

THE TYPES OF BILINGUALISM THAT A BILINGUAL REPRESENTS  
HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE VOLUME AND TYPES OF  
INTERFERENCE AND RESULTANT ERRORS

MALGORZATA MARTYŃSKA

This paper presents differences between the processes of second language acquisition/learning in the case of parents and children in a Polish-German bilingual family. In particular, I will attempt to make a contrastive analysis of errors occurring in the parents' and children's discourse which stem from interference between languages in contact.

The family consists of two Poles of Silesian origin: Bruno (44 years old) and Barbara (36 years old), and their two children: Christiane (7 years old) and Dominik (13 years old). The parents have been living in Germany since 1981 (Bruno) and 1987 (Barbara). Both children were born in Germany, but their first contact with German was in the crèche at the age of 2 (Dominik) and at the age of 3 (Christiane). The parents' first language is Polish; their first contact with German was after they had arrived in Germany and started a 6-month course (they had not studied German in Poland).

To begin with, various bilinguism types are presented in the table below, as well as bilinguism types characteristic of parents and children, which enable differences and similarities to be easily identified.

ALL POSSIBLE BILINGUIISM TYPES DEPENDING ON THE CRITERION ADOPTED	BILINGUIISM TYPICAL OF THE PARENTS	BILINGUIISM TYPICAL OF THE CHILDREN
1) The level of fluency criterion: A. Subcriterion concerning the level of proficiency acquired in each language – minimal bilingualism (Bausch 2003) – semilingualism (Skutabb-Kangas 1981, Bausch 2003, Lipińska 2003, Olpińska 2004) – nearly-bilingualism (Skutabb-Kangas 1981) – maximal (complete) bilingualism, ambilingualism (Bausch 2003, Gruzca 1981, Skutabb-Kangas 1981) B. subcriterion concerning the levels of individual language skills (Gruzca 1981, Kubiak 2003) – productive (active, full) bilingualism – receptive (passive, partial) bilingualism C. subcriterion concerning the ratio of the acquired levels in the first and second language (Bausch 2003, Gruzca 1981, Kubiak 2003, Olpińska 2004) – balanced (symmetrical) bilingualism – dominant (asymmetrical) bilingualism	1) A. a bilingualism type close to maximal bilingualism  B. productive bilingualism in both languages  C. more or less balanced bilingualism	1) A. nearly-bilingualism  B. productive bilingualism in German receptive bilingualism in Polish  C. dominant bilingualism with German as a dominant language
2). The function of languages criterion (Gruzca 1981, Kubiak 2003, Bausch 2003, Baker 1993, Graf 1987, Lambeck 1984, Aleemi 1991) – functional bilingualism: • systematic, interlocutor-dependent • systematic, topic-dependent • systematic, situation-dependent • systematic, location-dependent – mixed bilingualism	2) with the exception of parent-child communication, when the children make their parents switch to German (mixed bilingualism) the parents' bilingualism can be characterised as functional and systematic, interlocutor-dependent, location-dependent and topic-dependent	2) mostly mixed bilingualism, systematic, interlocutor-dependent bilingualism is sporadic (with native Germans e.g. at school)
3) The sequence of acquisition criterion (Bausch 2003, Siguán and Mackey 1987, Baker 1993, Klein 1986, Gruzca 1981, Kubiak 2003) – infant bilingualism, bilingual first language acquisition (bilingual FLA), parallel (simultaneous) bilingualism – consecutive (successive, succeeding, sequential) bilingualism, second language acquisition (SLA)	3) consecutive bilingualism, the acquisition of German started about 20 years later than the acquisition of Polish	3) consecutive bilingualism, the acquisition of German started 2-3 years later than the acquisition of Polish

ALL POSSIBLE BILINGUIISM TYPES DEPENDING ON THE CRITERION ADOPTED	BILINGUIISM TYPICAL OF THE PARENTS	BILINGUIISM TYPICAL OF THE CHILDREN
4) The range of bilingualism criterion (Gruzca 1981, Woźniakowski 1982) – individual bilingualism – group bilingualism • unilateral bilingualism • bilateral bilingualism • permanent bilingualism · historical · migrant • coincidental (temporary) bilingualism	4) group bilingualism: • unilateral • permanent (migrant)	4) group bilingualism: • unilateral • permanent (historical)
5) The territory criterion (Gruzca 1981) – both languages were acquired in the territory of A community – both languages were acquired in the territory of B community – language A was acquired in the territory of community A and language B – in the territory of community B – languages A and B were acquired in the historically bilingual territory A,B	5) – language A was acquired in the territory of community A and language B – in the territory of community B	5) – both languages were acquired in the territory of community B (Germany)
6) The circumstances of acquisition criterion (see Gruzca 1981, Bausch 2003, Weinert 1987, Klein 1986, Lipińska 2004, Woźniakowski 1982, Olpińska 2004, Blocher 1982, Schöpfung 1977, Fthenakis and others 1985, Graf 1987, Aleemi 1991, Jonekeit and Kielhöfer 1995) – naturalistic, spontaneous or untutored (unguided) bilingualism – artificial bilingualism, classroom bilingualism, academic bilingualism, guided/tutored bilingualism, rational bilingualism or cultivated bilingualism – mixed bilingualism	6) – mixed bilingualism in both cases – in the case of Polish – naturalistic acquisition preceded artificial – in the case of German – artificial acquisition preceded or was simultaneous with naturalistic	6) – mixed bilingualism in the case of German – naturalistic acquisition preceded artificial – naturalistic acquisition in the case of Polish
7) The status of languages criterion (Woźniakowski 1982) – diversified bilingualism – balanced bilingualism	7) diversified bilingualism (a dialect of Polish and <i>Hochdeutsch</i> )	7) diversified bilingualism (a dialect of Polish and <i>Hochdeutsch</i> )
8) The criterion of the knowledge of culture developed by the language communities (Gruzca 1989, Woźniakowski 1982) – bilingualism with biculturalism – bilingualism with monoculturism	8) bilingualism with biculturalism developed to a certain degree	8) bilingualism with monoculturism (German culture)
9) The attitude to languages criterion (Lambert 1982, Lipińska 2004, Olpińska 2004) – additive (enriching, elite) bilingualism – subtractive (impoverishing, folk) bilingualism	9) additive bilingualism	9) subtractive bilingualism

From the abovementioned criteria we can expect that they can have various types of influence on the volume and the types of interference and, simultaneously, on the volume and types of errors.

The great number of mistakes repeated by the children, especially in the case of the 7-year-old Christiane proves that the children are unable to speak correct Polish. In fact, they avoid it, being unwilling to use it and speaking Polish only when talking to a monolingual person. The mistakes can be divided into two categories: lexical and syntactic errors.

The most common errors repeated by the children include incorrect word inflection, in particular declension of nouns, which mostly appear in the nominative instead of being inflected for an appropriate case, e.g. *ja nie mam majtki, ona nie ma sukienka, nie chce jajko*. These may be due to interference from German, in which, unlike in Polish, nouns are very rarely inflected for particular cases via suffix alterations, because it is usually an article preceding the noun which declines and represents a particular grammatical case. The children also have difficulties forming irregular plurals, e.g. *dwa piesy*.

Verb forms in a particular person singular or plural, e.g. *ja umie stać na palcy, to się może stanąć* (=stać), *ona wzięła talerze* (=wzięła), as well as verb aspects, have also been found to be troublesome. Perfective verbs are replaced with imperfective ones, e.g. *To jest kupowane* (=kupione) *nowe, Będziem jeść* (=zjemy). The latter is the reflection of the German future tense structure Futur I, consisting of the conjugated verb form of *werden* and the infinitive which conveys the meaning. Sometimes inappropriate verbs are used, e.g. *To nie ma* (=jest) *ryba, To nie ma dobrze tyle słodczy jeść, nie mogą tego utnąć* (=uciąć). Some comparatives of adjectives may also be formed incorrectly, e.g. *Moje jajko jest grubniejsze*.

The second most common errors are interjections of German or Silesian origin. They mostly appear in the form of "quotations", which are outright transfers of phonemic sequence from German into Polish. These words or phrases that do not exist in Polish and are not integrated grammatically are usually used when the desired Polish equivalent does not come to the speaker's mind, e.g. *To jest moje Schulkolegen, Daj mi ten Ball, Moja Tante mi kupi*.

The other group within interjections are loanwords from German but slightly modified via assimilation of their phonetic form to Polish and adaptation of Polish declension endings, e.g. *czy mogą ta biała zosa (Sosse) skosztować?, kanapka z keją, Krystianka* (the Polish version of the German name *Christiane*), *witaminy od omy*.

Other errors include: loan-translations of a foreign word-formative pattern, e.g. *Co w balet-szkole robisz?* and of a foreign word meaning, e.g. *Ania mi umyla* (wyprała) *zoki, Znasz (umiesz) takie coś robić?*

Syntactic mistakes in the children's discourse are plentiful. The sentence order seems to be most affected, that is Polish sentences are spoken with a German word order, typically in subordinate clauses where the predicate goes to the end of the sentence, e.g. *Nie wiesz, co folia jest?*

Moreover, strongly bound elements of the predicate group, e.g. a modal verb and

the following infinitive, may be separated, which in Polish is incorrect, e.g. *kiedyś muszą te pany taka sukienka mieć, ja nie umiem zoka ubrać*. These mistakes stem from creating syntactic replicas of German sentence structure and they also include:

- using an infinitive as an imperative, e.g. *Cicho być!*
- using a replica of the German structure *von + Dative* instead of possessive adjectives or nouns in the genitive case, e.g. *To jest od niego* (=jego) *dziewczyna, Nie mamy od psa paszportu, To jest od Dominika pilka;*
- using a single negative while there should be double, typical of Polish sentences, e.g. *nic idzie już, nic dzieje się, mama nic o tego wie, on może żadne Cole pić*
- applying German verb patterns to Polish verbs, e.g. *To smakuje na kawa, Mama tego nie pozwoliła*
- creating replicas of other German structures, e.g. *To jest rower albo?, Jaki stary jesteś?, To jest kupowane nowe.*

The parents make much fewer syntactic mistakes than the children and most of the abovementioned syntactic error types did not even appear.

The most common mistake in the case of the parents is German- or Silesian-origin interjections in the form of "quotations", which are outright transfers of phonemic sequences from German into Polish, e.g. *Gott sei dank, że tę robotę dostał / Genau / Na ja / Klar / On jest kaputt z nerwami*, or in the form of loanwords from German slightly modified via assimilation of their phonetic form to those typical of Polish and adaptation of Polish declension endings, e.g. *Zatrzymamy się na tankszteli, Pojedziemy autobana, Mam dziś dużo bóglowania*. Syntactic replicas or problems with verb aspects are very rare in the parents' discourse, e.g. *Masz/dostałeś głód? / Będziem jeść* (=zjemy). Interestingly, such internationalisms as *euro* or *DVD* reflect German pronunciation, even when they appear in a Polish sentence and are preceded by a Polish cardinal number.

As we can see from the above description, the number and the types of the mistakes made by different bilinguals (that is parents and children) can vary. The difference in the number of parents' and children's mistakes may have its roots in the fact that the parents are nearly maximal bilinguals, which means that they have achieved a level of proficiency in both languages similar to that of the native speakers and they have no problems fluently communicating in either Polish or German. Productive bilingualism, that is the acquisition of proficiency in all language skills in both languages (speaking, listening comprehension, reading and writing), as has occurred in the case of the parents also contributes to small amount of the negative transfer in their discourse.

The children make a much greater number of mistakes, which demonstrates vast deficits in their lexis and morphosyntax. They are nearly-bilinguals, because in one of the languages (German) they have achieved a nativespeakerlike proficiency, while in the other (Polish) their competence is at a much lower level. This may of course be temporary, but taking into consideration the present circumstances it may be assumed that their level of competence in Polish will gradually drop due to the following factors:

- the parents do not care about the improvement of their children's Polish
- there are very few occasions prompting the children to use Polish (German-speaking school and local environment)
- the children are reluctant to use Polish and are facing more and more difficulties speaking it
- the children have never been (and probably never will be) taught Polish formally at school

Those problems are additionally multiplied in the case of the children by their different (unlike in German) levels of language skill acquisition in Polish (receptive bilingualism). Both children are proficient in the four language skills in German (speaking, listening comprehension, writing and reading), whereas in Polish they have developed the speaking and listening comprehension skills to a certain degree, they can read very simple texts but they cannot write.

This can lead to the conclusion that the children are representatives of dominant bilingualism, because the communicative range in German is wider than in Polish. German is more intensively used and it is with this language that the children have more contact (the school, local environment and their home are places where German is used, even in parent-child communication). The lack of encouragement and motivation from parents to use Polish at home more often is another contributory factor supporting the dominance of German over Polish and, simultaneously, increasing the volume of interference from the dominant language in the children's discourse.

The function of languages criterion also determines to a certain degree the volume of negative transfer. If in the parent-child contact code switching, that is constant alternation between German and Polish, is very abundant, and, simultaneously, the functional diversification of those two languages is not rigorous and clear because they are used in neither separate nor precisely determined contexts (mixed bilingualism), then mistakes in such communication are more likely to occur. They are more likely to occur in the discourse of the children who often make their parents switch to German. The parents in most cases represent functional bilingualism, which means that Polish and German perform diverse functions in communication acts, so consequently they commit fewer errors. The decision as to which language has which functions in their case depends mostly on:

- interlocutors: in contacts between husband and wife and between employer and Polish employees, Polish is more frequent, so it is functional, systematic and interlocutor-dependent bilingualism that prevails, with the exception of the parent-child communication. The children, being reluctant to use Polish, very often make their parents switch to German, even if the conversation was started in Polish.
- location of the communication act: among family members or at home – apart from the abovementioned parent-child communication – Polish prevails due to the presence of Polish native speakers in the home, such as Polish employees, au pair and home help. German is used outside the home, which is obvious since the family lives in a German-speaking community.

- topic of the communication act: when speaking about their feelings, the parents prefer to use Polish, while they speak German in formal, official situations (functional, systematic and topic-dependent bilingualism)

The sequence of acquisition criterion is also a very crucial one, reflecting which language was acquired first, and which second. Although both the children and the parents represent consecutive bilingualism, there was a greater (20 years) delay in starting the acquisition of German in the case of the parents than in the case of the children (2 or 3 years), which may also be reflected in the volume of interference. The parents acquired Polish as their first language and it is this language that they regard as their native one and that they studied formally at a Polish school. Both of them started to study German only after their arrival in Germany, attending a six-month course and acquiring the language in a natural way at the same time. The lack of simultaneity in the acquisition of the two languages, that is the delay in the beginning of second language acquisition, is typical of people who acquired a second language as adults, especially emigrants.

In the case of the children, Polish was the language used by their mother, and later an au-pair, although they were born in Germany. It was a language that they picked up from their parents and never studied formally at school. The beginning of their German acquisition was in the crèche at the age of 2 (Dominik) and 3 (Christiane). Until then Polish was used at home because the parents were not fluent in German at that time. Moreover, a Polish au-pair was taking care of the children. Consequently, it cannot be stated that both languages were acquired simultaneously in earliest childhood, because German acquisition started 2 and 3 years later.

The range of bilingualism and the territory criteria are also of some importance here. The children were born as prospective bilingual members of a bilingual community (historical bilingualism) and acquired both languages in the German-speaking community, while the parents became bilingual as a result of emigration to Germany (migrant bilingualism) and acquired each language in a different country, the first in Poland, and the second in Germany.

The different circumstances of Polish acquisition are an additional factor. What the processes of Polish and German acquisition have in common in the case of the parents is that two different forms of acquisition (naturalistic and artificial) mix with each other in the case of each of the languages. In the case of Polish, its naturalistic acquisition started when the parents were born in a Polish-speaking community, and its artificial acquisition started when their formal education at school began. So in the case of Polish, naturalistic acquisition preceded artificial acquisition.

The situation is different in the case of German. Here we can say that artificial acquisition preceded or was simultaneous with naturalistic, because immediately after arriving in Germany the parents started a 6-month course of German (they had not studied it before they left Poland) and simultaneously or with a slight delay they started to acquire it in a naturalistic way.

Being born in a Polish-speaking community, the children acquired Polish via participating in this community which consisted of their parents, the au-pair, their

grandparents and other Poles staying temporarily at their house. It can thus be stated that they acquired Polish in a naturalistic, spontaneous way. In the case of German, however, the two different types of acquisition (naturalistic and artificial) combined, because it was not until they started school that their formal education in German began, and before, at home and outside, e.g. in the crèche, the children acquired German in an untutored way. So, with German, naturalistic acquisition preceded artificial acquisition. The lack of support in the form of long-term formal education in Polish for the children may be one of the factors contributing to the greater number of mistakes made by the children than by the parents, especially in relation to syntax.

Another criterion which is bound to increase the volume of negative transfer from German into Polish is the attitude to languages criterion. In the case of the children Polish is dominated by German in everyday communication, and they represent subtractive bilingualism. The majority language, German in this case, is beginning to replace the native language of a minority group (the family under analysis is an example of such a group). Finally German starts to pose a threat to Polish, which becomes neglected. It can be assumed that the volume of interference, and consequently the number of mistakes, will increase with time, and unless special, additional measures are taken, the children may stop using it completely.

In the case of the parents, Polish has not been completely dominated by German; they represent additive or elite bilingualism. The majority language (German) did not supplant the native language of the minority group (Polish in the case of this family), nor does it pose a threat to it. Polish is still used every day and has not been neglected. So the parents immigrating into the territory of a new language community have broadened their mind by way of familiarity with one new language and, partly, a new culture. This would also account for the smaller number of mistakes appearing in their discourse.

To sum up, numerous factors (including extralinguistic ones) seem to influence the volume and the frequency of interference in the discourse of the bilinguals under analysis. These factors include (see Weinreich 1970: 3-4): "the speaker's facility of verbal expression in general and his ability to keep two languages apart, relative proficiency in each language, specialization in the use of each language by topics and interlocutors, manner of learning each language, attitudes towards each language, etc." and in order to fully explain the phenomenon of interference in each case, those factors should be taken into consideration. As those mistakes in the bilingual's discourse are elusive, made unconsciously and not always recurring, it is difficult to establish what exactly they result from. Moreover, each form of interference depends on other external factors which may suppress it (a monolingual interlocutor) or increase it (tiredness, stress, absent-mindedness). For these reasons, the statements formulated in this paper considering the influence of bilingualism types on the volume of interference may to some extent be regarded as only generalizations and assumptions.

## References

- Aleemi, J. 1991. *Zur sozialen und psychischen Situation von Bilingualen*. (Sprachwelten Bd. 6). Peter Lang Verlag. Frankfurt am Main.
- Baker, C. 1993. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. Multilingual Matters Ltd. Clevedon.
- Bausch, K.-R., Christ, H., Krumm, H.-J. (eds.) 2003. 97. Zwei- und Mehrsprachigkeit: Überblick. *Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht*. Francke: Tübingen und Basel. 439-445.
- Blocher, E. 1982. Zeisprachigkeit: Vorteile und Nachteile. In: Swift, J. (ed.) *Bilinguale und Multikulturelle Erziehung*. Verlag Königshausen und Neumann. Würzburg. 17-25.
- Fthenakis, W.-E., Sonner, A., Thurl, R., Walbinder, W. 1985. *Bilingual-bikulturelle Entwicklung des Kindes. Ein Handbuch für Psychologen, Pädagogen und Linguisten*. Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik. Max Hueber Verlag. München.
- Graf, P. 1987. Frühe Zeisprachigkeit und Schule. *Empirische Grundlagen zur Erziehung von Migrantenkinder*. Münchner Universitätsschriften. Max Hueber Verlag. München.
- Gruca, F. 1981. Glottodydaktyczne implikacje bilingwizmu. In: Gruca, F. (ed.) *Bilingwizm a glottodydaktyka*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UW. 9-39.
- Gruca, F. 1989. Język a kultura, bilingwizm a biculturyzm: lingwistyczne i glottodydaktyczne aspekty interlingwalnych i interkulturowych różnic oraz zbieżności. In: Gruca, F. (ed.) *Bilingwizm, biculturyzm, implikacje glottodydaktyczne*. Wydawnictwo UW. Warszawa. 9-49.
- Jonekeit, S., Kiehlhöfer, B. 1995. *Zweisprachige Kindererziehung*. Stauffenburg Verlag. Tübingen.
- Klein, W. 1986. *Second language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Kubiak, B. 2003. Dwu- i wielojęzyczność dzieci. In: *Języki obce w szkole*. Special issue 6 „My w Europie”.
- Kurcz, I. 1992. *Język a psychologia*. WSiP. Warszawa.
- Lambeck, K. 1984. *Kritische Anmerkungen zur Bilingualismusforschung*. Gunter Narr Verlag. Tübingen.
- Lambert, W. 1982. Die zwei Gesichter zweisprachiger Erziehung. In: Swift, J. (ed.) *Bilinguale und Multikulturelle Erziehung*. Verlag Königshausen und Neumann. Würzburg. 44-50.
- Lipińska, E. 2003. *Język ojczysty, język obcy, język drugi. Wstęp do badań dwujęzyczności*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Kraków.
- Olpińska, M. 2004. *Wychowanie dwujęzyczne*. Wydawnictwo UW. Warszawa.
- Schönplüg, U. 1977. *Psychologie des Erst- und Zweitspracherwerbs. Eine Einführung*. Kohlhammer Verlag. Stuttgart.
- Siguán, M., Mackey, W. 1987. *Education and bilingualism*. Kogan Page in association with UNESCO, London.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. 1981. *Bilingualism or not. The Education of Minorities*. Multilingual Matters. London.
- Weinert, R. 1987. Processes in Classroom Second Language Development: the Acquisition of negation in German. In: Ellis, R. (ed.) *Second Language Acquisition in Context*. Prentice-Hall English Language Teaching.
- Weinreich, U. 1953. *Languages in contact*. Publications of the Linguistic Circle of New York. No. 1. New York.
- Woźniakowski, W. 1982. *Glottodydaktyka w świetle zjawiska bilingwizmu naturalnego*. Ossolineum. Wrocław.