

ZWEI SPRACHEN GLEICHZEITIG? NEIN, DAS SCHAFF' ICH NICHT: A LITHUANIAN- GERMAN BOY'S JOURNEY TO ACTIVE BILINGUALISM

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Abstract.¹ Whereas many children in bilingual settings do not speak the minority language, very little is known about receptive bilingualism from the onset of speech and about such bilinguals activating their dormant language. Drawing on longitudinal ethnographic data, this paper reports on a case study of a receptive simultaneously bilingual Lithuanian-German boy who later started speaking both of his languages. Parents can do much for their children's bilingualism, but the child's agency is very important as well. The latter is much determined by the macro-socialisation factors, primarily by the communicative motivation of the child to use the minority language outside the bilingual home. Next to confirming possible insufficiency of the OPOL model, the paper demonstrates how quickly passive languages can be activated and highlights the importance of continuity of input and the value of receptive bilingualism.

Keywords: early simultaneous bilingualism, receptive bilingualism, minority language, OPOL model, Lithuanian, German

1. Introduction

Children's bilingualism in families is usually desired by the parents. However, unlike those of the majority language, the minority language competences, especially the productive ones, are not always

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attained (De Houwer 2017, 2020). In fact, we know that approximately one in four children in bilingual settings who hear the minority language at home do not speak it at school age (De Houwer 2020). It means that this is not something exceptional. De Houwer's (2007) large scale study on language patterns in families in bilingual settings has revealed that in the homes where both parents use only the minority language the success rates to raise their children to speak both languages are the highest, whereas in the households where both parents speak the majority language and, in addition, one of the parents speaks the minority language they are the lowest. Thus, it can be argued that interethnic families where one of the parents is the majority language speaker and the other one is the minority language speaker using both family languages at home, also with the children, face more difficulties in raising the children to speak the minority language (Hilbig 2019). The OPOL (One Person One Language) model was held as ideal from the very first scholarly accounts on early bilingual development and is still widely deemed by the broad public as very effective and, moreover, very natural in bilingual families. However, by now it is clear that this principle is much more limited compared to the ML@H (Minority Language at Home) model, which, however, oftentimes is hard to implement due to the lack or non-existence of minority language skills in majority language parents.

Whereas problems with the minority language as children get older and the majority language dominates are well documented (see Lanza 1998; Barron-Hauwaert 2004; Slavkov 2015, among others), very little is known about children being receptive bilinguals from the very onset of speech. Moreover, there is so far only anecdotal evidence of such silent bilinguals activating their dormant language. In order to fill this gap, my sociolinguistic study demonstrates a rarely covered case of a child opting for the majority language from the very start of his bilingual first language acquisition and him later turning actively bilingual.

2. The subject of the study and his family

Pranas (P) was born in 2010 in Vilnius, Lithuania. P's father (F) is a German, with standard German (DE) as his native language. F is a medical doctor by education and occupation. P's mother (M) is a native standard Lithuanian (LT) speaker and is a linguist working at a university². P has a younger sibling Jonas (J), born two years later, in 2012. The first three years of P's life (September 2010–July 2013) were spent in Lithuania. Then the family moved to a village in Southern Germany for two years (July 2013–August 2015). After that, they returned to Lithuania.

P's parents understand and speak each other's languages although F is much more competent and fluent in LT than M is in DE. The main language of the couple's communication is LT. However, seeing that P would not speak DE, at some point F switched to DE when talking to M in P's presence. And after some time in Germany, seeing that P's LT was not active anymore, F started to use LT with M again in order to increase the minority language exposure. As for their communication with the child, M and F consistently adhered to the OPOL model. The main care-giver in the first five years of P's life was M, who was on a maternity leave with her both sons. P was attending day care in LT medium language from the age of 2. After moving to Germany, being 3 years old, he was enrolled at a local kindergarten where the local Swabian dialect was spoken. Until the age of 5, P used to spend only a few hours per day in the kindergarten in both countries, whereas the rest of his time was spent with M and J. P's F used to be much at home in P's first two years of life as well, since he was still studying. P has two sets of grandparents, living in their countries of origin, Lithuania and Germany. The Lithuanian grandparents do not speak any DE, and vice versa.

P was speaking almost exclusively the societal language of the country he was living in at the time, despite receiving plenty of input

² P's M is the author of this article.

in both of his native languages at home. When the family lived in Lithuania, it was the LT that was active. After moving to Germany, a quick and complete switch to DE took place. A breakthrough towards active bilingualism was finally noted only after the family settled back in Lithuania again, P being almost 5 years old.

3. Data collection, research methods, and research questions

This case study adopts a sociolinguistic approach to early bilingual development. It is based on ethnographic data: longitudinal observations documented in M's diary entries and audio-recordings. Field notes were kept roughly 2–3 times per week in 2010–2016 (until P turned 6). They include general observations on P's bilingual first language acquisition, its milestones, the most interesting cases of mixed utterances, P's thoughts and anecdotes that reveal his stance towards his two native languages in different periods of his early life. The diary notes also include relevant contextual remarks and explanations, notes on the changes in family situation, as well as M's comments, emerging questions and possible interpretations of P's linguistic behaviour. In 2012–2016, also naturalistic audio recordings (10–30 min in length each) were being made two to four times a week. M made sure to record an approximately equal number of P's one-on-one interactions with her, with F, and with both M and F. Later, M listened to some parts of the recorded material, making additional notes and writing some excerpts of conversations down. A selection of 10 hours has been fully transcribed and used as a complementary data source. The collected conversations were analysed using ethnographic and interactional sociolinguistics approaches.

4. Aim of the study and research questions

This paper continues a long tradition of linguistic biographies of simultaneous bilingual children (Afshar 1998; Dewaele 2017; Leopold 1970; Saunders 1988, among others). The article aims to present a sociolinguistic case study of early simultaneous receptive bilingualism from the very onset of speech acquisition. It follows how the child's active LT became passive and his passive DE was activated at the cost of his LT, and describes the breakthrough towards active bilingualism.

The research questions are the following: What has led to the situation in which P was speaking only the majority language (LT while in Lithuania and DE while in Germany), despite being exposed to two languages at home? Which factors were the most significant? What do manifestations of P's metalinguistic awareness reveal about his language attitudes and choices and the role of the child's agency in becoming or not becoming actively bilingual? What has played a crucial role in finally breaking the receptive bilingualism pattern?

The study is intended to emphasise the importance of the pragmatic communicative need for children to speak the minority language and to demonstrate difficulties in creating this need in inter-ethnic bilingual households. It also aims to show how quick the processes of passivation and activation of languages in young bilinguals can be, provided there are good children's receptive skills and favourable extralinguistic circumstances. As for practical implications, the intention is to advocate the value of receptive bilingualism among parents, educators and society at large, encouraging minority language speakers to use their native languages with their offspring even if the latter speak the majority language.

5. P's bilingual first language acquisition history

5.1. THE VERY BEGINNING: P IN LITHUANIA (0–2;10³)

LT clearly dominated P's speech during the one-word and early multi-word stages already (they started at 1;2 and 1;7, respectively). LT was the base language with rare DE insertions that were becoming more and more grammatical over time. The mixed language was easy for M to notice and write down, as there were relatively few instances of it. In 10 transcribed hours (2;4–2;10), only 5% of the output was DE. Unsurprisingly, P was mixing more when interacting with DE-speaking F. The child had a minimal amount of active DE vocabulary and phrases. Receptive bilingualism does not necessarily mean zero production, and, in line with findings by Nakamura (2018, 2019), this scarce minority language output was mainly of re-active origin, meaning that it consisted mostly of non-original, imitated or routine words and phrases in reaction to what F was saying. P was not using DE independently and had not moved beyond the two-word utterances level in it. Rare instances of P's mixed language aside, P and F were constantly engaging in what is called dual-lingual discourse (see Nakamura 2018; Saville-Troike 1987), meaning that they were systematically using different language codes in their conversations. P's minimal productive DE was in sharp contrast with his fast-developing speaking skills in LT. LT as P's stronger language also manifested itself in his LT accent when speaking DE. Sometimes P faced difficulties pronouncing DE words, although his articulation in LT was usually very clear. It is important to note that no language mixing outside the home was reported by kindergarten teachers or the Lithuanian grandparents when P had no bilingual parents at his side. Thus, the sensitivity to the context and interlocutors, typical for even very young emergent bilinguals (see Lanza 1998), was clearly there although P was sometimes mixing language "labels", calling LT DE and DE LT.

³ Child's years;months

P's reactions to M trying to experiment a bit and speak some DE to him were always negative. P used to "argue" with his parents, how one or another thing should be called. Sometimes the boy insisted on using DE words, but more often he preferred the LT ones. P also demonstrated a clear favouring of the majority language by offering quite a few metalinguistic comments on his language preferences in the analysed period.

For example, in the conversation excerpt No. 1, M remarks that she is frying eggs. P notices that *fried eggs* can also be said in a "different", F's way. At this point, F joins the conversation reminding P of the DE word. However, the child expresses his preference for the LT version of it by stating how *he* personally wants to call the dish, repeating the LT word twice and emphasising it the second time:

- (1) M: *Kepu kiaušinieneį dabar.*
 P: *Tėtis sako kitaip...*
 F: *Ich sage „Spiegelei“.*
 P: *Kiaušinieneį. Aš sakau KIAUŠINIENĖ!*
- M: *I'm frying eggs now. (LT)*
 P: *Dad says it differently... (LT)*
 F: *I say "Spiegelei" (DE)*
 P: *Fried eggs. I say FRIED EGGS (LT)!*
 2;6, M's diary note

In excerpt No. 2, even more explicit negative orientation towards DE and inclination towards LT is expressed. It is obvious that by asking F why he calls a peach "differently", and not "persikas" (LT), P not only genuinely asks a question, but in fact also confronts F. By making a judgement, P also implies that F should rather use the LT word as well:

- (2) P: *Aš sakau „persikas“. Kodėl tu sakai kitaip?*
 F: *Ich sage „Pfirsich“.*
 P: *Negražu taip sakyti!*

P: *I say "peach". Why do you say it in a different way?* (LT)

F: *I say "Pfirsich"* (DE).

P: *It's not nice to say it this way!* (LT)

2;8, M's diary note

It should be noted that the DE words are not articulated by P in either of those two conversations, and it is not clear whether he remembered them and could have produced them if willing. However, P proved to be capable of activating some of his DE when absolutely needed, for instance, in communication breakdowns, making use of his bilingual skills, like here:

(3) M: *Apie ką nori knygelę paskaityt?*

P: *Apie tenuką.*

M: *Apie ką tokį?!*

P: *Apie tenuką!* (vietoje „traukinuko“)

M: *Ką? Nesuprantu (susierziniusi). Ar negali man kaip nors kitaip pasakyti?*

P: *Apie ZUG* (vok. „traukinys“)

M: *What do you want me to read for you today?* (LT)

P: *About tenukas* (an invented word for train that M is not able to grasp). (LT)

M: *About what?!* (LT)

P: *About tenukas!* (LT)

M: *What? I don't understand* (irritated). *Can you say that in another way?* (LT)

P: *About ZUG!* ("train" in DE) (LT)

2;8, recorded conversation

On the other hand, P was always refusing to translate from LT to DE or repeat the DE words that parents were trying to "put in his mouth" if he sensed that M and F were just probing him in an attempt to activate his DE. If at all, P was solely translating from his weaker DE to LT, but not in reverse. In the episode No. 4, we see how P refuses to translate a phrase into DE by declaring not knowing DE altogether:

(4) M: *Pranuk, gal gali kitaip pasakyti?*

P: *Aš nemoku vokiškai!*

M: *Pranas, can you say it in another way? (LT)*

P: *I don't know any German! (LT)*

2;6, recorded conversation

P's strong determination to stick to the majority LT even while receiving abundant DE input is especially vivid in the following example. Here F is reading a classic German children's story about a train called Henriette (already mentioned in the conversation in example No. 3). The train is rolling down the fields and everybody is happy to see her. The book was particularly loved by P and was being read to him repeatedly, both in DE by F and in loose LT translation by M. This time, F stops for a second to encourage P to complete the sentence in which rabbits greet Henriette:

(5) F: ...*Gleich danach hört man ein Rufen aus dem Brommelbeeren-schlag. Vierzehn Hasen rufen heiter: „Henriette, ...*

P: ... *Labas!*“ (vietoje *Guten Tag*)

F: ... *And then comes a shout from a blackberry bush. Fourteen rabbits shout cheerfully: “Henriette, ... (DE)*

P: ... *Hi!*“ (LT) (instead of *Guten Tag*)

2;10, M's diary note

One may have anticipated that an intense flow of DE being listened to for several minutes could have broken P's LT-only pattern at least for a moment. Especially because the required phrase was so simple and absolutely easy to recall, and the rhyme and familiarity of the story were additional facilitators. But that did not happen.

To support the minority DE at home and to increase its input for P, F started talking DE to M as well. However, this change in inter-couple communication did not have any noticeable effect on P. Perhaps, it was even counterproductive and only strengthened the dual-lingual P and F communication pattern.

In his first three years, P was getting oriented in his bilingual environment, sorting out his native languages, their vocabularies

and grammar. He was successfully learning to speak in LT, whereas his DE seemed to be developing at a much slower rate. In spite of some signs of his productive DE emerging, P's clear predisposition for the majority LT from the very beginning was revealed both implicitly, by his actual linguistic practices, and explicitly, by his expressed metalinguistic comments.

The family was regularly visiting P's grandparents in Germany. Trips to the minority language country are known to be very effective for strengthening and/or activating the child's minority language and are highly recommended for bilingual families (see Barron-Hauwaert 2004; Bourgogne 2013; Slavkov 2015; Uribe de Kellett 2002). However, the biannual two-to-four week long stays in Germany did little in P's case. P was speaking LT also with his paternal grandparents, relying on M and F to interpret for him when it was absolutely needed. Thus, even when spending time with monolingual DE speakers P seemed to lack incentives and perhaps also capability to put his DE in active use. This is because, unlike children who turn into passive bilinguals at some point later in their childhood (cf. Slavkov 2015; Uribe de Kellett 2002), he had never really spoken DE before (for similar cases, see Nakamura 2018).

P's bilingual development was clearly not harmonious (for the definition of the concept, see De Houwer 2015). P's parents, especially F, felt discouraged and upset by the situation, as they were not sure if their son would ever learn and/or want to speak DE with F and his family. M and F believed that using OPOL consistently, providing rich and abundant input, that is, interacting much, reading to the child, and fostering his connections with the minority language country and family members leads to active bilingualism by default, and so they expected it to happen in their family as well. However, the results were unsatisfying. One of the reasons for the family to temporarily move to Germany after F was offered a job there was to place P into a monolingual DE environment for a longer period of time so that he would get a natural motivation to activate his DE.

5.2. THE BIG CHANGE: P IN GERMANY (2;10–4;11)

In Germany, P's DE became the language of the wider social environment. Just as expected, after settling in, it did not take too long for him to start actively using his dormant DE for the first time in his life. He became very open to DE and eager to master it. At home, he was mixing in more and more DE words and phrases into his LT. In three weeks' time P was already able to construct his first multiword utterances and more complex sentences in DE. His active DE vocabulary was rapidly growing and he started to initiate and hold conversations in DE. According to the kindergarten teachers' testimonies and from what the parents witnessed themselves, P's sufficient fluency in DE was reached in a mere month. In a diary comment from that time, M noticed that *P is making progress in DE not just within days, but within hours.*

On the other hand, the activation of DE was at the cost of P's LT. The latter was now restricted solely to the family context. The steadily and rapidly increasing quantity of DE utterances outnumbered LT ones to such extent that after two months there were only three to four LT insertions in P's DE per day when interacting with M. P was speaking only DE with F and J. P's productive LT grammar, vocabulary and native-like LT accent seemed to be affected by attrition. In cases of miscommunication, P was happy to define and translate DE words for M when he was able to. But just as before, P refused to translate into his weaker language, which was LT now, when asked without any apparent real-life reason. Also, he would not repeat LT words or phrases for language maintenance purposes only and, if at all, provided only routine and imitated short responses in LT for M. However, he neither insisted that M spoke DE to him nor ever demonstrated any comprehension difficulties and still enjoyed listening to books being read in LT and hearing LT songs. Obviously, P's receptive LT skills were intact.

The situation with the performance and balance of P's native languages in Germany was a mirror view of the former situation in

Lithuania. In the table below, I have listed and compared the most important sociolinguistic and extralinguistic factors that likely have influenced and could explain P's language attitudes and practices in both countries and the shift of his active and passive languages.

Table 1. *The main factors that could have influenced P's linguistic attitudes and behaviour in Lithuania and Germany and his active and passive languages swapping places*

Stable parameters	P (0–2;10 years) in Lithuania Active language – LT	P (2;10–4;11 years) in Germany Active language – DE
Language spoken to P by F	DE	DE
Language spoken to P by M	LT	LT
Daily time spent at home	≈ 8 hours per day	≈ 7 hours per day
Daily time spent with M and J	≈ 8 hours per day	≈ 7 hours per day
Daily time spent with F (mostly all family being together)	≈ 5 hours per day	≈ 3 hours per day
Daily time spent in majority language child-care	≈ 4 hours per day	≈ 5 hours per day
Language spoken by M to F (in P's presence)	LT	LT
Contacts with minority language peers	None	None
P's meetings with minority language relatives (in minority language/third country)	2 times, 1 week long	3 times, 1 week long
Changed parameters	P (0–3 years) in Lithuania Active language – LT	P (3–5 years) in Germany Active language – DE
Kindergarten and community language	LT	DE
Languages spoken by F to M (in P's presence)	LT, later DE	DE, later LT
Daily reading time for P	≈ 15 min in LT + ≈ 15 min in DE	LT and DE every second day ≈ 20 min
Visits to the minority language country	6 times, 1–4 weeks long each	1 time, 1 week long each

As it is shown, many parameters in the home domain were the same or only slightly different in both countries, with a sole exception of the fact that LT in Germany was getting less support than DE in Lithuania in terms of reading time and the number of visits to the minority language country. However, what was going on in the home environment in both countries seemed to have little influence on P's active usage of the minority language. Obviously, P simply saw no point using his weaker language with his bilingual parents. The major determinant for one language to be active and the other passive and them swapping places was by all means external, as it was the issue of a community language. It was the monolingual DE environment outside home that created a real need and steered P to start using his former passive DE. This macro factor has overwhelmed both the stable and changed micro factors at home. However, P's LT was not kept alongside and pushed away from active usage as socially and communicatively redundant, which meant that the boy still remained a passive bilingual.

As for the community language, P's encounters with monolingual German peers in the playground and especially in the kindergarten were the most significant forces. One could tell that the presence of not only adults, but also other children who spoke DE and understood no LT made an immense impression on him right away. Since P especially loved to be out of home and play with other children, it was suddenly very important for him to speak their language. It is worthy to add that although hearing only standard DE at home, P picked up much of the local Swabian variety and partially adopted the local accent. This is a proof of a strong linguistic peer group influence on even very young children.

During the most dynamic first weeks in Germany, P was completely concentrated on adapting and fitting into the changed linguistic and socio-cultural environment as quickly as possible. Although he liked it in the kindergarten very much and had no problems there whatsoever, the seemingly smooth and speedy reorientation was obviously strenuous. P was very tired in the evenings

and had frequent temper tantrums. Seemingly, P lacked capacity to activate one language while keeping the other active and to alternate between them and was not willing to develop those skills either because it was not necessary for him to speak both languages heard in his environment. To save effort and energy, he chose to be pragmatic and use solely the relevant DE with everyone, also with his bilingual family members. One episode, documented during the first month in Germany, exemplifies P's determination very well:

- (6) *Tonight, Pranas wanted to share something exciting about what happened in the kindergarten with F. While speaking, he couldn't retrieve one needed DE word. Instead of simply substituting it with a LT one, P got very frustrated, burst into tears and needed to get help to finish his sentence and get consoled.*

2;11, M's diary note

P enjoyed making fun of LT and LT words, e.g. by distorting them, which could be interpreted as a manifestation of his lack of care for his other native language. On the other hand, a half a year before the family returned to Lithuania, there was a short conversation going on between P and M, the main part of which is presented in example No. 7. Being aware that they are going to go back to Vilnius, P expressed his inability to speak LT with some sorrow and anxiety in his voice, also revealing a low self-confidence as an actively bilingual person:

- (7) P: ...weil LT sprechen kann ich nicht, gel?

M: *Kai grįšim į Lietuvą, vėl galėsi. Ir mes tikimės taip pat, kad su tėčiu ir toliau DE kalbėsi...*

P: *Zwei Sprachen gleichzeitig? Nein, das schaff' ich nicht...*

P: ...because I can't speak LT, can I? (DE)

M: *When we are back to Lithuania, you will be able to again. And we hope very much that you will continue speaking DE with your dad...* (LT)

P: *Two languages at the same time? No, I won't manage...* (DE)

4;4, M's diary entry

This vivid example makes it even more obvious that in fact it was not because of some principled rejection of the LT language that P was not speaking it. Rather, it was because of P's lacking bilingual performance skills, despite sufficient receptive knowledge in both languages, and him wanting to act economically. No motivation to use the minority LT has led to its passivation and diminished productive skills, whereas poor performance skills on their part made it impossible to activate LT promptly even if willing.

The situation with bilingualism at home was not harmonious, just like it was not before in Lithuania. The fact that M and her boys⁴ spoke different languages felt strange and alienating to her. Still, since the family had a plan to return to Lithuania, parents were confident that the reactivation of LT was guaranteed, so they both mostly rejoiced over P's and J's developing DE. However, for a very short period of time, when M and F doubted and were seriously considering an option to stay in Germany permanently, M became really desperate, facing the prospect that P and J might not ever be able to speak her language.

5.3. THE BREAKTHROUGH AND BEYOND:

P BACK IN LITHUANIA (4;11-6;0)

Based on their previous experience, the parents were unsure what is going to happen to their sons' DE when they come back to Lithuania. M and F's concern was that according to the same pattern, P and also J will now cease speaking DE.

In the very first days back in Vilnius, P noted with astonishment: *They all speak LT!* It was relevant and socially needed to master LT again, especially for peer-group communication, which was the

⁴ J was following his brother's developmental path very closely in most regards. Only that his situation was exactly opposite in terms of active and passive languages because he was learning to speak in Germany. Despite spending much of time at home with M, he was receiving much of DE input both from P and F and in the *creche* which he started to attend 4 hours per day 3 times per week from the age of 1 year. From the very first words and utterances, he spoke almost exclusively in DE, also with M.

strongest stimulus for a change again. M's documented P's first LT sentence after two year's break was put together when trying to catch the attention of a neighbour boy to show him a new toy car. But apart from that, it was actually impossible for M to observe the activation process of P's LT because for one month he was speaking exclusively DE at home. The revival of the productive LT was taking place in the kindergarten. The teacher reported a breakthrough in P's Lithuanian in approximately 1,5 months. Since M was back to her full-time job, the boys were spending most of their days in the kindergarten. Being in the same group meant that they could help each other with the language, when needed, and that made the transitional period easier.

P and J had not stopped using DE with F. Moreover, P continued speaking DE also with M for nearly four months. DE was also kept as the dominant inter-sibling communication language for as long as nearly one year. Evidently, DE was positively associated with many nice sociocultural and personal experiences from the time in Germany (e.g. child-friendly countryside environment, interesting activities in the kindergarten, nice friends, impressing family trips) and was held as something valuable and worth maintaining. P was a role model for J and the one who kept an eye on the "right" language code. The older brother used to exercise some language control over the younger one (e.g. *Jonas, we speak DE!*). P was especially keen and determined to protect DE-only linguistic territory at home. For instance, one morning, M noticed that P talks in LT to her for a few minutes already:

(8) M: *Pranai, tu su manim lietuviškai kalbi!* (džiaugsmingai nuste-busi)

P: *Nein!* (tvirtai)

(P iš karto persijungia atgal į DE)

M: *Pranas, you speak Lithuanian to me!* (surprised, joyfully) (LT)

P: *No!* (firmly) (DE)

(P instantly switches back to DE)

5;5, M's diary entry

P now had no difficulties to switch between languages and was doing that frequently with M and especially with J. With the time, LT was dominating more and more in those interactions. As for F, P was clearly avoiding switching with him and was making attempts to stick to DE, at least at the discourse level. Unlike before, P was interested in and willing to translate when requested and on his own initiative in both directions, ask questions, compare the languages, discuss their differences and talk about his bilingualism quite often. This clear rise in his metalinguistic bilingual awareness had obviously to do with him reaching a new developmental stage.

By his sixth birthday and in more than one year after coming back to Lithuania, P's bilingualism could be called established, stabilised and balanced. In any case, the most vulnerable and dynamic period of P's earliest bilingual life seemed to be over. The child was majority language dominant, but also a competent speaker in DE according to his age⁵. P's DE was being further developed through books, audio-recordings, cartoons, films, educational TV programs and visits to Germany, etc. The parents thought that the success in maintaining DE had also much to do with P's close and warm relationships with F and the paternal grandparents.

6. Discussion and conclusions

From the onset of speech, P was speaking only the societal language of the country he was living in at the time (Lithuania or Germany). Although exposed to and stimulated by both languages at home, he would systematically reject the minority language and stick to the majority one. His active bilingualism emerged only after the family changed countries of residence twice, P already being 5 years old. Two things were crucial in this: P's experience living in both linguistic communities, especially his socialisation with monolingual peers,

⁵ A subjective evaluation of the German grandmother, an elementary school teacher in retirement.

as well as him getting more cognitively mature, which has enabled and enhanced his bilingual performance and switching skills.

The study confirms possible insufficiency of the idealised, as De Houwer (2009) puts it, OPOL model to produce active bilingual children if they have no pragmatic incentives to speak the minority language. OPOL can upset the language balance too much because the minority language parents often are the only source of input and the only conversational partners in children's day-to-day life. But even more importantly, children may not feel any necessity to put effort in practising their weaker minority language with a parent whom they know to understand and even speak their stronger majority language. As my evidence suggests, creating the pragmatic communicative need for the minority language in bilingual households can be very challenging, if not impossible sometimes, without the support of powerful macro-socialisation forces. Temporary relocation to the minority language country, where children have no other choice but to reawaken their dormant language in the local community, is optimal, but it is of course seldom feasible. On the other hand, shorter-term full immersions, e.g. summer camps or stays with monolingual minority language relatives could also be very useful, at least with some children.

P's parents had positive attitudes to bilingualism and were providing steady high quantity and quality input for their son. However, in P's very earliest years M and F were not aware of the specific recommended discourse strategies (see Lanza 1998) that have been proven to foster the usage of the minority language within the same conversation. Those include parents feigning lack of comprehension, asking for clarifications, repetitions and translations if the child responds in the inappropriate language, or at least recasting what the child says in the other language, etc. M and F were applying some of those strategies by intuition, but only sporadically, and they probably started doing that too late. The dual-lingual communication pattern was by then well-established and thus difficult to reverse. P was not being socialised to answer in the language he was addressed in from the very beginning and overtly resisted being nudged into the

minority language later. On the other hand, it is questionable if those strategies could have really been effective in P's case (see also Slavkov 2015), considering that the majority language dominated already in the one-word stage and also because of the boy's strong character. Apart from parental engagement and impact beliefs, that is, the conviction that parents can directly affect their children's language practices (see De Houwer 1999), the role of the child's agency is also very important and can not be underestimated. Based on what was presented, it must be admitted that success in early bilingualism in children does not lie entirely in parents' hands. With their own linguistic attitudes, preferences and agenda children also have a very significant role to play in the family language policy and can steer its course opting for receptive bilingualism or even monolingualism.

On a positive note, P's case clearly demonstrates how quickly the child's passive language can be revived, provided there are favourable extralinguistic circumstances and solid comprehension skills (see also Dahl *et al.* 2010; Slavkov 2015; Uribe de Kellett 2002). In this paper, I want to highlight the importance of continuity of input of the dormant language. P's bilingual first language acquisition clearly proceeded further in the passive bilingualism phases as well although the non-existent output left parents in doubt. The value of receptive bilingualism and the importance of parents' continued use of their native minority language with their children even if the latter systematically reply in the majority language needs to be more promoted among parents and educators. In the words of Slavkov (2015, p. 730), receptive bilingualism can be viewed as a valuable asset worth maintaining rather than a lost cause.

Receptive bilingualism is also bilingualism. Being able to comprehend another language is already very much and very valuable. Moreover, receptive skills also involve a potential for active bilingualism later in life. These ideas could be encouraging for parents willing that their children possess all family languages and striving for that. In case of a failure to socialise offspring into speaking the minority language with their parents, appreciation of the receptive

bilingualism (next to awareness that it is not something exceptional and, moreover, may be just a temporary phase) can possibly help parents to cope with emotional struggles (see Hilbig 2020) and assist them in generating the necessary energy and resources so that they can confidently continue to escort their children in their early bilingualism journey.

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RESÜMEE

ZWEI SPRACHEN GLEICHZEITIG? NEIN, DAS SCHAFF' ICH NICHT: LEEDU-SAKSA POISI TEEKOND AKTIIVSE KAKSKEELSUSENI

Inga Hilbig

Vilniuse Ülikool

Kuna paljud lapsed, kes on mitmekeelsetes keskkondades, ei räägi vähemuskeelt, on väga vähe teada retseptiivsest mitmekeelsusest kõne algstaadiumis ja selliste kakskeelsete tukkuva keele aktiveerumisest. Kasutades etnograafilist pikiuuringu andmestikku, käsitleb antud uurimus retseptiivset simultaanset kakskeelset leedu-saksa poissi, kes hakkas hiljem mõlemat keelt kõnelema. Vanemad saavad küll kakskeelse lapse jaoks palju ära teha, kuid lapse enda agentsus on ka oluline. See agentsus on mõjutatud makrosotsialiseerumise faktoritest, eelkõige lapse kommunikatiivsest motivatsioonist vähemuskeelt koduväliselt kasutada. Lisaks ÛVÛK (üks vanem, üks keel) mudeli võimalike puudujääkide tuvastamisele näitab antud uurimus, kuidas passiivsed keeled võivad kiiresti aktiveeruda, ja rõhutab sisendi järjepidevuse olulisust ning retseptiivse mitmekeelsuse väärtust.

Võtmesõnad: varajane kakskeelsus, retseptiivne kakskeelsus, vähemuskeeled, ÛVÛK mudel, leedu, saksa

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