

Bilingual Couples in Linguistics: A Systematic Review of Research Methods

Agnieszka Stepkowska
agnieszka.stepkowska@usz.edu.pl
University of Szczecin,
Institute of Linguistics, Poland

Katarzyna Buczek
kbuczek@uni.opole.pl
University of Opole,
Institute of Linguistics, Poland

ABSTRACT

The paper spotlights bilingual intermarriage by accentuating germane sociolinguistic studies to date in a comprehensive overview. The fact that couples have been largely marginalized in linguistics has become our motivation for a literature overview to establish the scope and directions of the scholarly development related to bilingualism among couples. With this in mind, we conducted a systematic review of research methods used by scholars who study bilingual couples. We analyzed seventy-seven academic publications in English and Polish. The reviewed works were culled from databases including Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTORE, Science Direct, and Semantic Scholar. We focused on publications in English since the bulk of the relevant literature comes out in this language. In turn our choice of Polish has been dictated by the fact that we have better access to linguistic studies in Polish that are less widely available internationally but enrich our research with original perspectives that may be absent from the English-language literature on the subject.

Keywords: bilingual couples; qualitative method; quantitative method; mixed methods; systematic review

INTRODUCTION

This paper reviews the existing literature, published in English and in Polish, which opens up insights into the diversity of problems, contexts, and phenomena inherent to bilingual couples. The last decades of the twentieth century saw an increase in the number of intermarriages worldwide (e.g., Gaines et al., 2015; Jones & Shen, 2008; Lee & Edmonston, 2005; Pereyra et al., 2015). Cultural differences between couples, rooted in individualism and collectivism, are linked to individualistic and collectivistic partners who are likely to manifest discrepant attitudes to intimacy, support, and relations with their extended families (Stepkowska, 2020).

We define bilingual couples as unions of two partners with different linguistic, cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. Such couples are referred to as *interethnic*, *intercultural*, *mixed*, *binational*, or *interracial*. In most studies the terms *ethnicity*, *race*, and *culture* evade clear-cut definitions and they are rather left to participants' self-identified affiliation. For some scholars, ethnicity encompasses culture and race, though race and ethnicity are sometimes used as

synonyms. We emphasize the linguistic trait of bilingual couples, still realizing that the term *bilingual* concurrently implies the other labels mentioned above.

To date, couples with mixed languages and cultures have not evolved into a discrete area of linguistics, except for a few publications by Tannen (1986, 1990). Different conversational styles of men and women, with their beneficial or detrimental impact on the relationship, have failed to attract a wider interest among linguists. This marginalization of marriage in linguistics has four reasons, i.e., methodology, perspective, gendered research practices, and family ideology (Dryden, 1999). First, marriage poses methodological limitations in collecting data on language practices as they relate to the emotional experiences between spouses. Second, the dominant perspective in linguistics is ascribed to individuals or groups of individuals rather than a dyadic relationship. Third, marriage tends to be perceived as a ‘woman’s issue’ and left for exploration to researchers of more feminist interests (e.g., DeFrancisco, 1991; Fishman, 1983). Fourth, family studies in linguistics often amount to interactions between mother and child or explicitly represent them.

In the past, intercultural relationships were rare and usually met with disapproval (Lombardo, 1988). What we know about bilingual couples has originated in the social contexts that suffered from language conflicts. Years ago, Ervin-Tripp (1968) noticed that opinions about intermarriage were based on common-sense assumptions rather than actual research. According to the deterministic view of language contact, intermarriage amounts to a scenario where one partner abandons his or her L1 for a majority language represented by the other partner’s L1, for example, from German to English when living in Australia. This model is regarded as universal since the place where a bilingual couple lives plays a key role in their language choice (Siguan, 1980). Other factors when the partner’s L1 may become dominant include the relative prestige of both languages, one’s sense of loyalty to a less spoken language, and the gender issue. There are studies that run counter to the assumption about bilingual partners who would always choose a majority language (e.g., Blackledge, 2001; Yamamoto, 1995). In contact linguistics, mixed couples are held responsible for language shift because many studies tend to treat them as an explanatory variable and not as an object of research. This means that intermarriage is taken to explain the fact that one of the partners switches to the other language, though it may be the opposite. In other words, intermarriage is seen as an outcome rather than the cause of language shift in the couple.

Another disputable issue is that intermarriage is classified as intergroup language contact, whereby the interpersonal aspects between bilingual couples tend to be ignored. Few studies (e.g., Heller & Lévy 1992) focus on what it really means to adjust oneself to the language of a community which one enters as an adult. What further upsets the objective balance in research on intermarriage is the excessive focus on children’s languages rather than on the maintenance and language change between the couples themselves (e.g., Lanza. 1990/2004). This approach defines a family as a unit preparing an individual for the life in society, and not as a relationship of two adults. As to bilingual parenting, gender has an extra impact on the linguistic output in children (Stepkowska, 2022a). Sometimes children speak the mother’s language better than the father’s (Boyd, 1998), which explains the traditional roles in family, where the father is the breadwinner, and the mother takes care of the children and spends more time with them. A belief in the significant role of a language for ethnic identity is crucial in this transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to another.

We pooled information from primary studies on bilingual couples in order to arrive at their comprehensive picture which offers both conceptual and practical knowledge. This paper aspires to synthesize what we know from previous research, and how this knowledge varies across studies.

Our systematic review involves the identification of research methods applied to explore bilingualism in close relationships. To this end, this paper is divided into four sections. Following the introduction, the methodological process of a systematic review is presented in consecutive steps. The core of our paper is the most expanded section featuring the classification of the reviewed studies by research methodology. The next section concludes this review and the last section presents references which also form the database of this paper.

METHODOLOGY OF A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Our systematic review resulted in seventy-seven publications which were filtered through six databases, namely, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTORE, Science Direct, and Semantic Scholar. Adjectives such as *bilingual*, *cross-cultural*, *intercultural*, and *mixed* were combined with nouns *couple*, *couplehood*, *intermarriage*, *marriage*, *relationship*, *partnership*, *communication*, and *hybridity*. We used three basic ‘Boolean operators’: *and*, *or*, and *not*. These operators helped create precise search queries by combining the keywords and marking their collocational combinations. We used *and* to narrow down the results, while including all search terms in the records. The use of *or* helped detect synonymous concepts thereby broadening our results. *Not* served to exclude words from our search, which aimed to ignore irrelevant concepts suggested by our search terms.

Designed to minimize bias, systematic reviews use repeatable methods to identify and critically appraise a relevant strategy of collecting and analyzing data (Gough et al., 2012; Snyder, 2019). Our systematic review set no limit on publication years and the keyword search yielded a total of 49,700 studies. We checked references in the obtained studies to include more articles written in English and Polish (Petticrew et al., 2006). We scanned books, book chapters, and unpublished dissertations. We left out studies released as conference proceedings, reports, and other not peer-reviewed publications found in the databases.

We created a database of the studies that met our inclusion criteria. The analysis herein features adults in intimate relationships who speak two or more languages in everyday communication. We sought to determine how bilingualism in the couple was investigated and which issues were considered relevant or irrelevant from a linguistic perspective. We assessed the quality and relevance of the studies, and excluded publications not explicitly related to bilingual couples, namely, child bilingualism, family language policy, and L2 acquisition. We rejected studies that failed to report on the methodological procedures, or missed the context in which the bilingual couples were presented. Ultimately, the studies that qualified for the review focused on bilingual couples, had a sound methodology on how to investigate language-related problems, and discussed the communication between bilingual partners.

The degree of agreement between our choices as to which studies should be included in this review was achieved in line with the ‘kappa statistic’ proposed by Cohen (1960). Cohen’s kappa is a coefficient that correlates accuracy and reliability for statistical classification. This coefficient measures to what extent two authors (or raters) agree on items classified into mutually exclusive categories. The kappa statistic ranges from 0 to 1, where 0 amounts to an agreement equivalent to a random chance, and 1 equals the perfect agreement. According to the online-based kappa statistic calculator (Cohen’s Kappa Free Calculator – IDoStatistics, n.d.), our choices were located in a near perfect agreement (% of agreement: 99.949%; Cohen’s kappa: 0.968). We evaluated the quality and relevance of the studies as well as their contexts, participant data, research methods, and the key findings. We scrutinized research questions and sampling strategies

applied by researchers. We checked if the recruitment procedures of participants were explained and how the data were collected.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS BY RESEARCH METHODS

This paper reviews the current research on bilingual couples in linguistics in order to systematize the contexts of the undertaken studies, the phenomena inherent to bilingual couplehood and the methodological tools used to collect data. Research on bilingual couples covers different cultural and linguistic contexts worldwide. The numerical distribution of these studies is uneven, with European and American contexts most intensely researched, though there are also data referring to Africa (Walters 1996) and the Far East (Dervin & Gao, 2012; Dumanig et al., 2011; Hiew et al., 2014). Partners with ‘Different Sociocultural Backgrounds’ were referred to as DISC couples (Uhlich et al., 2022) in contrast to couples of partners with similar backgrounds. The term *Western* has been neither clearly defined, nor consistently used in the linguistic literature. It may refer to cultural contexts in Western Europe or more broadly to the EU member states, and also to North America and Australia. Bilingual couples in linguistics are represented either by multilingual and multicultural samples, or by samples featuring homogeneous combinations of two nationalities and geographical territories.

To date, few studies were published as collective works to include a wide scope of cultures and languages represented by mixed couples (Berger and Hill 1998, Johnson and Warren 1994, Karis and Killian 2009). Individual studies, including unpublished theses, featured samples with national and cultural diversity (Bystydzienski, 2011; Dewaele & Salomidou, 2017; Giladi-McKelvie, 1999; Silva et al., 2012; Seward, 2008; Tien, 2013; Torsh, 2020). Other studies stressed the duality of bilingual couples by focusing on two nationalities of participants, for example, French-American (Varro 1988), Iranian-American, and European-American (Ruebelt et al. 2016), as well as Russian-American (Pavlenko, 2002, 2005; Piller, 2002; Visson, 1998). Ang-Tschachtli (2022) and Gonçalves (2013a) conducted studies in Switzerland on English-speaking and Swiss German couples, while Beraud (2016) investigated Norwegian-Ukrainian couples in Norway. In Poland, the first qualitative study on bilingual couples was authored by Stępkowska (2019) who interviewed twenty-four couples of Poles and their non-Polish partners to examine their bilingual communication, language choices, emotions, and the sense of identity.

Figure 1 shows the formats of disseminating research about bilingual couples in percentage proportions, namely, 16 monographs, 3 edited book publications, 11 book chapters, 41 articles, and 6 theses and dissertations. The applied methods made it possible to reveal the engaging aspects from the lives of bilingual couples, which helps better understand such relationships and their social significance. This variety of research topics and methods, as well as a high number of the collected publications reflect a growing demand for the exploration of bilingualism in private language contact.

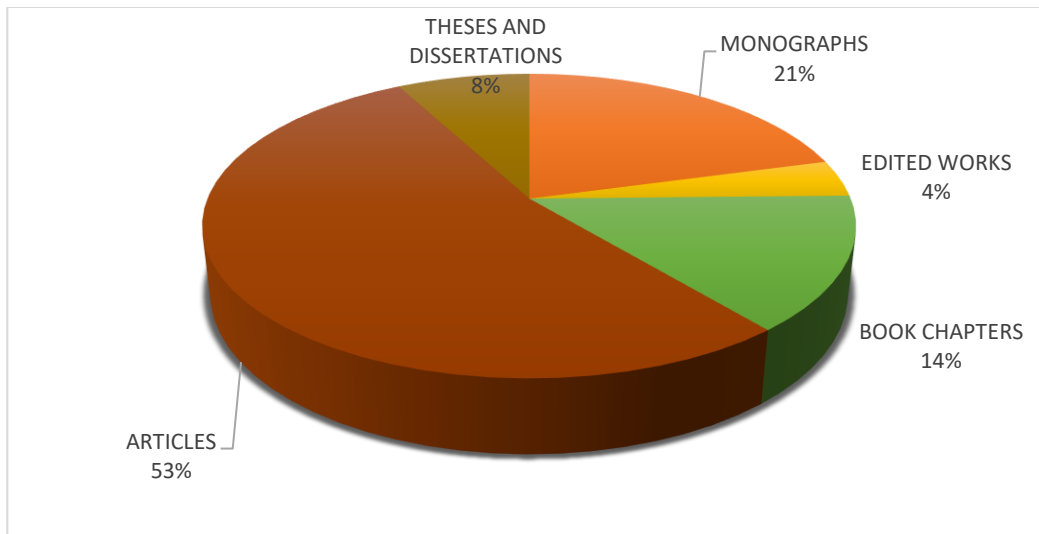


FIGURE 1. Publication formats featuring bilingual couples in linguistic research published in English and in Polish

Figure 2 shows the trends in the publication formats related to bilingual couples. In recent years the number of articles and theses increased in number, while the number of published monographs remained at the same level. Book chapters have grown in number over time, too. Interestingly, bilingual couples became a research topic for students and PhD candidates.

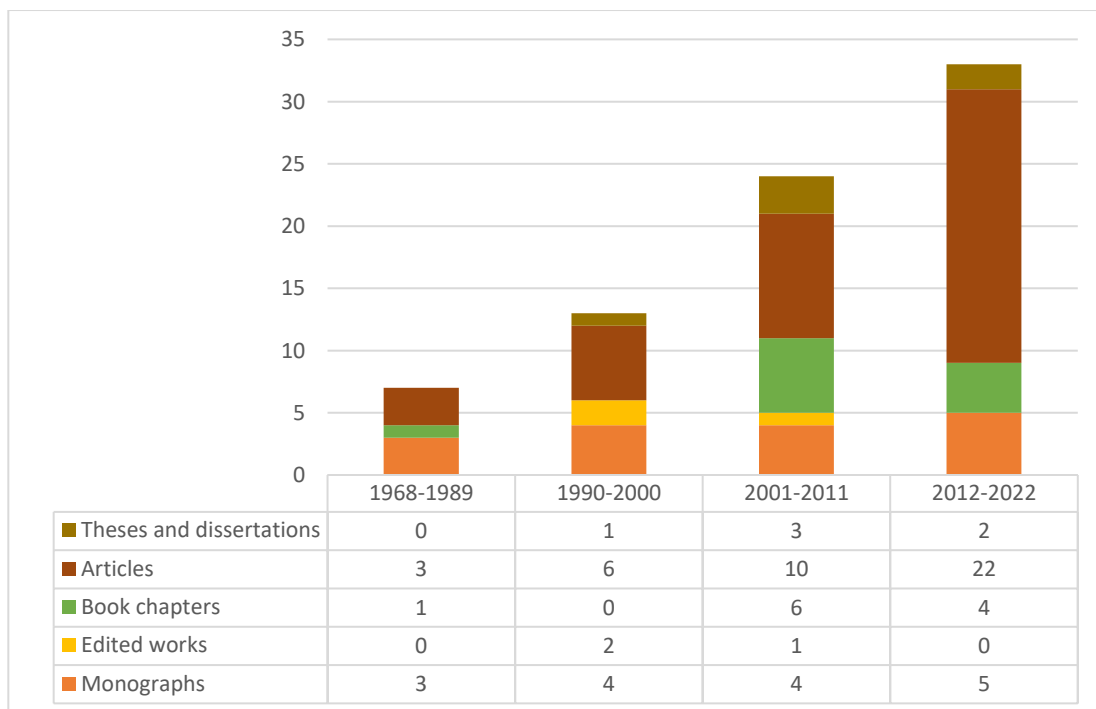


FIGURE 2. Trends in publication formats based on the analyzed literature

Table 1 presents a summary of methodologies identified in the analyzed literature. Linguistic research on bilingual couples rests largely on qualitative methods which give access to personal experiences and subjective opinions. Qualitative techniques prevail in the form of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations, as they prove effective in exploring the couples' bilingual experiences. Quantitative techniques are less popular, but surveys and questionnaires are useful for determining language attitudes and reported language practices. Studies based on mixed methods combine qualitative and quantitative techniques, which results in data triangulation. We believe that this systematic review offers a bird's-eye view of the potential areas awaiting scholarly exploration and help project future directions in linguistic research.

TABLE 1. Methodologies in the analyzed literature

METHODOLOGY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES OF USE	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<i>Qualitative</i>	in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observation	experiences of language use, identity formation, communication, and language practices	rich descriptions of experiences and perceptions	potential researcher bias, small samples, and no generalized results
<i>Quantitative</i>	surveys and questionnaires	language attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours	objective and systematic data collection	may not capture the complexity of experiences or contexts in which they occur
<i>Mixed methods</i>	combination of qualitative and quantitative methods; application of new research questions to former studies	triangulation of data from different sources, identification of patterns and relationships	an enhanced understanding of language experiences	requires large amounts of qualitative and quantitative data
<i>Systematic literature reviews</i>	review and analysis of existing scholarly publications	summary and evaluation of the existing knowledge; identification of the key issues, theories and methods used in linguistics	comprehensive synthesis of the existing research	relies on the availability of up-to-date publications

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

In Takigawa's (2010) study, conversational analysis (CA) highlighted the sequential turns of talk between bilingual partners, thereby revealing how languages and cultures influenced the couples' communication. In another study, Gonçalves (2013a) conducted a qualitative analysis of verbal interactions between bilingual couples. She applied CA to the videotaped and transcribed talk. Gonçalves examined the couples' turn-taking and language preferences to see how they coped with cultural differences. In her subsequent article, Gonçalves (2013b) combined CA with discourse analysis (DA) to find out how cross-cultural couples in Switzerland construct hybrid identities based on their socio-cultural practices by highlighting the cultural differences in their everyday practice of food preparation and consumption.

By arranging focus groups, researchers (Luna et al., 2008; Pavlenko 2002) collected data on language attitudes and beliefs. Focus groups typically involve a moderator who addresses open-ended questions to participants. Dervin's (2013) case studies examined a focus group of two intercultural couples in Finland and one couple in Hong Kong, who engaged in discussions that revealed similarities in their social and cultural experiences.

Observation was used to study bilingual couples' interactions by the systematic recording of their behaviour in natural settings. Dervin and Gao (2012) employed observation to see how partners interacted bilingually and how ethnic differences affected the couples' identities. Ang-Tschachtli (2021) chose observations to conduct a qualitative analysis of humour and laughter. She collected data from German-speaking couples in Switzerland, each having a Swiss German partner and a partner of different nationality. The couples were videotaped during informal conversations. She applied CA to determine how gender and the partner's L1 interplayed with humour between partners. Rubin Damari (2010) combined observation and DA to examine how partners negotiated cultural identities through language use. She recorded an Israeli-Spanish couple living in Israel at their home and in public places.

Among the most frequent techniques found in the analyzed literature, interviews were used solely or in combination with other techniques, such as observation and questionnaires. Interviewing helps clarify ambiguous responses and offers follow-up questions. This technique produces detailed data for exploring complex and sensitive topics. Piller (2001) studied the language choices between a German-English couple. She interviewed the couple and observed their interactions with family and friends. She conducted DA to investigate how language choices were related to the couple's negotiation of identity in other sociolinguistic contexts. Perovu (2018) conducted in-depth interviews with four Finnish women living in Sweden who were non-native speakers of the languages used by their couples. The study focused on these women's emotions towards their couple's language and how they perceived themselves in their first languages and in the couple's language. Above all, Perovu wanted to find out if these partners believed that their bilingualism had an impact on their relationships.

Piller and Gerber (2018) investigated family language policies via in-depth interviews. The couples taking part in this study lived in German-speaking Switzerland and shared their experiences and opinions without being constrained by pre-set response options. Interviews were conducted in the participants' homes to identify their attitudes towards multilingualism. Similarly, Ang-Tschachtli's (2022) study involved in-depth interviews with bilingual couples living in Switzerland. The study investigated how the couples' bilingual communication related to their identities. She combined DA and participant observation to gain insights into the couples' language use in natural contexts. De Klerk's (2001) study was based on in-depth interviews with Afrikaans-English couples in South Africa who faced a linguistic dilemma whereby one partner wanted to use their L1 and the other preferred to speak a different language. De Klerk examined the factors which influenced the couples' language choice and communication strategies. Another study based on in-depth interviews was conducted by Dryden (1999) who focused on how gender roles and identities were constructed in marriage. The study included same-sex and opposite-sex couples, as well as couples from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, where bilingualism was one of the aspects.

Beraud (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with Norwegian-Ukrainian couples residing in Norway. The interviews focused on the couples' language use and language choice. The study presented quantitative data in the form of descriptive statistics with regard to the participants' demographic features and language proficiency levels. In order to record in-depth

interviews, Bystydzienski (2011) used a purposive sampling technique for participant selection from different geographic regions, cultural backgrounds, and racial or ethnic groups. The interviews focused on the couples' communication, cultures, identity, and power relations. This study emphasized the value of the participants' self-reported experiences.

Romano (1997) interviewed bilingual couples to explore their cross-cultural communication and expectations. The study offered practical clues how to cope with cross-cultural challenges in intermarriage. In her unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dobrolioubova (2011) presented semi-structured interviews with British therapists. She analyzed transcripts by using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Her study emphasized the therapists' experiences with bilingual partners. Interviews were also used by Boyd (1998) to explore the experiences of North American professionals who moved to the Nordic countries and became bilingual. Boyd investigated their language practices and cultural identity, as well as their relationships with other bilinguals.

Tien (2013) chose in-depth interviews to ascertain how partners perceived the similarities and differences between their languages and cultures. Each couple had a partner of foreign descent and a different L1. The couples lived in the United States and had been together for at least two years. The results showed that the couples' communication was affected in the first place by the partners' beliefs, the attitudes of their relatives, and the couples' financial status. Similarly, Heller and Lévy (1992) interviewed twenty-eight French-English couples from Canadian cities in Ontario to explore their language use and the identity of their mixed marriages by means of DA.

Ruebelt et al. (2016) used interviews to find out whether cross-cultural differences between partners led to marital problems. Twelve intercultural married couples of Iranian American women and European American men reported to have maintained their relationships due to mutual respect and the acceptance of cultural differences. The study contributed to a scanty literature on Iranian Americans and intermarriage. The authors explicitly intended that their findings be used by counsellors and marriage therapists working with intercultural couples. Also, Johnson and Warren (1994) edited a collective work written by the couples themselves in the form of their testimonies and personal observations. The contributing couples represented different social classes.

Stępkowska (2019) investigated bilingual couples in Poland which remains an under-researched context. She conducted a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews to explore the challenges faced by twenty-four couples. As a follow-up series, Stępkowska published articles that addressed several distinct aspects of this sociolinguistic study, namely cross-cultural communication (2017), language choices and language acquisition (2021c, 2022c), language as a problem (2022b), immigrant women's perspectives (2021b), the partners' identity and the relations with their extended families (2020, 2021a), as well as the couples' parenting styles (2022a).

QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Quantitative studies on bilingual couples identify numerical data in relation to measurable variables, e.g., language proficiency, language use, and language attitudes. Surveys and questionnaires permit statistical analysis and the generalization of the findings. Zhang and Kline (2009) conducted a quantitative study on 616 college students from a Midwest university in the United States and a university in Eastern China. Participants were divided into two groups. One group was formed by students who were dating someone, and in the other group there were students not engaged in any relationship. The students answered questionnaires which aimed to statistically ascertain if their family or friends influenced their decisions about marriage or the

choice of a potential mate. Likewise, Lee and Edmonston (2005) conducted a statistical analysis of interracial and intercultural relationships in the United States between 1970 and 2000. Their study was based on Public Use Microdata Samples released by the US Census Bureau, and the Census data. The analysis showed that interracial marriages were more common at that time and this fact led to reducing racial and ethnic group boundaries in American society.

Pereyra et al. (2015) based their quantitative analysis on Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to investigate the interrelation between negative communication (e.g., criticism, lack of spousal respect) and the quality of a relationship. As a statistical technique, SEM integrates a confirmatory factor analysis and a path analysis to test hypotheses about the influences between interacting variables. A confirmatory factor analysis estimates psychological traits such as attitudes or satisfaction, while a path analysis aims to identify causal relationships among variables through a path diagram. The researchers approached 300 Anglo couples, 177 Latino couples, and 611 Anglo-Latino couples. They used a conceptual model of interpersonal relationships, namely, the Actor-Partner Interaction Model that accounts for the interdependence between the partners (Kenny et al. 2006). The mathematical approach to the problem led to a conclusion that spirituality or religiosity were often treated as the mediating tools in communication between partners, and that negative communication could unfavourably impact their spirituality. We also found quantitative methodology in the study by Castonguay (1982) who examined intermarriage and the patterns of language shift between 1971 and 1976 in Canadian censuses. In his statistical analysis, he investigated language change and L1 maintenance by both partners depending on their ethnicity.

MIXED METHODS

Mixed methods offer data triangulation. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods helps explore the experiences of bilingual couples and quantify selected variables. The study of language use involves both qualitative aspects (attitudes and beliefs) and quantitative aspects (frequency of code switching, language proficiency). Questionnaires provide a standardized way of collecting data from big samples of participants, which makes it possible to generalize findings for larger populations. Using this technique, Dewaele and Salomidou (2017) investigated 429 bilinguals who reported on their language practices, language attitudes, and the communication of emotions. Also, Buttny (1987) examined the impact of culture on the motives for intermarriage by collecting questionnaires on language choice in different contexts. In Piller's (2009) questionnaire, open-ended questions were not limited to pre-determined response options. This technique allowed her to obtain qualitative material about a phenomenon she referred to as 'language desire' which was the desire to learn a different language, a romantic desire to have a partner who speaks it, and a desire for the children to achieve bilingualism. Questionnaires with closed- and open-ended questions provide information about the demographic data of bilingual couples and their language use, as in the study by Bustamante et al. (2011).

Piller (2002) used mixed methods by combining the quantitative analysis of questionnaire data with the qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews to investigate the language practices of bilingual couples. Her study highlighted the strategies of language use among the couples, such as code-switching and the use of a lingua franca. In a similar way, Piller (2017) investigated how intercultural couples reconcile their cultural and linguistic differences. She used qualitative and quantitative data from a range of sources, including interviews, survey data, and media representations of intercultural romance (e.g., How 2022). She also took an experimental approach

to find out how bilingual couples decide about their language of communication (Piller 2003). Couples were asked to complete a task that required them to communicate with each other in their L1 or L2. The findings showed that the language used by couples depended on the social context and the partners' attitudes towards their speech communities.

A case study proved to be effective as regards the question of how the communication between bilingual partners affected the psychological and emotional perception of their relationships. Burck (2004) applied a case study to determine the implications of multilingualism for family therapy. She conducted a therapy session with a multilingual family to describe how the family members negotiated their identities and relationships through language. Burck used DA to examine language use during the therapy session, and its impact on their communication. A similar approach was adopted by Ugazio and Guarnieri (2018) who presented a case study of bilingual partners and their language use during therapy sessions. This study was informed by psychoanalytic theories and concepts, for example, defence mechanisms, to interpret the couple's communication patterns and behaviours. The analysis focused on the meaning of the partners' words in relation to their emotional experiences and their relationship. As the psychotherapists of bilingual couples, Tsatsas and Hewison (2011) chose a case study to develop their own professional experience. Having worked with bilingual couples, they investigated the partners' L1 use as a therapeutic tool.

Blackledge (2001) combined qualitative methods in his ethnographic study which was based on fieldwork in a multilingual and multiethnic area in the UK. He gathered data through participant observation, interviews, and the recordings of natural conversations. The data were analyzed through DA to examine the use of language to construct meaning and identities in social interactions. The study focused on how women in the community negotiated their identities and power relations through language use. In a similar way, Dumanig and David (2011) combined two qualitative techniques, namely, interviews and observations, which consisted in recording verbal interactions to collect data on the language choice by Malaysian-Filipino couples. This research procedure allowed to establish language preferences among thirty couples. Findings indicated that these interracial couples opted for English as a lingua franca in their everyday talk for convenience. Occasionally when feeling emotional, they switched back to their L1s.

Fitzpatrick (1988) examined the couples' communication patterns, power relations, and the level of marital satisfaction by combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, which included observations, interviews, and surveys. She analyzed the communication of mono- and bilingual couples by means of statistical and mathematical models and proposed a typology of these couples across their sociological and demographic contexts. Also, Yamamoto (1995) used small-scale surveys to assess both qualitatively and quantitatively the situation of bilingual families in Japan. She examined the language use among Japanese-English couples and their families living in Japan. Her analysis involved not only the couples' talk but also the communication patterns with their extended families.

SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEWS ABOUT INTERMARRIAGE BY OTHER AUTHORS

Literature overviews of intermarriage studies synthesize the existing research and provide insights into theories, concepts, and methodologies. By integrating multiple studies, such overviews contribute to a better understanding of complexity inherent in the bilingualism of couples. In her review of the studies on cross-cultural communication in intimate relationships, Piller (2007) analyzed the challenges faced by intercultural couples, and offered suggestions how to cope with

language barriers and cultural differences in communication styles. Cenoz (2017) highlighted the key areas for further directions in the literature on adult multilingualism, which indirectly relates to bilingual couples. She envisaged that future studies explore the relationships between multilingualism, cognition and the role of motivation and attitudes in adult language learning and maintenance. Her article accentuated social and cultural contexts in which multilingualism occurs. Likewise, Softas-Nall et al. (2015) conducted a literature overview with a commentary on the challenges present in the counseling work with bilingual couples. The authors examined the existing studies and discussed how the issues related to language, culture, and identity affected the marital therapy.

Breger and Hill (1998) collated studies from researchers across several disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics, and gender studies. The chapters offered case studies, surveys, interviews, and observations that addressed the challenges and opportunities of intercultural marriages. The contributing authors discussed issues related to language, cultural identity, gender roles, and family relationships. The collection of these studies gave an insight into the way relations between bilingual partners were established. Kalmijn (1998) conducted an overview of literature related to intermarriage and homogamy. He intended to determine the reasons for intermarriage and homogamy and to establish any observable patterns in communication or behaviour among such couples. Kalmijn critically evaluated the theories and interpretations proposed by scholars in the field. In their study, Gaines et al. (2015) synthesized research on interethnic marriage in the United States. The authors did not use any particular type of method, but identified and selected studies on different aspects of interethnic marriage. Finally, Jones and Shen (2008) did an overview of research on intermarriage in East and Southeast Asia by focusing on women in Vietnam, the Philippines, and China who were moving to Taiwan, Japan, Korea, or Singapore. The authors found that the majority of studies concentrated on these women's arrivals in the host countries, and missed out their home-leaving experiences. The article examined the trends of cross-border marriages. The discussion of the literature was complemented by statistical information obtained from the official sources of the countries and regions under study.

CONCLUSION

Based on our systematic review, bilingual intermarriage presents a wide thematic diversity in linguistic research. The systematic review brought to light a variety of methodological techniques and tools each time adapted to the aims of individual studies, the structure and size of the sampling, cultural contexts across studies, and the differences in statistical models and control variables. Qualitative and quantitative methods were applied separately or in combination as a mixed method approach in order to contribute into a fact-finding exploration of bilingual couples.

The qualitative method proved effective in examining language choice and the sense of identity among the couples. Researchers focused on emotional interaction and the related communication problems between partners. In-depth interviews provided insights into personal experiences and opinions about language use in relationships. The studies featuring participant observation allowed researchers to look into the couples' everyday life by capturing the spontaneity of their bilingual and cultural practices. Narrative analyses were useful in analyzing the stories told by couples, pointing to how language had shaped their relationship over time. Researchers used DA to discuss language choices and cultural differences in the interactions between the couples. The quantitative method focused on how the partners' communication related to the relationship satisfaction. The researchers examined the strategies used by partners when

facing linguistic challenges. The census data including age, sex, and education helped researchers explain the reasons for language choice among bilingual couples over time. Surveys and structured questionnaires were used to collect data about language preferences, communication strategies, and the hybrid culture of the couples. Data analysis enabled researchers to quantify patterns from survey responses, which shed light on how the couples coped with language barriers. In turn, mixed method approach combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify practices and experiences unique to bilingual couples. For instance, qualitative insights revealed how couples made language choices in their daily interactions, and how their bilingualism affected the upbringing of their children. On the quantitative side, surveys and statistical data provided information on the frequency of language use, the impact of bilingualism on relationship well-being, and preferred communication strategies. By combining qualitative and quantitative findings, mixed methods research offered insights into the couples' practices and experiences, highlighting the interplay between language, identity, and intimacy.

The major yet unavoidable limitation of this systematic review are the constraints put on literature available for investigating bilingual couples in a single paper. Another limitation with regard to our database concerns two languages in which the investigated publications came out, namely, English and Polish, which may also be considered a language bias (Dickersin 2005). This systematic review highlighted the research methods used to study bilingual couples by emphasizing the purposefulness of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches for a better understanding of these relationships in the increasingly diverse societies. Thus, the systematic review serves as a needed synopsis of what has been done as well as points to the areas awaiting further scientific exploration.

REFERENCES

- Ang-Tschachtli, S. (2021). The variable of gender and its interplay with mother tongue in the humor and laughter of bilingual couples. *Humor*, 34(4), 589–611.
- Ang-Tschachtli, S. (2022). *Bilingual Couples in Conversation*. Narr Verlag.
- Beraud, L. (2016). Language use in Norwegian-Ukrainian multilingual couples. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 1(42) (<http://immi.se/intercultural/>)
- Blackledge, A. (2001). Complex positionings: Women negotiating identity and power in a minority urban setting. In A. Pavlenko, A. Blackledge, I. Piller & M. Teutsch-Dwyer (Eds.), *Multilingualism, Second Language Learning and Gender* (pp. 53–75). Mouton.
- Boyd, S. (1998). North Americans in the Nordic region: Elite bilinguals. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 133, 31–50.
- Breger, R., & Hill, R. (Eds.) (1998). *Cross-cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice*. Berg Publishers.
- Burck, C. (2004). Living in several languages: Implication for therapy. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 26, 314–339.
- Bustamante, R., Nelson, J., Henriksen, R., & Monakes, S. (2011). Intercultural couples: Coping with culture-related stressors. *The Family Journal*, 19(2), 154–164.
- Buttny, R. (1987). Legitimation techniques for intermarriage: Accounts of motives for intermarriage from U.S. servicemen and Philippine women. *Communication Quarterly*, 35(2), 125–143.
- Bystydzienski, J. (2011). *Intercultural Couples: Crossing Boundaries, Negotiating Difference*. New York University Press.

- Castonguay, C. (1982). Intermarriage and language shift in Canada, 1971 and 1976. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 7(3), 263–277.
- Cenoz, J. (2017). Future directions in adult multilingualism. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 14(1), 1–5.
- Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 20, 37–46.
- Cohen's Kappa Free Calculator – IDoStatistics. (n.d.). <https://idostatistics.com/cohen-kappa-free-calculator/>
- DeFrancisco, V. (1991). The sounds of silence: How men silence women in marital relations. *Discourse and Society*, 2(4), 413–424.
- De Klerk, V. (2001). The cross-marriage language dilemma: His language or hers? *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 4, 197–216.
- Dervin, F. (2013). Do intercultural couples “see culture everywhere”? Case studies from couples who share a lingua franca in Finland and Hong Kong. *Civilisations*, 62, 1–15.
- Dervin, F., & Gao, M. (2012). Constructing a fairy tale around intercultural couplehood on Chinese television. *Journal of Language and Intercultural Communication*, 2, 6–23.
- Dewaele, J.-M., & Salomidou, L. (2017). Loving a partner in a foreign language. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 108, 116–130.
- Dickersin, K. (2005). Publication bias: recognizing the problem, understanding its origins and scope, and preventing harm. In H. Rothstein, A. Sutton & M. Borenstein (Eds.), *Publication Bias in Meta-Analysis: Prevention, Assessment, and Adjustments* (pp. 11–33). John Wiley.
- Dobrolioubova, V. (2011). Therapists' experience of the therapeutic encounter [Ph.D. thesis]. City University London.
- Dryden, C. (1999). *Being Married, Doing Gender: A Critical Analysis of Gender Relationships in Marriage*. Routledge.
- Dumanig, F., & David, M. (2011). Malaysian-Filipino couples and language choice: Heritage language or international language? In D. Mukerjee & M. Khemlani David (Eds.), *National Language Planning and Language Shifts in Malaysian Minority Communities* (pp. 71–86). Amsterdam University Press.
- Ervin-Tripp, S. (1968). An analysis of language, topic and listener. In J. Fishman (Ed.), *Readings in the Sociology of Language* (pp. 192–211). Mouton.
- Fishman, P. (1983). Interaction: The work women do. In B. Thorne, C. Kramarae & N. Henley (Eds.), *Language, Gender and Society* (pp. 89–101). Newbury House.
- Fitzpatrick, M. (1988). *Between Husbands and Wives: Communication in Marriage*. Sage.
- Gaines, S., Clark, E., & Afful, S. (2015). Interethnic marriage in the United States: An introduction. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71(4), 647–658.
- Giladi-McKelvie, D. (1999). *Intercultural Marriage: A Phenomenological Study of Couples who Succeed*. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services.
- Gonçalves, K. (2013a). *Conversations of Intercultural Couples*. Akademie Verlag.
- Gonçalves, K. (2013b). ‘Cooking lunch, that’s Swiss’: Constructing hybrid identities based on socio-cultural practices. *Multilingua*, 32(4), 527–547.
- Gough, D., Oliver, S., & Thomas, J. (2012). *An Introduction to Systematic Reviews*. Sage.
- Heller, M., & Lévy, L. (1992). Mixed marriages: life on the linguistic frontier. *Multilingua*, 11(1), 11–43.

- Hiew, D., Halford, K., & Liu, S. (2014). Loving diversity: Living in intercultural couple relationships. In A. Abela & J. Walker (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Family Studies: Global Perspectives on Partnerships, Parenting and Support in a Changing World* (89–99). John Wiley & Sons.
- How, Ch. (2022). A critical discourse study on Meghan and Harry's CBS primetime interview. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 22(2), 219–235.
- Johnson, W., & Warren, D. (Eds.) (1994). *Inside the Mixed Marriage: Accounts of Changing Attitudes, Patterns, and Perceptions of Cross-Cultural and Interracial Marriages*. University of America Press.
- Jones, G., & Shen, H. (2008). International marriage in East and Southeast Asia: Trends and research emphasis. *Citizenship Studies*, 12, 9–25.
- Kalmijn, M. (1998). Inter-marriage and homogamy: Causes, patterns, trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 395–421.
- Karis, T., & Killian, K (Eds.) (2009). *Intercultural Couples: Exploring Diversity in Intimate Relationships*. Routledge.
- Kenny, D., Kashy, D., & Cook, W. (2006). *Dyadic Data Analysis*. Guilford.
- Lanza, E. (1990/2004). *Language Mixing in Infant Bilingualism: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, S., & Edmonston, B. (2005). New marriages, new families: US racial and Hispanic intermarriage. *Population Bulletin*, 60, 3–36.
- Lombardo, P. (1988). Miscegenation, eugenics, and racism: Historical footnotes to *Loving v. Virginia*. *University of California Davis Law Review*, 21, 425–432.
- Luna, D., Ringberg, T., & Peracchio, L. (2008). One individual, two identities: Frame switching among biculturals. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(2), 279–293.
- Pavlenko, A. (2002). Bilingualism and emotions. *Multilingua*, 21, 45–78.
- Pavlenko, A. (2005). *Emotions and Multilingualism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pereyra, S., Sandberg, J., Bean, R., & Busby, D. (2015). A comparison of the effects of negative communication and spirituality on relationship quality among different groups of Latino and Anglo couples. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 43(5), 480–493.
- Perovuo, M. (2018). Our love, our language: A qualitative study on non-native speakers' experiences of bilingual couplehood, language emotionality and self-perception in different languages [M.A. thesis]. University of Stockholm.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences. A Practical Guide*. Blackwell.
- Piller, I. (2001). Linguistic intermarriage: Language choice and negotiation of identity. In A. Pavlenko, A. Blackledge, I. Piller & M. Teutsch-Dwyer (Eds.), *Multilingualism, Second Language Learning and Gender* (pp. 199–230). Mouton.
- Piller, I. (2002). *Bilingual Couples Talk: The Discursive Construction of Hybridity*. John Benjamins.
- Piller, I. (2003). An experimental study of bilingual couples' communication. In C. Pereiro, A. Suárez & X. Rodríguez-Yáñez (Eds.), *Bilingual Communities and Individuals* (pp. 230–243). Iniversidade de Vigo.
- Piller, I. (2007). Cross-cultural communication in intimate relationships. In H. Kotthoff & H. Spencer-Oatey (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Communication* (pp. 341–359). Mouton.

- Piller, I. (2009). I always wanted to marry a cowboy: Bilingual couples, language, and desire. In T. Karis & K. Killian (Eds.), *Intercultural Couples: Exploring Diversity in Intimate Relationships* (pp. 53–70). Routledge.
- Piller, I. (2017). *Intercultural Communication: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Piller, I., & Gerber, L. (2018). Family language policy between the bilingual advantage and the monolingual mindset. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(5), 622–635.
- Romano, D. (1997). *Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls*. Intercultural Press Inc.
- Rubin Damari, R. (2010). Intertextual stancetaking and the local negotiation of cultural identities by a binational couple. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 14(5), 609–629.
- Ruebelt, S., Singaravelu, H., Daneshpour, M., & Brown, C. (2016). Exploration of cross-cultural couples' marital adjustment: Iranian American women married to European American men. *Current Psychology*, 35, 437–449.
- Seward, M. (2008). Identity negotiations and third culture building in intercultural marriages [Ph.D. thesis]. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Ann Arbor.
- Siguan, M. (1980). Changement de langue dans le couple et dans la famille. In P. Nelde (Ed.), *Sprachkontakt und Sprachkonflikt* (pp. 283–285). Franz Steiner.
- Silva, L., Campbell, K., & Wright, D. (2012). Intercultural relationships: Entry, adjustment, and cultural negotiations. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 43(6), 857–870.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339.
- Softas-Nall, L., Cardona, B., & Barritt, J. (2015). Challenges and diversity issues working with multilingual and bilingual couples and families: Implications for counseling. *The Family Journal*, 23(1), 13–17.
- Stępkowska, A. (2017). Poles and their non-Polish partners: Languages, communication and couplehood identity. *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, LXIV(3), 350–365.
- Stępkowska, A. (2019). *Pary Dwujęzyczne w Polsce* [Bilingual Couples in Poland]. Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.
- Stępkowska, A. (2020). Family networking of bilingual couples: Reactions to otherness. In B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (Ed.), *Cultural Conceptualizations in Language and Communication* (pp. 115–128). Springer.
- Stępkowska, A. (2021a). Identity in the bilingual couple: Attitudes to language and culture. *Open Linguistics*, 7, 223–234.
- Stępkowska, A. (2021b). Language experience of immigrant women in bilingual couples with Poles. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 25(1), 120–134.
- Stępkowska, A. (2021c). Language choices between partners in bilingual relationships. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 21(4), 110–124.
- Stępkowska, A. (2022a). Bilingual partners turn into bilingual parents: Reporting on decisions and consequences. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 22(4), 246–260.
- Stępkowska, A. (2022b). Language as a source of problems in bilingual couples. In B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & M. Trojszczak (Eds.), *Language Use, Education, and Professional Contexts* (pp. 99–113). Springer.
- Stępkowska, A. (2022c). Acquisition of Polish among foreigners in bilingual couples with Poles: Impact factors. *Białostockie Studia Prawnicze (Bialystok Legal Studies)*, 28(4), 217–228.

- Takigawa, Y. (2010). Language expertise as a source of dispute in bilingual couple talk [Ph.D. thesis]. Temple University.
- Tannen, D. (1986). *That's Not What I meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks your Relations with Others*. Virago Press.
- Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. Ballantine Books.
- Tien, N. (2013). Communication and relationships of intercultural/multilingual couples: Cultural and language differences [Ph.D. thesis]. University of Northern Colorado.
- Torsh, H. (2020). *Linguistic Intermarriage in Australia: Between Pride and Shame*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tsatsas, N., & Hewison, D. (2011). Living in two languages: A bilingual couple therapist's experience of working in the mother tongue. *Couple and Family Psychoanalysis, 1*, 97–116.
- Ugazio, V., & Guarnieri, S. (2018). A couple in love entangled in enigmatic episodes: A semantic analysis. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 44*(3), 438–457.
- Uhlich, M., Luginbuehl, T., & Schoebi, D. (2022). Cultural diversity within couples: Risk or chance? A meta-analytic review of relationship satisfaction. *Personal Relationships, 29*, 120–145.
- Varro, G. (1988). *The Transplanted Woman: A Study of French-American Marriages in France*. Praeger.
- Visson, L. (1998). *Wedded Strangers: The Challenges of Russian-American Marriages*. Hippocrene.
- Walters, K. (1996). Gender, identity, and the political economy of language: Anglophone wives in Tunisia. *Language in Society, 25*(4), 515–555.
- Yamamoto, M. (1995). Bilingualism in international families. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 16*(1/2), 63–85.
- Zhang, S., & Kline, S. (2009). Can I make my own decision? A cross-cultural study of perceived social network influence in mate selection. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 40*, 3–23.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Agnieszka Stępkowska is a professor at the Institute of Linguistics, University of Szczecin, Poland. Her research interests focus on sociolinguistics and bilingualism. She published *English loanwords in Polish naval vocabulary* (2011), and *Multilingualism and English: The Canton of Zurich as a linguistic paradigm* (2013). Her latest book *Pary dwujęzyczne w Polsce* (Bilingual couples in Poland) came out in 2019.

Katarzyna Buczek is an assistant professor, PhD, at the Institute of Linguistics, University of Opole, Poland. Her research interests include historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, minority languages and multilingualism. She published on the history of English and Frisian with the focus on lexis, morphology and phonology.