Bilingual Partners Turn into Bilingual Parents: Reporting on Decisions and Consequences

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to contribute to our understanding of bilingual couples' language choices with regard to childrearing in the less studied Polish setting. Bilingual partners often rethink their communication patterns when faced with the perspective of parenthood. A qualitative study featuring 24 in-depth interviews was conducted with linguistically mixed couples of Poles and non-Poles who represented 22 nationalities and came from six continents. In total, the target couples communicated in seven languages, including Polish. The duration of their relationships ranged from one year to over thirty. By adopting the conceptual framework of the Family Language Policy, the study identified types of bilingual families in Poland by showing that they share parallel educational experiences. Results showed no major differences in the appreciation of bilingual couplehood in the context of their children's linguistic future and overall satisfactory evaluations of their bilingual performance. However, the analysis of interview extracts revealed differences found in parental attitudes towards the strategies of bilingual upbringing and in the reactions of children as described by the bilingual couples. The most satisfactory evaluations of the parents dissembled their once higher expectations regarding their children's linguistic performance. There were also differences in the reported sources of knowledge about how to successfully raise a child in two languages. This indicates that the identification of parenting styles and the ensuing experiences have a crucial bearing for the understanding of bilingual communication between parents and children.

Keywords: bilingual couples; childhood bilingualism; family language policy; heritage language; Polish

INTRODUCTION

Language planning among bilingual couples builds on hopes and fears connected with the linguistic future of their children. In this respect, the plight of bilingual couples offers two possibilities: either educate children in one of the couple's languages (most often in the language of the country's residence) or pass on bilinguality to them. According to earlier research (e.g., Edwards, 2012), parents have a good grasp as to the number of languages they should use in contact with their children and for what purposes. This knowledge results from parents' attitudes towards specific types of language interactions, e.g., code switching or the use of slang, which also affects their communication with children. Parental attitudes towards language learning and bilinguality are reflected in the strategies of verbal interactions, though the degree to which parents see themselves as capable or responsible for developing languages in their children may differ. Family language policy rests on the interrelation between language policy and choice versus the actual language use in family. It is often assumed that the acquisition and use of languages by

children are informed by the parents' language ideologies, their decisions about language learning and strategies adopted in families and in the wider socio-cultural context.

There are few studies centered around family language policy and bilingual couplehood in the Polish context or directly connected with Polish ethnic groups. The most recent and, in some cases, pioneering studies include bilingual couples living in Poland (Stępkowska, 2017, 2019), early child's bilingualism in Poland (Romanowski, 2018), Polish-German bilinguality of children from the parents' perspective (Pułaczewska, 2018), transnational families in Great Britain (Wąsikiewicz-Firlej & Lankiewicz, 2019), child's upbringing in non-native bilingualism in Poland (Szramek-Karcz, 2016), communication strategies adopted for the trilingual children upbringing (Murrmann, 2019), and socialisation and integration of Polish teenagers in Ireland (Machowska-Kościak, 2018). Interestingly, beyond the European context, it is the Polish diaspora in Australia that has attracted most of the researchers' attention, e.g., Romanowski (2021) who wrote about Family Language Policy in Polish-English families in Australia. Other studies concern Polish emigration to Melbourne after 1980 and the influence of the Australian immigration policy on the identity of Polish emigrants and their place in Australian community (Leuner, 2010). Issues related to Polish-English bilinguality in Australia were studied in the context of globalisation and information technologies (Dębski, 2009), as well as the language education of children from the families of Polish immigrants (Lipińska, 2013).

The main objective of the article is to explore language choices adopted by bilingual partners with childrearing experience. The study uses a conceptual framework of the Family Language Policy to examine the attitudes of bilingual couples towards the maintenance of bilinguality in their children. More specifically, the study investigates how decisions about language use in the family are connected with the outcomes demonstrated by children. Theoretical insights from the fields of family studies, ethnicity and bilingualism show that language use in intermarried families intertwines with the experience of childrearing by portraying its actual dynamics. By sketching out a picture of bilingual parents and their attempts to resolve the conflicting demands over childrearing, language and education, the article aims to depict language recognition and shared responsibility. Examining bilingual partners in their parental roles helps understand language experiences shared both by parents and children. Depending on linguistic constellations, the patterns of language use in family vary widely and so do the resulting types of bilingualism in children (Romaine, 2008). The results expose the bilingual partners' attitudes towards multiple language development. Parental efforts to maintain the heritage language in children indicate how the isolated heritage languages in families (in the context of a dominant language) may be better supported to help children benefit from the advantages of their bilingual capital.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Since each family defines the rules for communication and beliefs, it is regarded as an important domain for investigating language policy. Parents decide about language functions (status planning), language forms (corpus planning) and about language learning and teaching (acquisition planning). Language outcomes in bilingual children are believed to be shaped by parental ideologies (attitudes and beliefs). Parents' language ideologies are informed by different sources of professional advice, such as books, the media, the Internet and by the examples of other couples (Piller, 2001; King & Fogle, 2013). As the result, Family Language Policy (FLP) should be understood as a concept combining ideologies, management and practices related to language

(Romanowski, 2021). Similarly to language policy, FLP focuses on multilingual family environments, i.e., parents with different first languages (Piller, 2002), differences between the language of a family and the dominant language of the community (Stępkowska, 2020; Wong Fillmore, 2000), and differences between parents and children with regard to their language preferences (Fogle, 2008). Since the origin of FLP, its contributions have been set in a sociolinguistic perspective of child bilingualism and concentrated on language input to answer the question of differences in achieved competencies between children (Smith-Christmas, 2016). Thanks to the research about language policymaking in the family and the language outcomes in children (e.g., King 2016; King & Fogle, 2013), the field of FLP acquired the status of a distinct discipline. Of particular value are the studies that give the voice to children raised in transnational families (e.g., Romanowski, 2021). Children were presented as family members who took an active part in shaping the family language practices and who had a firm opinion about the effectiveness of heritage language learning as well as multilingualism.

A parent's first language treated as "heritage" symbolises cultural provenance. The heritage language (also referred to as minority language or non-dominant language) often becomes a site of identities' contestation when parents decide to impose it on their children to perpetuate the ethnic identity and to tie them to certain cultural values (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). It is noteworthy that many women in bilingual couples look at the heritage language as an essential aspect of their identity in relation to children, and as mothers they often seek to pass it on to their children (Stępkowska, 2021). On the other hand, parents see the heritage language as a valuable tool for sustaining kinship bonds and wish for the children to be able to maintain contact with their relatives. Thus, the heritage language is envisaged in families as a language that occupies two spaces on the spectrum at the same time, i.e., an idealistic space connected with attitudes and motivations, and a realistic space connected with education and resources (Little, 2020). In the context of migration, parenting styles with regard to passing on a heritage language reflect the parent's attitudes to parenting. Therefore, a parenting style may be conceived in terms of parents' orientations in line with their concept of parenthood and values passed on to their children (Pułaczewska, 2019; Wilson, 2021).

Attitudes and beliefs of parents inform their language behaviour towards children and constitute part of a broader conviction concerning the all-embracing child development, which means that language use in bilingual families is closely connected with the upbringing experience (Serratrice, 2019). These attitudes and beliefs were labelled by Lanza (2007, p. 53) as *language ideology* which is manifested by language practice, i.e., the way of speaking and language choice as well as the opinions about language. Hence, families may represent diverse language ideologies which are interconnected with language use at home. Parents express their language ideology directly as metalanguage or indirectly by language choice. By choosing a concrete language for the interaction with children, parents socialise them towards their language ideology, e.g., by the level of acceptance for code switching in the mutual communication. Deliberate decisions whether to use or not to use a given language in contact with children to achieve a specific educational goal fit in well with the concept of so-called *impact belief* (De Houwer, 1999). This concept concerns the parents' belief about their own role in the process of language acquisition by children, which consists in exercising control over the children's linguistic performance. The impact belief informs parents' actions and their efforts in language management at home (Nakamura, 2019). Parents with a strong impact belief or taking the part of the family's *language managers* (Spolsky, 2009) are distinguished by the deliberate attempts to activate children's bilinguality via the use of explicit discourse strategies (e.g., Lanza, 2004). The only situation in a family that could create sufficient

support for an early active bilinguality in children is the one in which a parent or parents hold the impact belief during the entire process of language acquisition by children, as well as the situation which is distinguished by the general positive attitude towards relevant languages and the life in bilinguality. Other situations render the chances of an early active bilinguality in children slender (Nakamura, 2020).

Romaine (2008) proposed a typology that distinguished six strategies of language choice in multilingual families. Communication strategies that may lead to bilinguality in children include (1) one person – one language, (2) non-dominant home language, (3) non-dominant home language without community support, (4) double non-dominant home language without community support, (5) non-native parents, and (6) mixed languages. These strategies are conditioned by factors such as the native languages of parents, the language(s) of the community, and the strategies adopted by parents to communicate with their children. Though in real situations the communication strategies may partly interconnect, the value of this typology lies in the fact that it places the study results in a generalised framework with the reservation that most families function in a monolingual rather than bilingual environment. Such is the case of the study conducted in Poland. Romaine's typology could be applied in multilingual contexts (e.g., Braun & Cline, 2010), but other authors considered only two out of six main categories, i.e., 'one person – one language' and 'non-dominant home language' (cf. Piller, 2001).

The typologies and strategies are in fact options of language possibilities in families that are offered for choice. Parents estimate their own language resources, determine the goals and choose an optimal strategy. The key issue is the decision about the language used at home. If both parents are fluent in languages they would like to pass on to their children, then the chosen strategy may be successful. Once parents choose a strategy, they should apply it with consistency that guarantees a successful introduction of children to bi- or multilinguality. Stavans and Hoffmann (2015) listed three situations that put at risk the language practices at home, namely: (a) when the choice of a strategy turned out to be missed and resulted in one of the parents feeling excluded from the interactions between children and the other parent, (b) when one parent has a poor command of the language and does not want or fears to admit it to the child or others, and finally (c) when parents failed to implement a chosen strategy in the earliest possible moment.

It must be remembered that the FLP is not only "a parental project, but also the project of children" (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015). Parents negotiate and process the direct influence of the community on FLP through their language choices. But it is children who receive and execute their parents' language planning. Several studies elucidated the child's success in the minority language, like the one by Mishina-Mori (2011) who pointed out not only a high level of input in the minority language but also the input quality. Stavans (2012) observed that a wide range of register was directly proportional to the high competence of exposed children. Similarly, Döpke (1992) argued that language maintenance depended on the role assumed by a child in interactions. The linguistic conditions provided by parents wanting to raise bilingual children turned out to be an emotionally demanding task because children who learnt the minority language had to cope with negative emotions (Okita, 2002). In her study, Pułaczewska (2021) demonstrated that when teenagers passed from parent-dependence in their early adolescence to a more autonomous stage, the presence of a minority language in their lives was likely to reach its "critical period" due to the strong impact of the local culture that dominated the bonds of family and ethnicity maintained by the minority language speaking parents. In turn, Romanowski (2021) observed that parents rarely discussed with their children multilingualism and language practices at home. In fact, children often failed to understand and appreciate the advantages of learning more than one language. As

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the result, their motivation to learn and use the heritage language risked a significant drop. Romanowski (2021) also showed that parental ideologies presented a combination of monoglossic and heteroglossic views. For example, parents expressed their keen appreciation for multilingualism but they frowned on the children's code-switching practice in everyday situations. This conclusion only adds to the significance of knowledge about the forms of occurrence and education about bi- and multilinguality.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method proved useful in describing complex sociolinguistic phenomena related to bilingualism. Interviews revealed how participants interpreted meanings with reference to themselves and to the problems under study (Cruickshank, 2012). They expressed their opinions and explained the motivation for their language behaviour (Silverman, 2011). The interviewed couples showed interest in the study on bilinguality in children due to their own involvement in similar phenomena. In the light of the study goals, an in-depth interview was the main tool of generating new knowledge. The interview was controlled by means of instructions that facilitated asking questions. The instructions corresponded with modules which represented the topics for conversation with participants (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). The interviews were based on four modules that included language repertoires of bilingual partners, their language choices, the couples' identity and children's bilinguality. The first three modules dealt with the relationship in the couple, whereas the fourth module introduced the question of bilingual childrearing. This article focuses primarily on the data related to the last module, i.e., raising children in bilinguality by linguistically mixed couples.

The main criterion for sampling was bilinguality in couple formed by a Pole and his or her non-Polish partner as well as their permanent residence in Poland. Since Poland entered the EU and NATO structures, the number of such couples has increased appreciably. This phenomenon has led to specific changes in the structure and awareness of Polish society. Bilingual couples in Poland enjoy universal social acceptance, particularly in large municipalities where they mostly live. Nevertheless, following the recent migration crisis in Europe, the image of an immigrant has been replaced by the image of a refugee, which resulted in different attitudes demonstrated across the EU member states (Kużelewska & Piekutowska, 2021; Czachur *et al.*, 2022). In total, 24 bilingual couples were interviewed. At the time of data collection, nine couples had been together for less than a decade, while seven couples had been together between ten and twenty years. The relationships of five couples had lasted between twenty and twenty nine years. There were also three couples who had lived together for at least thirty years. As the result, the command of Polish among foreigners in the couples was different. In six couples, the non-Polish partners were fluent in Polish. Also, there were two groups of nine couples each. In one group, foreign partners had a limited knowledge of Polish, whereas the other group consisted of foreign partners who were not able to communicate in Polish.

The data collection benefited from the judgement sampling which was a non-statistical technique, i.e., not allowing to make generalisations in reference to the group of participants under study. Since judgement sampling is based on the availability of participants rather than on random sampling, the sample was collected via a snowball technique that consisted in "personal or professional contacts to identify first participants, and using them to identify others after that" (Heller & Lévy 1992, p. 18). Indeed, interviewed participants offered contacts with other bilingual

couples willing to take part in the study. This "friend of a friend" method (Milroy, 1980) helped minimise the risk of potential rejections.

As regards qualitative sampling, it is assumed that fifteen interviews is enough to reach a saturation level, i.e., the moment when subsequent interviews cease to contribute new knowledge (Kvale, 2007). The total recording time of 24 interviews was nearly 26 hours (25h 52 min). The mean time of one interview was 64 minutes. Interviews were conducted in Polish but in four cases interlocutors switched to English and in two cases the Polish partner explained or interpreted fragments of conversations in languages other than English. All interviews carried out in Polish were translated into English. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study in which they agreed to participate. I explained to them the procedure and provided them with confidentiality by anonymising their personal data.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Out of 24 couples 22 of them had children. At the time of data collection, ten couples had one child, and twelve couples raised two children. Most parents had young offspring under ten years old (19 children). Nearly half of this group (7 children) had reached a maximum of 3 years of age. Two couples, Indonesian and French,[1] had children under one year (6 months and 1 month, respectively). Five couples had adolescent children, and four couples had adult children in the age group between 20 and 29. Two couples, Turkish and Czech, had children older than 30 years of age. Table 1 presents the data on children of the interviewed couples. If a given couple appears more than once, it means that the children of this couple fall into two different age groups. For example, "Japanese (f)" can be seen in two age groups: 8-10 and 11-19. This is so because this couple of a male Pole and his Japanese wife had two boys aged 10 and 13.

TABLE 1. The age of children

Children's age group	Number of children	Couples with children in a given age group*
0-3	7	Indonesian (m), American (f), French (m), Russian (m), German (m), Moldovan (m), Australian (m)
4-7	9	Italian (m), Spanish (m), American (m), Dutch (m), British (m), Brazilian (f), Indian (m), Australian (m)
8-10	3	Italian (m), Spanish (m), Japanese (f)
11-19	6	German (f), American (m), Kazakh (f), Japanese (f), Ethiopian (m)
20-25	4	Kazakh (f), Romanian (f), Ethiopian (m), Chinese (f)
26-29	1	Romanian (f)
Over 30	4	Turkish (m), Czech (f)

* In this column (m) stands for a male foreigner, and (f) denotes a female foreigner in a couple with a Pole (either male or female).

All couples responded positively to the question of children's bilinguality. Even the two childless couples (Austrian and Danish) in the studied sample declared strong beliefs about raising children in two languages. Agata, married to an Austrian, reacted to the question with exclamations

[1] For the sake of brevity and style, I refer to individual couples by describing them with an adjective denoting the nationality of a female/ male foreigner in a given couple. For instance: a "Czech couple" instead of a "couple of a male Pole and a Czech female", or a "German couple" instead of a "couple of a German male and a Polish female".

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such as "absolutely" and "obligatorily". She also found bilinguality attractive form the child's perspective by emphasising "better chances for intellectual and professional development". In turn, Katarzyna and her Danish husband, Erik, referred to a child's bilinguality as a "gift" and "bonus", something "natural" between bilingual partners and their children. Other participants either made the decision to teach two languages to their children or were planning to do so, or stated that they would do so if they had children. At times their discourse clearly indicated the superiority of bilingual acquisition over a monolingual one. There were couples in which parents used a third language in the couple's talk and addressed the children in their respective first languages. These couples created the conditions for effective trilinguality in children. Such cases included two couples, i.e., Jolanta and Oskar (German) as well as Camila (Brazilian) and Michał, with young children (2 and 4 years old, respectively) who were already exposed to three languages at home. An example of a couple with a grown trilingual son was the Chinese couple.

A strong commitment to the bilinguality of children among bilingual couples is sometimes shared by monolingual couples. This commitment is defined by Piller (2009) as *language desire* which drives parents to raise children in bilinguality. Piller (2009) argues that at the moment of starting a family, when a couple has small children or plans to have them, language desire takes on a new form. The earlier romantic desire to have a partner of a different language and culture turns into a desire directed at the bilinguality of children. Such a language desire is motivated by the practical argument underscoring the usefulness of knowing two languages but not only. Language desire signals the wish to belong to a community speaking a given language and become its member. Parents, even if they master a second language, e.g., the partner's first language, tend to struggle with their authenticity as the users of that language. As a result, their desire aims to pass on bilinguality to their children as the native speakers of the languages.

RAISING CHILDREN IN BILINGUALITY

The mere fact that parents make a decision about bilingual childrearing indicates their positive attitude towards bilinguality. Children may be introduced into two languages through simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism (Grosjean, 2010; Paradis, 2007). In simultaneous bilingualism, the second language is present at an early stage, at least by the third year of the child's age. Parents speak with the child in their first languages, e.g., the father speaks German and the mother speaks Polish. In sequential bilingualism, the second language is acquired following the language already used by the child and the parents. In other words, the child acquires the first language at home and the other language outside home, usually when the school starts. This type of bilingualism has an influence on the relationship between parents and children, especially at the time when children have mastered the language of their host country better than their parents. This was illustrated by a number of couples: Italian (m), Spanish (m), American (m), British (m), Romanian (f), Indian (m), Chinese (f), and Australian (m). Bilingual couples in my study represented two scenarios with regard to their bilingual parenting practices. Following Romaine's typology (2008), the most popular strategy turned out to be 'one person – one language', while the second one was 'non-dominant home language'.

'One person – one language' was picked by parents who had different first languages in which they addressed children. Communication in the family would not exclude either of the parents if they got to know each other's languages to some extent. This strategy may have a few versions which arise from a combination of different variables, notably in what language the parents speak to each other. Each bilingual couple in the sample had one partner who was a Pole speaking a dominant language of the community, i.e., Polish. Five out of nine couples from this

group used a non-dominant language, i.e., the language of the foreigner. Two couples spoke the dominant language and the other two couples used a third language (lingua franca), namely the Turkish couple spoke German and the Chinese couple spoke Esperanto. Couples who either planned or had just started implementing the strategy of 'one person – one language' were grouped together because their children did not exceed three years of age at the time of data collection. Therefore, those couples' opinions amounted to declarations rather than accounts of their actual language practices. Such couples were six, i.e., Indonesian (m), French (m), American (f), Russian (m), German (m), and Romanian (m). As the result, fifteen couples (nearly two thirds of the sample) either used or would soon begin to use the 'one parent – one language' strategy. In the group of couples aspiring to raise children in this strategy, four out of six communicated in Polish, one couple spoke a non-dominant language and one used a third language.

Research on the 'one person – one language' strategy proved that it did not guarantee success and that it was not the amount but the quality of the contact that had a key significance in the acquisition of a non-dominant language by children (e.g., Barron-Hauwaert, 2004; Genesee, 2000). Active acquisition of the non-dominant language by children cannot be left to a chance or other uncontrollable factors, such as the child's temperament or the contact with an extended family. The degree of bilinguality achievable by means of this strategy may be diverse and at times even disappointing for the parents. Parents who raised children in line with this strategy did not do it out of necessity but out of choice, which led to specific problems (Palviainen & Boyd, 2013). Those families were usually well integrated with the host community, but at the same time isolated from other bilingual adults and children. As the result, children from such families were exposed to a limited contact with the non-dominant language used with a few people in the close environment or simply to one person who spoke that language.

The 'non-dominant language at home' strategy consists in the use of one language at home, usually the minority language, and the other one outside the home. The sole use of the non-dominant language at home helps acquire the language effectively, though the turning point comes when children start going to school, which is similar in the context of the 'one person – one language' strategy. From that point, the proportion of time begins to change to the disadvantage of a non-dominant language, while the dominant language permeates into the home. The non-dominant language was used at home only by two couples, Brazilian (f) and Spanish (m). More unusual was the Brazilian couple due to their language of communication, which was not the non-dominant language (Portuguese) but a third language (English). Camila read about bilingual childrearing and admitted that 'non-dominant language at home' "wouldn't be an option for them, because Michał [her husband] couldn't speak Portuguese all the time", and also due to the fact that the couple did not give up English. Their initial choice was 'one person – one language' but certain "modifications" mentioned by Camila in fact sealed a change of this strategy into the 'non-dominant language at home' when they both decided that Michał would speak to the daughter like his wife, i.e., also in Portuguese and not in Polish. When Camila and Michał first met they used English, which became the basic language of communication between the couple. The birth of their daughter did not change their couple's language. What is more, since they had a child, they expanded their joint language repertoire by Portuguese by means of which they in fact implemented the 'non-dominant language at home'. In the presence of their daughter Iga, they both used Portuguese with her which, in Michał's opinion, "was only for the sake of Iga so that she could have this Portuguese, and so that it should be natural for her". This couple was an example of how one of the parents had become involved in the family language policy and how much this policy was linked with the father's motivation to learn the language. For his daughter

Iga, Michał made an effort to communicate both with her and his wife in Portuguese. If what he said in Portuguese was incorrect, then Camila always corrected him for Iga's sake. As the result, Iga found herself in the situation of trilinguality because she interacted with her parents in Portuguese, but she also heard them speaking English to each other and it happened that she joined them in English. In addition, outside the home Iga attended kindergarten where she had contact with Polish.

Similarly to the Brazilian couple, Maria and Felipe (Spanish) initially were planning to employ the 'one person – one language' strategy but their everyday language practices in the end made them switch to 'non-dominant language at home'. Most probably the fact that settled the change of strategies were the frequent stays of the couple with their first child in Spain at the house of Felipe's parents. Since her in-laws did not understand Polish, Maria started to speak Spanish to her son not only when they were in Spain, but later on also in Poland. Since then the Spanish couple successfully used the 'non-dominant language at home' strategy. This success was informed by the deliberate attitudes of both parents with regard to bilingual childrearing as well as the clearly defined goal regarding the children's bilinguality, that was "to prevent them from knowing only one language". Maria pointed out the consistent approach which she and Felipe demonstrated towards their children, which consisted in the exclusive use of Spanish in the family context.

CONSEQUENCES OF BILINGUAL PARENTING: THE CHILDREN'S REACTIONS

Language attitudes of the parents are the key factor that gives shape to the patterns of language use by children. The question whether children would use two languages in the interactions with others, or whether they would restrict themselves to one language, depends on many aspects in the language behaviour of the parents and above all their language choices and communication strategies. In the opinion of De Houwer (1999), not only do the language choices of parents have a fundamental impact on the development of early bilinguality in their children, but also how parents react to the language behaviour of their children. Yet we need to remember that the parents' language choices should be distinguished from those of their children (Piller, 2002).

The discussion about practices and strategies leading to the specific results of the adopted family language policy cannot exclude the attitudes of children (Stavans & Hoffmann, 2015). The role of children reverberates with the impact of their budding language competences on the language practices of other family members. This means that in the entire process of achieving bilinguality children are not merely an 'object' of language socialisation but the 'subject' next to the parents and the community in which they live. Even the best plan of blilingual upbringing may be rejected by the children if they fail to appreciate the needs and desires of their parents, directed to maintaining bilinguality at home. Children alone make decisions about the development of languages, which not always corresponds with the parents' plans. If the parents' expectations are too high in this regard, then they experience "feelings of disappointment" (Fries, 1998, p. 136).

The interviewed couples did not indicate any particular disappointment resulting from the changed attitudes of children towards languages they used on a daily basis. Even so, some changes in the language behaviour of children were spotted by a few parents. Such was the case of the Japanese couple. Despite her gentle persuasion that one should know two languages, i.e., one of an international range, which is English, and the other one that is less popular, Japanese, Mio admitted that her teenage sons "argued that they did not need Japanese because they lived all the time in Poland". Even the argument that Japanese was their mother's first language was not

convincing enough for the boys since after all Mio "also spoke Polish". Hence, Mio concluded that Japanese "tired them out".

In turn, in the Dutch couple of Beata and Vincent, their four-year-old daughter Mila refuses to speak Dutch with her father. The main reason for this was the fact that this couple communicated in Polish, in which the girl was the most proficient. Vincent suggested to the daughter a change of languages in the situations when they were alone, for example when they went by car, and sometimes they had a conversation in Dutch. It seems that Mila's resistance to switch languages occurred more often when Vincent explicitly asked her to do so rather than if he did it without asking for her consent, that is if he naturally switched to Dutch when they were alone.

In the Spanish couple, Maria noticed the differences in the language preferences of her children. She justified this fact with time proportions in the contact with the relevant language used by the children at home. Her ten-year-old son, Artur, who after birth spent more time with his father, became fluent in Spanish. In turn when the couple's daughter was born, it was Maria who cared for her most of the time and that is why Polish was more often used between mother and daughter. Therefore, in Maria's opinion, the four-year-old Sara "is still a little restive sometimes" and "prefers to speak Polish".

The examples of the Spanish and the Italian couples revealed similarities in language behaviour among the children themselves towards each other in their families. The Spanish couple used the strategy of 'non-dominant language at home', while the Italian couple implemented the 'one person – one language' strategy. In both families, when the parents were with their children, all of them spoke the minority language, i.e., the language of the non-Polish parent. However, the children always spoke the dominant language (Polish) between one another, both in the family of Maria and Felipe (Spanish), and in the family of Teresa and Matteo (Italian). In the case of the latter, Matteo, who did not speak Polish, explicitly demanded that the children switch to Italian between each other in his presence.

Couples (i.e., American (f), British and Australian) who still had young children and only recently began to use the 'one person – one language' strategy, admitted that "it already happened naturally" and that their children knew how to react, i.e., which language to use in contact with a given person from their surroundings. In the Australian couple, David who had been defined by his daughters as an English-speaking parent, would expect from them interactions only in English. As he reported, even if he addressed the daughters in Polish, they would answer him in English.

Children tend to mix languages quite often, especially when they are small and only just started to differentiate between persons and languages. An additional factor conducive to language mixing in children is the relative tolerance from parents for the alternate use of languages at the level of single words or entire sentences. The Czech couple (Jana and Paweł) recalled the stage of language mixing in their daughter, Marika, whose first language was Czech. Marika started to mix Czech and Polish right after her arrival in Poland, when she was two years old. At first, when Jana herself did not know Polish, she spoke Czech to her daughter, whereas Paweł used Polish. Marika mixed the languages, e.g., by combining the word root from one language with a word ending from the other, which often produced a humorous effect.

From the children's perspective, bilinguality did not appear to be an unequivocal reason for pride, but rather a burdensome fact which they wished to hide. Teresa (a Pole married to an Italian) and Mio (a Japanese married to a Pole) reported that their children were ashamed of speaking the language other than Polish because they did not want to stand out among their peers. If someone explicitly referred to Teresa's daughter by expressing praises about her speaking Italian, she would "get a mental block" and "simply won't say anything at all". A similar problem

was reported by Mio whose sons openly asked her not to address them in Japanese as this fact caused too much of an interest among other children at school. In consequence, Mio described the bilinguality of her sons at that time as their "complex".

EVALUATIONS OF THE BILINGUAL PARENTING STYLES

Although no strategy chosen by bilingual couples can guarantee the desired outcome of bilingual childrearing, the success is still possible. Paradoxically, the best outcomes regarding bilinguality in children have been achieved by the couples in which the non-Polish partner did not actively learn Polish. The communication between such parents and children had to be conducted in the first language of that parent (e.g., in the Italian, British and Australian couples), or in some other language known also to the other parent (e.g., the German (m) couple using English). For the child it was a favourable situation because of a clear differentiation between languages and the persons using them, including the communication patterns with parents being consistently realised. Yet parents who did not master the dominant language found themselves in a situation of sustained exclusion. Sometimes the exclusion was intensified by the fact that children became fluent in the language of their environment, i.e., the world to which such parents had largely limited access.

The Australian couple were satisfied with the 'one person – one language' strategy with regard to their two daughters. In Monika's opinion, her older daughter "spoke English very well". However, in order to prevent her husband David from being excluded from their everyday life when the whole family was together, all of them "switched" to English because he "had to take an active part in the life" at home.

Mio expressed a positive opinion about the bilinguality of her two teenage sons, though their bilinguality was limited mainly to speaking. Mio reported that her children could "get by" in Japanese, although they had no writing skills in the language. Nevertheless, she was satisfied with the fact that her sons had acquired a level of Japanese which was sufficient enough for them to converse with their Japanese grandparents and to communicate in most situations of everyday life in Japan.

The level of bilinguality regarding the children of the Czech couple was different. The parents argued that their daughter was fully bilingual unlike their son who was born in Poland and who in his childhood did not have such an intense contact with the Czech language as his sister. At the same time, Jana and Paweł were of the opinion that their son tried to make up for his poor command of Czech by demonstrating a stronger commitment to the Czech culture and personal contacts with friends and distant relatives than his sister.

Full bilinguality and biculturality was achieved by the daughters of Simone (German) and Piotr. The parents were unanimous about the fact that growing up in two languages and cultures not only gave shape to language repertoires of the girls but also formed their sense of identity. Simone stated explicitly that their daughters "had two identities, the one and the other", which was supported by Piotr's claim that they "did not divide it" and they were rather "somewhere in between". Language and cultures, when combined, created an added value which was discovered and appreciated most by the children who were almost fully grown to adulthood. Simone noticed that when the daughters were very young, they accepted bilinguality as a natural way of life in the family. Only with time, and having gained a broader perspective that stretched away further than the family context, did the girls begin to understand that "it was something exceptional". Such an outlook on the situation represented by the couple's daughters converged with the evaluation of the parents, which, apart from the obvious mastery of a second language, proved another essential fact, namely that the transfer of a specific attitude is closely linked to bilinguality.

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CONCLUSION

This article is a sociolinguistic examination of the less studied community of linguistically mixed couples in Poland, i.e., Poles in relationships with foreigners. The presented study promotes three worthwhile respects. First, the qualitative data of participants' accounts, including their occasional observations and reflections, bring more insight into the privacy of parents involved in the practices of bilingual childrearing. Second, the study aspires to contribute to a cross-disciplinary theoretical framework for a sociolinguistic analysis of parents' efforts to use bilingual practices (family language policy) and to pass on a minority language (minority language maintenance) to the younger generation (childhood bilingualism). And third, the study presents bilingual childrearing as a challenging task for parents by focusing on their dilemmas.

The study aimed to show the complexity inherent in the process of passing on the minority language to children. The discussed cases of bilingual couples participating in the study revealed their conscious involvement in bilingual childrearing. The most popular strategy turned out to be that of the 'one person – one language' followed by that of the 'non-dominant language at home'. The interviewed couples believed that being consistent in the once strategy would lead to a high level of balanced bilinguality in children. The couples shared their subjective evaluations of bilingual parenting, yet based on objective elements related to a certain level of expectations, such as proficiency in two languages, native-like pronunciation or the communicative knowledge in another language. Parents taking part in the study did not show disappointment which may be ascribed to their less excessive expectations concerning bilingual childrearing as well as to leniency towards their own lack of consistency in this respect, and the personal distance from this problem in general.

Parents' involvement in the bilinguality of their children began at the planning stage of the parenting process. Parents referred to specialist literature, sought advice from experts and kept a close eye on other bilingual couples with children. Parents who at first addressed their young children in one language and then wanted to introduce another language, could do so only by persuasive encouragement. Young children accepted such language behaviour of parents with difficulty (e.g., Mila in the Dutch couple). Older children and teenagers were encouraged to bilinguality with rational arguments (e.g., the two boys in the Japanese couple). In the more general perspective, bilingual parenting consisted not only in passing on languages but also language attitudes within which children approve, negotiate or eventually reject the linguistic practices of their parents. Parents saw their children's bilinguality as an investment in a more measurable sense (better life opportunities) and in a less measurable sense, when the couples stressed that thanks to bilinguality their children gained broader horizons in order to become "the citizens of the world", i.e., people who are open and freed from prejudices against other nationalities.

The above-mentioned aspects of the life of bilingual couples are hoped to produce their characteristic profile, including the evaluation of their needs and tensions related to language choices in family. This study aspires to contribute to the description of the types of language behaviour that is crucial in two respects. One, for the development of mutual communication and, two, for attaining a deeper understanding of ethnicity and identity among bilingual couples living in Polish society. Some aspects of the study may appear inspiring in further research not only for linguists or sociolinguists, but also for experts on migration and identity, including sociologists and psychologists.

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