

Ewa Małgorzata Skorek¹

Bilingualism and multilingualism – truths and myths

Abstract: We live in the world in which the society assumes a structure of a multicultural mosaic and communication comprises multilingual quotations. Migration contributes to linguistic and cultural exchange, and for numerous contemporarily born children, multilingualism constitutes a standard, a normal situation in which they grow and develop their speaking skills by means of natural acquisition of various languages. Bilingualism and multilingualism, so far a marginal problem for parents, has recently become a social issue. Many parents face numerous challenges: how to bring up children in bi- or multilingual families, what to do in the situation whereby the language of the parents varies from the language used in the local environment or what to do in order not to lose one's cultural identity and yet gain the approval of the local society. Speech therapists are among the first persons parents address, and although the problem is well recognized, it still requires constant upgrade since research in linguistics, sociology and psychology constantly verifies the state of knowledge on the impact of bi- and multilingualism, on the development of children as well as on further stages of life, while the widespread myths concerning multilingualism tend to be confirmed or rejected by reliable research results.

Key words: bilingualism and multilingualism, biculturalism, multiculturalism.

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Bilingwizm i multilingwizm – prawda i mity

Abstrakt: Żyjemy w świecie, w którym społeczeństwo przyjmuje strukturę multikulturowej mozaiki, a komunikacja składa się wielojęzycznych cytatów. Migracje sprzyjają wymianie językowej i kulturowej, a dla wielu współcześnie urodzonych dzieci wielojęzyczność jest normalną, codzienną sytuacją, w której rozwijają się i uczą się mówić poprzez naturalną akwizycję różnych języków. Bilingwizm i multilingwizm, będący do niedawna problemem marginalnym, dzisiaj stanowi problem społeczny. Wielu rodziców szuka odpowiedzi na pytanie o to jak wychowywać dzieci w rodzinie dwu- i wielojęzycznej lub co robić w sytuacji, gdy język rodziców jest inny niż otoczenia oraz jak postępować, by nie zatracić odrębnej tożsamości kulturowej, ale jednocześnie być akceptowanym przez otoczenie. Jednymi z pierwszych osób, do których rodzice zgłaszają się z tymi pytaniami są logopedzi, dla których problem nie jest nowy, ale wymaga ciągłej aktualizacji, ponieważ doniesienia z badań m.in. lingwistycznych, socjologicznych i psychologicznych stale weryfikują stan wiedzy na temat wpływu bi- i multilingwizmu na rozwój dziecka i związek z dalszymi etapami życia człowie-

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ka, a rozpowszechnione mity na temat wielojęzyczności potwierdzane są lub wykluczone przez rzetelne wyniki badań naukowych. Artykuł zawiera syntetyczne wprowadzenie teoretyczne, w którym autorka przedstawia starsze i nowsze ujęcie multilingwizmu i wielokulturowości, ich rodzaje, a także mity na temat wielojęzyczności i wielokulturowości oraz wyniki przeprowadzonych dotąd niektórych badań – w obu przypadkach w postaci stwierdzeń (*prawda, fałsz*) wraz z uzasadnieniem..

Słowa kluczowe: bilingwizm, multilingwizm, dwukulturowość, wielokulturowość.

Introduction

We live in the world in which the society assumes a structure of a multicultural mosaic and communication consists of multilingual quotations. Migration contributes to language and cultural exchange, and for many contemporarily born children multilingualism is a norm, an everyday situation in which they develop and learn to speak by means of natural acquisition of various languages.

Bilingualism and multilingualism, so far marginal issues, at present constitute a social problem. Many parents look for answers to the questions of how to bring up children in bilingual or multilingual families, what to do in the situation in which the language of parents is different from the language of the environment, and at the same time what to do in order not to lose cultural identity and retain the acceptance of the environment. Speech therapists were the first to be addressed by parents, since for them, the problem is not new and requires constant updating, as reports from the research in linguistics, sociology and psychology verify the state of knowledge on the impact of bi- and multilingualism on the development of children and its connection with further stages of life, whereas widespread myths concerning multilingualism are confirmed or rejected by the results of studies

Terminological considerations

The concept of biligualism already occurred in ancient Egypt. Inscriptions on the Rosetta stone, from the 2nd century B.C., found in 1799 during the Napoleonic campaign, were carved in three different versions (Sadowska-Gronert, 2009).

The first and exhaustive analysis of language development in bilingual children was published in 1913. It described Luis – a son of a French linguist Jules Ronjat, who was brought up in a bilingual family. From the birth of the child, his parents communicated with the child only in their native languages in accordance with the “one person – one language”

principle² (Vildomec, 1971). A similar method was also applied by other researchers of bilingualism (e.g. Grégoire, 1971).

At present, bilingualism attracts interest of numerous academic disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, education or sociology, among others. Each of them analyses selected aspects of bilingualism (multilingualism) and develops specific definitions of the concept, and particular authors analyzing the problem of bilingualism develop their own terminology or use terms suggested by other researchers, while understanding them in a different way or “filling” them with new meanings (Olpińska-Szkiełko, 2013). This leads to misunderstandings and different interpretations of phenomena within the same research area.

In reference to two languages, the term “bilingualism”³, and in reference to more languages, the term ‘multilingualism’ are used in the hereby paper⁴ (Kurcz, 2005). Biculturalism (multiculturalism) means affiliation to two (or more) cultures and readiness to respect their principles e.g. customs, temperament, norms etc. (Witkowska, Czy...). For the purpose of further consideration, it is assumed that whenever bilingualism or biculturalism are discussed, the text automatically applies to multilingualism and multiculturalism respectively, unless it is specified otherwise.

Initially, bilingualism was defined as identical competence in two languages (L1, L2). Yet problems with measuring and describing the degree of competence as well as research results showing that equal mastery of languages is rather impossible, led to changes in the definition. At present, bilingualism is described as the practice of active use of two languages and switching between them whenever the need arises, with no attempts to assess the degree of competence in either (Nalborczyk, 2002).

² Ronjat used the method on the basis of the work of Maurice Grammont from 1902, who assumed that the division of languages and their precise assignment to people from the child's environment will foster more efficient and easier language learning (Olpińska-Szkiełko, 2013).

³ According to Małgorzata Sadowska-Groner, the term “bilingualism” is narrower and applies to personal linguistic features, whereas the Polish term “dwujęzyczność” is wider, and applies both to people as well as to entire communities (Sadowska-Groner, 2009).

⁴ Some authors use two terms: multilingualism and plurilingualism. The former applies to migration and the use of many languages on a given territory, which defines its social character. The latter is more individual in nature (Bär, 2004; Bertrand, Christ, 1990; Meißner, 1993). According to some ESL methodology specialists, ‘a given person is plurilingual if he/she can use at least three languages (Bertrand, Christ, 1990, p. 44). Such a person does not have to be equally proficient in all languages. In contrast to multilingualism, plurilingualism may be the subject of planned actions e.g. the results of educational policy (Bär, 2004; Bertrand, Christ, 1990; Meißner, 1993).

Bilingualism may result from a natural or artificial, cultivated process (Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013). It is not easy to specify which methods and techniques applied in the process of acquisition of two or more languages can be classified as natural or artificial⁵. Furthermore, some specialists relate the concepts to the way in which children learn languages, others to the conditions in which the process takes place, still others to the age of the bilingual person⁶.

It has been accepted that natural bilingualism results from the acquisition of languages (first, second and subsequent languages) in natural conditions, in which languages are acquired through everyday communication with partners using a given language with the learner (Schönpflug, 1977) irrelevant of the age. Natural bilingualism occurs in the situation in which representatives of different language communities contact one another in everyday life i.e. either in a bilingual family, in a multilingual society or in the country in which the dominant language differs from the language used in a given family (Blocher, 1982).

“Artificial” or cultivated bilingualism occurs in the situation in which the second language is acquired in the process of education (Schönpflug, 1977), i.e. as a result of systematic instruction in the educational context, e.g. traditional foreign language teaching or bilingual education programs based on the Canadian concept of language immersion⁷ (Lambert, Tucker, 1972; Genesee, 1987, 1991; Olpińska, 2004). “Artificial” bilingualism is frequently referred to as school bilingualism (Fthenakis, et al., 1985; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1987).

⁵ For instance, one of the methods of bilingual education, i.e. employment of an au-pair, is treated as a natural method (e.g. Schönpflug, 1977; Fthenakis, et al., 1985; Graf, 1987; Aleemi, 1991), or, on the contrary, as an artificial method (e.g. Jonekeit, Kielhöfer, 1995; Blocher, 1982).

⁶ For instance, Wassilios E. Fthenakis understands natural bilingualism as active and passive use of both languages, while the second language has been acquired in a natural communicative environment along with the native language, at the moment when the cognitive development of the child was at the stage, at which it could take place both through the first (native) and second language of the child (Fthenakis, et al., 1985).

⁷ The Canadian concept of language immersion – an ELT program developed at the beginning of 1960s by the scientists from the McGill University in Montreal under the supervision of Wallace E. Lambert (Lambert, Tucker, 1972; Genesee, 1987, 1991), according to which foreign languages were used for the purpose of instruction in content subjects (e.g. geography or history). The program was directed at the English speaking majority in order to support the learning of the second official language in Canada (Genesee, 1994). Research focused on the efficiency of this program showed that the use of foreign language for learning other contents brings better results in the mastery of the language than language learning as such. Immersion models vary with respect to duration, intensity and the age at which instruction is offered (Olpińska, 2004).

In certain situations both processes overlap – a given person acquires the second language in a natural way and at the same time takes advantage of language instruction e.g. a child who in result of emigration of its parents lives in a foreign language environment, maintains contacts with peers using the same language and at the same time takes part in various forms of language instruction in this language.

Some authors define a bilingual speaker as a person who “to a certain extent has mastered more than one language”, irrelevant of the fact whether the acquisition took place in natural or artificial conditions (e.g. Snow, 2005, s. 478), and such terms as bilingualism or bilingual education are treated as synonymous (e.g. Ročławska-Daniluk, 2011); still others differentiate between bilingualism and proficiency in two languages (e.g. Lipińska, 2003).

In the hereby paper the term bilingualism is used in the second meaning. A bilingual speaker is a person using two (or more) languages acquired in natural conditions in contrast to a person proficient in the second or subsequent languages, learnt in the process of formal education. In the former situation, we deal with natural acquisition, whereas in the latter with foreign language learning⁸.

Bilingual people simultaneously become bicultural, to the extent to which they accept (consciously or unconsciously) the heritage of the culture carried along with the second language (Cieszyńska, 2004).

Such understanding of biculturalism allows for the differentiation between biculturalism of ethnic speakers and biculturalism of their children. Second generation biculturalism includes new elements, inaccessible to parents, but at the same time it is poorer since it lacks those elements which cannot be acquired away from the mother country. People brought up in a specific language tradition perceive the world in a different way since norms and forms of behaviour as well as moral, aesthetic and cognitive values are transmitted through language. In other words, the entire culture, or at least its major part, of a given nation is transmitted by means of language (Cieszyńska J., 2004).

The bilingual mind

Contemporary models of the bilingual mind reject the traditional view on bilingualism according to which both languages function separately and

⁸ It has been assumed that language acquisition in children is natural, automatic and spontaneous. The acquisition of tacit knowledge is biologically conditioned. Learning requires effort, motivation and is facilitated by specific abilities (*Psychologiczne...*, 2007).

are alternately activated or deactivated. At present, it is assumed that both languages are constantly active in the bilingual mind. Both systems function in close vicinity as readily available translation equivalents. Both languages have a common conceptual system or a set of meanings, the systems are interconnected, hence they remain in permanent contact and are readily available.

One of the non-selective models of the bi-lingual mind (BIMOLA or *Bilingual Model of Lexical Access*) has been suggested by Francois Grosjean. The common set of phonemes is divided into two subsystems, separate for either language. The same principle is applied to the lexicon which is a combined lexicon, comprising two subsystems. The subsystems are internally and externally related (Grosjean, 1997).

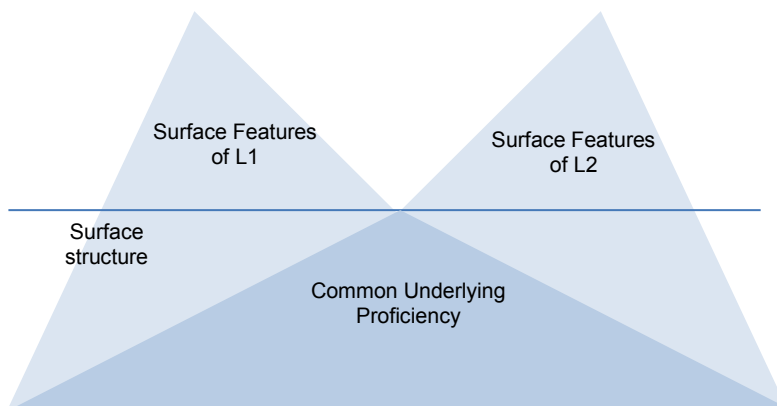


Fig. 1. *Bilingualism in the metaphor of the double iceberg theory developed by Cummins* (source: developed on the basis of Cummins, 1984, p. 143 and Lipińska, 2003, p. 117; Sadowska-Gronert, 2009, p. 182)

Jim Cummins observes that two languages do not occupy separate parts in the brain of a bilingual speaker. They are allocated in appropriate and limited spheres and share a wide and common area (Fig. 1). The iceberg theory (also known as language interdependence hypothesis) assumes that two languages may occur differently at the level of surface structure, whereas in reality they are based on identical cognitive processes (Cummins, Swain, 1986; Sadowska-Gronert, 2009).

The metaphor suggests that the underlying structure, common for both languages, is the foundation of the double iceberg which symbolizes different manifestations at the surface structure. The surface structure includes cognitive and intellectual competence whereas the hidden com-

petence and the operational system constitute a basis of communication and interpersonal skills. As far as specific cognitive and communicative features are concerned, both languages alternately intertwine in the brain of a bilingual person during written or oral production (Lipińska, 2003; Sadowska-Gronert, 2009).

Types of bilingualism

Bilingualism can be classified into various categories depending on the assumed criteria e.g. linguistic, cognitive, developmental or social and cultural. This chapter presents some of the major typologies, most frequently used in the specialist background literature.

Apart from the classification of bilingualism depending on the context of second language acquisition (natural and cultivated bilingualism) discussed above, several other forms of the classification of bilingualism, depending on various criteria or factors influencing the process of acquisition are recognized.

The most general classification differentiates between individual bilingualism and social bilingualism (official, actual) (Nalborczyk, 2002; Olpińska-Szkiełko, 2013; Woźniakowski, 1982). Social bilingualism applies to entire social groups and is caused by conquests, occupation, change of borders, federations, colonialism, neo-colonialism, international migration, state borders, original settlement or internationalization (Nalborczyk, 2002).

Other divisions take into account bilingual competence, i.e. the degree of language mastery. There is no agreement in the specialist literature on how bilingual competence, i.e. the degree of mastery of both languages should be assessed. Numerous authors suggest systematic measurement of language competence in both languages and in their opinion, the question: "Is a particular person bilingual?" should be rephrased into: "To what extent is a particular person bilingual?" (Fthenakis, et al., 1985, p. 16). The measurement of bilingualism takes into account not only the basic four language skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking, but also grammar and vocabulary. Language competence is measured by means of specialist language tests (e.g. Lambeck, 1984; Fishman, Cooper, 1971). Apart from traditional methods of testing, the quantity, quality (accuracy), the tempo of delivery, response time to language stimuli or the scope and frequency of interference, contemporary research on bilingualism employs complex procedures of the assessment of second language competence (*communicative language testing*) and the diagnosis of the difference between the surface and academic competence (*academic*

achievement, academically related language competence), i.e. language skills relevant for abstract thinking and cognitive operations (Baker, 1993; Genesee, 1991; Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013). Full bilingualism applies to the situations in which linguistic and communicative competence are developed in both languages in speech and writing (Cieszyńska, 2010). Balanced bilingualism means the development of language and communicative competence in both languages (Baker, 1993), and if the competence in one language exceeds the competence in another language, we can talk about dominant bilingualism (Peal, Lambert, 1962). In the situation in which competence is higher in one of the languages, we can talk about a dominant language, whereas the second language is described as weaker (Jonekeit, Kielhöfer, 1995). At this point, it has to be observed that a perfect mastery of a given language never occurs. Even monolingual speakers never reach the limits of full mastery in their language proficiency. Even the concept of native-like control remains imprecise since not all native speakers of a given language demonstrate full mastery of language competence (Grucza, 1993; Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013). On the other hand, people comprehending utterances formulated in the second language or capable of producing correct sentences in this language can be hardly classified as bilingual, but rather as proficient, to a larger or smaller extent. In reality, a balanced development of competence in two or more languages occurs rather rarely and the development of particular language skills may vary in the native language and the second language. This is a result of various factors: e.g. type, intensity and the moment of contact with both languages, education, emotional attitude, motivation as well as other personal reasons (Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013). Linguistic competence in both monolingual and bilingual people is not manifested at a permanent, specific and stable level. Differences in language mastery become apparent while comparing the level of proficiency in L1 and L2. Quite often, even in the case of simultaneous bilingualism, child's proficiency in one of the languages prevails, and consequently this language is more eagerly used (Hanus, *Dwujęzyczność...*).

Some authors observe that there exist additional aspects characterising bilingualism e.g., the extent of purity of both languages, i.e. lack of interference (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1987).

Other researchers consider code switching, i.e. the ability to switch from one language to another, depending on the interlocutor, communicative situation or domain of life, as an important element of bilingual competence (Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013). In this context of contemporary research on bilingualism, the concept of functional bilingualism is used (Graf, 1987; Lambeck, 1984; Aleemi, 1991), which is defined as the ability

to choose one of the languages depending on the communicative situation (Buttaroni, 1994).

Depending on the status ascribed by the speakers to either of the languages, it is possible to differentiate between symmetrical bilingualism – both languages have the same status and asymmetrical bilingualism – one of the languages enjoys a higher status (Nalborczyk, 2002). The choice of the language depends on the child's age and the number of languages. Research conducted by Suzanne Barron-Hauwaert shows that in case of children using three languages, younger children tend to use their mother's language, whereas older children (at the age of 3–4) use their father's language, while later on, they opt to use the language of the environment. The author observed that in case of children using three languages, the balance between languages is less probable than in case of two languages (Barron-Hauwaert, 2000). The decision (made by a bilingual person consciously or unconsciously) which of the languages is dominant and which is weaker, depends not only on the quantitative criterion of domination of one of the languages and the attitude of the bilingual speaker e.g. reluctance to use one of the languages (Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013), but also on socio-pragmatic conditions, e.g. the interlocutor, social roles, domains (the context of use, e.g. home or work), topic (partly overlapping with domains; the topic determines the language when for instance education is conducted in one language and professional vocabulary is not mastered in another), place, communication channel or type of interaction (Nalborczyk, 2002).

Measuring bilingualism involves questions concerning relative self-rating of proficiency by bilingual speakers (Baker, 1993). Apart from “objectively measurable” competence in both languages, the assessment of bilingual competence involves the emotional attitude and subjective evaluation of one's bilingualism, and some authors observe that the awareness of one's bilingualism and individual affiliation to both language communities constitutes the most important criterion of the assessment of bilingual competence (Jonekeit, Kielhöfer, 1995; Blocher, 1982).

While taking into account the time/moment of acquisition, it is possible to differentiate between early bilingualism, when the child is exposed to both languages in the pre-school period (that is until the age of five or seven depending on local regulations concerning education in particular countries), which leads to the acquisition of both languages to the same extent, and simultaneous bilingualism (Sadowska-Gronert, 2009), sometimes referred to as family bilingualism (Snow, 2005), when the child, from its birth, to the same extent develops language functions in two languages, used in the environment, parallel bilingualism, if L2 is introduced

before the age of three, and successive bilingualism if it is introduced later (Kurcz, 2005).

When bilingual speakers acquire their native language and linguistic competence first, and subsequently are exposed to the second language, it is possible to talk about consecutive bilingualism, which applies mainly to immigrants (Sadowska-Gronert, 2009).

Considering the context in which both languages are acquired, the acquisition can be simultaneous in a situation in which both language equivalents are acquired as one semantic unit – it is possible to talk then about complex (or integrated) bilingualism, or when acquisition takes place in two different contexts, which leads to the development of one double system of semantic units – in such case, we deal with coordinated bilingualism (Sadowska-Gronert, 2009). It is also possible to differentiate between coordinated (or pure) bilingualism – the words of both languages are totally separated, and in each system they have their own specific meanings, which in case of Polish-English bilingualism means that the terms /książka/ and /book/ coexist but are independent, each referring to a separate language, with its own (different) meanings and associated as such, complex (or mixed) bilingualism – characterised by one and common meaning of both words, hence /książka/ and /book/ are two separate forms referring to the same conceptual contents, and subordinate bilingualism – one language (usually the native tongue) is already mastered and the “other” language is subject to the process of acquisition in which L1 mediates, i.e. /książka/ is translated as /book/ (Weinreich, 1968).

It is also possible to talk about bilingualism in the context of reciprocal impact of languages. If L1 and L2 are socially accepted, we deal with additive or summative bilingualism, leading to harmonious development of bilingualism, whereas if L2 is preferred at the expense of L1 or L2 is preferred and acquired at the expense of L1, we can talk about subtractive bilingualism (Lambert, 1974; Sadowska-Gronert, 2009). In the former case we deal with the phenomenon of immersion, in the latter with submersion. Quite often submersion occurs when the child is not exposed to L2 until the school age, and L2 is the language of instruction as well as the language of school environment. As a result, full competence in L1 is not achieved and full competence in L2 may also be at risk (Kurcz, 2005).

Another division of bilingualism has been suggested by Jagoda Cieszyńska. According the author, bilingualism occurs most frequently as classical bilingualism – when one of the parents is an immigrant and the other is a native speaker of the language of the accepting country (then appropriate stimulation of both: the language of the mother and the father, conditions the development of the child's identity, intensifies the benefits of belonging to “two world”, and constitutes a basis of the development of

the self-image as well as relations with members of the community), and the first generation bilingualism – when the child is born or comes to the accepting country in the pre-lingual period, which is before the language has been mastered (Cieszyńska, 2010).

A different division of bilingualism concerns cultural affiliation, yet at the same time it is observed that bilingual competence is not necessarily combined with double cultural identity (Hamers, Blanc, 2000). It is possible to distinguish bicultural bilingualism – double cultural affiliation and bicultural identity, monocultural bilingualism in which affiliation and identity are related to, e.g. L1 only and anomic bilingualism in which cultural affiliation remains uncertain and cultural identity is not defined.

Bilingualism may result in the feeling of exclusion from the communicative community. Social effects of bilingualism may apply to children or their parents. Community exclusion bilingualism means a feeling that one is not fully understood in the tongue which is a foreign language to the speaker, or the impression that others are not eager to listen to the speaker using his native language, which gradually excludes speakers or results in the tendency to avoid conversation. Community exclusion bilingualism occurs when conversations are conducted in the language which is not known to the third party. Such exclusion from the community develops the feeling of the lack of affiliation and causes serious difficulty in developing one's identity. In early childhood, it blocks the reception of linguistic information if it is not directed to the child. This hinders the process of language learning through listening to conversations between adults. For instance, a child talks with its mother in her ethnic language, with its father in his ethnic language, whereas listens to the conversations between its parents in a foreign language (usually English). This language may become later the language of formal education, yet the acquisition of the fourth language quite often also becomes necessary. If parents use a foreign language in everyday conversations, mutual linguistic relations are deprived of the emotional load which fosters the understanding of language messages. Since a bilingual child talks with each of the parents in a different ethnic language, it develops separate language communities. The child itself does not understand the information exchange between the parents, as if it belonged to a different world. When the mother and the father talk to each other, the child is located outside the brackets of not only transmitted meanings but also feelings and emotions. It is like an alien, left alone, and learning to exist outside the community. Such image of the world must exert a negative impact on the development of linguistic and social competence. The family constitutes the most important stage of learning social rules and responsibility for others. The feeling of being an

outsider in a group to which one actually belongs constitutes a painful act of exclusion (Cieszyńska, 2010).

The effects of bilingualism – myths and facts

According to Otto Jespersen, the human mind has a limited intellectual capacity and a bilingual person has to divide this capacity by two, hence bilingualism is limiting by nature (*Psychologiczne...*, 2007). At present, such views are considered unsound.

In the past, negative reception of bilingualism was caused by the fact that the knowledge of bilingual children was verified in their second language. Since test results were unsatisfactory, this fact was combined with bilingualism. There were attempts to prove that bilingual children lose their intellectual potential and that their development is limited (Mackey, 1976). At present, despite the widespread conviction that mastery of more than one language constitutes an obvious advantage, some of the myths concerning bilingualism have survived. For instance, some parents are afraid that learning of more than one language may hinder the development of small children. Experience shows that such children develop not only more quickly, but also have better communication skills. It is natural that at the beginning children mix words or sentence constructions. Analogous mistakes are generally made in the process of language learning, hence the anxiety concerning stammering or speech disorders is unjustified.

Colin Baker observes that parents who bring up bilingual children tend to seek out language problems. The very moment learning, development or social problems occur, some parents assume that they are caused by bilingualism. When a monolingual child has problems at school, parents think that they result from poor motivation, intelligence, personality, teaching methodology or school itself (Baker, 1995).

Myths and facts⁹

1. Bilingualism is a rare phenomenon.

Wrong! It has been estimated that more than half the world's population is bilingual, i.e. lives with two or more languages. Bilingualism is found in all parts of the world, at all levels of society, in all age groups. Even in countries with many monolinguals, the percentage of bilinguals is high. For example, one can estimate that there are as many as 50 million bilinguals in the United States today (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

⁹ Statements 1–13 after F. Grosjean (2010; *Myths...*).

2. Bilinguals acquire their two or more languages in childhood.

Wrong! One can become bilingual in childhood, but also in adolescence and in adulthood. In fact, many adults become bilingual because they move from one country (or region) to another and have to acquire a second language. With time, they can become just as bilingual as children who acquire their languages in their early years (minus the native speaker accent). In general, people become bilingual because life requires the use of two or more languages. This can be due to immigration, education, intermarriage, contact with other linguistic groups within a country, and so on (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

3. Bilinguals have equal and perfect knowledge of their languages.

Wrong! This is a myth that has had a long life! In fact, bilinguals know their languages to the level that they need them. Some bilinguals are dominant in one language, others do not know how to read and write in one of their languages, others have only passive knowledge of a language and, finally, a very small minority, have equal and perfect fluency in their languages. It is important to keep in mind that bilinguals are very diverse, as are monolinguals (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

Submersion or language impoverishment (Snow, 2005) constitute a serious threat to early bilingualism (Kurcz, 2005). The phenomenon can also be observed in adults, but in case of children its progress is faster and it constitutes even a bigger threat. Submersion consists in the absorption of the first language by the second language (or the second language by the first language). In practice, this means that the child's language skills vanish and the inability to use one of the languages fluently occurs. Yet, this is a reversible process – intensive contacts with the disappearing language (for instance a trip to the place where the language is used) may prevent the process of language loss and foster the development of communicative ability in this language. Several conditions have to be met. The most important condition concerns the high prestige of the disappearing language, which prevents it from vanishing. The prestige should accompany language use from the very beginning, should become internalized by the child and be respected by the child's environment speaking the "dominant" language. Acceptance and approval of the use of the disappearing language on behalf of the speakers of the dominant tongue, constitutes another factor motivating immersion. Such situation makes the child aware of the significance and importance of both languages, and hence motivates the child to continue the use of both the disappearing and the dominant language. This kind of motivation constitutes a crucial element of immersion since it prevents the child from the occurrence and approval of submersion (Hanus, *Dwujęzyczność...*).

4. Real bilinguals have no accent in their different languages.

Wrong! Having an accent or not in a language does not make you more or less bilingual. It depends on when you acquired your languages. In fact, some extremely fluent and balanced bilinguals have an accent in the one, or the other, language; other, less fluent, bilinguals may have no accent at all (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

5. Bilinguals are born translators.

Wrong! Even though bilinguals can translate simple things from one language to another, they often have difficulties with more specialized domains. The reaction people have is almost always, “But I thought you were bilingual!”. In fact, bilinguals use their languages in different situations, with different people, in different domains of life (this is called the complementarity principle). Unless they learned their languages formally (in school, for example), or have trained to be translators, they often do not have translations equivalents in the other language (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

6. Mixing languages is a sign of laziness in bilinguals.

Wrong! Mixing languages, such as code-switching and borrowing, is a very common behaviour in bilinguals speaking to other bilinguals. It is a bit like having coffee with milk instead of just straight black. The two language repertoires are available in bilingual situations and can be used at will. Many expressions and words are better said in the one or the other language; mixing permits to use the right one without having recourse to translation which simply may not do justice to what one wants to express. This said, in other situations, bilinguals know that they cannot mix their languages (e.g. when speaking to monolinguals) and they then stick to just one language (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*)¹⁰.

7. Bilinguals are also bicultural.

Wrong! Even though many bilinguals are also bicultural (they interact with two cultures and they combine aspects of each), many others are monocultural (e.g. the inhabitants in the German speaking part of Switzerland who often acquire three or four languages during their youth). Thus one can be bilingual without being bicultural just as one can be monolingual and bicultural (e.g. the British who live in the USA) (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

At this point, the threats resulting from living in a multicultural society have to be mentioned. Immigrants are faced with numerous challenges, e.g. the need to adapt to the surrounding social and cultural reality, the

¹⁰ For more information see point 32.

system of values, integration (acculturation), but not assimilation (re-culturation), the need to preserve the cultural identity shaped in the family environment, one's system of values or language. At the same time, inappropriate strategies of ethnic minorities are indicated. The strategy of the "besieged fortress" – closing oneself in a cultural and linguistic ghetto, triggers isolation and self-isolation of a group in the society, poor acquisition of cultural heritage (incomplete primary socialization), culture, the system of values and social norms of the dominating society (hindered secondary socialization) lead to frustration, loss of the "ground", confusion, social maladjustment or aggression. In turn, the "forward leap" strategy means forced assimilation. It consists in the rejection of the native tongue and the inherited system of values, cultural tradition, social norms, poor primary socialization leading to poor secondary socialization, weakening of the emotional bonds with parents. This may result in poor acquisition of both languages, disorders of the intellectual development and anomie (*Bilingwizm...*).

8. Bilinguals have double or split personalities.

Wrong! Bilinguals, like monolinguals, adapt their behaviour to different situations and people. This often leads to a change of language in bilinguals (e.g. a Japanese–English bilingual speaking Japanese to her grandmother and English to her sister). This change of language has led to the idea that bilinguals are "different" when speaking one or the other language. But like monolinguals, it is the situation or the person one is speaking to which induces slight changes in behaviour, opinions, feelings, etc., not the fact that one is bilingual (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*)¹¹.

9. Bilinguals express their emotions in their first language.

Wrong! Some bilinguals have grown up learning two languages simultaneously and hence have two first languages with which they will express their emotions. And for the majority of bilinguals who have acquired their languages successively, first one and then, some years later, another, the pattern is not clear. Emotions and bilingualism produce a very complicated but also very personal reality that has no set rules. Some bilinguals prefer to use one language, some the other, and some use both of them to express their feelings and emotions (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

10. Bilingualism will delay language acquisition in children.

Wrong! This is a myth that was popular back in the middle of the 20th Century. Since then much research has shown that bilingual children are not delayed in their language acquisition. This said, one should keep in

¹¹ For more information see point 32.

mind that bilingual children, because they have to deal with two or more languages, are different in some ways from monolingual children, but definitely not in rate of language acquisition. As for bilingual children with language challenges (e.g. dyslexia), they are not proportionally more numerous than monolingual children with the same challenges (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

Compared to their monolingual peers, bilingual children quite often have a wider repertoire of vocabulary (words known in L1 and L2) (Snow C.E., 2005). Although classical bilingualism may hinder the process of speech development at the first stage, and may be manifested by a slower tempo of the development of the language system in the spheres of semantics (vocabulary), inflection and syntax (sentence construction), the differences in the tempo of the acquisition of the language system in children with classical bilingualism and monolingual children can be levelled approximately at the age of four, provided that conscious and intensive support of the immigrant parents is guaranteed (Cieszyńska, 2010). It may happen that the competence in both languages is limited and the child has problems at school with either language, e.g. when a child moved to a different country and the parents did not create conditions for the development of the native language. On the other hand, the educational centres of the guest country did not perform their tasks in respect of providing the child with language instruction (Baker, 1995).

11. The language spoken in the home will have a negative effect on the acquisition of the school language, when the latter is different.

Wrong! In fact, the home language can be used as a linguistic base for acquiring aspects of the other language. It also gives children a known language to communicate in (with parents, caretakers, and, perhaps, teachers) while acquiring the other (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

The mastery of the parents' language (the inherited language) constitutes the basis for the mastery of the dominant language. New knowledge is always built upon the acquired knowledge. The same principles apply to language. Similarly, primary socialization (in the family) constitutes the basis for secondary socialization (social adjustment) (*Bilingwizm...*). Cieszyńska observes that the child can learn two, three or even four foreign languages, but in order to assure the efficiency of the process and avoid negative effects, it needs the opportunity to communicate with parents in their native language or languages in the situation of couples of different nationalities. Such compromise may result in the appropriate formation of one's double or triple ethnic identity, but the process of upbringing and the transmission of moral norms is much more important in the process of the child's personality. This becomes impossible without the support of the entire language community. Appropriate stimulation in

the father's and mother's language conditions the development of the child's identity. This is not only a question of benefits resulting from possessing "two worlds", but it constitutes a basis for the construction of one's self-image and relations with other members of the community (Cieszyńska, 2010).

Example 1.

A Polish-Russian couple from Sweden: mother – Russian, father – Polish, both know to a certain extent each other's languages and Swedish. Each of the parents speaks in their native tongue to the child, they also speak to each other in their native languages. At the age of 3.5 the child starts education in the kindergarten. Now, at the age of 21, the person uses 3 languages fluently and 3 further passively (limited speaking skills, understands spoken language, can read texts) (*Bilingwizm...*).

12. If parents want their children to grow up bilingual, they should use the *one person – one language* approach.

Wrong! There are many ways of making sure a child grows up bilingual: caretaker 1 speaks one language and caretaker 2 speaks the other; one language is used in the home and the other outside the home; the child acquires his/her second language at school, etc. The critical factor is NEED. The child must come to realize, most of the time unconsciously, that he/she needs two or more languages in everyday life. This is where the *one person – one language* approach often breaks down as the bilingual child quickly realizes that the weaker (often minority) language is not really needed (the caretakers or other family members often speak the other, stronger language, to one another, so why keep up the weaker language?). A better approach is that all family members use the weaker language at home, if at all possible, so as to increase the child's exposure to it and mark the language's "main" territory (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

Specialist literature recognizes so called strategies of teaching the second language. The most important include the strategies of the person, place and time, and these can be introduced alternately. The strategy of the person means that each of the languages is associated with a different person. For instance, the first language can be used by the mother and the second by the father (OPOL – *one parent one language*). While talking to the mother, the child automatically uses her language. Analogically, while talking to the father, it uses his language. This strategy is frequently used in case of simultaneous bilingualism (Kurcz, 2005). If parents in a multicultural family communicate with the child in their native languages, language competence is evenly spread. The child does not confuse languages.

Example 2.

23 months old Nadia, whose Polish mother speaks to her exclusively in Polish, and whose father speaks to her exclusively in Greek, and who has contacts with English speaking children (often from Italian or French families), has been constructing beautiful (and correct!) sentences in Polish. At first, she addresses questions in Polish to her mother, and then she approaches her father and asks the same question in Greek (*Bilingwizm...*).

The strategy of place means the use of particular languages in different places. It may happen in the situation in which different languages are used at home and at school. Then the child chooses the language depending on the place. The strategy is usually used in case of successive bilingualism. The phenomenon is typical of immigrant children, who use their native language at home and the language of the guest country outside home. The last of the aforementioned strategies consists in dividing the periods during which the first language and the second language are used. The periods may vary in respect of duration and frequency, yet their relative regularity allows the child to time language use. Such limitations provide the child with precise guidelines concerning the use of either language. They allow the child to formulate utterances which are “linguistically pure” and maximize the probability of being understood by the addressee of the message. At the same time, they lead to the substantiation of the child’s vocabulary in one of the languages to the areas related with a person, place or time defined by particular strategies (Kurcz, 2005).

13. Children raised bilingual will always mix their languages.

Wrong! If bilingual children interact in both bilingual and monolingual situations, then they learn to mix languages at certain times only. When they are with monolinguals (e.g. Grandma who doesn’t speak any English), they quickly learn to speak just the one language (communication breaks down otherwise). It is important though that the situation be truly monolingual (and not a “pretend situation” in which a bilingual parent pretends not to know the other language); children will make an effort to speak only one language if they feel it is vital for communication. Thus, caretakers will want to create natural monolingual environments where children will need, and hence use, just one language (Grosjean, 2010; *Myths...*).

Another issue concerns the domination of lexicon in unbalanced bilingualism – in result of domination, the child may select known words irrelevant of the language, and the phenomenon is described as access to the lexicon. The second situation applies to all people, bilingual or not – sometimes we lack a word, even a banal word, and then we say it is “on the tip of our tongues”. Bilinguals face such situations much more often. While speaking one language, we suddenly feel that we lack an appropri-

ate word in the language in which we are talking. What is worse, we are intensively attacked by the equivalent in our second language (Weston, *Dwujęzyczność...*).

Observation of speech development from its earliest stages, allows for identification of differences between mono- and bilingual children. The differences are the result of resorting to two vocabulary resources and code switching, that is finding designates in L1 and L2. This leads to the production of sentences comprising vocabulary from both languages. Snow gives an example of an utterance of a boy who speaks Spanish and English: *Sabes mi school bus no tiene un stop sign* (English words: *school, bus, stop sign*, Spanish words: *sabes, mi, no tiene, un*) (Snow, 2005, p. 482). Such utterances may be received by the environment as evidence of low linguistic competence of the child. This may cause confusion and difficulty in the production of spontaneous speech by bilingual children, and consequently to the acceptance of intellectual and linguistic drawbacks or even placing the child in a special education class. Appropriate conditions of language acquisition prevent such situations. Hence, appropriate second language teaching strategies (see: point 12) as well as the immersion method should be applied (Kurcz, 2005).

14. One cannot become bilingual after the critical period, which extends from the first year of life until adolescence.

Wrong! The critical (or optimum) period for L2 acquisition (i.e. the period of the greatest sensitivity to incoming language stimuli) extends from the first year of life until adolescence and gradually disappears (Kurcz, 2005). Numerous authors observe that pre-adolescent children may develop full competence and speak the language fluently with no foreign accent – in the way typical for native speakers (Lenneberg, 1967). The thesis is confirmed by the research analysing the cases of many people – mostly US immigrants after many years of residence in the country – in respect of such language skills as pronunciation in spontaneous speech, listening comprehension, the ability to imitate pronunciation and syntactic competence, relative to the competence of native speakers. All experiments show that there is a high correlation between the age at which the acquisition of a foreign language started and the degree of so called native-like competence, in favour of persons who initiated language learning at the earlier age. Compared to younger people, analysed adults demonstrated lower scores in respect of accuracy and utterance complexity, irrelevant of the duration of residence in a foreign language country, contacts with the language or social status and education (Edmondson, House, 1993; Schönplugg, 1977; Rieck, 1989; Baker, 1993; Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013). It is so, since up to a certain point in the cognitive development, the second language is acquired just like the first one, that is

rapidly and effortlessly on the basis of the “language instinct”. The structures of the nervous system responsible for language processing are waiting to be filled with contents. If the child is exposed to more than one language, all languages are acquired in the same way. In result, the child is equally proficient in many languages, which applies to idioms and prosody. Coherence and consequence in the production of language messages are important at this stage (see: strategies of second language teaching).

15. Bilingualism delays senility and the Alzheimer disease.

Fact! Bilingualism has health oriented significance. Simultaneous use of several language systems activates larger areas of the brain. Even if at a given moment only one language is used, the areas connected with other languages remain active. The process works as an additional portion of activity for the brain and improves thinking (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Thanks to this specific “training”, bilingual people experience problems related to senility much later – the average age of monolingual patients is 75.4, whereas bilingual patients – 78.6. In bilingual patients, the symptoms of the Alzheimer disease occur approximately 4.5 years later, compared to monolingual speakers. In both analysed groups, bilingual patients used different languages. Their level of education and socio-economic status was similar to the group of monolingual patients, which means that these factors have less influence on the development of dementia than the number of languages people speak. researchers ascribe this difference to the process referred to as cognitive reserve, according to which more intensive physical and mental stimulation of the brain improves its condition (Bialystok, et al., 2007; Bialystok, et al., 2012).

16. Bilingualism improves cognitive control in children and adults.

Fact! Four-year-old bilingual children and bilingual adults: younger people (the average age approx. 40) and older people (the average age approx. 70) were subjected to research. Each of the groups was contrasted with monolingual subjects at an analogous age. The procedure, referred to as the Simon’s task, consisting in the presentation of stimuli (e.g. pictures or geometrical shapes) on the right or left side of the computer screen, was applied. Subjects expected to react to the appearance of stimuli by pressing the appropriate key on the basis of rules established beforehand. For instance, if a green square appears on the screen, the subject is expected to press the key on the right side, and if a yellow square appears – the key on the left side. Thanks to this kind of differentiation, the task has two variants: concordant – a green square (reaction – press the right key) appears on the right side of the screen (the same side for the stimulus and reaction) and inconcordant – a green square appears on the left side (the stimulus and reaction on different sides). In case of

inconcordance, subjects are expected to suppress the most obvious reaction – pressing the key on the side on which the stimulus appears and react in the opposite way, i.e. is less automatically. In order to stop the automatic reaction (in this case incorrect), subjects have to intensify control and accelerate the process of suppression. Compared to their monolingual peers, bilingual children and adults score much higher while performing the Simon's task. The results do not arise any controversy, considering the need for constant suppression of one of two available language reactions in bilingual children (e.g. speaking in L1 instead of expected L2). The mastery of cognitive control is transmitted to other confusing situations and gives advantage to bilingual children (Bialystok, 2001; Kurcz, 2005).

17. Compared to monolingual children, bilingual children demonstrate a higher ability to switch attention and higher flexibility in interpreting encountered stimuli.

Fact! Ellen Bialystok analysed the flexibility and the speed of attention switch in bilingual children. She used two tasks. For the purpose of analysing four and five-year-old children, she used the task which consisted in sorting cards on the basis of the rule which was to be discovered on the basis of feedback. The rule could apply to the colour or shape of figures drawn on the cards. For instance, the cards could be sorted by the colour: red/blue or the shape of the figure: circle/triangle. After some time, the rule for sorting changed. The question was: how quickly subjects could discover the change of the rule (previously correct responses now generate negative feedback). In this task, bilingual children scored higher than their monolingual peers. The second test covered six-year-old children. Ambiguous figures were used, such as pictures showing a duck and a hare at the same time. In this task, bilingual children more often changed their interpretation (a picture presenting a duck/a picture presenting a hare) when given the opportunity to interpret pictures in a way different from their first impressions. The results showed that bilingual children demonstrate better attention switch skills and higher flexibility in interpreting encountered stimuli (Bialystok, Craik, 2010).

18. Bilingual children take better advantage of working memory.

Fact! Julia Morales and her colleagues showed that five-year-old bilingual children perform better than their peers in tasks involving working memory and demanding storage of a considerable amount of data for a certain period of time. For the purpose of research, charts consisting of nine squares displayed on the computer screen were used. Next, images (e.g. of a frog) appeared on several squares. The task of the children was to remember the exact position of the displayed image over the period of

postponement, after which the correctness of their responses was tested. The task required storage of information about the position of images in working memory over the period of postponement, to the extent to which the children could use these records in order to answer questions concerning the position of frogs on the squares. The analysis of the results scored by mono- and bilingual children demonstrated the advantage of the latter. It could be argued that the structure of working memory in bilingual children functions better and has more capacity (Morales, et al., 2013).

19. Abstract thinking and language awareness develop faster in bilingual children.

Fact! Abstract thinking and language awareness develop faster in bilingual children (Mondt, van de Craen, 2003). Bilingual speakers have much better language feeling, compared to monolingual speakers, they are also much more sensitive to language nuances (Baker, 1995).

20. Bilingual children find it easier to acquire further languages.

Fact! Early acquisition of the second language results in the development of the area in the brain which is common to two languages and whose specific characteristics consist in the fact that it allows for the addition of subsequent languages acquired during further stages of education. Such joint position of language functions fosters, according the researchers, the learning of subsequent languages (Nitsch, 2007).

21. Bilingualism expands mental and intellectual horizons.

Fact! Contemporary science assumes that although language systems vary at the general level, they are constructed on the basis of universal laws reflecting the way of thinking which is common to all people. The differences, such as grammatical structure or language habits, express diverse cultural norms and the way of perceiving the surrounding reality. Guy Deucher, an Israeli linguist, relates this dependence to the way of thinking in bilingual children. He observes that natural acquisition of a number of languages in childhood naturally translates into an expansion of intellectual horizons. Each of the systems opens a path to other ways of thinking and enriches experience. This fosters better understanding of the surrounding reality, which is particularly useful in the contemporary, multicultural society (Deutscher, 2010). Bilingual speakers have two words to describe objects or phenomena, which results in the fact that the connections between words and concepts are not stiff. Colin Baker gives an example of the word *kitchen* in various languages. For instance, in Polish the word *kuchnia* means a place to which guests are seldom invited by the ladies of the house. In Swedish the word *köket* means a common room for the entire family, not only while cooking, baking or setting

the table, but also during meals. Such thinking develops creativity in children and expands their mental horizons. The results of the research conducted all over the world show that bilingual speakers have more imaginativeness in thinking than monolingual people. Children who are proficient in two languages obtain higher scores in intelligence tests, compared to their monolingual peers (Baker, 1995).

22. Bilingual people may suffer from personality conflict.

Fact! The use of two languages may elicit personality conflicts in children. Growing up in two languages should not be identified with the final effect, i.e. bilingualism only. It also means growing up in two cultures and identification with two ethnic groups (Baker, 1995).

23. Compared to monolingual children, bilingual children demonstrate a slower tempo of reading and obtain lower scores in language tests.

Fact! Bilingual children have a slower tempo of reading, compared to their monolingual peers (Snow, 2005). Irrelevant of general intelligence, they obtain lower scores in language tests (Morales, et al., 2013). This may be caused by the longer period of access to the mental lexicon and the hindering reciprocal impact of both languages (Hanus, *Dwujęzyczność...*).

24. Adult bilinguals demonstrate a higher level of non-verbal intelligence and a wider scope of vocabulary, compared to monolingual speakers.

Wrong! Research on the level of non-verbal intelligence (*Raven's Progressive Matrices Test*) and the scope of vocabulary (*Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*) failed to reveal any significant differences between mono- and bilingual persons (Kurcz, 2005).

25. Bilingual adults are more resistant to distraction and cope much better with cognitive inconsistencies, compared to monolingual speakers.

Fact! Bilingual speakers are also more resistant to distraction and cope much better with cognitive inconsistencies of given situations. Bialystok, in her research, asked subjects to perform the Stroop's task which consists in the presentation of words – names of colours – written in colours different from the colours which the words describe (e.g. the word *blue* is written in pink). During the presentation, the subjects are expected to name the colours of letters in which words are written. This reaction is less obvious than reading out the names of colours, since on a daily basis, we much more often read texts rather than specify their colour. Hence we deal here with the effect of interference which can be levelled by cognitive inhibition and intensified cognitive control. Bilingual speakers cope

better with the Stoop's effect by inhibiting the imposed reaction and ignoring its distractive impact (Bialystok, Craik, 2010).

26. Bilingualism has no impact on divergent thinking.

Wrong! In relation to the above mentioned high flexibility in switching between languages, researchers analysed the connections between bilingualism and creative thinking. Research was conducted by Anatoliy V. Kharkhurin. He checked creative thinking abilities (by means of a test of picture labelling) and the quality of divergent thinking, as well as the "fluency" and flexibility of thinking. On the basis of the analysis of the collected data, he decided to restrain from formulating a statement according to which bilingual people are more creative, since there is no data which might allow for generalisation of the statement to wider areas of creativity. It seems more appropriate to say that bilingual people obtain better results in tasks requiring divergent thinking and processing details or ideas. This is directly connected with better results of bilingual speakers in respect of flexibility and fluent "switch" between problems. All these observations present bilingual speakers as people who think in a diversified, unconventional and inventive way (Kharkhurin, 2008).

27. Bilingualism improves observation skills.

Fact! Bilingual speakers demonstrate a higher ability in observing what is happening around them, which results from the need to switch from one language to another depending on the situation, for instance, when they talk to various family members in different languages (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

28. The first language constitutes a foundation upon which further language systems are constructed.

Fact! Mastery of all language subsystems: phonetic and phonological – the ability to differentiate between phonological oppositions and articulation of sounds; semantic (vocabulary), morphological (inflection and word formation); syntactic (sentence construction) and the achievement of high language competence (in speech and then in writing), constitute the best path for the acquisition of further languages. Irrespective of the place of residence or work, the ethnic language is a basis for efficient mastery of subsequent language systems. The richer the vocabulary in the first language, the easier it is to learn new words and expressions in further languages. The higher the level of mastery of the syntactic system (sentence construction), the easier it is to understand written texts in a foreign language (Cieszyńska, 2010).

29. While doing homework, children should be assisted in the dominant language.

Wrong! Insufficient mastery of the language of formal education may exert a negative impact on the process of learning. While doing homework, children should be assisted in the language of formal education in order to avoid double translation. First, when the task is explained in the dominant language, next when the parent's response is translated into the language of education. Such approach requires perfect familiarity with both languages, translation skills and knowledge, which in view of their age, children may not have. Undoubtedly, it distorts the process of the acquisition of knowledge and exerts negative influence on the process of memorisation (Cieszyńska, 2010).

30. Bilingualism expands communicative and professional opportunities.

Fact! Compared to monolingual speakers, bilingual speakers can communicate with wider groups of people and can constitute a link between generations. They also have greater opportunities of employment in international companies (Baker, 1995).

31. Compared to monolingual people, bilingual speakers are more understanding.

Fact! Compared to monolingual speakers, bilingual persons demonstrate more patience and understanding in contacts with speakers who have not fully mastered the language (Baker, 1995). In result, bilingualism aspires to the elimination of racism, nationalism and xenophobia in the name of international communication and understanding, while preserving the rich and inherent linguistic and cultural heritage of the humanity (Sadowska-Gronert, 2009).

32. In bilingual speakers, each language is accompanied by different patterns of behaviour.

Fact! Snow analysed social and cultural aspects of communication problems in bilingual speakers. In her opinion, the problems result from the fact of the occurrence of significant differences in communication caused by the overtones accompanying speech acts characteristic for particular languages. The author writes, among others, about the differences between English and Spanish in specific social situations. For instance, users of both languages, while following the script of behaviour in restaurants, produce completely different utterances or sentences. In English, a formal request for a menu is preceded by polite and formal phrases, e.g. "Could you bring the menu, please?". In Spanish, the same request is more direct, e.g. "Bring the menu". The lack of familiarity with the wider context of the use of some of the phrases and direct translation into another language may result in the breakdown of communication principles required by the script of the situation. An English speaking

Spaniard may be considered arrogant, whereas an English person speaking Spanish could be described as posh. In this way, such characteristics assume personality features and influence the perception of individuals and differences in the description (Snow, 2005).

Changes in behaviour depending on the currently used language have been confirmed by the research by François Grosjean, who asked his bilingual (English and French) subjects to tell stories based on comic strips embedded in the context of American culture. The instructions imposed the use of French. Among listeners there were monolingual (French) and bilingual (English and French) speakers. In both cases, the behaviour of the storytellers was different. In case of telling the story to a monolingual person, the subjects used only French, controlled their speech and avoided English expressions. However, if the listener was bilingual, despite clear instructions, the speakers occasionally used English phrases. Their speech was also more casual (Kurcz, 2005).

Baker observes that bilingual speakers have two or more worlds of experience at their disposal. Each language is accompanied by different patterns of behaviour, e.g. various ways of conducting conversations, eating, reception of art, etc. (Baker, 1995). In view of the above facts, the observations of bilingual people, who admit that while speaking L1 they have a “different personality” than while using L2, are not surprising. Their behaviour, manifested in the form of communication, has a different character, and according to Daryl Bem – the author of the autoperception theory, people perceive one another on the basis of behaviour (Wojciszke, 2011). Thus, these are two diverse personality traits, formed on the basis of the language used by individuals at the moment of their development (Olpińska-Szkielko, 2013).

33. Bilingual children with speech disorders demonstrate disorders in both languages.

Fact! Bilingual children with speech disorders demonstrate such disorders in both languages, yet such disorders do not result from limited contacts with languages. The results of the research on early development of bilingual children, with and without speech disorders, show that the stages of the development of grammar in both groups are similar, however their tempo is slower in bilingual children with speech disorders, and the children cannot switch codes in case of the lack of vocabulary in one of the languages (Rocławska-Daniluk, 2011). The research conducted in Sweden on Arab speaking pre-school children shows that after two years of contact with Swedish, the children achieved an appropriate level of the development of grammar both in Arabic and Swedish. In case of children with speech disorders, the development of grammar in Swedish was unsatisfactory and syntagmatic disorders in phonology persisted in

both languages (Håkansson, et al., 2003; Salameh, et al., 2003; Salameh, et al., 2004). The occurrence of articulation disorders in bilingual children analysed by numerous researchers (Gildersleeve, et al., 1996; Dodd, et al., 1996; Goldstein, Washington, 2001) leads to the conclusion that such disorders have a common, linguistically universal source of difficulty, which can be manifested, with various intensity, in the surface structure of a given language (Holm, Dodd, 1999; Holm, et al., 1997). The symptoms of the disorder were observed over longer periods of time in both languages and in many new situations in bilingual children with selective mutism (Rocławska-Daniluk, 2011).

Example 3.

Paul was well known at school as a perfect physicist, mathematician, chemist, a student interested in biology and history. He wrote good essays in Polish, provided he found the topics interesting. All his written work, irrespective of the subject, contained many spelling mistakes. He had similar problems with foreign languages – he spoke and understood English and German much better than his peers, yet his writing was almost incomprehensible. Due to dysorthography, he took his final exams three times. He studied at a technical university. At present, he is an acknowledged professor and a member of a research group of the Nobel Prize laureates in physics. Until today, he has serious spelling problems in all languages he knows (Stasiak H., 2003).

Conclusions

In case of bilingualism and biculturalism we deal with two disparate situations. On the one hand, a miraculous impact of bilingualism on the cognitive features of people is indicated, and on the other, negative social and cultural effects are highlighted. Cieszyńska observes that there exists a stereotype of a bilingual speaker, promoted by radio, television or popular science press, on the basis of which myths about the marvellous impact of bilingualism on life, professional career and cognitive development are constructed. The lives of people, in case of whom, bilingualism was the source of school or adaptation problems or hindered the development of their own image and determination of their identity, are seldom recalled. In particular, in the situation of labour-related migration, connected with frequent changes of the place of residence, adaptation and serious educational problems are observed in children. Proficiency in a number of languages, enriching every human being, is not identical with the bilingualism or multilingualism of immigrant children (Cieszyńska, 2010). Thus, natural bilingualism should not be identified with school or cultivated bilingualism.

Exhaustive research shows that the specific nature of the mental lexicon and the need to switch codes are not indifferent to the cognitive processes in bilingual speakers, children as well as adults. The consequenc-

es are not always negative, and many researchers observe that positive consequences outnumber the negative ones. Additionally, bilingualism has health-oriented significance and is related with social and cultural conditions of functioning. While summarizing the consequences of bilingualism, both negative phenomena connected with social functioning, as well as better cognitive skills of bilingual speakers have to be stressed. Efficient levelling of negative effects, especially in education, is of particular importance since it allows for better concentration on positive effects and creates a situation in which it is possible to take full advantage of them. Appropriate actions may reduce unfavourable effects of bilingualism.

Bilingualism is not merely the ability to speak a number of languages, a quality highly desired in the contemporary world. It is also a difficult, or sometimes impossible process of constructing a language community in the situation in which it is painfully missed. Being bilingual means immersion in two cultures and two different ways of perceiving the world. This is different from learning a foreign language, which always enriches people. Proficiency in a number of languages, always enriches people, yet it is not identical with bilingualism or multilingualism of immigrant children (Cieszyńska, 2010). The decision concerning raising bi- or multilingual children is of particular importance. Its impact on children and parents will be felt through the entire life. Bilingualism affects the child's identity, social conditions, education, profession, marriage, place of residence, travelling and its way of thinking (Baker, 1995).

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