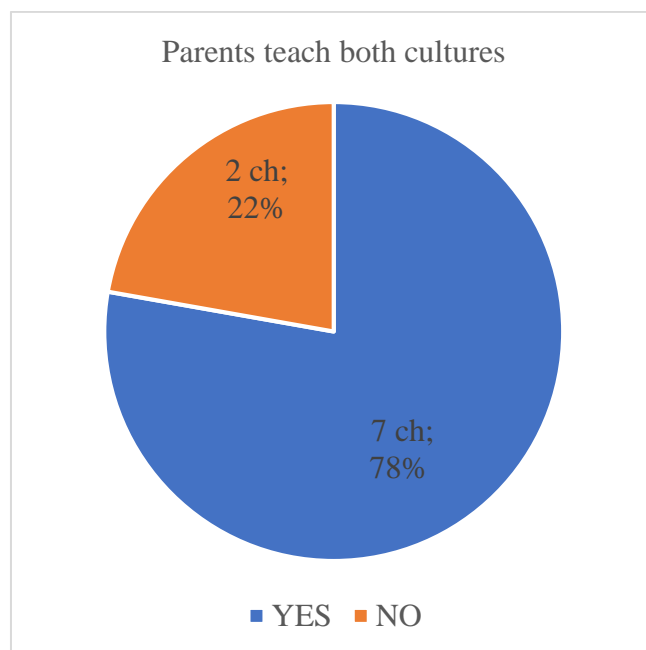

Figure 9: Number of parents who teach their children about two cultures

To teach their children about both cultures is a prerequisite when the parents want their children to be bicultural. Children imitate other people, their gestures and intonation. Children should watch television or movies in their weaker language because they are exposed to real-life language. In movies they can see the different ways of living. For example, in the Czech Republic it is customary to take off one's shoes when entering one's home, but in Sweden or the USA it would be alarming. Children cannot know this until someone tells them or until they experience it or see it (Cunningham 97–98).

The parents of Karolína and Christopher are both Czech, the family lives permanently in Austria, where both the children were born. They are Austrian by birth, but they spend time with their grandparents on summer holidays, they have no problems to live in Czechia and communicate in Czech. The main difference is that they do not have any friends in Czechia, and it is not a home for them. Their mother speaks mostly Czech at home, and they are lovers of Czech movies and fairytales. Also, their mother

reads in Czech, cooks Czech cuisine, and teaches them about the history of the Czech Republic. As she has said to me, she wants them to know where they come from and to know their family roots. She considers them as Austrian, and she tries her best to be accepted in the Austrian society as equal. Karolína and Christopher are the only children at the kindergarten who were not raised as Christians, but her mother still signs them up for Sunday school so that they are not excluded and judged. They combine holidays, on Christmas day they have both Czech and Austrian dishes. On Easter, they do the Austrian "egg hunt."

5　Stereotype: Bilingual Children May Very Often Stutter

The stereotype about stuttering is the most fanciful. There is no evidence that bilingual children tend to stutter more than monolinguals. Scientists confirm that monolingual and bilingual persons have the same chances of stuttering, and if bilinguals had higher chances, then at least 20% of the world population would stutter and overall be less intelligent, which is not the case (Štefánik 77). Stuttering is probably caused by:

> Brain disorder (cerebral dysfunction), which means the effect of brain injury, sometimes is related to mental disorders connected to anxiety… A possible explanation can be a large difference between the thought processes in the child's brain and their insufficient ability under time pressure to share their thoughts and information with others. (Štefánik 78)

Very often stuttering is hereditary, boys also tend to be more sensitive to it. Between the ages of three and five, children learn longer sentences, in this period, there may appear symptoms of stuttering. Stuttering can be described as a "repetition of words and syllables, extension of pronunciation, and long pauses between words and sentences" (Štefánik 77). The period of stuttering can be only temporary and does not need to influence later speech. If stutter occurs, parents should not alert children about this error, they should continue to speak as they did and even more. Children do not need to limit themselves to speaking only in one language, however, it might seem as helpful. The stutter may disappear spontaneously and the parents can then return to bilingual upbringing. When stuttering persists, it is recommended to visit a children's psychologist or speech-language pathology specialist (Štefánik 77).

As has already been stated, bilingualism does not cause stuttering. None of the children I worked with showed any sign of stuttering. Some children sometimes pause in the middle of the sentence, which is caused by a lexical gap, during that pause, they think about filling it with appropriate synonyms, possibly code-switching.

Georg: *Ma, podat mi prosím… prosím… to… kšiltovku.* (Ma, hand me please / pause… / please… / pause… / it… / cap.)

6   Stereotype: Bilingual Children Are Excellent Translators

Bilingual children can be considered as translators and interpreters, but it does not mean that they are excellent at it. Professions as translator and interpreter can be for both monolingually or bilingually raised people. To be excellent at it means to be able to use translation techniques, processes, and notes. Being able to speak in two languages is not enough. Translation is a science which needs to be taught. Translators focus only on one topic (law, medicine, computers, etc.) because the vocabulary is unknown to lay people (Štefánik 80–81).

Bilingual children must acquire both languages sufficiently. Between the ages of three and four, they are able to translate phrases and simple sentences. Some children might be happy to translate something for a monolingual person, and they might want to translate even more. Some can even flaunt their skills. Other children can feel uncomfortable translating for others. Some parents force their children to translate and show their children's skills on request. The children can take it as a bad experience; they can refuse to translate for a longer period. Some of the children need to translate for their monolingual parent (Štefánik 81–82). To sum up, what a child translator needs to have are languages at a very high level of proficiency, wide vocabulary, and a disposition to be resistant to stress. Age of the child and frequency of language use are also great pointers, when the children are used to translating, as adults they have greater chances to be excellent at it (Harding-Esch 88–90).
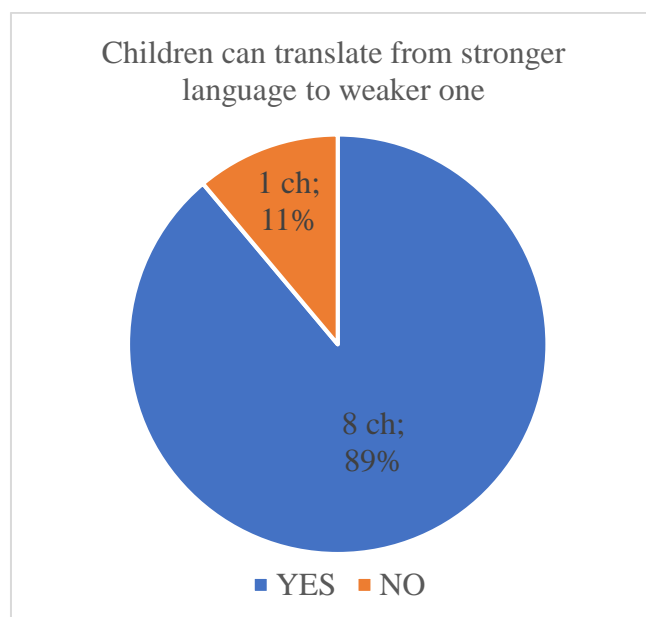

Figure 10: Children can translate from their dominant language into their weaker language most of the time without any problems

Christopher's stronger language is German, and he does not often translate to the weaker one, which is Czech. His older sister Karolína often takes his place. When he has to translate, it takes him a lot of effort and he does not even like doing it. So, he is the only one who can be considered as not as good at translating as the other bilingual children. The following example is a speech transcription where Christopher's mother asks him to communicate instead of her with her monolingual parents. He did not want to do it, but he had no other choice but to translate it, which he did with mistakes in Czech declension and a little hesitation in the word *myčka*, which is a *washing machine*.

Christopher: *Mutti, beeile dich, Opa ist im Auto.* (GER: Mom, hurry up, grandpa is in the car.)

Mother: *Sag ihm dass ich muss die Waschmaschine einschalten.* (GER: Tell him to wait, I need to turn on the washing machine.)

Christopher: *Mama.* (GER: Mom.)

Mother: *Lauf.* (GER: Run.)

Christopher: *Máma říká, počkej, musí zapnout to… myčka.* (CZ: Mom says, wait, she must switch on that / pause / the washing machine.)
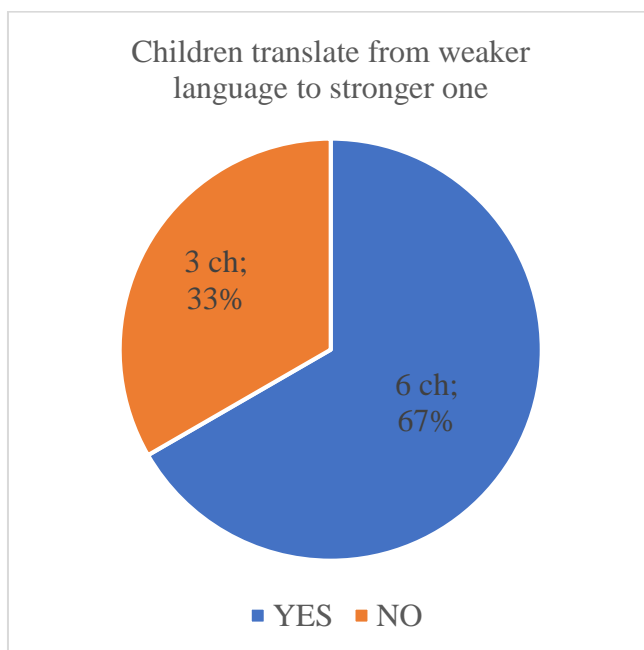

Figure 11: Children can translate from their weaker language to the stronger language most of the time without any problems

The number of children who cannot translate from their weaker to their stronger language is two more than in the previous figure. It is caused by their uncertainty about what some words mean and by searching for the correct synonyms. Children who belong in this group have their other language much weaker than the dominant one, and they

translate rarely. They can translate when required to do so, however, when comparing their ability to the other observed children, their competence is much weaker.

Kevin, Adam, and Christopher belong to this group, because none of them is used to translating. Christopher is the only one who does not like translating, Kevin and Adam do not mind it and they translate whenever someone asks. They need to divide the sentence into phrases and translate each one of the phrases separately.

Mother: *Adame, řekni babičce, že pojedem asi až zítra po obědě.* (CZ: Adam, tell grandma that we will leave probably only tomorrow after lunch.)

Adam: *Řeknu, kde je? Baka, mama rekao… mi odlazi… vjerojatno sutra po obědě.* (CZ: I will, where is he? / SC:: Grandma, mom says… we will leave… tomorrow after / CZ: lunch.)

Grandmother: *Hvala lijepa dečko .* (SC: Thank you very much, boy.)

Adam: *Babička děkuje.* (CZ: Grandma is thanking me.)

Mother: *Za co?* (CZ: For what?)

Adam: *To nevim, já se zeptám.* (CZ: I don't know, I'll ask.)

This conversation follows the same pattern, Adam slowly and enthusiastically translates. Also, in the given translation there appears code-switching in the word *oběd* instead of the Serbo-Croatian *obed*, it is very similar, but the phonetics differs, and Adam did not distinguish it.

The following transcription of Edward's speech is an excellent example. Edward switches languages and translates from English to Czech and vice versa. His English is on a very high level of proficiency but is still a little weaker than Czech. His father does not speak Czech, so Edward is used to translating for him.

Father: *Tell him I didn't order this meal.*

Edward: *What did you want, dad?*

Father: *I ordered number sixteen, pizza with bacon, salami, and onion.*

Edward*: Tatínek říká, že si neobjednal tuhle pizzu, ale… sixteen?* (CZ: Dad says that he didn't order this pizza, but… / ENG: sixteen?)

Father: Yep.

Edward: *Objednal si šesnáctku, tu se slaninou, salámama a cibulí.* (CZ: He ordered number sixteen, the one with bacon, salami, and onion.)

Service: *Aha, tak my mu to donesem do 10 minut.* (CZ: I see, so we will bring it within 10 minutes.)

Edward: *Děkuji. She said it will take them 10 minutes.* (CZ: Thank you. / ENG: She said it will take them 10 minutes.)

Father: *Never mind. Děkuji.* (ENG: Never mind. / CZ: Thank you.)

First, Edward gathered information about what he should say to the service. He forgot the number, so he asked again and immediately finished the translation. He made a mistake in the Czech declension of the word *salámama* instead of *salámem* but mistakes in declension are expected in children's speech. When the service replied, Edward without any hesitation translated to the weaker language.

7 Conclusion

This thesis was concerned with the phenomenon of bilingualism, mainly focusing on simultaneous bilingualism, which refers to learning to speak two languages at the same time from birth. Currently, the positive effects of bilingualism prevail against any negative point of view on bilingualism. Ultimately, some of the worldwide circulated stereotypes about bilingual children were confirmed to be untrue.

In the thesis I encountered some problems with a lack of applicable data. Some recordings did not contain enough of the required data, but thankfully, the parents observed their children's speech and wrote some additional samples down for me.

The first section of the thesis described the phenomenon known as bilingualism, and it also introduced the bilingual families and children researched for the purpose of this thesis. Apart from two siblings, these children are being raised simultaneously bilingual in families where each parent has a different mother tongue. Some of the parents use the method of one person – one language, others usually use languages variously according to the situation. This chapter includes a description of mistakes made by parents which can confuse the child, so it can also be used as advice for parents, who should for example avoid correcting mistakes or forcing children to switch languages. Briefly described are also negative and positive views on bilingualism.

Interference and code-choice are highly visible phenomena which many people take as the child's inability to acquire languages properly. It is confirmed by linguists that these problems are expected to occur and mostly disappear spontaneously. More than a half of the observed children code-mix, fewer of them even code-switch. However, none of these children is unable to communicate. Code-choice is an evidence of using two languages which interact with each other. It is the same with interferences, which occur because of dominance in one language. The dominant language influences the weaker one, and it can be apparent in pronunciation, transfer of phrases or grammatical structures. Interferences are described very briefly, and it is a possible topic which could be described in more detail in a master's thesis.

It was confirmed that bilingual children are able to be part of at least one community. None of the observed children has problems understanding the culture where they grew up, all of them communicate with other children, and they understand the society around them. Some of them can be considered as bicultural, which means that they understand and identify with two cultures on the same level. They have no

difficulties in changing countries and cultures without any effect on their behavior and feelings. This is mainly due to their learning about both cultures. Future research may examine how religion influences language and biculturalism.

The stereotype that bilingual children stutter was proven completely wrong. None of the observed children shows any signs of stuttering. Stuttering is a brain disorder which is not caused by bilingualism.

The only stereotype that was partly confirmed is bilingual translation. Observed bilingual children are able to translate from one language to another. I had difficulties distinguishing what is a good translation and what is an excellent translation of sentences. I had to talk with the parents, and I considered their own opinions, as they know best how good their children are at translating. Still, it needs to be remembered that although the children can translate basic topics of everyday life, translating unknown topics is difficult. To be an excellent translator is an ability which can be acquired at a later age, the ability is not innate, but can be trained.

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