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## **‘LANGAUGE-ONLY’ OR ‘INTENTIONAL’ BILINGUALISM – THE BENEFIT OF CHOICE**

### **Abstract**

The present paper explores various aspects of bilingualism. It explores the traditional types of bilingualism and the less familiar ‘artificial’ bilingualism, which is bilingualism in a monolingual family living in a monolingual society. Linguists and child psychologists propose that from-birth-bilingualism should be employed only in cases of families where family members belong to different language groups or different societies or cultures. They claim that the bilingual child needs not only the individual language, but also the culture behind the language (the sociological benefit), and only a native speaker of that language with their extended family can provide this. Older studies even showed that bilinguals tested in their primary language lagged behind their peers, due to the interference of their inferior language. As a result, no type of bilingualism was encouraged. Recent studies, however, have shown that bilingual children not only do not lag behind monolingual children in cognitive and verbal abilities, but they also have an advantage as they reach old age. They are much less prone to dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.

The present paper describes the existing types of bilingualism, and its advantages with special emphasis on the less known type of bilingualism, namely the so-called ‘artificial’ bilingualism, or ‘language-only’ bilingualism. If the traditional types of bilingualism are a matter of necessity (personal or societal), ‘language-only’ bilingualism can be and undoubtedly is a matter of choice.

### **1. Bilingualism and society**

In the past, children from a bilingual background were often perceived as having a handicap and if these children didn’t do well at school, their bilingualism was seen as the cause of their failure (Wei 2007:16–22). There was also a widespread belief that bilingualism has a negative effect on a human being’s intellectual and spiritual growth. There were frequent stories of children who persisted in speaking two languages in school having had their mouths washed with soap or being beaten with a cane. Bilinguals were considered “semilingual” and many problems – individual as social, were falsely

attributed to bilingualism (Wei 2007: 22). The concern that bilingual foreign language acquisition (BFLA) leads to delayed and even impaired forms of language development has been expressed in a number of ways. Bialystok (in Genesee and Nicoladis 2005) claimed that BFLA might result in feeble cognitive and linguistic development. Macnamara (in Genesee and Nicoladis 2005) among others was certain that bilingual education puts children at risk for academic failure or delay. Diebold (in Genesee and Nicoladis 2005) went even further and claimed that BFL learners will be socio-cultural misfits, identifying strongly with neither language group (Genesee and Nicoladis 2005: 2). Fortunately, attitudes do not remain constant through time. At the societal level, it changed with the change in the political ideology and at the personal level it changed when the people involved realized that being bilingual can increase their employability or social mobility.

## **2. Types of bilingualism**

Traditionally, bilingualism was linked to child language, and only those children acquiring two, three or more languages from birth or at least early childhood onwards were considered true bilinguals. Recently, learners acquiring a second language in adulthood, or individual speakers successively learning two or more languages, can also be considered bilinguals.

The basic function of language is communication; however, this does not take place only in the first language or mother tongue (L1). Indeed, in the L1 the function of communication is so much more than the language itself; it is the means of identification, emotions and appurtenance. Acquisition of the first language (L1A) is fast (although we acquire it through the entire course of our lives), natural, spontaneous, unguided, unorganised, inevitable, successful and is executed through the contact with the target language (Pirih Svetina 2005: 8-10).

Foreign language acquisition (FLA) can make a person monolingual as well as bi- or multilingual (BFLA, MFLA). Therefore, the speaker who independently of the communicative context alternately uses two languages, is called a bilingual and the phenomenon itself bilingualism. Consequently, we distinguish between societal and individual bilingualism (Unuk 1997: 32).

Every language is connected to a specific culture. Accordingly, Furlan (2002: 58-59) claims that every bilingual is in his/her fundamental sense also bicultural. The repertoire of behaviour and knowledge is not only quantitatively but also qualitatively bigger than the one of the monolingual/mono-cultural. The cultural input from one and the other language is usually provided by the extended family, namely cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, who have ample knowledge of their culture and are through relational ties eager to communicate it to the child thus making him/her bilingual. Bilingualism, however, should not be taken as a sum of two mono-lingualisms.

The type of bilingualism mentioned above is so-called *individual* bilingualism Hamers and Blanca (quoted in Butler and Hakuta 2007: 115) as opposed to *societal* bilingualism which is explained below.

### **2.1. Societal bilingualism**

Bilingualism inevitably emerged in countries which developed from former colonies, where bilingualism was necessary for any type of communication. Children in countries like India, South Africa, Hong Kong, Jamaica,.. first learnt their mother tongue, but later, as they entered school they would learn also the official language (taught in school, used in courts, the media, etc.) which was in the above-mentioned cases English. This type of bilingualism can be found also along the borders of countries where ethnic minorities of neighboring countries live (e.g. members of the Hungarian ethnic minority on the Slovene border with Hungary, and the Italian and Austrian ethnic minorities on the borders of Slovenia with Italy and Hungary. The same holds for the Slovene ethnic minorities on the other side of the Slovene border. Families involved in this type of bilingualism usually consists of one or both parents speaking the “foreign language” and the society filling in for the official language.

### **2.2. Individual Bilingualism**

Later, with increasing migration, traveling, commuting, people got to know people of other nationalities, got close, got married, made families for themselves, and even though they frequently lived far from the border, continued to cultivate both languages of the parents. This is no longer bilingualism characteristic of a bilingual country or ethnic minority, but a kind of individual bilingualism, where the decision of the bilingual nature of the child rested solely upon the resolution of the parents to carry it out or not. Due to its individuality and the various circumstances in which it occurred (Worrall, 1972), while in the case of individual bilingualisms (if the parents chose to raise their children as bilinguals), the situation, combination of languages, cultures, etc. were so different it would be difficult to find respondents of this types fitting into one particular category. Such bilinguals were consequently dealt with individually and usually by their parents or friends who were linguists or at least interested in linguistics.

Both above-mentioned types of bilingualism could be labeled bilingualism out of necessity. It was necessary to teach both languages to the child for him/her to communicate with their environment (the family and wider – the society). And over the decades linguists and psychologists have striven to prove that bilingualism has advantages rather than disadvantages, as opposed to the common belief earlier in the development of applied linguistics and SLA. In accordance with the newest findings we claim that bilingualism as a means of SLA should not only be the privilege of the few who undergo it as a matter of necessity, but it should also be a possibility for those who choose to undergo it for no societal reason but the fact they want children to undergo

SLA as early in life as possible. In this paper, we wish to point out the frequently neglected type of bilingualism which does not come as a matter of **necessity** but rather a matter of **choice**, namely ‘language-only’ or monocultural bilingualism.

### **2.3. ‘Language-only’ or monocultural bilingualism**

The bilingualism which emerges in a monolingual family with the sole purpose to teach the child a foreign language from the earliest possible age is called **‘language-only’** (Jurančič Petek 2002) or **monocultural bilingualism**. It is sometimes called **‘intentional’** bilingualism (Stefanik 1999). This type of bilingualism does not arise from necessity, namely the parents or other members of the family do not belong to different cultures or different language groups and it would be difficult for the child to communicate with both parents or with members of the extended family if s/he did not have at least the basic knowledge of the respective languages. The mentioned type of bilingualism develops purely from the initiator of the second language wanting the child to be able to develop both languages from birth in the most ‘painless’ way possible. As a rule, the child comes from a monolingual family living in a monolingual society and the choice of bilingualism is entirely arbitrary. The general attitude of psycholinguists and child psychologists has been such that one should not raise a child as a bilingual without a perfectly good reason (which is communication within the family and outside it), lest they do not want to confuse him/her and cause potential developmental problems. We shall nevertheless demonstrate a case of such bilingualism which has successfully overcome all societal, personal and linguistic barriers for more than eighteen years and continues to do so (for more detailed information see also Jurančič Petek 2002). But first let us examine the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism in general.

## **3. Differences between monocultural and bicultural bilingualism**

### **3.1. Language Choice**

Bilingual upbringing is an option that is usually considered by those parents who have migrated to a new country on a voluntary basis and who are already reasonably fluent in two languages before they start contemplating the bilingual upbringing of their children. There are two general groups that fall into this category: parents who have moved abroad together and have a common mother tongue (“single-language ‘marriages’”) and people who have migrated on their own and have ‘married’ someone who has a different mother tongue (“mixed-language ‘marriages’”), (De Jong 1986:10).

Language-only or monocultural bilingualism does not fall into any of the above categories. Even if the parents have a common mother tongue and are “single-language ‘marriages’”, they had not necessarily migrated to a new country. They live in their

native land. These parents are initially fluent enough in both languages involved and one of them chooses to use one language on the child, usually the native language or the language of the community, while the other parent chooses to introduce the other, namely the second language. The reasons for this choice are solely the intention to provide the child with as much linguistic information at an early period of life as possible in order to trigger L2 acquisition rather than have their child later in life to undergo foreign language learning. It is this early age that is so significant in the learning process (Whitney 1998) even though it might have the backlashes of ‘language-only’ or mono-cultural bilingualism.

### 3.2. Language Strategies

With traditional **societal and individual bilinguals**, language strategies are the following:

1. The first strategy that parents can adopt is the *one-person-one-language method*, where one parent speaks one language with the child and the other parent another language. It is a strategy most commonly used by parents in a mixed-language marriage. And if the partner whose native tongue is the local language doesn’t speak the language of the partner who comes from abroad, it is the only possible way to continue the upbringing. The strategy is also called the rule of Grammont; after the individual who first promoted this principle (Pertot 2004: 26; Wei 2007: 327).
2. The second strategy is to use the foreign language in the home and the language spoken locally outside the home. This is the strategy usually used by parents with a single-language marriage. This method can also be applied by parents with a mixed-language marriage in cases where both partners are quite fluent in each other’s language.
3. The third possible strategy is only one language used with the child up till a certain age and then the other language is introduced (between the age of three and five, for instance).
4. The fourth strategy is to use no particular strategy and to switch between the two languages whenever and wherever it is most convenient; factors such as time, topic, person, place, etc. decide which language is spoken. In a way, this “strategy” is being used by the majority of parents some of the time because even if parents choose one of the first three strategies, it is practically impossible to be consistent at all times in all situations (Grosjean; adapted in Furlan 2002: 60–61).

Language strategies with ‘**language-only**’ or ‘**mono-cultural**’ bilingualism usually rely on language choice. And the language choice is that the second or foreign language would be communicated in the home and to avoid facilitating the already present awkwardness of the situation (a non-native speaker of a language teaching that language to their child) it is done only by one parent, while the other parent and the extended family would compensate for the loss in the child’s native tongue. The choice which parent should be doing which language is not a random one, since there are social norms

which stand against the foreign language being introduced by the mother. Stefanik (1999) mentions that the foreign language in 'intentional' bilingualism will naturally be introduced by the father, because the mother should be raising the child in the mother tongue. But what if the father was not fluent enough in the language and the mother was. Was the family to deprive the child of the possibility of early language learning for the sake of the mother preserving the mother tongue in the child?

The above mentioned mixed strategy (strategy 4) is not an option in 'language-only' bilingualism in a monolingual society. The parent introducing the second language should be persistent in that language until the child is prepared to accept it. Since there is usually no external support for the foreign language, lack of persistence will normally lead to refusal on the side of the child to respond in the foreign language either only in particular situations (e.g. in public) or even in the home (in normal situations). This paper will show that the mother involved in introducing the second language can with her emotional component prove to be an asset to consistency in the child's responses in the foreign language. It should be noted that there are also some pitfalls a mother is faced with in this specific situation (when it comes to reading bed-time stories and later helping the child preparing for school tests in the mother tongue). Later in the paper, when we talk of 'direct' and 'indirect' communication with the child in the foreign language, we shall explain how to overcome some of these difficulties.

### 3.2. Language Balance

When the strategies mentioned above are used, the child learns two languages at the same time, which is known as **simultaneous acquisition**. According to the third strategy a child learns the second language after learning the first, which is known as **successive acquisition**. Some experts claim that simultaneous means the acquisition of both languages from birth onwards, others allow that the acquisition of the second one starts at the age of one or, for some, three. (Furlan 2002: 59–61).

In the case of language-only or **monocultural bilingualism**, simultaneous acquisition is the only option, since as soon the provider of the L2 is recognised as a speaker of the mother tongue and is not supported by an extended family or some other reason to justify the introduction of the L2, the child will question the legitimacy or sense of providing them with the L2. This does not mean, however, that this type of bilingualism cannot result in so-called passive bilingualism (a child can listen with understanding and read a language but do not speak or write it). The more persistent the provider of the L2, the more active the L2 of the bilingual child will be even in a monocultural environment.

It is true that whatever strategy or rules are being applied, it is almost always true that the child is more fluent in one language than in the other and features as the more important or "dominant" language in different stages of the child's bilingual development. Whether both languages spoken at home from the beginning or it is only the foreign language, the language spoken at school will gradually take over (Wei 2007: 4–7, 13–14).

The command of both languages is not equal and one language becomes **weaker** and the other **dominant** (Wa 2004: 4). Consequently, code-switching occurs. Code-switching is a process in which bilinguals incorporate structures from their dominant language into their weaker language or vice versa. It can happen within an utterance (intra-utterance mixing) or between utterances (inter-utterance mixing) and the nature of the mixed elements can be function versus content words. Code-switching is an ordinary way of bilingual expression and it usually does **not** mean a mistake (Genese and Nicoladis 2007:6, 12; Baker 2006: 7). In several phases, linguistic development code-switching becomes a necessity in monocultural bilingualism. It is the only compromise the provider of the L2 and the child can make to bridge the crucial stages in that development and not lose contact. We should not forget that neither the provider nor the child is a native of the L2.

#### **4. A case study of language-only or monocultural bilingualism**

A case study of language-only or monocultural bilingualism was carried out over a period of eighteen years (from 1998 to 2017 and is still on-going). The study involved a Slovene family where the mother and father are both native speakers of Slovene, but decided that the father would be the provider of Slovene for their children, and the mother, being an English teacher, would be the provider of English as a second language. The father would be supported by the environment (including the grandparents, educational institutions and others in the Slovene context) in acquainting the children with what is otherwise known as the ‘mother tongue’.

It was expected that initially both children would be more proficient in the second language, namely English), which would temporarily be the dominant language. However, over time, the ‘mother tongue’, namely Slovene should prevail due to the vastness of exposure.

The first son undergoing the experiment of language-only bilingualism, namely Child 1, was born in 1998, and the second son, Child 2, in 2000. Life took its normal course. Care was taken, however that the impact on the side of the mother was as consistent as possible for the longest period possible. The mother did not wish to force the second language on her children, which is why she was prepared to interrupt the experiment as soon as resistance would begin to show.

##### **4.1. The children’s phonological development in English and Slovene**

The first sounds, either repeated by the child or uttered on their own initiative, as expected, emerged in the case of both children in a certain order (at least the larger groups did), consistent with the normal development of sounds in the early period of a child’s life, e.g. plosives, open vowels, some fricatives, particularly the dentals and labiodentals, but not for the right words (which also replace alveolar fricatives), nasals, other fricatives (alveolars and partially also palatoalveolars), more closer vowels,

diphthongs and triphthongs and approximants. Of the latter, the bilabial approximant *w* came first in the case of Child 1, followed by palatal *j*, and then the lateral *l* and the post-alveolar *r*. Child 1's *r* was due to the vast impact of Slovene (and the mother's imperfect English in the initial stages of communication with the child in English – which was understandably one-directional. Besides *r*, the palato-alveolar fricatives /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ and affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ were the most difficult for Child 1 to learn.

**Sounds which are not part of the Slovene sound system /θ, ð, æ, ŋ/:** Even though the dental fricatives were in the initial phase of Child 1's verbal development something that came quite naturally to him, especially as a substitute for /s/ as in “bus”, he in a sense lost it, or couldn't connect it with words which actually required it, such as “thank you”, “this”, “that”, “something”. Getting the information mainly only from me, he replaced these sounds with the one usually used by Slovenes, namely *t* and *d*. At this point, particularly as he advanced in his vocabulary and became more certain of his English. All the time he was encouraged to produce the *θ* and *ð* as interdental. but this was not something that would come naturally. At the age of three, some intentional resistance could be observed in both children's response to the encouragement to produce the interdental sounds correctly. For a more detailed analysis of the development of speech sounds in Child 1, cf. Jurančič Petek 2002)

#### **4.2. Child 1 and Child 2's bilingual linguistic and cognitive development (landmarks and pitfalls in raising bilingual children in a monolingual family and society)**

As mentioned above, Child 1 and later Child 2 developed vowel sounds and plosives by the age of two, fricatives by the age of four in both languages, namely Slovene and English. The two most obvious English sounds which are non-existent in the Slovene sound system, namely the voiced and voiceless dental fricatives /ð, θ/, were in the case of both, Child 1 and Child 2 produced at the age of 2;6. Both, however, refused to use them consistently in the appropriate contexts. Relatively consistent use of the dental fricatives came at the age between seven and eight, when they had become aware of the fact that it was a good thing not only to master another language, but to also master it well.

The basic differences occurred when these sounds were structured into larger units, into recognizable meaningful units. Often it was difficult to tell apart the languages in which they were uttered. At about the age of 1;0, the babbling stage, Child 1 uttered the words 'mama', 'dada' and later also 'ama'. All three words were related to the needs he had. 'Mama' served as a request for anything, 'dada' when he wanted something from him, and 'ama' when he was hungry. But the crucial question for all involved in this experiment was which intelligible word would he produce first, and would it be in English or in Slovene. At the age of 1;3 and on seeing it on television, he produced the word /dʌ dʌ/ referring to an actual “duck”. Before that he would use onomatopoeic means of expression, e.g. /kwæk kwæk/ for 'duck' and /wuf wuf/ for dog. It came as a



surprise that he eventually chose to utter an English word as his first meaningful word, even though his mother had long since ceased being his primary caretaker having to go to work after 4 months of maternity leave and leaving the child in the care of his grandmother who continuously spoke Slovene with the child. On further reflection, it became obvious that it was not that ‘duck’ was a word from his mother’s tongue that made him produce it before its Slovene equivalent, but that the Slovene equivalent was far more complicated to pronounce, namely ‘račka’. Another reason for choosing this particular word to be his first was the rubber duck he always had in the bath tub. A couple of weeks later we noticed he used the same strategy for pronouncing the word car. Pointing at one he would utter reduplicated /ka: ka:/. Unfortunately, Slovene words (due to the vastness of exposure to it) overrode the English ones which means that at the age between 1;0 and 2;0 the difficulties for the child to express himself in the second language increased, the phonological characteristics of the words uttered in either language were discouragingly Slovene, and the urge to stop speaking English with the child when he was unable to express himself in English while explaining his daily activities the greater. One of the greatest frustrations was knowing that the child wanted to relate his daily activities to his mother first, starting with “Mommy, I ...” and then immediately turning to their father and giving the account in Slovene. The only thing the mother could do in such case was helplessly listen and hope he should acquire a large enough vocabulary in English soon enough to be able to do the same to with her

Child 2’s first word, on the other hand, was ‘car’. It came at the age of about 1;2. It was quite expected, because cars were his favourite toys, unlike Child 1 who favoured tractors over cars.

Although both languages in this language-only bilingual situation developed quite normally, some drawbacks should be mentioned relating to this specific type of bilingualism. One of the most interesting examples was Child 1’s being very late in referring to himself as ‘I’, ‘me’ through English pronouns, even though he had already mastered them in Slovene. He referred to himself as ‘[child’s name] does this’ and ‘[child’s name] does that...’ almost to the age of 4;05, because this was how the mother referred to him and there was no extended family from which he could learn differently. His brother, on the other hand, mastered the pronouns relating to him far more rapidly, because he was able to imitate his brother.

At the age of 2;04 Child 1 was able to combine words into structures such as ‘mama tu’, ‘mama ka’ (= mommy’s car) and ‘dada ka’, while at the age of 2;05 utterances like /ka: ki:/ (standing for ‘car key’) emerged. He was also able to use the word ‘key’ (/ki:/) not only for a key, but also for things related to it, such as key hole, etc. Again, the word ‘key’ was acquired prior to the Slovene expression ‘ključ’ due to the difficult pronunciation of the latter. Proof that he chose the of the two languages for individual words is also that in this period, i.e. at around 2;06, he preferred the Slovene word ‘to’ over the English ‘this’, Slovene ‘tu’ to English ‘here’, Slovene ‘ne’ to English ‘no’.

It was impossible to avoid cases of code switching within a sentence, especially when it came to questions. Not only are the WH questions in English much more difficult to

pronounce than the Slovene questions usually beginning with /k/, e.g. 'kam' (En.: where), 'kaj' (En.: what), 'kateri' (En.: which), but the initial voiceless velar plosive sounds in Slovene have already been fully acquired, which the labio-velar approximant had not yet been. So at the age of 2;02 questions like /ka: iz dis/ ('kaj (=what) is this') or /kam dis/ ('kam (=where) this).

One of the most significant drawbacks of language-only or monocultural bilingualism is limited caretaker knowledge of vocabulary in the L2. Being a non-native speaker of English living in a non-English society the mother in our experiment was faced with quite a number of difficulties regarding vocabulary and when to allow code switching other than that of using different language when communicating to different people. Namely, Child 1 loved looking at books with animals, cars, trucks, tractors, etc. There were numerous expressions his mother had never heard of, e.g. parts of machines he wanted to know the names of at the age of two, strange little animals, all the things that one had to look up in the dictionary and not only once, since these words were seldom used in everyday life. Although the mother strictly followed the rule never to speak to the child in Slovene, and the child new perfectly well that she spoke Slovene, because she had done that that in front of him on numerous occasions talking to friends, relatives, neighbors, we had an agreement that there were some words (either Slovene or English) which she and her child would internationalize, namely for the 'dummy' or 'soother', they used the Slovene expression 'duda' /duda/, which they liked the most, and they also used 'hug' whenever hugging was in question no matter which language the children were using. So 'duda' had to be furnished with English inflections when used in English, so the plural form was 'dudas' and it was also modified with articles, e.g. 'the duda', 'a duda'. On the other hand 'hug' was given Slovene inflections, so 'to hug' was 'hagati', 'I hug you' was 'hagam te', 'give me a hug' was 'daj mi haga'. Again, the choice of expression was conditioned by ease of pronunciation and 'hug' is indeed easier to pronounce than 'objeti' (to hug).

In later stages, code switching to Slovene was allowed with completely new words if there was no equivalent description with simpler words available. This, however, was done in the framework of the English sentence. The mother was careful to avoid complete Slovene sentences, so that the children would not get used to uttering them back to her. Such code switching might seem simple, but it does become an important issue when the children start going to school and start doing homework and preparing for tests in Slovene and the mother, provider of the second language, is forced to help them. She is confronted with a huge dilemma as to which language to use in revising the study material for school.

Consequently, it is possible to conclude that in the case of one-parent-one-language strategy, it is not case of trying to convince the child that the respective language is the only one the parent speaks (which can be the case in bicultural families, but certainly not in monocultural ones), since the child witnesses the parent using the other language with other people on countless occasions. The point is to insist on the notion that this is the only language in which the parent can and is prepared to communicate with the child. The child will need years to discover that he/she can question the choice of language

introduced to him/her by the parent, and by that time they are so very used to and emotionally involved with the chosen type of communication, they will find it difficult to alter it lest for some significant reason. This is why starting with language-only bilingualism from the very beginning, preferably from birth or from the first communication with the provider of the second language is of vital importance.

Situations which can serve as proof for the above-mentioned statements:

At the age of 5;06, Child 1 asked his mother why she spoke to him in English, but to his friends in Slovene. To this point, Child 1 had never raised this question either in relation to his friends or to his father, not because he was not aware of it, but because he was not aware of the fact that this was a question he could ask. It was only at the age of five and over that he felt he had the right to ask this question. His mother gave an intuitive answer, namely that if all his friend had known English, she would have spoken with them in English as well. And as it were, they did not know it, so she could not speak with them that way. On hearing this, he must have obtained a feeling of importance, because he gave a smug smile and never opened the question again.

Another such day came when he was 8;03. His mother was driving him to school, when all-of-a-sudden he asked, "Mommy, can you please speak Slovene?". The mother was surprised at the suddenness of the question, but felt he had a right to require this of her, so she responded with an "Of course I can" and continued with "Sta oba pripeta?" (=Are you both buckled up),.... silence... "Imata vse stvari za šolo?" (=Do you have everything you need for school?) ..... silence ..... "Ali vesta, kaj bo za kosilo danes?" (Do you know what is for lunch (at school) today?)... silence .... This was a very awkward situation for both. The mother's Slovene sounded extremely harsh to both, because in all that time, i.e. more than eight years they had spoken no more than two or three sentences to each other in Slovene. In the end, here, too, Child 1 did not want to leave his comfort zone and immediately said, "Mommy, please speak English". So, they went back to normal, and it continued for ten more years and it is still continuing.

When we say that the mother did speak to her children more than two or three sentences in Slovene, this does not mean that she did not utter any Slovene sentences to them, but rather that the solely English ones were sentences of direct communication, while others were not. When the caretaker, especially if it is the mother, decides to introduce artificial or language-only bilingualism, she can be discouraged as soon as it comes to bedtime stories. She will read them in the L2 for a couple of years then notice that due to lack of L1 input, she should be reading them in the L1, and she might give it up altogether. In order to not deprive her children of Slovene input at bedtime, the mother in our experiment read bedtime stories in Slovene and made comments on them in English thus encouraging both children to talk about them in English. This way she kept **direct (or every-day) communication** in English and **indirect communication** (i.e. through stories) in Slovene. This was also the strategy used in solving the problem of help during preparation for school tests, which could only be done in Slovene. Comments on the course contents, however, were made in English, thus preserving the continuation in the direct communication in English.

### **4.3. The Age and Order of Acquisition**

Depending on the period of life in which a person acquires the second language we can distinguish **early bilinguals** and **late bilinguals**. Early bilinguals usually acquire both languages from birth, namely before the so-called critical period, i.e. the period up to the age of about seven years, during which the brain is extremely susceptible to all the linguistic information received from the environment and when the language system seems to develop to its full capacity. It is assumed that after the critical period this susceptibility is considerably reduced which makes acquisition of any language, the foreign language as well as the mother tongue, extremely difficult. Bilingualism, early or late, is considered the most efficient way of acquiring a second or foreign language. Adult bilingualism was never a matter of such disagreement as early bilingualism, since on the one hand adults performed better in the initial stages of learning than children and on the other bilingualism from birth or early bilingualism was believed to cause confusion in children and delays in one language or both languages due to code-switching. Recent discoveries have shown that code-switching does not necessarily mean error. So, at this point there are at least two reasons why choose early rather than late bilingualism. The first one is the so-called critical period. Beside the mentioned general view of the end of the critical period at the age of seven, Long (1990), on the basis of several linguistic studies, introduces two critical period, namely the critical period for mastery of the phonological characteristics of language which ends at the age of six and the critical period for syntactic mastery which lasts until the age of fifteen. According to this theory, learning a foreign language in primary school falls in the critical period of syntactic mastery, but no longer in the one of phonological acquisition. In order not to miss either period it is advised that the second or foreign language is introduced as soon as possible.

The second reason for early second language acquisition (preferably from birth) is that “being older when exposed to L2 also means having had more years of practicing the L1. Therefore, L1 would interfere more with L2 in an older person learning a new language”. (Whitney 1998: 340) Experiments performed by Flynn (1996) on the basis of principles and parameters have provided proof according to which it is reasonable to believe that the interference of with age increasing level of L1 interference in the L2 of later bilinguals can have stronger consequences than not catching the biologically based critical period. (Whitney 1998: 341)

‘Language-only’ or monocultural bilingualism, as mentioned above, can take place only in early bilingualism, because its success is dependent on the child’s not being aware of the fact that he/she can question the parents’ ability to speak with them in any other language than they are using with the child, even though he/she is aware of the fact the parent is a proficient speaker also of the other language (the parent’s native language).

## **5. Advantages of early bilingualism (i.e. bilingualism closest to birth)**

### **5.1. Advantages in the L2 phonological and linguistic skills (Whitney)**

According to observations regarding the age of acquisition mentioned above we might conclude that the claim that the introduction of the two languages as close as possible to birth could cause confusion in the child and delays in linguistic development has proven to be wrong. The child is perfectly able to effortlessly separate the two languages. And this holds for a monocultural situation as well as the bicultural one.

Volterra and Taeschner (in Genesee and Nicoladis 2005) describe the phases of development of L2 in the early bilingual child:

“In the first stage the child has one lexical system which includes words from both languages. ..., in this stage the language development of the bilingual child seems to be like the language development of the monolingual child. ... In the second stage, the child distinguishes two different lexicons, but applies the same syntactic rules to both languages. In the third stage the child speaks two languages differentiated both in lexicon and syntax...”(in Genesee and Nicoladis 2005: 3)

Some research has even found that bilingual children reach language milestones (such as first word and first fifty words) at the same age as monolingual children. They do not show any evidence of being “language confused” either. Moreover, it was also found that this situation demands of the child additional mental effort which in turn strengthens his/her linguistic and cognitive abilities.

The children in our study underwent psychological examination at the age of 3 and 5. Without the examiner knowing they were bilingual, they estimated the children’s L1 language development as optimal.

### **6.2. Advantages in the development of cognitive and linguistic abilities in general (Developments in neuro-and psycholinguistic research of bilinguals)**

Not only had it been discovered that bilingual children have a learning advantage, but they have other cognitive advantages as well.

New research into the neurobiology of bilingualism has found that being fluent in two languages, particularly from early childhood, not only enhances a person’s ability to concentrate, but might also protect them against the onset of dementia and other age-related cognitive decline. It may also be that managing two languages helps the brain sharpen—and retain—its ability to focus while ignoring irrelevant information.

Other research suggests that bilingualism may delay the onset of age-related dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease, by up to four years. Although scientists don’t know why

bilingualism creates this “cognitive reserve,” some feel that speaking two languages may increase blood and oxygen flow to the brain and keep nerve connections healthy

More recently, scientists have discovered that bilingual adults have denser gray matter (brain tissue packed with information-processing nerve cells and fibers), especially in the brain’s left hemisphere, where most language and communication skills are controlled. The effect is strongest in people who learned a second language before the age of five and in those who are most proficient at their second language. This finding suggests that being bilingual from an early age significantly alters the brain’s structure.

With the above mentioned said, and the benefits of bilingualism pointed out, it would be cruel, if only accidental or random bilinguals (i.e. bilinguals through necessity) had the advantage not only learning language other than the mother tongue more fluently, but also sharpening their cognitive abilities, beyond the natural course of development.

## **7. Conclusions**

If one of the main objections to raising bilingual children in a monolingual society and monolingual family is the fact that the child might be confused by receiving the two languages but not the two cultures, it is necessary to more clearly define what the culture the normal individual bilingual child receives is. Martinet (1984) brings forward a different distinction between bilingualisms than the ones mentioned above, one which is beside the cultural aspect based also on the inclusion of semiotic behaviour (e.g. the conventional conceptual systems as well as the semi-conventional ones, e.g. manners of greeting, thanking, apologising; expressions of joy, disapproval, doubt, love) as criteria for defining true bilinguals (Martinet 1984: 14-16). It is necessary to point out that according to Martinet, bilinguals can develop in any stage of life (as early learners, midlearners – in the teenage period, and late learners (Martinet 1984: 13). In these periods persons mastering two languages simultaneously can be: (1) **bilinguals**, i.e. individuals who have the command of verbal expressions of two languages, but insufficient command of the non-verbal expressions of the second language (L2); (2) **total bilinguals**, i.e. individuals who have the command of verbal and non-verbal expressions in two languages, but who are insufficiently familiar with the cultural details of the national culture (NC) in which the L2 is spoken; (3) **partial bilinguals**, i.e. individuals who have a fairly good command of, say, syntactic and lexical expressions of an L2, but insufficient command of, say, phonetic expressions, and cultural aspects linked to the L2 (Martinet 1984: 13). Based on these criteria it would be possible to classify Child 1 and Child 2 in this study as developing from partial bilinguals through bilinguals to total bilinguals in their teens. It was only here that they became aware of the usefulness of correct pronunciation and paid much more attention to it.

The cultural aspect in which the bilingualism is being acquired is by definition confined to those details in cultural knowledge that are acquired during childhood through nursery rhymes, games, songs, books, religious teaching, etc. According to Martinet (1984) a mid- or late learner would probably not have acquired all these things, but provided they

acquired the expected level of proficiency would nevertheless be considered bilinguals just proves that an individual can do perfectly well without them.

To ensure 'language only' bilingualism, the bilingual child needs only to familiarize with the culture of the second language, especially if it is English, through mass media (television the Internet,..) and later on in the school system, where in foreign language classes s/he get to know the culture. Martinet expressed doubt if it is entirely necessary to strive for perfection even in characteristics pertaining to 'language only', e.g. pronunciation, as she sees it somewhat as a betrayal of one's identity and thus integrity when in the natural environment of the first language, the second language being spoken. For this reason, many natural, so-called 'societal' bilinguals preserve their ethnicity speech markers, which makes them no less bilinguals than those with perfect L2 speech. Rather than making L2 cultural acquisition a criterion for perfect bilingualism, Martinet (1984: 17) speaks of the learner becoming either **bilingual** or **bicultural**. This makes the children discussed in this study true bilinguals, because it is the L2 culture that the extended family provides and these children do not have. Every-day conversation in the L2 language with one of the members of the family, however, provides sufficient knowledge of the language for the child become a proficient speaker of that language in every sphere of life.

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