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Komunikace v bilingvní rodině

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Bakalářská práce popíše komunikaci v bilingvních rodinách a zaměří se na jazykový vývoj dětí v takových rodinách (např. preference jazyka, vznik a rozvoj řeči, výskyt chyb, výslovnost, apod.). Praktická část bude založena na pozorování konkrétní rodiny/rodin. Práce je psaná anglicky.

Rozsah grafických prací:
Rozsah pracovní zprávy:
Seznam odborné literatury:

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že bakalářská práce je uložena v souladu s rektorským výnosem č. 4/2009 (Řád pro nakládání se školními a některými jinými autorskými díly na UHK).

Prohlášení autora

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala (pod vedením vedoucího práce) samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

Anotace

DREJSLAROVÁ, Gabriela. *Communication in Bilingual Families*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2015. 60s. Bakalářská práce.

Bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem bilingvní, tj. dvojjazyčné komunikace v rodině. Jejím cílem je popsat tento druh komunikace s ohledem na přínosy a možná rizika pro bilingvní dítě. Kapitoly v první části práce se věnují jazykům a dialektům všeobecně, dále komunikaci, různým druhům bilingvismu a jazykovému rozvoji dětí. Druhá část práce se zaměřuje na samotný výzkum, tj. pozorování šesti dvojjazyčných rodin. Jsou zde popsány a blíže analyzovány různé případy bilingvních rodin. Použitou metodou je rozhovor.

Klíčová slova: komunikace, mateřský jazyk, bilingvismus, rodina

Annotation

DREJSLAROVÁ, Gabriela. *Communication in Bilingual Families*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové, 2015. 60pp. Bachelor Diploma Thesis.

The bachelor thesis deals with bilingual communication in the context of the family. It aims to describe this particular type of communication with regard to its benefits and potential risks to the bilingual child. The chapters in the first part shall aim to provide a general overview concerning languages and dialects, as well as communication, the different types of bilingualism and language development of young children. The second part focuses on the primary research conducted through close observation of six bilingual families. The research sample shall look at various different subsets of bilingual families and systems of communication and hence will provide an in-depth analysis of the findings deriving from each family. The research method used is the semi-structured interview.

Keywords: communication, language, bilingualism, family

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	10
2. THEORETICAL PART	12
2.1 Written and spoken languages	13
2.2 Changes in language	14
2.3 Foreign language teaching in the Czech Republic.....	15
2.4 Bilingualism	16
2.4.1 What does being bilingual mean?.....	17
2.4.2 “Elite” and “folk” bilingualism.....	20
2.5 Language acquisition.....	22
2.5.1 Behaviorist theory	22
2.5.2 Generative theory	23
2.5.3 Contextual psycholinguistics.....	24
2.5.4 Cognitive psycholinguistics	24
2.6 Factors of child speech development	24
2.7 Bilingualism and the age of the child	27
2.8 Development of a bilingual child	28
2.8.1 Simultaneous acquisition of two languages.....	28
2.8.2 Separation of the two languages	28
2.8.3 Awareness of own bilingualism.....	31
2.8.4 Problems associated with bilingualism – stammering, mistakes.....	32
2.8.5 Abusive language	32
3. PRACTICAL PART.....	34
3.1 Observation of families	34
3.2 Research Methodology	34

3.2.1	The Scope of Research	34
3.2.2	Research Goals	35
3.2.3	Research Question	35
3.2.4	Research Group.....	35
3.2.5	The Method of Research.....	36
3.3	Results of the Research.....	38
3.3.1	The Hughes Family	38
3.3.2	The Johnson Family.....	40
3.3.3	The Clarke Family	41
3.3.4	The Harper Family	43
3.3.5	The Robertson Family	45
3.3.6	Kateřina and Simir	47
3.3.7	The Hughes family.....	49
3.3.8	The Johnson family.....	49
3.3.9	The Clarke family.....	49
3.3.10	The Harper family.....	49
3.3.11	The Robertson family	50
3.3.12	Kateřina and Simir	50
4.	CONCLUSION.....	51
5.	SOURCES.....	53
5.1	Printed sources	53
5.2	Electronic sources	54

1. INTRODUCTION

The Linguistic Society in America, in 2009, found that there were, at that time, 6,909 distinct languages in the world. The world is constantly evolving and there are many sources updated every so often providing various statistics, but it is valid to say that there are approximately 195 independent countries in the world.¹ Based on these numbers, it is evident that there are more bilingual than monolingual countries and bilingualism is present in most, if not all countries in the world.

As a result of the introduction of freedom of movement in Europe and increased tourism, it seems that there is a larger proportion of bilingual families around us than there used to be in the past decades. Nevertheless, I have found that there is a distinct lack of solid research conducted into this particular subject area.

The theme of this work is communication in the bilingual family. It focuses predominantly on the process of learning languages and on the unique concept of bilingualism and its different variations.

The theoretical part is divided into eight chapters: Languages; Changes in language; Foreign language teaching in the Czech Republic; Bilingualism; Language acquisition; Factors of child speech development; Bilingualism and the age of child; Development of a bilingual child.

The practical part of this thesis is based on observation of six bilingual families and the research aims emerge as follows: Do children of bilingual families start talking later than monolingual children? Is there any particular method of communication which proved to be the most effective when raising children bilingually? Are there any typical speech problems that bilingual children experience? Is there a certain age which is the most convenient to start raising a child bilingually?

¹ <http://www.worldatlas.com/nations.htm>

I have chosen the topic of bilingualism for my bachelor thesis because in my opinion, it is a very interesting, complex and current area for discussion. It is important to note that this work does not aim to provide a deep scientific analysis of the topic, but rather to gather useful and practical information that could perhaps help people who want to learn more about the topic or the parents who are considering bilingual communication in their family and want to get an insight into the functioning of this type of communication, its benefits and potential drawbacks.

I think that this topic might in the future be further expanded upon and elaborated in the form of a diploma dissertation thesis.

2. THEORETICAL PART

A language is “The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way” or “A system of communication used by a particular country or community.” (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 26).

There are approximately seven thousand languages spoken in the world. It is not easy to give a precise number, because linguistically, it is difficult to distinguish between a language and a dialect. Everyone acquires a specific dialect and everyone has a specific accent (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 26).

Different language communities have certain ways of talking that set them apart from others. Those differences may be thought of as dialects —not just accents (the way words are pronounced) but also grammar, vocabulary, syntax and common expressions. Often a group that is somewhat isolated regionally or socially from other groups will develop a characteristic dialect. The Dictionary of Linguistics defines dialect as a variety of a language used by people from a particular geographic area. Many historical linguists view every speech form as a dialect of the older medium from which it was developed; for example, modern Romance languages such as French and Italian developed from dialects of Latin. Other linguists point out the role of historical and political developments in the formation of a dialect (Malone, 2004, p. 35).

It seems that languages, unlike the countries, have not got any borders. It means that occasionally, even inhabitants of the same country can experience difficulty understanding each other if they come from different parts of the country with a different regional dialect.

Harding and Riley state that some of the dialects or groups of dialects are considered to have a higher social value than the others; in that case, we call them “languages”. This does not suggest that these dialects are more logical, more desirable or older. The value of these particular dialects originates and stems from two aspects: their use and their speakers. It seems that these are the dialects spoken by the ‘well-educated’ part of the population; from middle to higher social class. These dialects appear to be used in the educational system of their country and also within administration. They have developed their written form, and

have been explored and standardized to a degree that has resulted in them becoming more dominant than other dialects. The term “language” is a social and political stamp which is used for the officially recognized dialects. This results in inevitable political problems. In many countries, more than two dialects are spoken and if they are officially recognized as languages, we consider the speakers “bilingual”.

The average number of speakers of one language is about one million. On the other hand, there is also great language diversity across the nations. As a result, to assume that each country has one language which is spoken by all the inhabitants is not only naive, but it is wrong and inaccurate, even though most countries have their standard dialect(s) recognized as the official language(s). (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 27)

2.1 Written and spoken languages

Written and spoken language differ in many ways. Below are some of the ways in which these two forms of language differ:

- Writing is usually permanent and written texts cannot usually be changed once they have been printed out/written, while speech is usually transient and speakers can correct themselves.
- Spoken language can be full of repetitions, incomplete sentences, corrections and interruptions, except for formal speeches and other scripted forms of speech, such as news reports.
- Speech is usually a dynamic interaction between two or more people. It can use timing, volume and tone to add emotional context.
- Some grammatical constructions and some kinds of vocabulary are only used in writing, such as some complex chemical and legal terms.
- Some types of vocabulary are used only or mainly in speech, such as slang words.²

The primary form of the language is the oral one. It is a commonly accepted fact that this particular form of communication existed long before the written form, and naturally, children learn to speak earlier than they learn to write. Many languages do not have a written

² <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/writingvspeech.htm>

form and there are many people throughout the world who do not learn to read or to write for one reason or another. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p.28). Speaking, on the other hand, is fast and passing, while writing is quite slow and stable. Both forms have their advantages and disadvantages. Written form is usually used for important and perhaps more ‘formal’ communication while spoken form is more direct and simplistic.

Harding and Riley (2008) argue that it is possible for a person to be bilingual in both written and spoken forms of the languages. However, some of the bilinguals can only read and write in one of the languages they speak – it is usually the one they were educated in.

2.2 Changes in language

“Languages change for a variety of reasons. Large-scale shifts often occur in response to social, economic and political pressures. History records many examples of language change fuelled by invasions, colonization and migration. Even without these kinds of influences, a language can change dramatically if enough users alter the way they speak it. Frequently, the needs of speakers drive language change. New technologies, industries, products and experiences simply require new words. By using new and emerging terms, we all drive language change. The vocabulary and phrases people use depend on where they live, their age, education level, social status and other factors. Through our interactions, we pick up new words and sayings and integrate them into our speech. Teens and young adults for example, often use different words and phrases from their parents. Some of them spread through the population and slowly change the language.”³

The written form of a language is relatively resistant to changes, whereas the spoken form changes rapidly. As a result, language can adapt to the lifestyle of its speakers. This applies mainly to the development of new inventions, thoughts or relationships. A language that does not reflect the changes in society and modern world is rare (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 28). Many of the changes in everyday life can go unnoticed. Sometimes we may recognize a new word or expression being used, which can either expire or become common and it is less noticeable once popularly used. Yet we consciously recognize that older generations, such as

³ https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/linguistics/change.jsp

our parents and grandparents, speak differently. Furthermore, when we come back from long holidays abroad, open an old book or watch a TV program from thirty years ago, it is profoundly obvious how the language and expressions change.

2.3 Foreign language teaching in the Czech Republic

Teaching of foreign languages in the Czech Republic has a long tradition. Most of the people who know some foreign language speak English, German or Russian. Much fewer people can speak languages such as Italian, Spanish or French.⁴ Czech people are beginning to recognize that learning a foreign language helps them to develop more understanding of other cultures, gives them the ability to browse foreign web pages or watch foreign TV programs, but most importantly, over the past decade, speaking at least one foreign language has become a key necessity when seeking greater employment opportunities.

Foreign language education is obligatory since the 3rd grade in the Czech Republic and in most cases, it is English. Second foreign language education is obligatory since the 8th grade (the latest) and it is usually German or French. According to the National Institute of Education survey in school year 2009/2010, both primary school pupils and secondary school students study one foreign language, which is below the EU average. In contrast, grammar school students study two foreign languages, which is above the EU average and the reason is that at most grammar schools in the Czech Republic, two foreign languages are compulsory. Language skills of secondary school/grammar school graduates are set on level B2. It would certainly enhance the learning experience in developing language skills if the students were given the opportunity to communicate with other EU citizens.⁵ Czech Republic also has a tradition of a bilingual state – it used to be Czechoslovakia where two languages were official. The Czech government wants to bring Slovakian language back to schools because many young people can no longer understand this language, even though it is so similar to Czech.

⁴ <http://www.nuv.cz/vse-o-nuv/zavedenim-druheho-povinneho-ciziho-jazyka-na-zs-se-zlepsil>

⁵ <http://www.nuv.cz/vse-o-nuv/zavedenim-druheho-povinneho-ciziho-jazyka-na-zs-se-zlepsil>

2.4 Bilingualism

In the popular view, being bilingual means being able to speak two languages fluently; this is also the approach of Bloomfield (1933):

“Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages at the level of a native speaker... It is not possible to define the point where a non-native speaker becomes bilingual: the distinction is relative.” (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 15)

Most people think that in order to be called bilingual, a person needs to have a perfect knowledge of two languages. Unfortunately, it is not possible to describe what “perfect” knowledge means. Nobody uses the full vocabulary of their mother tongue and everybody makes mistakes in their speech. It means that everyone, including bilingual people, only use a part of the language (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 30). For example, a bilingual IT professional can speak English at work, but only Czech at home. His knowledge and understanding of technical and formal terms in English will probably be better than in Czech, but he will speak better Czech in practical, everyday life. This is the core topic within the whole discussion about bilingualism.

Other definitions of bilingualism which range from a minimal proficiency in a second language to a native-like knowledge are for example:

“Bilingualism starts in the point when a person becomes able to express themselves meaningfully in a foreign language.” (Haugen, 1953, p. 40)

William Mackey proposed a simple definition of bilingualism - the alternate use of two or more languages.⁶

“Bilingualism is a relative term... Let’s just say that it is the use of two or more languages by one person.” (Mackey, 1976, p. 52)

Bilingualism stands for the abilities and communication in two languages. In bilingual society, people communicate in two languages. In a bilingual society, there can be many

⁶ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/life-bilingual/201010/who-is-bilingual>

monolingual people if there are enough bilingual ones who can perform the functions in which bilingual skills are necessary. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between an individual bilingualism and a bilingual society. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 50) Consequently, it is clear that there is a difference between a bilingual society and bilingual individuals. It is theoretically possible that all the people living in a bilingual society would only speak one language and also a bilingual person can live in a monolingual society. The quotations above also demonstrate the ambiguity of the term bilingualism.

For the purpose of this thesis, I chose the definition by William Mackey which allows us to include for example a bilingual child who communicates with their friends in a different language than with their parents or professionals who read and write articles in a second language but rarely speak it.

2.4.1 What does being bilingual mean?

Bilingualism is not a black and white phenomenon; everything is very relative. It is hard to find people who know two languages perfectly, including the full vocabulary. On the other hand, we cannot call a person bilingual when they can only create a few sentences in foreign language, because millions of people can do that but never reach such level that anyone would consider them bilingual. If there is a major imbalance between the person's mother tongue and their second language, it would not be logical to call this person bilingual.

In their book, Harding and Riley do not measure relative abilities or knowledge ("He speaks better Czech than English"); instead they focus on the relative use ("He uses Czech and English every day"). However, this kind of bilingualism could be described as "an alternate use of two or more languages by one person" or "alternate practical use of two languages". There are areas of life with which the bilinguals only have experience in one or the other language. Although they usually have no problem understanding what others say, they find out that they lack the necessary vocabulary to express themselves on the topic. The well-known phenomenon associated with this problem is called interference (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 51).

“Interference is the use of elements from one language while speaking or writing another. It is a characteristic of the message, not of the code. It varies quantitatively and qualitatively from bilingual to bilingual and from time to time in the same individual, ranging from an almost imperceptible stylistic variation to the most obvious sort of speech-mixture.” (Mackey, 1976, p. 75)

Harding and Riley state that interference may occur at any level of the structure or function of the language. For example, in terms of phonetics it takes the form of a foreign accent. As for vocabulary, interference usually manifests inability to choose correctly between related words. For example, a bilingual (English + French) with dominant French can say: “Today I went to the library” instead of saying “Today I went to the bookshop.” There can also be a grammatical interference between the structures of the two languages. A common mistake is a wrong word order according to the rules of the dominant language, for example “C’est celui qui je parlais avec” instead of “C’est celui avec lequel je parlais” because in English, the correct word order would be “He’s the one I was talking to.”

Interference is one of the indicators of the existence of language dominance. This dominance occurs when there is not a perfect balance between the two languages. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 52) Example: a person who went to school in the Czech Republic, but works in the medical profession in Great Britain could find themselves lacking in suitable vocabulary when they want to speak in Czech about their work. However, this situation can quickly be changed by talking about the topic and refreshing the forgotten words.

Harding and Riley also mention that the language dominance is not anything strange or unhealthy/unusual, because everyone, including the monolinguals, has a limited and specialized vocabulary according to their profession and interests. Another sign of language dominance is favouring one language over the other. If a bilingual is asked to talk about several topics, it will soon become evident what their dominant language is. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that the person is actually better at the dominant language; it is usually just a subjective feeling or instinct.

‘Receptive bilingualism’ is an important and very common variant of bilingualism. It means that the person can understand the language, but cannot or does not want to speak it. Many people think that this is just reluctance to talk or a proof that bilingualism does not work.

Receptive bilingualism has many root causes: the most important being the change of language environment. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 54) For instance, when a Czech family moves to the USA, the children will probably start speaking English with everyone. Firstly, they will forget to write and then to read in Czech language and will only communicate in their mother tongue with some of the family members. Eventually, they can even start speaking English with their parents, who sometimes succumb to this pressure and stop speaking Czech, too. If the family gets back in contact with Czech people, the parents will soon remember how to speak the language, but the children will have greater difficulty or in most cases, may not remember it at all. Even though they can understand and maybe even read in Czech, they are not able to express themselves in this language and they find themselves in a state of receptive bilingualism.

Harding and Riley also described another cause of the receptive bilingualism, which is the situation when parents communicate with each other in a different language than they use when talking to their children. The children can understand the second language perfectly, but they cannot speak it. It seems that they do not even know the language, but that is not true, they are just receptive bilinguals and if the family moved back to their home country, the children would quickly learn to use the language of their parents, too.

According to Harding and Riley, the third scenario is when one of the parents can understand but does not speak the language the other parent speaks with the children. In these cases the chances that the family will become fully bilingual are quite low. For example: mother is Czech, father is American and the family lives in the Czech Republic. The mother understands but cannot speak English, so she speaks Czech to the children, while the father speaks English. When the children grow up a little, they will start communicating in both languages and then there are two options: either the mother learns English so that the rest of the family do not have to translate what they are saying all the time or the family becomes monolingual – they will only speak Czech with each other.

However, there is also an opposite kind of receptive bilingualism, which is called the asymmetric bilingualism. This means that a person can speak better than they can understand the language. The explanation behind this is very simple: when children learn the foreign language from one of their parents while living in a different country, they are likely to experience this kind of asymmetric bilingualism (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 57).

For example if the mother is Czech, the father is British, and the whole family lives in the UK. The children learnt Czech from their mother, but when they come to the Czech Republic for the first time, they cannot understand the native speakers, because they are not used to various local accents. Fortunately, this situation usually does not last for a long time. Harding and Riley mention however that this may also occur to some of the monolinguals – sometimes the residents of the same country also have problems understanding each other due to the difference between their accents and dialects.

2.4.2 “Elite” and “folk” bilingualism

It is evident that the sheer quantity of international marriages has rapidly increased over the past two decades. There are now around sixteen million international couples in the EU.⁷

There is also a large proportion of couples who decide to move abroad, due to education or a job purposes or opportunities, for example. The fact that so many people make the conscious decision to live in a foreign country proves that bilingualism is not an irregular practice, and that it is not just limited to wealthy people who have the earning capacity to pay for babysitters and expensive schools. Generally, most people who decide to move abroad, and are therefore affected by the question of bilingualism, are middle-class (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 55). It is noteworthy to mention this, because many people associate this type of bilingualism and lifestyle choice to only a small number of wealthy people.

‘Elite bilingualism’ is described as: “*The privilege of educated middle-class people of most societies.*” (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 55).

‘Elite bilingualism’ occurs when competence in two languages is developed and maintained. ‘Elite bilingualism’ (also called ‘Prestigious bilingualism’) within a family context can sometimes occur when it is cultivated and maintained within the home without the outside support. This can happen when one or both parents speak a language which is not widely spoken in the society the family lives in and which they want to transmit to their children. (Baker and Jones, 1998, p. 20)

⁷ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-11-175_cs.htm

‘Folk bilingualism’ is described as: *“The result of conditions in which the ethnic groups live. Their bilingualism is involuntary and necessary for survival.”* (Tosi, 2003, p. 45)

This type of bilingualism is more common than ‘elite bilingualism’, as it occurs when individual family bilingualism is a part of a natural societal pattern. (Baker and Jones, 1998, p. 20)

According to Tosi, this distinction into ‘elite’ and ‘folk’ bilingualism is very important because it shows that while the first group uses the educational system, which they have under their control, for promotion of bilingualism, the other group is pushed into bilingualism by the educational system controlled by somebody else. Research also shows that the privileged children from the dominant group do well at school whether their education is carried out in their mother tongue or not. Tosi suggests that an ‘optional bilingualism’ could be the solution to this problem. (Tosi, 2003, p. 45) This usually occurs or is used in those cases when the second language is a matter of choice, not an absolute economical or political need.

Even though it seems that ‘elite bilingualism’ is nothing other than a privilege, parents of bilingual children in such families also have to overcome various problems. The biggest problem is that there is usually not enough choice of foreign language classes at public schools (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 55), which means that a child who is bilingual in Czech and English might not be able to study any other foreign language (until the 8th grade) except for English in which he/she is already fluent.

Harding and Riley state that bilingual education and upbringing can be tremendously successful and useful and it is not harmful towards the child’s development in any way, but many parents who experience some of the typical problems mentioned above do not have enough information and support and as a result, they simply give up. This usually evokes a feeling of loss in one of the parents and it also brings some practical problems for children, such as not being able to communicate with their grandparents. Obviously, nobody should be pushed into bilingualism, but on the other hand, if the parents are experiencing some difficulties, there should be enough support to help them overcome such issues.

2.5 Language acquisition

Children's speech, developed through the gradual acquisition of language by a child is one of the most prominently sought topics for both linguistic scientists and the general public, because it is a natural but significant stage of the child's development. Parents can ask questions such as: How important is the role of adult speech imitation? What does the child actually learn when they begin to speak?

The branch of science which deals with children's language acquisition is called "developmental psycholinguistics". This discipline went through a long evolution during which variety of opinions and theories emerged. The basic subject of the debate was the following question: Does the child acquire the language only by learning, or does any innate mechanism (that is only needed to put into operation) play a significant role? (Nebeská, 1992, p. 86)

Regarding the development of psycholinguistics, there are four basic theoretical orientations (behaviorist theory, generative theory, contextual psycholinguistics, cognitive psycholinguistics), which mainly deal with three basic themes:

- 1) innate assumptions of language use
 - 2) assumptions derived from active individual interactions with the environment (learning)
 - 3) situational context (the external environment in which the use of language occurs)
- (Kantoříková, 2011, p. 12)

2.5.1 Behaviorist theory

The dominating psychological theory in the USA in the 1930's -1950's was behaviorism. In this theory the use of language was understood as any verbal activity that a person acquires in the learning process like any other skill. (Kantoříková, 2011, p. 12)

Behaviorism in the course of its development has undergone many changes and modifications, but the use of language is still viewed as a learning outcome in its conception. Behaviorist-oriented psycholinguistics attaches great importance especially to the external

environment in which the use of language occurs and to the mental assumptions which the individual receives from the interaction with the environment. (Kantoříková, 2011, p. 12)

2.5.2 Generative theory

The Noam Chomsky's theory attached importance to the innate assumptions of language use and explicitly rejected the methodological basis of behaviorism, in particular, that the use of language is the result of the learning process, thus these theories were built on diametrically opposite assumptions. The language was seen as a mental phenomenon. The innate biological and psychological predispositions of humans include specialized mechanism that allows the acquisition and use of language. (Kantoříková, 2011, p. 13)

With the exception of those who suffer from communication and language impediments due to intellectual or other developmental disabilities, every child acquires at least one language. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 32) This fact leads scientists in the area of speech and language to the conclusion that the ability to acquire a language is genetically encoded in all human beings. This ability is not limited to one specific language. A Czech infant adopted by German parents will acquire German, not Czech, and will go through all the stages of language development as all the German children. We all have the ability to acquire a language, but we need to learn it from the members of community that we live in.

In the beginning, our circle of acquaintances is very limited – it only consists of the parents and maybe a few other relatives. This is the period when parents play the key role in the language development of their child (even though their influence persists for several more years). As the children begin to socialize with more people, especially other children, they also start to learn from them. The reason is that people do not acquire their mother tongue formally.

Acquisition of a language is not about repeating. Repeating actually plays only a minor role in the process. If we acquired a language only by repeating, how would we create a sentence that we had not heard before?

2.5.3 Contextual psycholinguistics

In this theory, mental assumptions (a common experiential complex of speaker and recipient) are considered the basis for communication. In the concept of contextual psycholinguistics the use of language is seen as a manifestation of the individual's active interaction with the environment. (Kantoříková, 2011, p. 14)

2.5.4 Cognitive psycholinguistics

Cognitive psycholinguistics is a relatively young discipline that deals with the description and explanation of mental structures and processes of human language. It focuses on the interaction between mental representation and processing of language skills. The basis of this concept is therefore an emphasis on the mental assumptions of language use, on both innate assumptions, but also acquired ones. (Kantoříková, 2011, p. 15)

According to Nebeská (1992), in contemporary psycholinguistics, none of these methodological assumptions is preferred. It attaches equal importance to the innate assumptions of use of language; to assumptions which are obtained by an active interaction between the individual and environment, as well as to the situational context.

2.6 Factors of child speech development

The primary factor in the development of children's speech is the age of the child. The child's age determines the degree of its motoric, cognitive, verbal and social development. Crying and screaming are the first two kinds of vocal expressions of a child. Roughly around the second month of life murmuring appears. These expressions gradually become the means of interaction with people around. Approximately at one year of age this stage ends and emitted sound clumps begin to resemble words. After the first year of age, there is a period of repetition of isolated words, then around the eighteenth month the child begins to use first combination of words. Between the second and third year of age, the child masters basic vocabulary and starts forming basic sentences. The child also understands many other complex syntactic structures, even though they do not use it yet. During this period in the

development of children's speech regularly appears exaggerated observance of rules – so called „overgeneralizing“, which means that the child has already mastered the basics of morphology of the language, but so far not the exceptions.

In English, this phenomenon shows for example in adding regular past tense endings to irregular verbs (goed, breaked instead of went, broke) and others. (Nebeská, 1992, p. 97)

Between the age of three and five, the vocabulary of a child expands. They use increasingly complex sentences. After the fifth year of age the child not only widens their vocabulary, but also improves their communication skills. At the age of six, the child can understand jokes and verbal puns and understands the basics of synonymy and homonymy. (Nebeská, 1992, p. 98)

The second important factor in the development of children's speech is stimulation of their environment. Parents play the most important role here, particularly the mother, which primarily stimulates cognitive development of the child and thus its verbal development. In the first months of their life mother speaks to the child and responds to their attempts of interaction, not only verbally but also by touch and views. Once the child starts trying to articulate, parents praise the successful attempts and help them to create grammatically correct sentences. (Nebeská, 1992, p. 99)

According to Nebeská, another important activity of adults is so-called expansion: it means that when the child expresses an incomplete sentence or phrase, the adult extends it to complete the correct form. Parents continually name objects around the child; show them things that might be interesting for the child, respond to their questions, teach them songs, tell them fairy tales. The child eventually starts using the terms they hear repeatedly. Another part of the development of children's speech is an imitation of the communication habits of parents. This way the child learns what is appropriate and what is not, how to address a person or how to thank someone. (Nebeská, 1992, p. 99)

Child language acquisition is a complex process involving a number of factors. Despite all the research in this area, there are still many uncertainties, but we can confidently say that language development is an integral part of cognitive and social development. It is equally

certain that in language acquisition both innate mental assumptions and stimulating environment are involved. Development of spoken language is understood as a natural process, while learning the written form of the language as a process that requires deliberate intellectual activity of the child. (Nebeská, 1992, p. 100)

As far as correcting children is concerned, it does not seem to be very important. In all languages, it is the meaning and the act of communication which are the most important, so the structure and the precision of the grammar should be there as a support to communication rather than the focus of the language. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 103) Therefore, interventions towards correcting grammar should be age-appropriate and positive towards identifying the meaning of the expression being used. This is proved by a fact that sometimes we learn something new without making a single mistake and sometimes we keep making the same mistake over and over again. When a child says a grammatically incorrect but true sentence, for example: “Tom car”, their mother is unlikely to correct the grammatical error and commonly, she reacts: “Yes, you are so smart!”. On the other hand, when a child says a grammatically correct sentence which is not technically true, for example: “This is Tom’s car”, their mother replies: “No, it is John’s car”. This suggests that if people acquired languages by correcting and praising, they would all tell lies which would be grammatically correct. Making mistakes is not necessarily a sign of inability to learn a language. They are an integral part of the whole learning process. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 103)

According to Harding and Riley (2008), learning, on the other hand, is about enlarging the range of meanings; it is a result of motivations and opportunities. We do not usually have to encourage a child who is acquiring a language, but we have to give him/her enough opportunities to learn, to use and to practice it. A good way of teaching a child a language is by playing games that enlarge his/her vocabulary. Language can only be acquired by direct interaction with various people. Learning a language at school is about interactions that aim to educate, while the interactions at home have more diverse goals. Unlike at home, children who learn the language at school also learn to communicate with a large group of people. School provides systematic education which stimulates higher levels of abstract thinking connected mainly with reading and writing, whereas at home children learn the language spontaneously.

2.7 Bilingualism and the age of the child

Babies

Some people could argue that babies are unable to talk, but it does not mean that this period is not extremely important for the development of bilingualism. (Harding and Riley, 2008)

According to very general statistics, bilingual children begin to talk a little later than monolingual children, but even so, they still meet the standards applicable to monolingual children, which is at the age of eight to fifteen months. In other words, they start to talk at the age which is perfectly normal for monolingual children, too. Girls in general begin to talk a few weeks earlier than boys, but the difference between bilingual girls and boys is even greater than between monolinguals. One should also take into account the fact that there can be a huge difference between the firstborn and the second-born. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 86)

According to a research, the monolingual babies say their first word at the average age of 11,2 months, while the bilingual babies at the age of 1 year. (Doyle, 1978, p. 37)

Children and adolescents

Children learn the second language incredibly fast when they are placed in circumstances where it is necessary. When a family moves abroad and the children start attending school, they will recognize the importance of being able to communicate with others and therefore will acquire the language in only a few months. Children are very adaptable and it is a well established fact that they have the ability to acquire foreign languages more rapidly than adults. On the other hand, they can also forget the foreign language very quickly, too. Thus, it is necessary that they practice it as often as possible in everyday communication. Under certain circumstances, it is possible that the child does not forget any of the foreign languages; for example when the family often moves from country to country and they stay in touch with their friends or when the family has more children who were all born in a different country. In this case, children will need various languages in order to understand each other. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 87)

Harding and Riley also mention that the language dominance in the childhood does not in any way influence the language dominance in adulthood. People who become bilingual after the age of twenty usually have a foreign accent, while the typical sign of child bilingualism is a perfect pronunciation at the level of a native speaker.

2.8 Development of a bilingual child

2.8.1 Simultaneous acquisition of two languages

According to McLaughlin (1978), it seems that the process of acquisition of a language goes through similar phases and is in general the same with monolingual and bilingual children. Bilingual children only have an extra task: to learn to distinguish between the two language systems. (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 15) In other words, a bilingual child acquires two languages in the same way a monolingual child acquires one, with the only obvious difference – they need to learn to distinguish between both languages. Therefore, bilingualism does not require any special mental processes or capabilities.

2.8.2 Separation of the two languages

As far as the separation of the two languages is concerned, there are two different possibilities: Either the children go through a mixed phase when they combine both languages or ever since the children start speaking, they keep both languages separate. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 90)

An example: when a child says a grammatically correct, but mixed sentence (some of the words in first language and some in the other, for example Czech and English), it can either be a proof that the child cannot distinguish between the two languages, or it can mean that the child is using two separate language systems because he/she keeps the correct word order (in the Czech part of the sentence, the child follows the grammatical rules of the Czech language and the same goes for English) and pronounces all the words correctly, too.

According to Harding and Riley, mixing the languages is a part of a process during which the children learn how to sort the languages out. Most children mix the languages at first, but then they gradually learn how to distinguish between them. However, some children never or

very rarely mix the two languages. Parents naturally think that the children are confused, while they are only building two separate language systems.

Harding and Riley (2008) described three phases of the language development of bilingual children:

Phase number one:

In the first phase the child only disposes of one lexical system (vocabulary), which consists of words in both languages, but the adequate pairs of words have not yet been made. Some of the words used during this phase are a combination of both languages.

Grosjean (2001, p. 86) gives the following examples:

“pinichon” = pickle and cornichon; “shot” = chaud and hot; “assit” = assis and sit (English and French)

Some children create compound words, such as:

“bitte-please”, “lune-moon” or “pour-for”.

In the first phase, children can only pronounce words in one way, thus all the words sound the same, regardless the language.

Phase number two:

The child now has two separate sets of vocabulary, but still uses the same grammatical rules for both languages. The situation gets increasingly complicated and the child will hesitate when a word is similar in both languages, but is pronounced differently.

In this phase, the child can know many words for which he/she does not have an equivalent in the other language. At the same time, he/she often avoids the words that are difficult to pronounce and replaces them by their equivalent.

Another typical thing for phase number two is adding words into sentences in the other language, for example: “In the sky, there is the *soleil*.”

One piece of evidence that the child is creating two separate vocabularies is the moment when he/she becomes able to translate from one language to the other.

For now, the child only uses one grammatical system, but this fact is not too obvious unless the two languages have very different rules.

Phase number three

The vocabularies, as well as the grammatical rules of both languages, are now separate. In this phase, children start to associate specific people with specific language. They sometimes ask their parents questions like: “Do all the mothers speak French?” or “Do all the children here in France speak English at home?”. The reason for such questions is that they are sometimes confused about their own bilingualism. The children try to recognize and identify their social surroundings; they want to make clear who speaks what language. They also want to make it easier for themselves to choose appropriate words and correct sentence structure. Some children also tend to generalize certain grammatical rules in order to keep both languages separate. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 90-92)

- There is very little known about the process of language separation, but it is certain that eventually the children master it and then cease to create mixed sentences.
- Duration of the phases described above may be very individual for each child. It is not possible to tell at what age the child will get to the next phase. They are only reference points on a continuum. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 92)
- The mixing of languages in bilingual children occurs less frequently if both languages are in equilibrium and if the context of their usage is clearly separated. (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 79)
- Language dominance is not and cannot be static. It changes according to the family situation – if the family moves to a different country, the local language will then become dominant and vice versa. In some cases, the children can also temporarily forget one of the languages. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 92)

If the same idea can be expressed by using simple grammatical rules in one language, while the second language requires a complex sentence structure, children will almost certainly learn the simpler rule and a temporary imbalance can occur. This does not necessarily mean that the language they used is dominant, though. If it seems that the child has one dominant language, the process of separation of languages can take longer, because the dominant

language influences the second one in terms of either grammar or pronunciation. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 92)

Harding and Riley (2008) also emphasize that significantly less contact with one language than with the other leads to weakening. The degree of weakening of the language will affect the time it takes until the child gets rid of their mistakes.

2.8.3 Awareness of own bilingualism

When do the children realize they can speak two languages? Based on the scientific observations, Harding and Riley (2008) state that it is evident that they start using the two or more languages correctly at the age of three. This is also the age when choosing the right language is no longer a problem. Another sign that the children are aware of their bilingualism could be that they are able to translate for people who cannot understand.

Children perceive languages differently than adults. They do not see impenetrable barriers between different languages, which actually seems to be the right approach. For them, such terms as “English”, “French”, “Czech”, “German” etc. are too abstract and they have difficulties understanding them. Until the age of six or seven years, children often describe their situation as: “the way I speak with mum/dad/classmates...” instead of using the specific name of the language they use. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 93)

Most bilingual children go through a stage when they verify what language they speak. Two of the most common questions are: “What language am I speaking now?” and “Am I speaking English now with you, mum?”. Some children might do this to boast about their bilingualism, but the younger ones, who do not realize their exceptionality, more than likely just want to verify their identity and state: this is me and this is how I communicate. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 93)

2.8.4 Problems associated with bilingualism – stammering, mistakes

Despite of the fact that many people believe that bilingualism causes stammering, the British Stammering Association confirmed that there is no evidence for this statement. Even in the countries with high number of bilinguals, the number of people who suffer from stammering is not higher.

However, there can be an indirect relationship between bilingualism and stammering. It seems that most children go through a phase when they stammer and it is very important that they do not start being ashamed for it. If the child feels anxious or ashamed by their speech during this period, it can lead to serious complications and even to permanent stammering. A bilingual child can be stressed by the need of choosing the right language or by speaking in the non-dominant language in front of strangers. Another stressful scenario can occur when the bilingual child uses wrong language and gets laughed at because of it. If this child has preconditions to stammering, it can develop due to this kind of stress. Last, but not least, bilingual children are seen as something rare or atypical. Therefore, other people pay more attention to their speech than they would ever pay to the speech of monolingual children. The comments they make can be positive or negative, in both cases, however, they unnecessarily draw attention to what is natural and automatic for a child. (Harding and Riley, 2008, p. 94)

All the parents should remember that if their child stammers, it will not help if they react impatiently or irritably. The child should not be corrected either, because that will cause him/her to concentrate more on the way of speaking instead of on the content. Instead, the child should feel relaxed and encouraged to talk about the topics that interest him/her.

2.8.5 Abusive language

It is a common fact that children all over the world revel in breaking taboos when there are no adults around. Swear-words are easy to pick up and as soon as certain children realize the "uniqueness" and social deviance attached to these words, they may use them to 'fit' in or in some occasions, to test their parents' patience. Family values play a large role in deciding how parents respond to swear words. For some families, swearing is not treated as a big deal and parents accept that kids are likely to use swear words. However, families who are

particularly offended by swearing and cursing will want to address the problem immediately. According to Harding and Riley (2008), the use of swear words by children indicates to the parents that their children have started a process of further social integration. (However, this does not mean that the parents should overlook or support such words. They should explain to them that swear-words are unacceptable within social contact).

There are many different approaches taken to address and discipline this type of behaviour. Many parents first explain to their children that it is wrong to swear and lay down rules to prevent their children from engaging in it. In the context of bilingual families, parents who are not fluent in the foreign language of the country they live in may be in a position where they will have to take greater caution to prevent this type of abusive language occurring, because their child could easily learn swear-words from their friends, not knowing that they should not use them.

3. PRACTICAL PART

3.1 Observation of families

In this section, the stories of multiple bilingual families will be presented. When looking for bilingual families, I got in contact with relatives and friends who live abroad for help. In my surroundings, there are several couples who are raising their children bilingually. The original purpose was to choose one family that I would observe. However, I gradually came across many bilingual families with interesting stories, who displayed a willingness to participate in my project. Therefore, I felt that having a slightly larger database would give me greater depth and understanding to the topic at hand; by comparing and contrasting the various approaches adopted by different families. Based on the data I collected, I will attempt to answer some of the following key research questions associated with communication in bilingual families:

- Do the children in bilingual families start talking later than monolingual children?
- Is there any particular system of communication which proved to be the most effective when raising children bilingually?
- Are there any typical speech problems that bilingual children experience?
- Is there a certain age which is the most convenient to start raising a child bilingually?

3.2 Research Methodology

3.2.1 The Scope of Research

My research work concerns the question of communication in bilingual or multi-lingual families. In particular, I focused on communication in terms of using the mother tongues.

3.2.2 Research Goals

The aim of this research is to determine what the parents' perceptions of bilingual communication in their family are. More precisely, I was interested in the communication pattern of the family; the reasons why the parents decided to raise their child/children bilingually; whether they faced any challenges associated with bilingualism and their overall opinion about the decision they made.

3.2.3 Research Question

I have set a general research question: What is the approach of the parents in bilingual family to language education and upbringing of their children?

In order to make the research question more specific, I have further developed and divided this research aim into three areas which explore the topic from different angles, such as:

- What are the parents' ideas of their bilingual children's education?
- What are the mother tongues in the family?
- Did the parents experience any problems associated with bilingualism in their family?

3.2.4 Research Group

All respondents were chosen purposefully, according to the following criteria and types:

- It must be a mixed relationship or marriage.
- One of the used languages must be English.
- Children in these families are bilingual or are becoming bilingual.

Nowadays, most people know at least one bilingual family, thus it was not difficult to find a suitable number of families who met my criteria and were willing to do the interview. It also helped that I have many friends living abroad, especially in Great Britain, Ireland and France, which gave me the opportunity to find some very interesting participant families. Through comparing and contrasting the various perspectives of different families from different

backgrounds and cultures, I hope that this research will offer the reader a broad insight into what bilingualism means to the families who practice it.

Two of the participant families live in France, one lives in Ireland, one in Great Britain and two in the Czech Republic. In four of the families, there are two children and in two of the families, there is only one child. In every family, with the exception of the last one, at least one of the parents is a native English speaker.

3.2.5 The Method of Research

To collect the necessary data, I used the method of semi-structured interview.

“Semi-structured interviews are more relaxed than structured interviews. While researchers using this type are still expected to cover every question in the protocol, they have some wiggle room to explore participant responses by asking for clarification or additional information. Interviewers also have the freedom to be more friendly and sociable. Semi-structured interviews are most often used in qualitative studies. The style is most useful when one is investigating a topic that is very personal to participants. Benefits include the ability to gain rapport and participants' trust, as well as a deeper understanding of responses. Data sets obtained using this style will be larger than those with structured interviews.”⁸

The interviews were conducted via Skype with four of the families who live abroad and in person with the two families who live in the Czech Republic. When interviewing the families living in France, I used both English and French for our communication.

All the interviewees agreed and consented with partaking in the interviews, its recording and further analysis in my bachelor's thesis. With respect to the confidentiality and privacy of the families, I changed the last names. This work will be available on-line for participating families.

⁸ <http://www.examiner.com/article/interview-types-structured-semi-structured-and-unstructured>

During the interviews, I first asked general questions:

- What are the first names of all the members of your family?
- What is your nationality / what are your nationalities?
- How many children do you have?
- What age are you and your children?
- In which country does your family live at the moment?

Then I wanted to find out more about the family, for example:

- How did you meet?
- What are your professions?
- Why did you decide to live in France / Ireland / Czech Republic / Great Britain?

More importantly, I asked about the language pattern in their family, about the way members of the family communicate:

- What are your mother tongues?
- What foreign languages do you speak?
- Please describe how you communicate in your family.

Finally, I asked about the bilingualism in their family:

- Why did you decide to raise your children bilingually?
- Did your children experience any speech problems or major difficulties when they were learning the languages?
- Do you think that it was a good idea to raise your children bilingually?

Since the interview was not fully structured, but only semi-structured, I did not always ask all of the questions. Instead, I wanted to lead a rather natural conversation in order to get as much information as possible.

3.3 Results of the Research

3.3.1 The Hughes Family

1.	Mother	Father	Children	
Name	Jacqueline	James	Marie	Amélie
Age	40	45	8	3
Nationality	French	British		
Country	France			

James and Jacqueline are English-French couple living in France. James came to France in 1990's and works as a teacher. Jacqueline used to work as a teacher as well, but is now on maternity leave, taking care of their two children: 8-year old Marie and 3-year old Amélie. Both parents have a positive attitude to bilingualism, despite of the fact that they never decided to raise their daughters bilingually. Mother (Jacqueline) had an experience with bilingualism in her home region; seeming natural to her. She also thinks highly of learning the English language and is happy that her older daughter can already communicate with a good standard of English. James found it absurd to speak French with his own children.

James and Jacqueline communicate in French, but mother only speaks French with her daughters, while father only speaks English with them. Mother can speak English, but sometimes has difficulties with understanding Marie when she speaks at a faster pace with her father, but seemingly, she does not mind. When the situation arises where she cannot understand something that they are saying, she asks them to repeat the sentence.

The parents agree that bilingualism in their family is a 'natural thing' and do not understand why some people "make such big deal of it". The father recognizes his standpoint in terms of being "the source of English" in their family and admits that he likes to teach his daughters English songs, poems, and buys them English-written books.

Both girls began speaking at a typical age. Initially, they spoke in French with both parents. Marie started to speak English when she was three years old. Amélie is also starting to speak English and she can already understand everything.

Marie speaks English with good construction of sentences and a wide vocabulary. She expresses contentment for being bilingual. She has many friends in Britain, so she can practice when her family visits their relatives in Liverpool. She finds it 'natural' to speak English with her dad and French with her mum and become accustomed to this routine while interacting with her parents. "It is so weird when my mum speaks English to me.", she comments.

Marie is good at writing and reading in English, but does not want to study this language at school. She does not tell her new friends that she is bilingual straight away, because she does not want to look like she is 'bragging'.

The parents admit that greater effort is needed when the children are small, but the whole family is satisfied with being bilingual.

3.3.2 The Johnson Family

2.	Mother	Father	Children
Name	Caroline	John	Tom
Age	33	35	4
Nationality	Belgian	British	
Country	Ireland		

John and Caroline met on holidays in Belgium, where Caroline is originally from. At first, they lived in Belgium, where their son Tom (4) was born. Caroline speaks French and John speaks English to Tom and they communicate in both languages together. The family recently moved to Ireland. Tom is used to speaking English with his dad, therefore he did not experience many problems when they moved.

Since the parents sometimes communicate in English and sometimes in French, the approach to bilingualism is different to that of the Hughes family. Tom has become accustomed to switching between English and French, therefore his bilingualism comes to him naturally and he does not get confused. From the information gathered, Tom chooses the language according to the context of the situation or scenario. There are some words which he continuously pronounces with an English accent (his name, for example), but he regularly answers the phone in French.

Caroline and John believe it to be necessary to correct Tom when he makes a mistake or mispronounces a word, but primarily, they support and encourage him in learning and communicating in both languages.

The parents made the conscious decision to raise their son bilingually because they recognized it as a very useful skill for his both his education and future; and they never regretted their decision. Tom does not stammer and never had any unusual speech problems.

3.3.3 The Clarke Family

3.	Mother	Father	Children	
Name	Lindsay	Sean	Audrey	John
Age	44	50	15	13
Nationality	Irish	Irish		
Country	France			

Lindsay and Sean are both Irish and have known each other since they were teenagers. They came to France in 1997 because they wanted to explore a different culture and try living abroad for some time. Eventually, they “fell in love with France” and both embarked on occupations which they were satisfied with, therefore they decided to settle there. They both speak English with an Irish accent and so do their two children, Audrey and John. Sean works as a chemist and Lindsay owns a bookshop.

The parents admit that neither of them have a great flare for languages and it took them a number of years to learn a satisfactory level of French. Although they are both well-educated, they find French language very difficult.

Lindsay and Sean are very proud of their Irish origin and their identity is extremely important for them. They never thought about applying for French nationality and their two children also love Ireland. Sean and Audrey visit their grandparents in Ireland at least three times a year and the whole family always spends Christmas there, too.

The language situation of this family is very easy to describe: English at home, French outside. The parents did not teach their children French – they learnt the language socially; from their friends and, predominantly, at school. Lindsay admits that when her son and daughter were small, she used to prevent them from speaking French at home. The only possible dilemma is that their children speak French together at school, because they did not want to speak English in front of their French classmates. As a result, they occasionally speak French together at home when the parents are not around.

Neither Audrey, nor John had speech problems and it was easy for them to learn French. Despite of the fact that they are very good at it, one of the things they dislike is translating for

people who do not speak English or French.

Both children sometimes replace an English word by a French one, especially when talking about their interests. This is called the language interference, which was described in chapter 2.4.1. The reason for the language interference is that the children usually talk about such topics with their French friends, so they know all of the “cool” words that teenagers use, of which they do not know the equivalent in English. Sean does not support mixing languages because he wants his children to speak correctly in both languages and he knows that they do not have any problem separating English and French. They have, what he describes as ‘perfect’ knowledge of both languages, but their French is naturally slightly better as far as the vocabulary and grammar are concerned.

When Audrey was ten years old, she did not like being asked about her bilingualism, but now she feels proud and so does her younger brother. Audrey studies German at school and she is very good at it. She thinks that it is definitely easier to learn another language when a person is bilingual, because she can compare the grammatical rules and some of the words are also similar in German and English or French, therefore they are easier to remember.

The fact that the parents decided they would only speak English at home does not mean that they refuse the French language. Sean and Lindsay admire bilingualism of their two children and they realize that they are rather French than Irish, since they were both born and raised in France.

3.3.4 The Harper Family

4.	Mother	Father	Children	
Name	Christine	Jeremy	Danielle	Peter
Age	39	39	17	12
Nationality	French	British		
Country	Great Britain			

Christine and Jeremy met in France when they were both twenty years old. Christine is originally from Orléans, but studied at University in Paris. Jeremy came to France to study at the same university for one semester. He could speak French, however not fluently, while Christine was very good at speaking English. They developed a strategy where Christine would only speak English and Jeremy would always reply in French in order to improve their language skills and to learn from one another. When Jeremy returned to Great Britain to finish his studies there, they stayed in touch and a few months later, Christine was offered employment in Britain which she accepted and moved there to live with Jeremy.

At the beginning, they spoke English on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, while French on Fridays and during the weekends. Surprisingly, this system proved to be functional and effective. They both soon reached a level close to that of native speakers.

In 1997, their daughter, Danielle, was born and gradually, the language pattern in their family changed. The parents started to communicate in French together and they only talked French to Danielle until she was two years old. When her father started speaking English to her, Danielle quickly learnt the second language and became bilingual. When Danielle was three years old, the whole family moved to France, because of a serious illness of Christine's mother.

Two years later, Christine gave birth to their baby son, Peter. The parents decided to raise him bilingually and again, it seems that they experienced little or no problems, because Peter had enough opportunities to practice both languages and his parents paid a lot of attention to his language development.

When Peter was six years old, the family moved back to Great Britain and it only took the children a week to replace French by English.

The language pattern changed again. Since the family moved back to Great Britain, the children only speak English with each other and to their parents. Jeremy and Christine speak French between themselves. Jeremy speaks in English to children when they are alone and in French in front of his wife. Christine always speaks in French to her two children. The reason for this was that the father loves French and uses it daily at work; and for his wife, it has always been a little bit easier to express herself in French, even though her English has reached a high standard.

To summarize, the children did not neglect French, (which used to be their mother tongue, as well as English) their knowledge could be described simply as more passive – meaning that they can understand everything, but feel more at ease speaking in English, their dominant language. (The topic of language dominance was described in chapter 2.4.1, page 18). They both have a few classes a week of French at school and are very good at it, but since they are both interested in different fields of study than foreign languages, they have not considered studying French for example at university.

The compelling thing about this family is the way in which their language pattern changed several times and the children always adapted easily to the new system of communication with their parents. Both parents believe that if their children ever need to start speaking French again, it would not be problem for them, because in their childhood, they used to be fluent and they never lost contact with this language.

3.3.5 The Robertson Family

5.	Mother	Father	Children	
Name	Eva	Paul	Sarah	George
Age	29	32	5	3
Nationality	Czech	British		
Country	Czech Republic			

Eva is a twenty-nine year-old Czech woman from Trutnov. After her secondary school, she attended a one-year intensive course of English language and subsequently, she decided to move to London. Eva had spent her first two years in Great Britain working as an au-pair, when she changed her job to work as a flight attendant. She eventually met Paul, young man from London. They started living together in London, but only a few months later, when Eva became pregnant, they decided to move to Prague, as Eva strongly believed that her parents should have regular contact with their grandchild. Since then, they have lived in the Czech Republic, where Paul works as a language teacher.

After spending three years in Great Britain and also because her husband is British, she can now say that she is fully bilingual in Czech and English. Paul has been studying Czech for five years and he speaks well enough to enable himself to converse with his Czech friends about everyday topics and also to be able to explain the English grammar to his Czech students, but he does not believe that he has reached a level of fluency in Czech. This was one of the reasons why Eva and Paul decided that she would speak Czech with their children and Paul would only speak in English with them. They consider it a major advantage for a Czech child to be bilingual.

Eva and Paul have two children, five-year old Sarah and three-year old George. (They chose these names because they have got a Czech equivalent, too.) The children usually speak in Czech together, but in English when they are alone with their dad. It seems that neither of them has a dominant language. The first words they said were in Czech, but thanks to their dad, who spends a lot of time with them, their English and Czech are equally good. However, there are a few situations when Paul speaks in Czech with his children: when Eva's parents or some of the Czech friends who cannot speak English are visiting or when the children ask

him to read them a fairytale which is written in Czech.

What is interesting about these two children is that when they came back home after spending two weeks alone with their grandparents in Great Britain, they only spoke in English for a week, even with their mum.

Both children started speaking a little later than usual, which the parents connect with their 'bilingual development'. Sarah used to be considered to have a strong accent in both languages, so it was hard for her friends to understand her, but she has proved herself to be very intelligent and these problems did not last long. Sarah's younger brother started to talk earlier than his sister, but he stammers a little. His parents do not worry too much about this, as he is still small and they believe it is just a temporary problem. However, they are planning to sign him to speech therapy, because they do not want to neglect anything.

Despite some of problems the family is experiencing, the parents insist on raising their two children bilingually. They are convinced that it is the best they can do for them. Moreover, they believe that being bilingual creates more openness and tolerance to foreign cultures and that it will give their children a chance to succeed in their lives.

3.3.6 Kateřina and Simir

6.	Mother	Father	Child
Name	Kateřina	Simir	Nicolas
Age	25	27	4
Nationality	Czech	Turkish	
Country	Czech Republic		

Kateřina is a twenty-five year-old Czech woman originally from Beroun and Simir, who is two years older than his girlfriend, is Turkish, from Istanbul. The couple met in Turkey, where Kateřina spent one year on Erasmus program. After the Erasmus program, Kateřina came back to the Czech Republic to finish her studies in Prague. She visited Simir several times during the following year and then they decided they would start living together in the Czech Republic. Simir found a job in Prague and the couple had a baby, Nicolas, who is now four years old.

This couple is particularly unique from all of the previous families, because they decided to raise their son trilingually. Kateřina and Simir communicate in English, but neither of them is fluent in it. To a large degree, Kateřina cannot speak Turkish, except for some basic phrases and Simir cannot speak well Czech, either. Therefore, they use all three languages at home, without having any specific system in place. Kateřina usually speaks in Czech with her son, but when her boyfriend is around, she speaks in her intermediate level English, while Simir tries to speak in Turkish to Nicolas, except for when the whole family is together. The whole family visits Simir's relatives in Turkey twice a year and they all speak in Turkish to Nicolas.

It is important to note that Nicolas, who will soon be going to kindergarten, cannot speak any of the three languages fluently – it seems that he does not know when to use which language and he speaks in rather short, simple sentences. Apparently, he is confused about all the different languages. Nicolas also mixes Turkish and English. Kateřina is beginning to worry about her son's language development and would like to try to stop speaking English in front of him and only speak either Turkish or Czech instead.

Simir does not agree with this idea, because he believes that English is the most useful language their child could learn, but at the same time, he is very proud of his origin and wants his son to feel half-Turkish.

In my research, I interviewed six different families. Two of them live in the Czech Republic, four live abroad.

3.3.7 The Hughes family

The parents find the bilingual communication in their family natural and are satisfied with the results of the bilingual upbringing of their children as they seem to not experience any speech problems or difficulties with separation of the two languages. Both children started to talk at typical age. The bilingual communication is functioning, the parents do not regret their decision and the children are fully bilingual.

3.3.8 The Johnson family

The parents decided to raise their son bilingually and they find it important to correct his mistakes. The parents are happy with their decision and the system of communication seems to be effective. Tom does not have any speech problems associated with his bilingualism.

3.3.9 The Clarke family

At the beginning, this family did not support bilingualism at home, they did not decide to raise their children bilingually, but since the family lives in a foreign country, the children learnt the second language at school and in a social contact and are now bilingual. The parents do not support mixing of languages and insist on strict separation of the two languages. The children are satisfied with their bilingualism and their parents are proud of them.

3.3.10 The Harper family

The system of communication in this family changed several times and the children always easily adapted to the changes. Both children were raised bilingually, but their knowledge of the second language is now rather passive. However, they feel that if they ever need to start using the second language, it will not be a big problem for them since they used to be bilingual in their childhood.

3.3.11 The Robertson family

The parents communicate in their mother tongue with their children, which means that they are naturally bilingual. They both started to talk a little later than usual and experienced some problems that are typically associated with bilingualism, such as strong accent or stammering.

Despite of these problems, the family believes that bilingual upbringing of their children is the best they can do for them and in general, they are satisfied with their decision.

3.3.12 Kateřina and Simir

This couple has decided to raise their child trilingually, but it seems that due to the absence of a unified system of communication, their son is experiencing various speech difficulties. The mother would like to change the system of communication, however her partner insists on this type of upbringing of their son. Their son is only four years old, therefore it is not possible to tell whether he will eventually become fully trilingual or not.

4. CONCLUSION

The main goal of the theoretical part of this thesis was to introduce the issue of bilingualism. Furthermore, it aimed to describe the process of becoming bilingual.

The practical part was focused on presenting six bilingual families, describing their communication patterns and possible problems they experienced during the bilingual upbringing of the children.

The results of the interviews point to the fact that it is more effective to choose a unified system of communication in the family in order to be successful in bilingual or multilingual upbringing of the children. Apparently it does not matter what kind of system the parents choose, but it is important that the system is unified and adhered strongly in to prevent the children from being confused.

The research has not shown that it is more effective or preferable to start with bilingual education at a particular age, leaving aside the fact that it is easier to acquire a foreign language at a young age. The results also suggest that it is not possible to neglect the link between bilingual upbringing and speech problems that are typically associated with bilingualism. However, five of the six interviewed families are satisfied with the decision they have made (whether consciously or naturally) and it is also very common that the parents feel proud of their children being bilingual. Most of the interviewed families believe that it is a big advantage for a child to be bilingual.

When writing, I struggled to find references which offered detailed information and analysis on the topic of bilingualism. Therefore I drew the information for the theoretical mainly from the only available book that is current and focuses on a particular theme of my work.

I consider the process of writing this thesis very enriching, because I learnt a lot of new information about bilingualism and it was very interesting to do interviews with participating families and listen to various stories as well as the experience with bilingual

education. I hope that this work will help someone to decide whether to raise their child bilingually, or to rely on the teaching of foreign languages at school. As I already mentioned, bilingualism is a very complex topic which could be elaborated in a more in-depth way as the theme of a diploma dissertation thesis.

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ATTACHEMENTS

„10 Steps to Raising a Multilingual Child

The truth is you raise a bilingual or multilingual baby the same way as a monolingual baby -- you talk to them! Infants *acquire* language; they can't really be taught. However, you can certainly improve conditions, avoid pitfalls, and help the process along!

1. Agree on multilingualism
2. Know what to expect and when
3. How many languages - what is practical?
4. Decide which language system works for you
5. Don't wait - now is the perfect time!
6. Declare your intentions
7. Establish a support network
8. Get relevant materials
9. Set your goals, but remain flexible
10. Have patience and keep going

1. Agree on multilingualism

Most families that have the opportunity to raise a bilingual or multilingual child can come to an amicable agreement whether to pursue it or not. But, sometimes we are asked, "What do I do if my partner isn't supportive of me speaking my native language to our child?" This is very sad but also understandable. There can be a fear of being left out, not knowing "the secret language", or concerns if it's good for baby. Some brave souls keep going despite lack of support. We salute you - wanting to speak to your child in your native language is something your child will benefit from, guaranteed. And in the meantime, your significant other may well come around. Some parents go off on the other extreme and speak a language that is not their mother tongue to baby from birth, just to provide early language exposure.

Luckily, most couples find a way that is acceptable to all parties, as well as beneficial for the baby.

2. Know what to expect and when

Some people just want to plunge into raising a multilingual baby, especially if bilingualism and multilingualism are common in their community. This *lassiez-faire* approach is great, as it means the parents are comfortable and committed to the concept, and this attitude promotes learning. However, for others, multilingualism can turn the prior communication pattern in the family on its heels, so it pays to be well-prepared. Also, informed parents spot warning signs earlier and know what to do when problems arise such as speech and hearing difficulties, one language lagging behind, or the child's refusal to speak a language. Educate yourself about your baby's language milestones, and you will no doubt marvel at these just as you cherish the first time he rolls over, sits up, and takes his first step.

3. How many languages?

What do you want to accomplish with multilingualism? Do you want to share the heritage language of your family or just help your child learn a foreign language without the necessity for study? The motivations are many and varied, but the practicalities are similar. First, how many languages you choose depends upon the practical elements in the household. For example, can someone within the immediate family provide meaningful language exposure in another language? Do you live in an area where there are plenty of foreign speakers?

Generally, the number of languages within the household is the number of languages baby gets on his plate, maybe with one extra. So, most parents who don't speak a foreign language themselves typically don't go beyond bilingualism for their child. On the other hand, when each parent speaks a different foreign language, they may venture for those two, the community language and possibly one more, i.e. four languages.

Beyond four simultaneous languages, the success rate starts to fall significantly. Researchers claim that a child needs to be exposed to a language 30% of their waking time to actively speak it. Regardless of how many languages, you do need regular exposure and creating a need for baby to use them - plus the ability to maintain that for at least the first five years of the child's life. If you're able to provide that for the languages you want her to learn, go for it!

4. Decide on a Language System

Your family should discuss a few issues to make sure everyone is on the same page. Who should speak what language to baby? The two most common and among the most successful language systems are One Person One Language and Minority Language at Home. If you have the opportunity and desire, you could add a language beyond what the family provides through an outside source like an immersion program, a nanny or au pair. This is perhaps the easiest way for parents who don't speak any foreign languages to give early language exposure to their baby. Is there a time specific rule you would like to apply? For example, both parents will speak the minority language during the weekend even though one parent may only be a rudimentary speaker of the language. This is a perfectly legitimate solution, as well. “

5. Don't wait - Now is the perfect time!

The ideal time to start multilingualism is *even before your baby is born*. Only recently, with the help of modern technology, have researchers been able to actually see what's going on inside the head of infants. As it turns out, a baby knows important things about language even before birth, and he gains fundamental verbal skills long before he utters his first word. So, why is it a bad idea to postpone it? You could say the brain is "primed" the first three years of life with synapses at a peak, busily setting up the optimal neural pathways to mediate language. This construction of the brain's language chip continues, but at an ever-slowng rate until late childhood. Even if you don't start from birth, the earlier is truly easier for both you and your child. By the early teens, the baby's special abilities are completely gone. Besides, the younger the child, the less likely they will care about blatant errors. They will just happily chatter away until your ears are ready to fall off. What better learning conditions can you ask for?

6. Declare your intentions

Before your baby is born, everyone will have an opinion about the names you're considering for your little one. Once the name is given, most people drop the subject. The same is true of multilingualism. Everyone will no doubt have an opinion before you start, but once you begin, they will just accept it. The best tactic is simply to not ask for support or approval from

your friends and extended family. We have found it is better to never open the door for negotiations - simply inform them of your decision. Most opposition you encounter can be politely ignored with a nod or a smile. You might simply say, "That's interesting" or "That's a good point." If it's someone whose opinion you really care about, gently educate them. Well-informed explanations will go a long way. Dispelling common myths on multilingualism and show them the advantages instead, should help you persuade them.

7. Establish a support network

Get your support from others like you. Most things are more fun and rewarding if you share them with like-minded people. Not only do you have a peer group to discuss the art of raising multilingual children and benefit from the experiences of others, but you will build a network of other speakers of your minority language. Equally important, it gives your child the opportunity to hear, speak, and interact with other children in the minority language. This is an enormous motivator for them (this time, group pressure actually works in your favor!) And playgroups are among the best and easiest ways to do it. They may even remain friends with a few of the kids for a long time. Play friends are probably the best way to ensure continuous language exposure over the years - especially when Mom and Dad lose the coolness factor.

8. Get relevant materials

Having books, music, movies, and toys in your minority language is both fun and useful. There are other household items such as place mats, tableware, posters, etc. that also are helpful. Tangible items that can be played with, mouthed, and shaken will provide a more realistic reminder to your child of the language.

9. Set your goals, but be flexible

Unfortunately, there are many things that can undermine the best laid language learning strategy. The most difficult ones include divorce or loss of a parent. Less dire ones might be that your Russian-speaking nanny just quit, or your child was wait listed at the immersion preschool you had counted on. Each situation has to be evaluated, but with flexibility you can get back on track. It's certainly not the end of the world if your child gets less exposure to the

minority language for a period of time. She will remember what she has learned when you're able to increase the language interaction again.

The dangerous threshold to avoid is refusal to speak. In this situation, you'll have to be creative and try to find increased exposure to the minority language. Or, you may have to change your goals. Is passive knowledge sufficient for now? You can still bring the language to active use later, and it will be much easier for your child than for someone without the foundation you have already set. That, in itself is a gift beyond measure. But whatever you do, keep your child in contact with the language in some way!

10. Have patience and keep going

Raising multilingual children does require patience, and there will no doubt be frustrating times. But, of course, parents of monolingual children experience frustration, too! Don't worry if your child doesn't speak his languages as quickly as his friends or with the same proficiency in all of the languages. Reality doesn't always fit our plans. Focus on the success, marvel at what your child *can* do, and praise, praise, *praise!* Remember that if you don't try, you don't accomplish anything. Rest assured that when your child says, "I want a hug" in your own language, you'll almost cry with pride. At that moment, it won't matter that it took some extra effort or that you had to wait a bit for the result.

Raising a multilingual child is an immensely rewarding experience. Many of the world's parents are raising their children with more than one language, so go for it!"⁹

⁹ http://www.multilingualchildren.org/getting_started/tensteps.html