

Intentional bilingualism of a Slovak child regularly exposed to English

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Introduction

Child language development is a long-term process that needs to be observed and interpreted from a longitudinal perspective. The transition from no language to the full set of acquired communicative skills is an admirable achievement that children reach in the first years of life. The entire process seems to be critically dependent on the language input the child is exposed to, because without it no language acquisition takes place (Pearson, 2007, p. 400). Parental speech is the most important source of language behaviour for children, and is at the same time the goal gradually reached by children in the process of acquisition¹ (Slančová, 2018, p. 16). Moreover, if children are surrounded by two languages in the family environment, they are able to acquire them spontaneously (Průcha, 2011, p. 167) and become bilingual; however, there is a necessity to secure sufficient contact not with one but two languages (Štefánik, 2000a, p. 38). Being bilingual “is a massively pervasive experience” (Bialystok, 2019, p. 29), since it is estimated that more than half of the world’s population is at least bilingual. Bilingualism is often associated with social, economic, and educational effects, and may help connect individuals with extended families and communities. It also has ubiquitous consequences on the mind and brain that might be different at different stages of the lifespan (Bialystok, 2019, pp. 29–30). Bilingualism in Slovakia has a long and rich history. Recently, the upward trend of travelling and intermingling with nationals of other countries has strengthened the contact Slovaks have with other languages and has increased the occurrence of bilingualism in Slovakia, being it natural or intentional (see Vozníková, 2019; Hurajová, 2020).

1 Research methodology

This study is a partial output of the longitudinal observational research the subject of which is my son Adrián, aged 4;6,² and the process of his bilingual first language acquisition (BFLA)³ from birth up to this day. The child has regularly been exposed to two languages – Slovak and English. Slovak is the mother tongue of both his parents and is also the language of the surrounding community. However, I, as a proficient speaker of English, use both languages in communication with him. Since English is not my native language this type of bilingualism

¹ Child language research usually uses two terms: *language acquisition* and *language development*. They are associated with the same issue, but there is a slight difference between the aspects they point out. Language acquisition refers to the initial cognitive and social processes in language learning, while language development refers to an individual’s progressive mastery of specific linguistic features, e.g. pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, and any sequences that occur throughout the process of acquisition (Silver – Alsagoff – Goh, 2009). In this study, both terms are used respectively.

² Adrián’s age is referred to in the patterns (Y; M) within the entire study (Y – year and M – month), similarly as in Štefánik (2000a) and Bobčáková (2017).

³ The term BFLA is adopted here in the sense of explication by De Houwer (1990, pp. 2–3): a child is first exposed to language Alpha no later than a week after first exposure to language A, and a child’s exposure to languages A and Alpha is fairly regular, that is, takes place almost every day.

is referred to as intentional bilingualism (Štefánik, 2000a). The amount of exposure to English is on average between 2-3 hours daily and our basic family language policy is: I speak English to my son(s) freely when we are at home alone without the father. When my husband is at home we speak Slovak. In addition, there is also another source of English input in our home, as recommended in situations where first-hand experience is not available (Baker, 2014, p. 24), namely English books, songs, and videos including nursery rhymes, children stories and picture dictionaries. This source is active regardless of the presence or absence of the father.

I applied the naturalistic approach of studying a language, which comprises the observation of the child's language development in its natural environment. The most prominent source of data for my study is a language diary supplemented by occasional audio/video recordings. The corpus contains transcripts of Adrián's spontaneous utterances⁴ as well as short conversations in natural settings that I considered linguistically significant from the viewpoint of his language development progress. They were recorded daily and with background information on the circumstances and my possible explications or sometimes hesitations about their exact meaning. The sound shapes of Adrián's early utterances were also recorded phonetically, which in subjects under the age of two is indispensable in order to avoid unwarranted over-interpretation of data (De Houwer, 1990, p. 14). The material collected and recorded in the diary was transcribed in compliance with the rules of the transcription and encoding system CHAT (Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts)⁵ of the international database CHILDES (Child Language Data Exchange System) (MacWhinney, 2008)⁶, which is in fact one of the most widely used resources in language acquisition research (Ohala, 2008, p. 29). I attempted to gather data that genuinely represent reality, describe them in a comprehensible way, analyze them by means of generally agreed upon methods, and to interpret them objectively and truthfully, as advised for the study of both mono- or bilingual early child language development (De Houwer, 1990, p. 12).

Naturalistic observational diary studies provide long-term insights into children's language acquisition process in their natural environment, allow their progress to be monitored permanently and detailed data to be recorded at any time. It is the most common method used to obtain speech production data because it can provide not only momentary records but also records of the child's progress from one stage to the next (Ohala, 2008, pp. 28-29). There are, however, some potential difficulties, such as observer bias (especially in case of a parent observer), the inconsistency and inaccuracy of records, as well as the problem of interpreting what the child means (Štefánik, 2000a, p. 34; McCabe, 2021, p. 41). In order to defend parental studies, Saunders as a parent-researcher himself claims that they are indispensable in any thorough investigation of children's language development. According to him, only parents can ensure a reasonably accurate picture of their children's language because of their continual close contact. Although it might be difficult for them to remain completely objective, he thinks they still have a much deeper knowledge of their children than any outsider ever would (Saunders, 1988, p. 29). Moreover, "studies of simultaneous bilingual acquisition can contribute significantly to the development of a general theory of language acquisition" (Genesee, 2003, p. 205), and as for intentional bilingualism, naturalistic observation is one of its typical research methods (Szramek-Karcz, 2016a, p. 94).

⁴ The main unit of my analysis is the utterance, defined as "a single word or combination of words with a single intonation contour" (Lanza, 2004, p. 123). An acceptable utterance is considered the one recognizable to the hearer as an intentional social or communicative act (Slančová – Kičura Sokolová, 2018, p. 515).

⁵ CHAT is the international standard for transcribing human speech. A basic form feature is a line-by-line format, with one utterance per line. This transcription system enables to capture in detail not only speech production, but also non-verbal communication and the situational context (Slančová, 2018, p. 18).

⁶ Online available at: <www.childes.talkbank.org> [Cit. 2021-10-05.]

Nevertheless, the aim of this study is not to draw any generalized conclusions but to summarize and report the outcomes of my longitudinal observation realized through intensive contact with Adrián, which can serve as a baseline for further longitudinal or cross-sectional research in the area, since the phenomenon of intentional bilingualism is becoming ever more prominent. The study discusses the issue of intentional bilingualism from both a terminological and practical point of view; I summarize various standpoints and the experience of several authors who applied and scrutinized this strategy of BFLA, and state my own viewpoint with a suggestion of a new term applicable to this phenomenon. Furthermore, the efficiency of the chosen (rather experimental) method of BFLA is examined. The theoretical-methodological **discussions** are followed by an overview of the attained degree of bilingualism in Adrián, with a focus on his bilingual language development across the language levels – phonological, grammatical,⁷ lexical and semantic, pragmatic, as well as the production of mixed utterances.⁸ Drawing upon the mentioned focus areas, the study answers the following research questions: Is intentional bilingualism a feasible strategy for bilingual upbringing? Is it possible to develop bilingual competence in a child with a limited amount of exposure to one of the two languages? Is it possible for a child to acquire the two languages without confusion if the main source of contact with them is secured by a single person? Are the stages of bilingual language development under experimental conditions comparable with monolingual stages? What degree of interference across the language levels occurs?

2 Key concepts

2.1 Intentional bilingualism as a strategy of BFLA

Intentional bilingualism is a specific type of bilingualism in which one or both parents communicate with the child in a language other than their mother tongue in order to make the child bilingual (Štefánik, 2000a, p. 19). Although considered controversial due to the underlying fact that a parent does not speak his/her native language to the child (Szramek-Karcz, 2016a, p. 93), it has become popular in the monolingual countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Romanowski, 2018). It is generally viewed from the perspective of a conscious voluntary decision of the parents to speak a foreign language to the child in a natural way (Szramek-Karcz, 2016a, p. 93) for the mere purpose of teaching the child a foreign language from an early age (Jurančič Petek, 2017, p. 4). However, it can possibly be relevant for some other contexts, such as Romani communities in Slovakia persuaded to speak Slovak to their children, or immigrant families reducing their communication to the majority language in order to support its acquisition in their children. In the mentioned situations the language choice is intentional but not always voluntary.

In the past this type of bilingualism was labelled as ‘artificial bilingualism’ (Kielhöfer – Jonekeit, 1983; Saunders, 1988), but Štefánik (2000a; 2000b) replaced it by the term ‘intentional bilingualism’, which has become generally accepted and used as the most neutral term eliminating negative connotations (Szramek-Karcz, 2016b, p. 40). Other terms used to refer to this phenomenon are ‘elective bilingualism’, ‘cultivated bilingualism’ (Szramek-Karcz, 2016a), ‘language-only or monocultural bilingualism’ (Jurančič Petek, 2017), and ‘non-native bilingualism’ (Szramek-Karcz, 2016a; Romanowski, 2018; Hurajová, 2020).

The employment of intentional bilingualism as a strategy for BFLA using the ‘one person-one language’ (OPOL) method was reported as successful by many authors, e.g. Dimitrijevič (1965), Saunders (1988), Štefánik (2000a), Bobčáková (2017), Jurančič Petek

⁷ I use the term grammar as the umbrella term for both morphology and syntax. Despite being two separate language levels, they are closely interrelated (especially in language acquisition and use) and they commonly refer to the more ordinary term – grammar (e.g. Průcha, 2011, p. 51; Slančová – Kapalková, 2018, p. 627).

⁸ For a more detailed account of Adrián’s BFLA see Vozníková, 2021.

(2017), and Hurajová (2020). Apart from linguistic studies, its popularity and efficiency is also confirmed by various sources on the internet.⁹

Without a doubt, intentional bilingualism is a unique way of becoming bilingual and raises several issues that have been debated for decades, e.g. its naturalness vs. artificiality, the impact of the parent's language proficiency in the chosen language and the degree of intimacy attained through it with the child.

Despite efforts to find a neutral term, all the terms referring to this phenomenon imply its unnaturalness and tend to emphasize the contrast between natural bilingualism and this "artificial imitation".¹⁰ But are these types of bilingualism really so different? The term 'natural bilingualism' refers to "someone who has not undergone any specific training" (Wei, 2000, p. 6) and has acquired two (native) languages simultaneously from parents (Hurajová, 2020, p. 357). This does not seem to be incompatible with intentional bilingualism. Saunders (1988, p. 41) explains that it is artificial only in the sense that one of the languages is being passed on by a non-native speaker of that language.¹¹ If the parent speaks the language fluently and confidently, and does so right from the start, the situation will certainly not appear artificial either to the parent or the child. It can thus become their language of intimacy. This approach draws intentional bilingualism closer to natural bilingualism. However, Štefánik (2000b, p. 30) sheds more light on its specificity when he says that it brings together the elements of natural language acquisition on the one hand but it partially imitates the situation of language teaching/learning on the other hand, since the child's bilingual upbringing is consciously regulated by the parents.

As in intentional bilingualism one of the languages used in the home is a foreign language, it presents a challenge for the parent(s) to be capable of speaking the chosen language effortlessly and correctly in order to be a valuable language model for the child. Štefánik (2000a, p. 20) admits to certain difficulties when he writes that, in this case, the language model transmitted to the child might not be perfect in all aspects. This means that despite a high level of proficiency in the second language, the parent might make mistakes. Nevertheless, the final degree of bilingual acquisition is almost the same as in the case of natural bilingualism. Based on his own experience of the application of this type of bilingual upbringing, he states that it is possible to achieve a high level of language proficiency in the child (Štefánik, 1999, p. 30). Saunders (1988, p. 5) shares this view and claims that "it is possible for fluent non-native speakers of a minority language to create a bilingual home environment from which their children can derive considerable benefit". Although he himself admits explicitly that his knowledge of German (the intentional language) is not equal to his knowledge of English, he finds using it as a means of communication with his children neither artificial nor lacking intimacy. He is convinced that applying this strategy right after the child's birth helps to establish a natural and close relationship (Saunders, 1988, pp. 27 & 41). Bobčáková (2017, p. 41) also confirms that her using a non-native language with her son does not do any harm to their mutual attachment.

Overall, the following factors are considered essential for the emergence and retention of intentional bilingualism in the child: the parent's competence in the chosen language and the consistency of the BFLA strategy (Saunders, 1988, p. 41; Štefánik, 2000b, p. 37; Hurajová, 2020, p. 351), motivation for the acquisition of both languages, and the necessity to use both

⁹ For example: the Czech website <<https://www.bilingvni-vychova.com/umely-bilingvismus-zblizka/>> [Cit. 2021-10-06.], or the English website <<https://nonnativebilingualism.blogspot.com/>> [Cit. 2021-10-06.].

¹⁰ For example, Kielhöfer and Jonekeit (1983, p. 15) state that it refers to a situation when natural bilingualism is artificially imitated by parents in a monolingual family. Hurajová (2020, p. 339) congruently claims that under such conditions two languages are not acquired naturally but the situation is imitated by one or both parents.

¹¹ Hurajová (2020, p. 346) claims likewise that she regards intentional bilingualism as artificial in the sense of "creating deliberate foreign language environment".

languages in order to satisfy the child's communication needs, or otherwise the active bilingual becomes passive or monolingual (Štefánik, 1999, p. 30).¹² I can confirm these factors as crucial.

Drawing upon my personal experience, I espouse the perspective of intentional bilingualism as a specific type of natural bilingualism. Despite the fact that speaking English to my son(s) is a conscious process for me, and that the context is different from a natural context with both parents and the society using the same L1, it is a natural development for him. Bilingual language input has been a part of his life from birth, which makes the process quite natural, and I consider both Slovak and English his native languages. Thus, I am convinced that it is possible to raise a native speaker of a language despite being a foreign parent. In order to refute the implied artificiality of this type of bilingualism, I suggest a new term to refer to it, namely 'foreign natural bilingualism'. This term emphasizes its natural character but also distinguishes its naturalness from the usual context related to parents – native speakers. In sum, "intentional bilingualism is a perfectly viable option" (Meisel, 2019, p. 227), and warnings against it, arguing that it constitutes an unnatural setting, are rather annoying (Meisel, 2019, p. 227).

2.2 The efficiency of the chosen method of BFLA

There are many ways of raising bilingual children and at the beginning of this journey a decision must be made as to which method to apply. The choice is crucial in that it "can shape their degree of bilingualism, making it more or less balanced" (Ruiz Martín, 2017, p. 127). Among the most common methods of BFLA are: 'one person-one language' (OPOL), 'minority language at home', 'free alternation of languages', and 'language time' (e.g. Štefánik 2000a, pp. 23–24). Although the OPOL method is generally preferred, it is not the only way of securing bilingualism in children.¹³ Even if it is used mainly to avoid confusion and language mixing in the child, it is not a fail-safe strategy in preventing the child's mixing because children raised in the OPOL setting use at least some mixed utterances (De Houwer, 2009, p. 109), which, however, "are not a sign of confusion" (De Houwer, 2009, p. 44), since early mixing tends to be systematic rather than chaotic (Meisel, 2019, p. 67). Besides, a strict OPOL setting is most likely quite rare (De Houwer, 2009, p. 277).

Having decided to alternate Slovak and English with my son, I also tried to think of a more specific method of implementing it. I wanted to avoid random alternation or even uncontrolled mixing, so at first I considered the OPOL method, which, however, I was not sure about. Since I have never spent more than several days in an English speaking country, and I was not raised in this language, I cannot always express myself with ease, even though my general knowledge of English corresponds to the C1 level of the Common European Framework Reference.¹⁴ I also consulted my hesitation with several parents – native speakers raising their children bilingually. Their unified recommendation was: do not speak English exclusively to your child if it is not effortless for you. Moreover, I found several relevant recommendations in literature related to this topic. Štefánik (2000a, p. 24) considers it problematic if the mother addresses her child in a language other than her mother tongue since she is the person who the child has a most ardent relationship with and who determines the emotional development of the child. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, p. 47) explains further that later languages undergo a different process of acquisition. She distinguishes between denotative,

¹² This situation is mentioned by Hurajová (2020, p. 349) who experienced a final relapse to monolingualism in her son.

¹³ Saunders claims explicitly: "There is probably no single method which can guarantee success in achieving B in the family, since there are simply so many variables involved" (Saunders, 1988, p. 47).

¹⁴ Hurajová (2020, p. 348) also admits that language used for communication with children is specific and contains many expressions that can be acquired almost exclusively from authentic sources, and that she did not feel speaking English to her son quite natural when cuddling him as a very young baby.

connotative and extralinguistic meanings and claims that in foreign languages which we acquire later we do not need experience, we only transpose the denotative meaning. To acquire connotative and extralinguistic meaning it is necessary to live with that language, i.e. to have everyday experience in the community of its native speakers. Lacking this, we often regard a foreign language as colder or poorer. These attitudes are not insignificant and they were fairly important in my search for an acceptable approach. However, I think that it is possible even for mothers to feel quite comfortable in their foreign language, for example, if they spend a sufficient period of time in a community of native speakers.¹⁵

Another relevant note leading to my final decision was the one made by Baker (2014, p. 19), who writes that to use two languages is a more difficult option, but not an impossible one for a single parent. He sees a potential problem in the separation of those two languages within the child and emphasizes that if a single parent feels it important to use two languages with the child, there should be clear boundaries of separation between the two languages. Having taken all the mentioned attitudes as well as my own feelings into consideration, I decided to alternate Slovak and English when addressing my son with the basic rule of speaking English at times when my husband is not at home.¹⁶ As mentioned in the methodological introduction, Adrián's contact with the English language is also secured by reading books, listening to songs, and watching cartoons, and his average amount of exposure to English is between 2-3 hours a day. Although this approach might not be as efficient as the OPOL method, I regard it as much more unaffected (in our case) and preventing too much code-switching. Hence, I fully agree with Szramek-Karcz (2016a, p. 97) who claims that intentional bilingualism does not have to be realized only by the OPOL method. Moreover, research has revealed that parents switching languages have no harmful influence on the child (Szramek-Karcz, 2016a, p. 97).¹⁷

The application of this approach since my son's birth has helped in creating a natural bilingual environment, but it has had a serious impact on the rate of Adrián's BFLA: his Slovak is clearly dominant and English slower in its development. Saunders (1988, p. 24) comments on this issue, saying that most bilingual children simply do not have equal exposure to both their languages, which, however, does not mean that just because one language is weaker it cannot be an effective and natural means of communication between children and parents. He considers it a commendable achievement in itself and something worthy of being fostered.

Thus, it appears that none of the potential pitfalls of intentional bilingualism (being it OPOL or another method) are either insurmountable or endanger the child's language development and personality. It can therefore be concluded that "in any case, the children's ability in a language acquired naturally through interaction with their parents in the home will usually be far superior to any ability they may acquire later through studying it as a foreign language at school" (Saunders, 1988, p. 34).

3 Research findings

3.1 General description of Adrián's bilingualism

Adrián is an intact first-born child (4;6), with a younger brother Alexander (1;4). We are a complete family, both parents with a university degree. Our family (including grandparents

¹⁵ From the Skutnabb-Kangass' (2000, p. 33) viewpoint of competence or function, a mother tongue can be a language acquired/learned at some later stage of an individual's life. Although it might primarily be a language studied as a second language at school, long-term experience and exposure to the language (e.g. residence abroad) can naturalize its knowledge to such an extent that one might perceive it as his/her mother tongue.

¹⁶ Our case is not the only example of this method of intentional bilingualism. I found another family applying it on the website <<https://www.bilingvni-vychova.com/umely-bilingvismus-zblizka/>> [Cit. 2021-10-06.].

¹⁷ This assertion can be confirmed by Past's study (1976 mentioned in Štefánik, 2000a) with successful outcomes, where the child was addressed in the intentional language (Spanish) by both parents only for 60–90 minutes a day. Although clearly dominant in English, she became fully capable of communicating in Spanish.

and other relatives) have a positive attitude towards Adrián's bilingualism that, in my opinion, shows no negative effects either on his cognitive or personal development. Since my husband and I are professional musicians, Adrián seems to be endowed with a good musical ear, which can be an advantage in his language acquisition capacity (Adler, 1977, p. 158), because musical training might promote phonemic awareness and language abilities (Colzato, 2017, p. 192). Despite his familiarity with the culture related to English-speaking countries (especially British culture) I do not consider him bicultural because he lacks direct personal contact with the particular culture. Thus his cultural horizon is single but broadened. From the point of view of types of bilingualism, Adrián is an early compound bilingual with dominant Slovak.¹⁸

In general, it is not clear how much minority language input is required for children to become bilingual (MacLeod et al., 2013, p. 132), but "a greater amount of input leads to greater proficiency, which leads to more use" (Pearson, 2007, p. 400). The degree of fluency depends greatly on the quality of interaction which provides a child with the experience of language use (Dunn, 1998, p. 26).

Adrián's Slovak is appropriately developed and his English is more receptive than active, because his Slovak is much more supported and contact with other English speakers besides his mother is limited. Thus he lacks communicative situations where he would be naturally forced to use English more often and actively, because he knows that when I speak English to him, he can use Slovak and I will understand. This discrepancy between receptive and productive skills in favour of the former frequently occurs in bilinguals¹⁹ (Durdilová, 2017, p. 40), but is still advantageous, as even receptive skills involve "active decoding processes involved in understanding language" (Hoffmann, 2014, p. 24). Moreover, it is possible to convert receptive knowledge into active use. The change can occur in a relatively short period of time in which it becomes necessary to speak the weaker language that until then has not or hardly been produced. Nevertheless, the levels of bilingual understanding a child needs to have, or variations in the social context that might explain the timing and/or extent of children's subsequent active bilingual production, are not sufficiently known (De Houwer, 2007, p. 421). A remarkable case of language refusal is mentioned by Saunders (1988, pp. 123–124) about an Italian-English bilingual child brought up by Raffler-Engel who, despite using the OPOL method, initially spoke only Italian, and started to use English at the age of 2;8. This demonstrates that continuing to talk to a child in the language s/he is reluctant to speak will ensure a passive knowledge of that language which will, in most cases, eventually be activated.

Although both monolingual and bilingual children show wide individual variation in their language development, both groups develop language in similar ways (De Houwer, 2009, p. 309), and "there is no outstanding difference in the main language acquisition milestones of bilinguals and monolinguals" (Nicoladis – Genesee, 1997, p. 264). According to monolingual norms, bilingual children might be delayed in some aspects of language development due to the lower amount of contact with their two languages (Durdilová, 2017, p. 40); however, bilingual environments "are not adequate explanations for significant delays in language" (Feldman, 2019, p. 399). It should also be noted that monolingual standards are not unequivocally relevant

¹⁸ Since it is difficult to define unequivocally what bilingualism is, it can be classified into many types that specify it, e.g. receptive vs. productive bilingualism (according to the form of competence), co-ordinate vs. compound bilingualism (according to the cognitive organization of competence – a separate vs. a fused representation of the languages in the brain), early vs. late bilingualism (according to the age of acquisition), or balanced vs. dominant bilingualism (according to the level of balance between languages). For a more detailed discussion of types of bilingualism see Vozníková, 2021, pp. 50–62.

¹⁹ It might occur under different conditions as well; for instance, Dimitrijevitich (1965, p. 28) mentions that his intentionally bilingual son had better receptive than productive skills while he used the OPOL method, which secures much more equal contact with both languages than my language strategy. Jurančič Petek (2017, p. 6) also admits that intentional bilingualism can result in receptive bilingualism. However, a persistent approach can lead to more active bilingualism in the child even in a monocultural environment.

for bilinguals, since bilinguals are not the sum of two monolinguals in one person (De Houwer, 2009, p. 185).

My son Adrián and his language development seem to be in line with all the above-mentioned facts. He has shown both individual and general features common to either mono- or bilingual children. His language development in Slovak corresponds to the standard expectations of his monolingual peers, but his English acquisition is slower and lags behind in some aspects, which is caused by his limited contact with the language. Nevertheless, his overall bilingual development shares typical characteristics of children growing up with two languages, e.g. production of mixed utterances or translating from one language to the other.

One of the most debated issues in BFLA is the question whether the bilingual child initially develops two separate linguistic systems or just one integrated system with a lack of language separation. Current research inclines towards separate language development that applies even for BFLA children who speak only one of their languages frequently and well (De Houwer, 2009, p. 295). All that is required for language differentiation is sufficient exposure to both languages, and there is no reason to believe that early mixing indicates confusion or failure to separate the two languages (Meisel, 2019, pp. 59 & 67).

I am convinced that Adrián has been developing two separate language systems, even though his exposure to the English language is rather limited. I consider his language mixing a sign of language interaction and development, as well as a lack of balance between his Slovak and English. For example, the avoidance of difficult words and constructions in the weaker language is a typical developmental feature in bilingual children (Grosjean, 1982, p. 181), and it can justify the reasons for early language mixing. My conviction about Adrián's separate language development is also supported by the fact that he started to use translation equivalents at 1;10, and these are considered evidence of language differentiation (Nicoladis – Genesee, 1997, pp. 260–261).

De Houwer also explains that in actively bilingual children who develop their morpho-syntactic systems separately from each other, one language may be further developed than the other. It is possible that the language development, despite being uneven, is separate, and that a bilingual child produces complex sentences in one language while in the other language only two-word utterances appear (De Houwer, 2005, p. 40).

Nevertheless, even if Adrián had not differentiated his two languages before the age of 3 years, he definitely did it at 3;3 because at this age he started asking me explicitly how to say certain words in English and considered it great fun.

Overall, Adrián has no problem with my addressing him in English and he likes watching cartoons, listening to stories and reading books with me in English. However, when he is supposed to use the language, he is sometimes reluctant and I try to elicit responses from him. I do not think he has a negative attitude towards the language, he simply feels more competent and self-confident in Slovak. More recently, he has become more willing to start a conversation with me in English, which I consider a sign of his overall progress in this language. In general, 6 types of Adrián's verbal reactions to English occurred:²⁰

1. a Slovak answer to an English question

*MOT: what's daddy doing?

*ADR: učí detičky.

%eng: he is teaching children.

(1;11)

²⁰ Štefánik (2000a) mentions very similar responses, i.e. mixing and translating, with almost identical examples in his Slovak-English intentionally bilingual child.

%sit: Adrián and his mother are on the way to the bus stop.

*MOT: where are we going?

*ADR: na autobus.

%eng: to take a bus.

(2;7)

2. first a Slovak and then an English answer to an English question

*MOT: what's this?

*ADR: plienka.

%eng: a nappy.

*MOT: what's this in English?

*ADR: nappy.

(1;11)

*MOT: are you thirsty?

*ADR: áno.

%eng: yes.

*MOT: what do you want to drink?

*ADR: water.

(2;6)

3. a mixed answer to an English question

*MOT: are you hungry?

*ADR: áno, Adík je hungry.

%eng: yes, Adík is hungry.

(2;3)

*MOT: do you want a baby sister or a baby brother?

*ADR: ja chcem baby sister.

%eng: I want a baby sister.

(2;6)

4. an English answer to an English question

%gpx: mother is pointing to a picture with a cat playing the violin.

*MOT: what's the cat doing?

*ADR: playing violin.

(2;0)

%sit: mother and Adrián are lying in the bed.

*MOT: are you sleeping?

*ADR: good night, I sleeping.

(2;0)

5. completing mother's sentences

%sit: Adrián is going to eat his soup.

*MOT: i think it's a bit...

*ADR: ... hot.

(2;0)

%sit: mother and Adrián are washing their hands.

*MOT: now we are washing our...

*ADR: ... hands.

(2;6)

6. translating mother's sentences

*MOT: we are going to take a bus and pick up daddy from school.

*ADR: za tatom!

%eng: to daddy!

*ADR: autobusom!

%eng: by bus!

(1;11)

*MOT: tomorrow I'll go to hospital for a checkup with the baby and you and daddy will come to pick me up by car.

*ADR: a prečo ťa prideme zobrat'... autom?

%eng: and why will we go to pick you up... by car?

(3;1)

All these examples confirm Adrián's ability to understand English. Even in the situations when he answered in Slovak and created mixed or translated utterances, it was clear that he understood the meaning of the question. So even though his receptive skills in English surpass his productive skills, they are an integrated part of his gradually growing productive skills, and in a broader sense, English definitely is an integrated part of his language development.

3.2 Phonological development

The course of Adrián's phonological development followed the expected path including both general developmental patterns and individual differences in the order of different speech sounds as they occur in children's productions (Hoff, 2014, p. 125). His syllable structures comprised patterns appropriate for his monolingual as well as bilingual peers, i.e. simplifications, reductions, and substitutions of certain phonemes and/or syllable clusters, for example: [ika] *sviečka* 'candle', [jaŕ] *hrať* 'play', [ukaiki] *rukavičky* 'gloves' (dim.), [e:] hair, [kŭ] good, [nŏke] snowflake (1;3-2;0). Reductions occurred up to the age of 3;0, and substitutions continued until 3;9. Since then they have appeared exclusively in English.

Adrián's acquisition of phonemic inventory started unexpectedly with a first vowel *e* instead of the usual *a*. The Slovak phonemic repertoire was completed surprisingly early, at the age of 3;9, with the consonant *r*. In English, Adrián acquired the vowel *æ* rather late, at 3;10 and he still has not acquired the diphthong *eə* which he substitutes with the Slovak long monophthong *e:*. His English consonants are still not fully acquired either; he lacks 3 sounds: θ (substituted by *f* or *t*), δ (substituted by *d*), and *r* (substituted by *w*).²¹ Nevertheless, these consonants are usually acquired between 4 and 7 years of age (Damico – Ball, 2019, p. 360). The only surprising fact is that Adrián has acquired the Slovak *r* earlier than the English *r* which is easier to pronounce (Štefánik, 2000a, p. 82). Overall, Adrián's rate of phonemic acquisition corresponds to general expectations since "the child's phonemic inventory typically stabilizes between 5 and 6 years of age" (Flahive – Hodson, 2014, p. 190)

The phonetic shape of Adrián's words showed universal simplifying processes, i.e. developmental errors, typical in both monolingual and bilingual children:

²¹ Štefánik (2000a, p. 83) mentions similar types of substitutions observed in his bilingual child.

- deletions: [ekɔ] let's go (1;5), [pika] *spinkat'* 'sleep' (euph.) (1;6)
- assimilations: [batəta] butterfly (1;6), [bakuka] *bábovka* 'marble cake' (1;6)
- substitutions: [mjeko] *mlieko* 'milk' (1;7), [mɪwk] milk (1;11), [tʰitaʰ] *čítať* 'read' (1;11), [gwi:n] green (1;11).

Due to the contact of two languages, Adrián also produced interference-like errors:

- application of Slovak rules of devoicing assimilation in English – [bɪk] big (1;9)
- stress shift from Slovak to English: [ˈbanana] ba'nana
- Initial plosives *p t k* aspirated in English only occasionally but sometimes also in Slovak, e.g. *toto* 'this' (3;7)
- English vowels *i* and *u* pronounced more like Slovak
- palatalization of English alveolars *d t* due to the perception of their different place of articulation than in Slovak; however, developmentally not managed yet – [katj] cat (1;11), [natj] night (2;0), [dʒiə] dear (2;1), [tʃi:] tea (2;7).

These types of errors emphasized the mutual interactions of the emerging phonological systems; nevertheless, a greater impact of Slovak on English rather than the opposite effect was detected. Both the developmental and interference-like errors I have observed in Adrián shared many similarities with the Slovak-English intentionally bilingual child observed by Štefánik (2000a).

Thus, my observation confirms the opinion that children growing up in bilingual environments are able to acquire language-specific phonological features, with occasional interaction between them (Blumenfeld – Marian, 2009, p. 5), and I am convinced that my son Adrián has been developing two independent phonological systems that show signs of mutual interaction, with a greater impact of his dominant Slovak upon English.

3.3 Grammatical development

Adrián's process of morpho-syntactic development confirmed two seemingly contradictory facts related to BFLA:

1. bilinguals reach the main acquisition milestones at approximately the same times as monolinguals (Kennison, 2014, p. 179) → Adrián's Slovak
2. bilinguals might be delayed in some aspects of language development due to a lower amount of contact with their two languages (Durdilová, 2017, p. 40) → Adrián's English.

This happens because children exposed to two languages necessarily receive less total exposure to each of their languages than monolingual children (MacLeod et al., 2013, p. 132), and because certain structures are more complex in one language than in the other (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 91), which is especially true in the case of my son Adrián. Although his Slovak grammar perfectly corresponds to both the rate and age of acquisition in monolingual children, his English grammar lags behind in comparison to his monolingual peers. This is caused by the typological difference of the languages²² as well as by the fact that he receives much less exposure to English than to Slovak. Nevertheless, when compared to bilinguals his English development corresponds to the range of their rates, since in bilingual children "one language may be further developed than the other" (De Houwer, 2005, p. 40).

²² Slovak and English are typologically different languages. Slovak is a synthetic inflectional language in which affixes cumulate grammatical functions. It also allows a variable free word order, due to full conjugation and declension, and an implicit subject, e.g. (*Ja*) *ľúbim ťa*. '(I) love you'. English is an analytic isolating language with a fixed word order since it compensates for the absence of conjugation and declension. Grammatical relations are expressed by pronouns and prepositions, a subject has to be present in all sentences in an initial position, and the typical word order is SVO.

With regard to the Slovak language, Adrián's morpho-syntactic development is comparable with both his monolingual as well as bilingual peers. He started to use plural forms of nouns at 1;7 and acquired all cases by 2;6. In verbs he started with the present tense, which he conjugated correctly in all persons of both singular and plural by 2;5. He continued with the past tense and completed his verbal acquisition the future tense at 3;6. He also started to use passive structures at 1;9 and conditionals at 3;5. He produced his first 2-word utterances at 1;6 and 3-word utterances at 1;8. First asyndetic multiple sentences appeared at 1;8 and syndetic at 2;0. From the age of 2;0 his productions became highly advanced, and by the age of 4;0 he acquired all the necessary grammatical rules and structures.

Concerning Adrián's English, his morpho-syntactic development is not so straightforward and overall lags behind both his monolingual and bilingual peers. He acquired regular plural *-s* in nouns at 2;10 and possessive *'s* at 3;0. In verbs he started with *-ing* at 2;7 and continued with the 3rd person *-s* at 3;10. He has not acquired the past *-ed* marker neither the future auxiliary *will* (but acquired the future intention structure *going to* at 3;6). He has also neither acquired conditional nor passive structures. He produced his first 2-word utterances at 1;7 and 3-word utterances at 1;10. His first creative structures emerged after 2;6. Asyndetic multiple sentences appeared at 2;7 and syndetic at 3;9. However, by the age of 4;0, he had acquired only two interrogative pronouns *where*, *what*, one conjunction *and* and his production of multiple sentences is very limited. Thus, Adrián's language production in English is morphologically appropriately developed contrary to its syntactic simplicity.

Adrián's emerging grammar in both languages revealed all the typical types of developmental errors:

- simplification/omission of function words: *vlasý mama* 'hair mum' → *mamine vlasý* 'mum's hair' (1;10), *daddy shoes* → daddy's shoes (2;1)
- overextension of the acquired rules: *plaká* → *plače* (2;0), *bojíť sa* → *bát' sa* (3;9), *foots* → feet (2;10), *big windows* → big windows (3;1)
- subject-verb disagreement in person and number: *Rukavičky spadol.* → *Rukavičky spadli.* (1;9), *My boots is stuck.* → *My boots are stuck.* (3;6).

Due to the mutual interaction of the languages, interference-like errors with prevailing impact of Slovak upon English also occurred. In morphology, Adrián produced numerous borrowings consisting of English stems and Slovak inflectional suffixes.²³ In syntax, highly variable word order patterns in English occurred under the influence of the Slovak syntactic rules, e.g. *(He) English spoke.* → He spoke English. (2;2), *Is here (the) boat.* → The boat is here. (2;7)

In sum, Adrián's English grammatical competence is developing more slowly than in monolinguals and bilinguals with the OPOL method. Nevertheless, it is still progressing. The slower pace is principally caused by the lower amount of exposure, and also by Adrián's excellent Slovak competence,²⁴ which allows him to accomplish all his communicative intentions and needs.

3.4 Lexical and semantic development

Adrián's language development started with the preverbal stage that lasted from 0;0 to 1;2. In accordance with standard expectations, his vocalizations began in the 2nd month of his life, after which came first consonant- and vowel like segments produced in isolation and later

²³ Since borrowings are related to word formation and word formation is a borderland between morphology and lexicology (Vužňáková, 2018, p. 89) I decided to include a detailed discussion of them in the following lexico-semantic subchapter.

²⁴ Adrián's communicative competence in Slovak was evaluated as excellent by a professional in the field of child language development.

in combinations (e.g. *ggg, bbb*). The babbling period started at 0;6, and it comprised the typical CV, CVCV and CVC syllable patterns, such as *mem, tata, dada, mama*. The preverbal stage was completed with the onset of his first words repeated after models²⁵ at 1;2, which falls within the age span commonly indicated by linguists (e.g. Průcha, 2011, p. 48; Berk, 2013, p. 376). However, before expressing his first words, Adrián showed signs of comprehension through his non-verbal reactions that appeared congruently in both languages at 0;11. Thus, receptive knowledge preceded active word production in both languages, as generally expected (e.g. Průcha, 2011, p. 46; Berk, 2013, p. 376), and his onset of active speech occurred within the common age range – 1;3 in Slovak, 1;6 in English.

Adrián reached the 50-word milestone within 5 months in Slovak (1;3 – 1;8) and within 6 months in English (1;6 – 2;0). Nouns prevailed in both languages. Slovak nouns were followed by interjections and verbs, which is quite in line with Slovak monolingual children as observed in Slančová et al. (2018, p. 47). English nouns were followed by verbs and adjectives, as expected among the first 50 words (Gunter – Koenig, 2011, p. 81).

At the age of 2;0 Adrián possessed a total active vocabulary of 333 words, which corresponded with general developmental expectations (e.g. Průcha, 2011, p. 48; Brooks – Kempe, 2014, p. 257). 78.97 % of his vocabulary was Slovak and 21.02 % English. At the age of 3;0 Adrián reached a total active vocabulary of 1665 words, consisting of 72.31 % Slovak, and 27.69 % English words. His percentage of English words thus grew by almost 7 % in one year, which is clear evidence of his progress, and his monthly growth showed both a rapid and gradual increase as well as occasional decline, as commonly expected (e.g. Slančová et al., 2018, p. 66). At the age of 3;0 Adrián’s vocabulary included a similar ratio of word classes in his two languages, with nouns, verbs and adjectives being the three most numerous ones.

Overall, the unequal amount of exposure to the two languages became evident in the rate and size of Adrián’s bilingual vocabulary, being in line with Slovak monolingual children but lagging behind his English monolingual peers. This, however, is not unusual in BFLA children, because their “lexicons may develop at different rates for each language separately” (De Houwer, 2009, p. 246).

Early semantic development is usually linked to universal semantic categories that also occurred in Adrián’s language productions, such as: persons, activities, greetings/routines, food and drinks, body parts, animals, clothing, vehicles, toys, household objects (Průcha, 2011, p. 74; Slančová et al., 2018, p. 56). Some of these surprisingly appeared at first in English; namely numerals, colours and shapes.

During the process of lexico-semantic development, Adrián’s language productions included register variations, e.g. euphemisms, colloquialisms, regional and non-standard expressions, and he also produced the typical developmental phenomena:

- idiomorphs: *aka* → *svetlo* ‘light’
- homophones: [ebike] (1;7) – the Slovak words *rybička* ‘fish’ (dim.) and *chlebík* ‘bread’, [ejou] (1;9) – the English words *yellow* and *hello*
- semantic overgeneralizations: the Slovak word *včera* ‘yesterday’ used for all the actions that happened in the past, and the English word *boat* for boats, ships and anchors
- nonce-formations: in Slovak – *mixovačka* → *mixér* ‘blender’ (2;5), *husličkovať* → *hrať na husliach* ‘to play the violin’ (2;11), *fuja* → *špina* ‘dirt’ (3;0), *zmaliť* → *zmenšiť* ‘make smaller’ (3;11); in English – *postcard box* → *post box* (2;11), *parks* → *parking spaces* (3;6), *foodberries* → *berries (food for birds)* (3;10).

²⁵ In general, words reproduced after an adult are not considered part of the child’s active vocabulary. It is not until the child can produce words spontaneously, with a clear purpose in a particular context, that productions can be considered first words (Cruz-Ferreira, 2006, p. 149).

Identically with the Slovak-English bilingual children observed by Štefánik (2000a), Rebelos (2012) and Bobčáková (2017), lexical interference was manifested in Adrián's ample production of borrowings, prevailingly consisting of English stems and Slovak prefixes/suffixes, that occurred in:

- verbs: *sleepkaj* (dim.) – 2nd person singular imperative/*spinkaj* (dim.) (2;6), *stampujem* – 1st person singular present/*pečiatkujem* (3;6), *scareit'* (inf.)/*strašiť* (3;7)
- nouns: *booky* – nominative fem. plural/*knihy* (2;2), *trainom* – instrumental masc. singular/*vlakom* (2;6), *mouseka* (dim.) – nominative fem. singular/*myška* (2;11)
- adjectives: *brokené/zlomené* (2;6), *bricksový/tehlový* (3;7)
- nominal borrowings with Slovak stems and English suffixes: *papieriks* (3;1), *hubs* (3;10).

The instances of semantic interference appeared in both languages, e.g. *maj pekný čas* derived from the English phrase *have a nice time* (3;9), *I've got my birthday* derived from the Slovak phrase *mám narodeniny* (3;11).²⁶ All the mentioned interference phenomena pointed out the mutual interaction of the two languages in Adrián's process of BFLA and his ability to use his emerging bilingual competence as a base for lexical creativity.

3.5 Pragmatic development

Pragmatic development has been an integral part of Adrián's language acquisition process. Our communicative interaction started before his verbal language production via various non-verbal expressions with a more or less clear pragmatic purpose. At the age of 0;11 he started to respond non-verbally (i.e. by conscious gestures) to various routine commands in both languages, such as: *Show me...*, *Where is...?*, *Touch your...*. These routines usually included pointing to objects, pictures and body parts. With the emergence of his linguistic devices, the pragmatic functions became clearer. Thus, I can confirm that "communication begins long before language is established" (Bialystok, 2001, p. 30), and that children learn how to communicate in the same natural way as they acquire a language system (Průcha, 2011, p. 112).

Although Adrián communicated his intended meanings already in the preverbal stage of his language development, with the onset of speech he reached a wider range of pragmatic functions that he attempted to communicate. In the one-word and two-word stage his utterances in both languages corresponded to typical early pragmatic functions, e.g. reference, dis/agreement, command, positive/negative opinion, surprise, polite request/refusal, etc.,²⁷ which were accompanied by gestures to convey the intended meanings. Overall, he reached a richer pragmatic competence in Slovak than in English, in accordance with his general achievement in the process of the English language acquisition. Nevertheless, his English competence definitely includes pragmatic purposes.

With respect to pragmatic interference, Adrián differentiates his language choice according to the interlocutors and/or situation but his unequal language competence enables him to use only Slovak in a monolingual mode. Therefore, he often produces mixed utterances, which can be understood as using a bilingual mode while lacking the ability to choose and stick to the appropriate language when speaking to Slovak monolinguals or other nationals who do not speak Slovak. Nevertheless, the first signs of awareness of the relations between the

²⁶ Similar observations were recorded by Štefánik (2000a) and Bobčáková (2017).

²⁷ The specified pragmatic functions draw upon the research by Slančová (2008) and are understood as bi-dimensional: the realization of an elementary communicative intention as well as representation of the relation between the child and its environment (p. 119).

language choice and the interlocutor appeared when he was 2;10, as depicted in the example below:

%sit: Adrián is playing with our Indian friend, but suddenly he comes to his mother.
 *MOT: what have you been doing with Adeline?
 *ADR: playing.
 *MOT: how?
 *ADR: speak povedal som socks lebo ona nevie po slovensky ponožky.
 %eng: speak I told Adeline socks because she does not know the Slovak word ponožky.
 (2;10)

This example demonstrates his language differentiation according to the interlocutors/situation; however, his language choice is limited by his language modes. Since his Slovak competence is advanced, he is able to use a Slovak monolingual mode. His English, on the contrary, is not developed enough for a monolingual mode as he lives in a monolingual Slovak community. But still, it is well developed for use in a bilingual mode.

3.6 Code-switching/mixing and mixed utterances

Mixed utterances are a common characteristic of bilingual speech as well as a usual part of developmental processes in children growing up with two languages (De Houwer, 2005, p. 35). I consider both Adrián's code-switching and mixing²⁸ proof of his language interaction rather than random language mixture because they both require enough knowledge of two grammatical systems in order to follow the linguistic constraints of code-switching/mixing (Poplack, 1980), and moreover, "code-switching is a mode of bilingual performance which allows the bilingual to display his full communicative competence" (Romaine, 1989, p. 157).

The identified purposes of Adrián's code-switching include the ones typical in children: filling out lexical gaps (most frequently due to the dominance of Slovak), emphasis/reinforcement of a request, attracting attention, and quoting someone (McClure, 1977). The switched elements comprise both lexical as well as grammatical morphemes and the matrix language of his mixed utterances is mostly Slovak, e.g. *to je yellow* 'it's yellow' (1;10), *nechcem teeth umývať* 'I don't want to clean my teeth' (2;0), *ideme kúpiť carrot, please* 'let's buy a carrot, please' (2;3), *idem rice eat* 'I am going to eat the rice' (2;6), *idem sa poseesawat* 'I am going to see-saw' (3;1), *ty si sleptovala* 'you slept' (3;9), *chcel by som sa powalk* 'I would like to go for a walk' (4;4), *máme dost lettucka* 'we have enough lettuce' (4;6), *mama pozri koľko carrots I have* 'mummy look how many carrots I have' (4;6).

Another type of code-switching that has appeared in Adrián's speech is lexical duplication, i.e. juxtaposition of translation equivalents, such as: *veľké auto, big big big* 'a big car' (2;0), *Mama, sadkaj si! Mama, sit down!* (2;5), *Kde si? Where are you?* (2;6), *That's it! Už je to hotovo!* (3;5), *Ideme do divadla, to the theatre.* 'We are going to the theatre.' (3;7), *Mama, ja som našiel niečo, I have found it!* 'Mummy, I have found something!' (4;6).

This phenomenon is not rare in bilinguals (e.g. Romaine, 1989; Štefánik, 2000a; Rebelos, 2012), and the fact that young bilingual children have translation equivalents can be taken as evidence of their language differentiation (Nicoladis – Genesee, 1997, pp. 260–261).

²⁸ I distinguish between these two terms according to the distinction made by Štefánik (2000b, p. 122), who states that code-switching includes a full shift from one language into the other at the level of a sentence or expression without any assimilation (e.g. *Daddy you said nech sa páči to me* 'daddy you said here you are to me'), while in code-mixing expressions or parts of one language are assimilated phonetically and morphologically to the other language (e.g. *Idem sa s tebou fajtovať* 'I am going to fight with you').

Conclusions

Bilingualism is a long-term experience of two languages related to increased competence in both languages as well as their alternate use. The level of language competence sufficient for the “bilingual” label is reflected in the ability to understand two languages, each with their own particularities, lacking equivalents, as well as in the actual experience of thinking in both languages. In other words, being bilingual allows for varying degrees, and it requires command of two languages, albeit not homogeneous.

Adrián is a natural bilingual child with two native languages, who has been acquiring English from a foreign parent. Even though he is not acquiring English from a native speaker, the process of acquisition is natural in that he is developing all the constituents and rules of the language implicitly, without formal instruction, which is confirmed by his constant progress in the complexity of English utterances. Despite being a weaker language, his English has become implicitly interiorized. For example, Adrián sometimes speaks English at night when he wakes up accidentally, and he can use English associatively because at the age of 4;0 he changed the name of his favourite cartoon character from Peppa Pig into Peppa Pink, and at the age of 4;6 when supposed to wear a jumper, he asked me in Slovak whether the jumper could jump. Furthermore, his language productions manifest features that are typical for bilingual children, but cannot be found in monolingual children, such as code-switching and mixing, translating, or answering in the other language. I am convinced that another impact of his bilingual experience is his ample production of Slovak nonce-formations as they require significant lexical flexibility, creativity, and freedom. These cognitive abilities are generally believed to be enhanced by bilingualism, e.g. Baker (2014, p. 5).²⁹

Overall, Slovak is his dominant language with monolingual-like development and competence. He is able to communicate in it without any effort, but this is not so in the case of English due to his limited amount of exposure time and contact with other speakers besides his mother. His communicative competence in English is restricted and overall more receptive than productive, but as he is still progressing across all language levels, his ability to communicate fluently and effortlessly is increasing as well. Thus I am convinced that he is a productive bilingual and the research data support my conviction. Besides, language competence is not a stative phenomenon; its degree can vary across a lifespan. This means that my son can become more fluent and advanced in English later, if not now, but he might never become a balanced bilingual.

In accordance with the findings of other researchers involved in the area, my observation has proven that intentional bilingualism is a feasible strategy for bilingual upbringing with a potentially high efficiency, depending on the amount and quality of exposure to the ‘intentional’ language. Since “bilingualism of children is a natural result of the fact that they live in nationally and linguistically mixed territories” (Hurajová, 2020, p. 340), creating a bilingual environment in a family means creating a linguistically mixed territory that can naturally lead to children’s bilingualism. My family experience reveals bilingualism as a natural part of our everyday life, therefore I suggest a new term, ‘foreign natural bilingualism’. It is also evident that even under experimental conditions with a limited amount of exposure to one of the two languages it is possible to develop bilingual competence in a child. The efficiency of this approach is lower than through the OPOL method but still valuable.

Another significant discovery is that even if a child receives the bilingual language input primarily from a single person, s/he can acquire them without confusion. Therefore I fully agree with Baker’s view (2014, p. 19) that even though it is a more difficult option to alternate two languages, it is not an impossible one. However, it is important that the parent keep clear

²⁹ In association with this, McLaughlin (1978, p. 206) claims explicitly: “Bilingualism seems to free the child from the tyranny of words.”

boundaries of separation between the two languages and avoid random code-switching or uncontrolled mixing. This is why I attempted to set clear rules for language alternation with my son. The strategy of speaking English during the periods of time when we are at home alone without his father thus seems to be a successful one, with the exposure to English being regular and meaningful for Adrián.

Congruently with general expectations, my research supports the assertion that the stages of mono- and bilingual language development are the same. Despite a lower amount of time spent in both languages compared to monolinguals, Adrián proceeded through the expected developmental stages in each language; however, at different rates. Moreover, his two developing languages have constantly interacted, which led to instances of interference at all language levels, as generally expected. Since Adrián's dominant language is Slovak, I observed a greater impact of Slovak on English than vice versa, which can also be connected with a greater morphological complexity of Slovak, as it is an inflectional language. However, I do not consider these interferential phenomena as evidence of failure to acquire each language sufficiently or to reach full separation of his two languages. I rather perceive them as a sign of his language interaction as well as the opportunity to manifest his bilingual communicative competence.

All in all, to make a child bilingual is a cardinal decision that influences the entire functioning of a family. The ways how to realize and achieve it are manifold, with different degrees of efficiency. The less conventional the method, the less certain the results. However, my research findings clearly show that even under experimental conditions (a single and non-native mediator of two languages, a limited amount of exposure) it is possible to develop bilingual competence in the child, if the chosen strategy is consistently followed. Although bilingual first language acquisition is not supposed to bring the same results as monolingual first language acquisition, i.e. to raise two monolinguals in a single child, it is still valuable and offers the enriching advantage of being able to communicate and view the world through two language perspectives.

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Summary

Intentional bilingualism of a Slovak child regularly exposed to English

Intentional bilingualism is a popular type of bilingual upbringing in which a child is exposed to a language that is not a native language of either of his/her parents but one or both of them use it in communication with their child because they want to make him/her bilingual. This study reports on the bilingual first language acquisition of a Slovak child regularly exposed to English, implementing intentional bilingualism through an experimental approach of alternating two languages by his mother. The main objective of the study is to give an overview of his language development across the individual language levels – phonological, grammatical, lexical, semantic, and pragmatic with the focus on his developmental vs. interference-like errors as well as production of mixed utterances. The results reveal that intentional bilingualism is practicable even under experimental conditions and that it can be a natural way of raising a bilingual child. The ratio of contact with the two languages, however, leads to a certain developmental disproportion, in which the native language of the parents becomes clearly dominant.