

# **The Advantages and Disadvantages of Bilingual Language Development**

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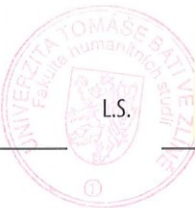

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá výhodami a nevýhodami dvojjazyčného vývoje a je rozdělena do dvou hlavních částí. Teoretická část se soustředí na vymezení pojmu bilingvismus, dětský bilingvismus a popisuje systém osvojování jazyka dětmi, které vyrůstají v dvojjazyčném prostředí. Nadále se tato práce zabývá specifickými výhodami a nevýhodami souvisejícími s dvojjazyčným vývojem u dětí. Cílem praktické části bylo pomocí kvalitativních rozhovorů s rodiči dětí z dvojjazyčných rodin zjistit, jaké přínosy či problémy může dvojjazyčný vývoj přinést v praxi.

Klíčová slova: bilingvní dítě, bilingvní rodina, bilingvismus, dvojjazyčnost, dvojjazyčné prostředí, mateřský jazyk, nevýhody, osvojování jazyka, výhody

## **ABSTRACT**

The bachelor thesis deals with the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual language development and it is divided in two parts. The theoretical part focuses on defining the term bilingualism, child bilingualism and it describes how children raised in bilingual environment acquire language(s). Finally, the thesis describes specific advantages and disadvantages associated with bilingual language development. The aim of the analysis was to use qualitative interviews with parents from bilingual families to find out what benefits or issues can result from the language development of bilingual children.

Keywords: bilingual child, bilingual family, bilingualism, bilingual environment, native language, advantages, disadvantages, language acquisition

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

As a result of the globalization of today's world, bilingualism became a world-wide phenomenon. (Shin 2013, 59) The global improvements in electronic communication, advertising and media give rise to bilingual societies all over the world. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 513) Until the first half of the 20th century, bilingualism as such was considered harmful for the child's cognitive development. (Saunders 1988, 14) Since then, most studies have reported the positive influences of bilingualism. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 92) Despite the fact that some people might still perceive bilingualism as an exceptional way of language development (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 28), it can provide the speaker with great advantages. (King and Mackey 2007, 3) Although the language development of bilingual children does not necessarily differ from the language development of children who were raised in monolingual environment (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 54), many monolingual families believe that growing up with more than one language is unhealthy. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 91–92)

The aim of my thesis is to explore and describe the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual language development in children that were raised in bilingual environment and acquired both of their languages simultaneously since their birth or soon after.

The bachelor thesis consists of a theoretical part and a practical analysis. The theoretical part focuses on bilingualism. The first chapter provides the reader with the definitions of bilingualism as such and it describes three main factors that influence bilingual future development (proficiency, language identification and psychological factors). Furthermore, the differences between individual and societal bilingualism are also explored. Chapter 2 focuses on child bilingualism and bilingual language acquisition. In this chapter, I also provide detailed information about simultaneous and successive bilingual language acquisition. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 are dedicated to the advantages and disadvantages that arise from bilingual language development. Chapter 3 focuses on the positive impacts of bilingual language development on child's cognitive development and metalinguistic awareness, communication skills and educational and career edge. In the final chapter, I highlight the possible disadvantages connected to the language development of bilingual children, such as linguistic disadvantages or psychological complications.

In the practical part, I present my research. I investigated the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual language development in 5 bilingual children. The research was conducted in the form of qualitative interviews. Due to the young age of the children that

participated in my research, all interviews were conducted with their parents. Firstly, I introduce my research and the bilingual families in order to achieve a better understanding of their language background. Secondly, I present my findings and discuss them in relation to the academic literature.

## **I. THEORY**

## 1 BILINGUALISM

The concept of bilingualism is described by many linguists such as Leonard Bloomfield, Colin Baker, Ellen Bialystok, etc. However, the definitions of bilingualism provided by these authors are in many cases contradictory. Earlier definitions described bilingualism as the ability to speak with two languages perfectly. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 8) Others claim that no bilingual individual is equally proficient in both languages. More specifically, no bilingual individual is equally proficient at all linguistic levels (lexicon, morphology, phonology and syntax) and in all language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). (Myers-Scotton 2006, 39–42)

Moreover, Harding-Esch and Riley (2003, 22–23) claim, that being equally proficient at all linguistic levels and in all four language skills is rare, as bilinguals use their languages for different purposes. For better understanding, the authors point out an example of a French/English lawyer who uses English in her office and French at home. It is obvious that comparing her language competence in legal English and informal French is impossible. (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 22) In the following, I will have a closer look at the various definitions of bilingualism.

The approach to bilingualism has shifted over years. In the earlier definitions, bilingualism was described as an idea of mastering two languages perfectly. In other words, being bilingual meant being monolingual in two languages simultaneously. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 8) Bloomfield (1993, 56) describes bilingualism as a “native-like control of two languages,” suggesting that bilinguals should speak each language as if they were exposed to them since birth. On the other hand, Shin (2018, 4) considers the view of native-like proficiency in both languages to be an idealized concept. She maintains that fluency in both languages would require monolingual competence in each of them which is, according to her, rarely possible. In other words, it is seldom case that bilinguals are equally ‘perfect’ in speaking, listening, reading and writing in both their languages.

A rather different definition is given by Myers-Scotton (2006, 44) who defines bilingualism as “the ability to use two or more languages sufficiently to carry on a limited casual conversation.” In other words, bilingual individual is anybody who can carry on a conversation in more than one language, regardless to their level of proficiency in those languages.

As we have seen, the approach to bilingualism has changed over time. Defining bilingualism is problematic since bilingual’s languages are “different tools for different

purposes” (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 22) that cannot be treated separately from the relevant dimensions. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 7) Due to the variety of dimensions that must be taken in consideration in the study of bilingual speakers, providing a straightforward definition of bilingualism is impossible. (Baker 1988, 2)

With regards to all relevant dimensions, bilingualism cannot be studied only from the linguistic point of view. Working with bilingual speakers also requires the knowledge of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, psycholinguistics or biology. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that bilingualism must be investigated as a multidimensional phenomenon. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 25–32) It is, however, important to narrow down the area of research within the study of bilingualism we want to investigate in order to avoid over-generalization (see Chapter 2 for child bilingualism and language acquisition in bilingual children and Chapter 3 and 4 for the relationship between bilingualism and cognitive and educational development, psychological problems and communicative competence). In what follows, I will discuss factors that affect bilingual speakers and their language development: proficiency, language identification and psychological factors.

## **1.1 Factors that affect bilingual language development**

The question whether someone is or is not a bilingual is difficult to answer. (Maftoon and Shakibafar 2011, 79) However, factors such as proficiency level, language identification and psychological issues strongly contribute to language development of bilingual speakers. (Bialystok 2003, 4–6) In what follows, I will focus on the relationship between these factors and bilingual language development.

### **1.1.1 Proficiency**

One of the factors which serve to the purpose of understanding bilingualism is the level of proficiency in all four language skills and at all linguistic levels in both bilingual’s languages. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 7) Regarding the proficiency level of bilingual speakers, it is important to distinguish between productive and receptive bilinguals. The former group comprises individuals who are able to speak and understand the two languages. The latter group includes those bilinguals who lack the ability of producing the language. (Bialystok 2003, 4)

Speaking about proficiency, it is necessary to keep in mind that the proficiency in all language skills is not the only one to consider. As we have already mentioned, not all bilingual speakers reach the equal proficiency in listening, speaking, writing and reading in

both languages. Besides the level of proficiency in all language skills, it is important to mention bilingual's structural proficiency, which indicates how the bilingual speaker knows and uses the morphology and syntax of both languages. (Myers-Scotton 2006, 42) Considering the level of proficiency and the bilingual's competence in both their languages, it is also important to distinguish between balanced and unbalanced bilinguals. Balanced bilinguals reach similar proficiency in both of their languages. On the other hand, unbalanced bilinguals possess higher proficiency in one of their languages than in the other. (De Groot 2011, 4)

In the light of the above discussion, it is safe to conclude that the process of reaching the proficiency in a language differs in each bilingual individual and is largely determined by the context in which a language is used. (Appel and Muysken 2005, 83). For example, Harding-Esch and Riley (2003, 34) described the case of a German student that studied in England for couple years. When she went to a bank in Germany, she was not able to express herself in German because she has never experienced a discussion about banking services in German before. However, she was completely able to carry on this conversation in English. The example shows that although the majority of bilinguals develop comparable communicative skills in both of their languages, their proficiency in both languages strongly depends on the context in which a particular language is used. (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 34–35)

### **1.1.2 Language Identification**

As I have already mentioned, being bilingual means to be able to speak more than one language. (Myers-Scotton 2006, 44) However, in some cases, it is difficult to identify what can be considered a language. (Bialystok 2003, 5) The difference between a language and its dialect is sometimes bigger than the difference between two different languages. For example, the difference between Czech and Slovak language is incomparable to the difference between some varieties of Chinese. (Shin 2003, 49) Not to mention diglossic languages, where two versions of the same language are used according to the context either for formal or informal purposes. (Bialystok 2003, 5)

To understand today's language diversity in the world, it is necessary to define language. In order to differentiate between languages and dialect, linguists established the degree of mutual intelligibility. Languages that are closely related, are referred to as mutually intelligible. For example, a speaker of Southern American English can easily communicate with an English speaker from a different state in the USA. On the other hand, languages such

as English and Chinese are mutually unintelligible, as the speaker of English and the speaker of Chinese are not able to understand each other. (Shin 2018, 49) Furthermore, languages may be distinguished by their structure or according to socio-political criteria. If two languages differ on the basis of their structure, their linguistic systems (phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax) differ in a way which enables the speaker of one language to understand the speaker of the second language. The main socio-political criteria are national borders since “linguistic varieties are often called separate languages just because they are spoken in different nations.” Other socio-political criteria are cultural differences and religion. Speakers with visible cultural differences consider their language varieties as separate languages. In addition to that, some language varieties changed in separate languages due to the formation of a religion. (Myers-Scotton 2006, 17–19).

### **1.1.3 Psychological factors**

Our native language represents a tool for shaping our identity. If children or adults are required to speak a second language, which is not natural for them, it could lead to some serious psychological issues. The impacts of these factors are commonly observed among children who had to adapt to new language environment due to relocation. (Bialystok 2003, 7–8) According to Baker and Jones (1998, 9) bilingual language development can also contribute to identity issues.

Bilinguals vary their language choices and preferences according to how they wish to be seen by other people. Studies show that in some cases, bilingual speakers tend to hide the knowledge of their native language in the presence of speakers of the dominant language. (Shin 2018, 116) Moreover, bilingual speakers may feel embarrassed when speaking in public because they are not equally proficient in both of their languages. (Baker and Jones 1998, 10) The psychological issues connected to bilingual language development will be discussed more in Chapter 4.

## **1.2 Types of Bilingualism**

To fully understand what bilingualism really is, it is important to distinguish bilingualism as a possession of an individual or a group. These are referred to as individual bilingualism and societal bilingualism and both are closely linked together. (Baker 2001, 2)

### **1.2.1 Individual bilingualism**

Bilingual individual is an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 34) To explore bilingualism as an aspect of individuals, Baker



(2001, 3) suggests that it is substantial to distinguish the individual's language skills and how they are able to apply them in reality. People may speak two languages but their competencies in each of them may differ, as well as the proficiency level in reading, writing, listening or speaking. Bilingual individuals are classified as elective and circumstantial according to the reasons they have for acquiring a second language.

Circumstantial bilinguals tend to acquire the second language for survival purposes. In most cases, the term circumstantial bilingual refers to immigrants that need to learn a new language in order to adapt to the society they are placed in. Their native language is usually partly or fully replaced by the new one and they are likely to develop an accent. On the other hand, elective bilinguals acquire the second language by choice. These individuals learn the second language without the danger of losing their native language and they usually come from a language group majority. They acquire the second language in educational facilities or by themselves. (Baker 2001, 4)

### **1.2.2 Societal bilingualism**

According to Baker (2001, 43), people with the ability of speaking two languages usually live in networks. The author operates with the idea that language does not exist without language communities. As same as monolinguals and multilinguals, bilingual individuals belong to communities, which are based on various characteristics such as religion, ethnicity or social class. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 385–386)

Shin (2018, 57) shows that in a bilingual community, two languages are not used for the same purposes. She illustrates that each language has a different function. For example, one language is used for informal communication and interactions at home and the second one for formal domains such as educational and government institutions. According to Lachout (2017, 13), it is important to keep in mind that with over than 6,000 languages in today's world and only 206 countries, bilingual speaking individuals are present in most of the countries of the world. In addition, with today's traveling, migration and unlimited communication, the bilingual population is in the stage of growth.

In the first chapter I discussed different approaches to the concept of bilingualism and how they changed over time. As we have seen, bilingualism is very difficult to define and measure, since bilinguals use their languages for different purposes. (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 22) It is also important to keep in mind that bilingualism is multidimensional. Therefore, it cannot be investigated only from the linguistic point of view. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 25–32) I also described the importance of distinguishing between the individual

and societal bilingualism as well as three main factors which affect bilingual's future language development: proficiency, language identification and psychological factors. In the following chapter, I will focus on child bilingualism and bilingual language acquisition in children.

## 2 CHILD BILINGUALISM

As I have mentioned in Chapter 1 of my thesis, bilingual individual is someone who uses more than one language. (Myers-Scotton 2006, 44) Since this thesis deals with bilingual language development and its advantages and disadvantages, the following chapter focuses on child bilingualism and bilingual language acquisition.

Bilingual children are exposed to more than one language since birth or soon after their birth. In today's world, the number of children raised in bilingual environment is growing, as a result of which the development of these children has become a subject of many studies in linguistic and psycholinguistic field. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 91) To become bilingual, it is important to expose children to meaningful social interactions in more than one language. In other words, children must be exposed to the languages in order to acquire them successfully. (Shin 2018, 191)

According to Steiner and Hayes (2008, 3), the development of speech fluency of bilingual children depends on the bilingual environment in which the children are raised. The bilingual environment includes languages spoken by the parents as well as those spoken by the extended family, the language of culture, community and the language used in school. By day-to-day conversations and social interactions, children become more adapted to the language they acquire. However, the language development of bilingual children is mostly affected by the language(s) of their parents. (King and Mackey 2007, 98) As I have already mentioned in Chapter 1, it is impossible to reach equal proficiency in both languages. Therefore, the dominant language of most of these children becomes the language they hear and use most frequently. (Steiner and Hayes 2008, 3)

Monolingual speakers often claim that children raised in monolingual families represent the natural way of language development and are more likely to avoid some possible threads such as cognitive, linguistic or emotional confusion which arise from the early exposure to more than one language. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 91–92) Furthermore, there are many false expectations about bilingual children. Firstly, bilingual children are expected to be proficient in the second language while they are still in the acquisition process. The other issue that is often viewed negatively is language alternation. In other words, when bilingual children alternate languages within a single conversation, they are, by many monolingualists and educators, considered confused. However, what may appear as confusion is a process known as a code switching. (Steiner and Hayes 2008, 6) In what follows, I will briefly describe the relationship between bilingualism and code-switching.

## 2.1 Code-switching

The language development of children brought up in bilingual environment is similar to the language development of monolingual speakers. However, unlike monolinguals, bilingual children must distinguish two language codes which often leads to their alternation. This alternation is referred to as code-switching. (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 63). Code-switching can be described as “a phenomena associated with bilingual acquisition” which comes naturally to children raised in bilingual environment. (Harding – Esch and Riley 2003, 142–143) Moreover, code-switching is a strategy of bilingual communication, where the individual “optimizes his communication efficiency in terms of the most adequate form-function mapping, by calling upon the whole range of his repertoire.” (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 272). For more details about code-switching see Chapter 4.

As I have mentioned above, code switching comes in the association with second language acquisition. Therefore, in what follows I will discuss the language acquisition in bilingual children.

## 2.2 Bilingual language acquisition in children

Bilingual language development is a process influenced by many factors. For example, the age of language acquisition or the language exposure play significant role in children’s language development. (Fierro-Cobas and Chan 2001, 80) Shin (2018, 191) describes language shaping as a significant factor in child development. According to her, people tend to believe that acquiring the second language is much easier in small children than it is in older children, teenagers and adults. This often leads to the assumption that the ability of learning both languages to the same degree declines with age. In addition, various studies show that older learners of the second language are characterized by the decline in the performance of specific language domains such as pronunciation. (Shin 2018, 10–11)

The question of age is described as the most arguable issue connected to bilingual language acquisition. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 555) Considering this issue, it is important to mention the Critical Period Hypothesis. This hypothesis states that in order to be a successful speaker of the second language, it is necessary for the acquisition to occur during a specific period in early childhood, ending at puberty. (King and Mackey 2007, 20) Myers-Scotton (2006, 346) claims that critical period is “a period when acquisition always happens and after which similar proficiency in the L2 can’t be reached.” Many studies have been conducted on the Critical Period Hypothesis in order to determine the terminus of the critical period. Long (1990, 280) claims that unlike the native-like morphology and syntax of the

second language, which are both possible to acquire before the age of fifteen, the ability to acquire the native-like pronunciation in the second language declines by the age of six.

As it was mentioned above, language shaping and the age of the second language acquisition represent significant factors in the development of bilingual children. The aim of the following part of this thesis is to explore how the second language is acquired. According to Harding-Esch and Riley (2003, 50–69), bilingual speakers acquire language either simultaneously or successively.

### **2.2.1 Simultaneous bilingual language acquisition**

Bilingualism can be, as I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, defined as the ability to speak and understand two languages. If the second language acquisition occurs during infancy and early childhood, it is referred to as simultaneous acquisition. (MacLeod et al. 2012, 132) Peter and Wei (2009, 15) describe simultaneous acquisition as a learning process which begins at birth or before the age of three. During simultaneous acquisition, bilingual children are exposed to two languages at the same time which means that they receive less exposure to each language than monolingual children do in their own language. This represents the main difference between the acquisition in monolingual and bilingual children. However, despite the fact that bilingual children receive less exposure to each language, they are exposed to linguistic structures that are significantly more diverse than those which occur in monolingual language acquisition. Furthermore, many bilingual children develop comparable abilities to monolinguals in either one or both languages. (MacLeod et al. 2012, 132)

According to Baker (2001, 87–88), simultaneous bilingual language acquisition is affected by three main aspects. The first crucial aspect is the language ability of parents. In some families, both parents are bilingual. In others, one of the parents is monolingual and the other one is bilingual. The second aspect is the language used by parents in order to speak to the child. MacLeod et al. (2012, 132) claim that in order to become a successful bilingual speaker, it is useful when parents use the minority language at home. Moreover, it is also important to consider the impact of the language(s) spoken by relatives and other family members. The last aspect which affects simultaneous bilingual language acquisition is the language spoken in the community where the child is raised. (Baker 2001, 87–88)

In summary, simultaneous bilingual language acquisition occurs during infancy and early childhood. Infants become bilingual by the exposure of two languages from birth. In other words, these children shift from their preverbal stage to speaking two languages by

being exposed to two languages simultaneously. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 52) Statistics show, that bilingual infants tend to begin to speak later than monolingual children. However, the age when these children begin to speak, which is from eight to fifteen months, is still fully acceptable in monolingual development. (Harding-Esch and Riley 2003, 42–43) Furthermore, research has shown that infants possess the ability of audio recognition, which allows them to receive a large amount of linguistic manifestation. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 52)

### **2.2.2 Successive bilingual language acquisition**

While acquiring a second language successively, bilingual children have already one established language. Moreover, successive bilinguals acquire the second language when they are more cognitively mature than simultaneous learners. (Auer and Wei 2009, 24–25) According to Harding-Esh and Riley (2003, 69), the general assumption is that the ability to acquire the second language declines with age. Although, the vast majority of successive bilinguals experience issues connected to the pronunciation as they keep their native accents, Shin (2018, 11–12) claims that with sufficient time and correct instructions, later learners are capable of developing the same bilingual skills as simultaneous bilinguals. Successive bilingual language acquisition strongly depends on the individual's motivation and is influenced by the acquisition process of the first language and by the exposure to the second language in comparison to the first language. (Fierro-Cobas and Chan 2001, 91)

Harding-Esch and Riley (2003, 43–45) suggest that successive bilinguals are speakers who acquire the second language after their third year. Baker (2001, 97) claims that the probability of being proficient in the second language is much higher among young childhood learners. They also tend to adapt to the sound system of the second language more easily than later learners and adults. Bilinguals that learn the second language during schooling often reach high degree of proficiency in the acquired language(s). The duration of the exposure to the second language plays a significant role in the future bilingual success. On the other hand, speakers who begin the acquisition process after the puberty or in the adulthood experience number of issues connected to the second language acquisition and they are most likely to develop a non-native pronunciation.

### **3 THE ADVANTAGES OF BILINGUAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

The previous chapters defined the phenomenon of bilingualism, its typology and the three main factors which play a significant role in the language development of bilingual speakers. In Chapter 2, we focused on child bilingualism and how these children acquire their languages. We also explained the concepts of simultaneous and successive bilingual language acquisition. The following chapters will focus on the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual language development.

The question of whether bilingual language development can be considered as an advantage or a disadvantage is controversial. For example, Baker and Jones (1998, 6) suggest that the number of advantages connected to becoming bilingual is higher than the number of harmful influences. However, according to Baker (1988, ix), people often expect that bilingual children will experience issues with mathematics, science or creativity. Although people tend to view bilingualism as harmful, in countries such as Africa and Asia, bilingualism is considered to be normal. (Appel and Muysken 2005, 101) Many bilingual speakers have no choice but to be bilingual. However, the arguments whether bilingual language development is or is not beneficial need to be taken into consideration by parents who have to decide if they are to raise their child bilingually or not. (Saunders 1988, 14)

#### **3.1 Metalinguistic knowledge and cognitive thinking**

Metalinguistic knowledge is, according to Myers-Scotton (2006, 339), knowledge “beyond how to produce certain utterances.” In other words, metalinguistic knowledge means that bilingual children are able to understand the language as a system which they can manipulate with. (King and Mackey 2007, 5)

Bilingual individuals gain this type of knowledge during the acquisition process of their second language. For example, metalinguistic abilities allow bilinguals to understand that by changing the arrangement of words, you can change the meaning of the whole sentence. Bilingual children with the metalinguistic abilities know how the language works in general. Experts such as Ben-Zeev, Galambos and Hakuta proved that bilingual children have an advantage over monolingual children in making grammatical judgements, detecting meanings in ambiguous sentences or in recognizing and correcting the ungrammatical sentences in each of their languages. These findings contributed to the notion that information processing in bilingual children might be an advantage arising from their bilingual language development. (Myers-Scotton 2006, 340) Appel and Muysken (2005,

111) also claim that for bilingual children it is easier to manipulate with the syntax of their languages than it is for monolingual children. According to them, this is caused by the fact that unlike monolingual children, bilingual children are exposed to two different language structures.

### **3.1.1 Cognitive thinking**

Apart from metalinguistic abilities, Bialystok (1991, 167) claims that simultaneous bilingual language acquisition and bilingual education are both associated with a positive impact on cognitive thinking. She also claims that child bilingualism is positively related to creativity and problem-solving. The studies of cognitive thinking observe the ways of how people become acquainted with objects and ideas. (Farisiyah 2018, 22) Baker and Jones (1998, 67) suggest that “the ownership of two or more languages may increase fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration in thinking.”

Appel and Muysken (2005, 111) also describe that bilingual children are more cognitively advanced in divergent and convergent thinking. In the tasks related to convergent thinking, children are expected to provide one and only solution. The tasks related to divergent thinking emphasise children’s creativity (Baker 1988, 23), as they are required to provide not one but many solutions. (Appel and Muysken 2005, 111) In these tasks, bilingual children often show higher performance than monolingual children. (Appel and Muysken 2005, 111) Moreover, Baker and Jones (1998, 67) suggest that bilingual children may evince a higher performance in divergent thinking because they are exposed to two different languages which enables them to refer to a single idea in two or more ways. In other words, these children have two words for a single thing or an idea.

## **3.2 Communication advantages**

Bilingual children whose parents speak with their native languages have the advantage of being able to communicate with them in the language they prefer. For many parents, the possibility of speaking to their children in their native language is significantly important. This communication advantage helps to build a stronger relationship between a bilingual child and his parents and also his extended family. (Baker and Jones 1998, 6) Furthermore, thanks to the bilingual advantage, many bilingual families are able to maintain their heritage language, which is a language spoken by previous generations that may or may not be spoken on a daily basis but his maintenance plays a crucial role for the family culture. Maintaining the heritage language also provides bilingual children with a strong sense of identity and



self-confidence which may contribute to their future success. (King and Mackey 2007, 11) Besides the parent-child communication and the communication with relatives, bilingual speakers have the opportunity to speak to a wider community. (Baker and Jones 1998, 6)

### **3.3 Cultural advantage**

Other advantage comes with traveling. Unlike the monolinguals that speak only one language, bilingual speakers have the advantage to build new relationships with people from the countries they are traveling to. In order to discover different cultures, it is necessary to know their language(s). The monolingual speakers may also discover other cultures but without the ability to understand their language(s), it is difficult to fully understand their customs and behaviour. (Baker and Jones 1998, 6–7) With the ability of speaking two languages, bilinguals often do not face language barriers (Grosjean 1982, 272) and according to Baker and Jones (1998, 6–7), they have more opportunities to penetrate different cultures and truly understand their traditions, history, beliefs, etc.

### **3.4 Learning a third language**

According to García (2009, chap.1), many people believe that it is difficult for bilingual speakers to learn an additional language. However, Baker (2001, 271–272) claim that unlike monolinguals, bilinguals appear to have an advantage in learning the third language because they are already using two linguistics codes. Therefore, according to Cenoz (2013, 72), bilinguals can relate the compositions, lexicon and the communication functions of the new language to the language systems they already know. In other words, their previous experience with acquiring or learning the second language may be positively applied to learning the third language.

### **3.5 Educational and future success**

The ability to speak more than one language provide bilinguals with the advantage in their educational and future career achievement. When parents have to decide whether to raise their children bilingually or not, they should keep in mind that in today's globalized world, the demand for bilingual professionals is increasing. Due to the international competition, the majority of companies in the world require their applicants to know at least two languages. This fact may be used as motivation for the parents or the older children and teenagers deciding whether to add another language to their repertoire or not. (King and

Mackey 2007, 13–14) Some of the professions where professional bilinguals easily find their place is, for example, specialized interpreting and translating. (Filipović 2019, 146)

As we have seen, bilingual language development provides many advantages. People who speak two languages have the ability to perceive the language as a whole system. The linguists we have mentioned above proved that bilingual children outperform their monolingual peers when it comes to syntax manipulation or in making grammatical judgements. In addition, bilingual children seem to be more cognitively advanced than monolingual children. Because bilinguals speak two languages, they have the chance to explore different cultures more deeply than monolinguals and thanks to their earlier experiences with acquiring or learning a second language, they appear to have an advantage over monolinguals in learning the third language. Finally, the globalization of today's world helps to create many work opportunities for professional bilinguals and the knowledge of two languages is generally considered to be a great advantage when applying for a job.

## **4 THE DISADVANTAGES OF BILINGUAL LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

As we have seen in Chapter 3, bilingual language development brings a number of advantages, including the elaboration of cognitive thinking and creativity, maintenance of the family heritage language and culture, the chance to explore different countries and to understand their traditions or applying the previous experience of acquiring the second language into learning the third one. In Chapter 4, I will focus on the disadvantages of bilingual language development.

The negative effects of bilingualism were observed mainly around the first half of the 20th century. Since then, the studies reporting bilingual disadvantages were rapidly outnumbered by the ones reporting the positive effects of becoming bilingual. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 92) Suggesting that there are no disadvantages connected to bilingual language development would be misleading. However, many issues such as speech production delay in young bilinguals might be falsely blamed on bilingualism. Other issues that are often wrongly attributed to bilingual language development are personality problems such as low self-confidence or failing in school. (Baker and Jones 1998, 8) King and Mackey (2007, 16–32) introduced 10 common misconceptions about bilingual language development. According to the authors, people assume that bilingual children have to be raised only by bilingual parents, that the exposure to two languages may result in the speech delay or that the code-switching is a sign of a confusion. However, the authors show that these misconceptions are based on myths. In the following part of my thesis I will focus on the real possible disadvantages of bilingual language development.

### **4.1 Linguistic disadvantages**

#### **4.1.1 Vocabulary development**

Bilingual children seem to develop the lexicon more slowly than monolingual speakers. The question of whether the dual language exposure has an influence on vocabulary growth of bilingual children have been broadly researched. Due to the fact that comparing the size of vocabulary in two languages is problematic, the results of these studies are diverse. For example, the studies conducted in 1993 proved, that the vocabulary production of bilingual children is not significantly different from monolingual children. (Bialystok 2003, 64) However, studies conducted in 1997 that compared the vocabulary range of the dominant language of bilingual children and the monolingual children who speak the same language,

proved that monolingual children have a significant advantage over their bilingual peers. Moreover, many other studies show that in the first few years, bilingual children have smaller vocabulary range than monolinguals. (Bialystok 2003, 222)

Although bilingual children have wide range of vocabulary when it comes to both of their languages together, their vocabulary knowledge within one language may be much smaller which causes that they are not as verbally fluent as monolingual children. (Sandoval et al. 2010, 234) Moreover, bilingual children may not have the same chance to access the same amount of words in each of their languages when compared to monolinguals. This is caused by the fact that bilingual children don't access the words from their two languages as frequently as monolinguals do. (Pelham and Abrams 2013, 313)

#### **4.1.2 Sentence production**

Secondly, another issue observed among bilingual children is slow sentence production. According to the study conducted by Runnqvist et al. (2013, 256), bilingual children are not only disadvantaged in their speech production but also in the production of whole sentences, which is caused by the consistent interference of their second language. Moreover, bilingual children also have difficulties with the production of tongue twisters. (Gollan and Goldrick 2012, 495)

### **4.2 Bilingualism and identity**

As I have already mentioned in Chapter 3, bilingual children have the opportunity to maintain the heritage language of their families, which allows them to maintain their cultural identity.

With the ability to speak two languages, bilinguals can take on more than one identity. (King and Mackey 2007, 72) However, bilingual speakers may experience some identity issues which can result in identity crisis. For example, when each of the parents is a different nationality and speaks a different language, the children may be confused about which culture do they belong to. Other disadvantage may occur when a family moves to a different country or region. These bilingual children may experience difficulties in adaptation to the new culture and language. Although the bilinguals may experience the difficulties with their culture or self-identity, it is important to keep in mind that dual language exposure does not inevitably result in identity crisis. Many bilingual speakers do not experience these issues at all. (Baker and Jones 1998, 8–9)

### 4.3 Psychological issues

Bilingual speakers are often viewed as two monolinguals in one person and their performance is measured by monolingual norms which expect the equal fluency in their both languages. If bilingual speakers lack the proficiency in both languages and more importantly, if their competence in the majority language is low, they may face humiliation and they may be viewed as inferior. Bilingual children may become shy and embarrassed when it comes to speaking in public or in front of monolingual speakers. (Baker and Jones 1998, 9)

Bilingual children may also feel ashamed if they use borrowed words which makes them feel like they lack the ability to verbally express themselves. (Lyon 1996, 59) The pressure of monolingual standards causes that bilingual children may fully concentrate on reaching these norms and avoid the usage of their minority language. (Baker and Jones 1998, 10) Shin (2018, 116) claim that “bilingual language choice and preference change according to people’s conception of who they are and how they wish to be perceived by other people” which causes that bilingual children try to identify themselves with the dominant language of the community and on the other hand, try to eliminate the usage of their minority language.

In conclusion, the above section discussed the concept of bilingualism, provided its definitions and described how the proficiency level, psychological factors and the language characteristics contribute to the future development of bilingual speakers. It has provided the reader with an overview of child bilingualism and described the differences between successive and simultaneous bilingual language acquisition. We observed and listed the advantages arising from bilingual language development such as metalinguistic awareness, problem-solving, creativity, cognitive advantages and the advantage in learning the third language.

Furthermore, we described that the ability of speaking two different languages helps to maintain the cultural identity of the individual and it may contribute to the future educational and career edge. Despite the fact that the studies observing the bilingual advantages rapidly outnumbered the studies dealing with the negative consequences, we have discussed some bilingual disadvantages in Chapter 4. The possible linguistic issues observed among young bilinguals include slow vocabulary development and speech production delays. Furthermore, bilingual language development may be an initiator of identity issues and psychological issues such as feeling shy when speaking in public.

## **II. ANALYSIS**

## 5 RESEARCH PRESENTATION

This research should answer the question, whether bilingual language development is beneficial or not. The aim is to find out some specific advantages and disadvantages that the dual language exposure brings to the children raised in bilingual families. As I have stated in the theoretical part, whether bilingual language development is beneficial or not is a controversial question. (Baker and Jones, 1998, 6) Many linguists (e.g. Baker and Jones 1998, Myers-Scotton 2006, Sandoval et al. 2010, Appel and Muysken 2005, Bialystok 1991 and 2003) describe the advantages and disadvantages associated with the bilingual development in children. For example, bilingual children are often cognitively advanced, creative, and they have the ability to communicate in more than one language with their family and relatives. However, bilingual language development is also connected to issues such as delayed development of lexicon and sentence production or psychological issues. (Baker and Jones 1998, 6–8)

### 5.1 Research method

This research was conducted in the form of a qualitative interview. Interviewing is one of the most commonly used methods of qualitative researching. This method has its own characteristics, for instance, qualitative interviews involve personal interactions between the interviewer and his respondents. Moreover, qualitative interviewing is usually informal and thematic. (Mason 2002, 63–64)

I have conducted individual interviews with four parents from bilingual families. Three interviews have been conducted in English and one in Czech. For the purpose of this thesis, I translated the answers from the third interview to English. All respondents gave us their permission to voice record all interviews. Each interview took between 15 – 30 minutes. Due to the young age of the children participating in my research, all parents were promised their anonymity. I decided to address them with names Anna, Petra, Vivien, Alex and Karin.

At the beginning of each interview, I asked the respondents few questions to understand their language background. By talking to the parents, I tried to understand how their children feel about the fact they grow up in bilingual environment. I tried to find out, whether the children experienced any kind of issues related to their bilingual language development such as problems with speech development or psychological issues. I also tried to find out how their bilingual background affected their learning process of the third language or if they have ever been confused about their identity. I was also curious about the parents' general

opinions on the bilingual upbringing of their children and if they think that bilingual language development can bring them certain benefits or on the other hand, problems.

It seems relevant to point out that due to the state of emergency caused by the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic, the measures adopted by the Czech Government on March 16, 2020 which limited the free movement of Czech citizens made it impossible for me to meet my respondents and conduct the interviews personally. Therefore, all interviews were placed in the online environment via Skype and Zoom. In the following part of my thesis, I will analyse the data obtained during the interviews.

## **5.2 Respondents**

For the purpose of this research, I needed to find bilingual families with children raised in bilingual environment since birth or soon after. Therefore, I chose four bilingual families. Three of them live in the Czech Republic and one of them in Zürich, Switzerland. All respondents were contacted through the internet, more specifically, through a Facebook group called “Jazykoví volnonožci.”

Two of the interviewed participants are female, two are male and all of them come from a different cultural background and speak different languages. In what follows, I will briefly describe the interviewed families in order to understand their bilingual and multilingual background.

### **5.2.1 South African-Czech family - Anna and Petra**

This family lives in Zlín, the Czech Republic. The father is South African and speaks English. The mother was born in the Czech Republic and speaks English and Czech. She lived abroad for five years. They have two daughters, Anna who is 12 and Petra who is 14. Both of them were born in the Czech Republic. The language spoken to them is Czech and English, depending on the situation. In order to communicate to each other, the girls use both English and Czech. The older daughter prefers English, the younger one prefers Czech. Both of them learn German as a foreign language.

### **5.2.2 Czech-French family - Vivien**

This family lives in Prague, the Czech Republic. The mother was born and raised in France but spent several years living in Germany. She speaks French, English and Czech and the father is Czech and speaks Czech. They have one 13-year-old daughter. She learns English as a foreign language. The language spoken to her is mostly French but also Czech.



### **5.2.3 Czech-French family - Alex**

This Family lives in Zürich, Switzerland. The father was born in the Czech Republic and speaks Czech, English, French and a bit of Swiss German. During his studies, he spent one year in the USA, half a year in Spain and one semester in Austria. The mother is from France and speaks French. They have two sons. One of them is only 7 months old, the second one is 4 years old. For the purpose of this research, the interview focused on the older son only. The language spoken to them is Czech and French. None of them is old enough to learn an additional language. However, they live in a German speaking part of Switzerland so there is an intervention of Swiss German and English.

### **5.2.4 Czech-German family - Karin**

This family lives in the Czech Republic. The father comes from Germany and speaks German, Czech, English and Russian. The mother is Czech and speaks Czech. They have one daughter that is 11 years old. She has two other siblings. One brother living in Russia and the second brother living in Germany. Together, they communicate in the combination of German, Czech, English and Russian. However, they do not see each other very often. The language spoken to her at home is German and Czech, which is a dominant language for her. She learns English as a foreign language and she also speaks a bit Russian because she communicates with her brother who lives in Russia. For the purpose of this research, the interview focused on the daughter only.

## 6 DATA ANALYSIS

It is important to keep in mind that bilingual language development does not qualitatively differ from the development of monolingual children. The way in which each of the bilingual's languages develop is the same as in children from monolingual families. Moreover, bilingual language development leads to the same level of grammatical competence as the development of one language in monolingual children. Generally, the observed issues arising from the process of becoming bilingual are mostly related to the differentiation between their two languages and the possible delays in the acquisition period. (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004, 95) As I have already mentioned in Chapter 3, in some cases, people tend to perceive bilingual language development as an incorrect way of how to raise their children. For the parents' opinions on this monolingual approach see the section 6.1.1.

Many linguists (e.g. King and Mackey 2007, 16–33, Steiner and Hayes 2008, 4–19, Shin 2018, 1–15) introduced lists of the most common misconceptions concerning bilingual language development. According to the authors, some people assume that children have to be intelligent in order to become bilingual or that bilingualism leads to confusion, language mixing and the unproficiency in either of the bilingual's languages. Another myth is that bilingualism leads to the delay in language development.

For the purpose of this research, I chose five children that acquired their first and their second language simultaneously since they were born. Due to their young age, all interviews were conducted with their parents. I was curious about the way how the interviewed parents generally feel about raising their children as bilinguals, so I asked them about their opinion on the bilingual upbringing.

### 6.1 General opinions on bilingual language development

All parents consider the bilingual language development of their children beneficial and as one of them stated: *“It is a completely common thing.”* [my translation] Alex's father said that he really appreciates that he and his wife managed that their son speaks fluently Czech and French. These parents were also the only one that established a system of how to communicate with their children after a consultation with a pedagogist and a psychologist. After the consulting and further self-education they established a communication system based on the “one face, one language” rule. This means that each of the parents speak only one language to their children. In this case, the father speaks Czech and the mother speaks French.

Anna's and Petra's mother also claimed that bilingual language development is beneficial for them, and she also said that both of her children were exposed to two languages since they were born, as they went to the English kindergarten. According to her, at that point, English became their first language even though they were both born in the Czech Republic. However, this changed after they went to the Czech primary school.

Karin's father, who himself grew up as a bilingual, stated: *"From my point of view, I've always knew I want to give my child the same opportunity of learning the second language as I had and I'm quite happy about it."* [my translation]

### 6.1.1 Bilingual or monolingual language development?

As I have already stated in Chapter 2, Bhatia and Ritchie (2004, 91–92) claim that monolingual speakers often assume that the children raised in monolingual families represent the natural way of language development. I asked the parents how they feel about this monolingual approach.

All parents expressed a strong disagreement to this monolingual approach towards the natural way of children language development. However, Alex's father does not consider monolingual development a bad thing as he stated: *"[...] that's just what happens to you. This is the way how you were born, and you just need to play with the cards that you have. I think that if you are monolingual, it doesn't mean it is the right development. I think whether you are monolingual or bilingual depends on your parents."* [my translation] Karin's father also supports the statement that whether we are monolingual, bilingual or multilingual depends on our family background. He said: *"It always depends on the possibilities people get. If you grew up in the environment where parents speak only one language and you don't get the know the bilingual environment at all, there's nothing you can do about it."* [my translation]

Vivien's mother even said that growing up in monolingual environment is not *"natural behaviour."* [my translation] To support this argument, she said: *"[...] think about Czech people. They grow up as bilinguals and they don't even know about it. It is completely normal that Czech people grow up and understand Slovak."* [my translation] She described monolingual language development as limited and she added: *"If you speak several languages, you are able to describe the world in different ways."* [my translation]

Anna's and Petra's mother works as an English teacher for young children and she met many parents with different approaches to the language development of their children. Some of them emphasised the monolingual approach towards the natural language development.

However, the mother herself disagrees with the opinion that children should grow up speaking only one language.

### 6.1.2 Summary

The goal of this section was to find out how parents generally feel about raising their children as bilinguals. We can say that all the participants of our research share very similar view on the bilingual language development of their children. All parents perceive the bilingual upbringing of their children positively and consider it beneficial rather than negative. Despite the differentiation in their language background, all of them agreed on the positive aspects of raising a child as a bilingual speaker. One family even contacted the specialists in order to be sure they communicate with their bilingual children in the right way. They established a specific system of communication called “one face, one language” where each of them speaks to their children in only one language.

I also asked the parents about their opinion on the monolingual approach towards natural language development. All of them disagreed with the idea that children growing up in monolingual environment present the natural way of language development. Some of them even described monolingual development as limited and stated that speaking more languages gives us the opportunity to view the world in more ways. As an example, one of the participants said that Czech people actually grow up as bilinguals as they are able to understand and speak Slovak. Two parents also stated that whether we are monolingual or bilingual depends on our family background. As one of the participants said: “[...], *you just need to play with the cards that you have.*”

These findings lead me to conclude that parents who raise their children in bilingual environment are overall satisfied with their choice and consider this way of language development positive and natural.

## 6.2 Linguistic advantages and disadvantages

As I have already mentioned in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, whether the language development of bilingual children could be presented as an advantage or a disadvantage became a broadly researched topic. (e.g. Baker and Colin 1998, Myers-Scotton 2006, King and Mackey 2007) Findings of the studies conducted in the first half of the 20th century mostly describe the negative aspects connected to bilingual language development. However, the records of bilingual disadvantages were since then rapidly outnumbered by the studies describing the positive aspects of bilingual language development.

According to experts (e.g. Bialystok 2003, 64, 222, Sandoval et al. 2010, 234, Runnqvist et al. 2013, 256, Gollan and Goldrick 2012, 495), bilingual children may experience delay in a speech production, slow development of lexicon or difficulties connected to verbal fluency such as slow sentence production. In what follows, I will describe linguistic advantages and disadvantages that observed among the bilingual children in my research.

### 6.2.1 Verbal fluency and lexical development

None of the children experienced any kind of serious difficulties connected to their speech development. Karin, Vivien and Alex often mix both languages together when they communicate with their parents. Anna and Petra used to mix their languages as they were younger. However, their mother considers it natural rather than a struggle. One of the parents said: *“These occurrences may look as if the children struggle because sometimes, they just cannot say something in Czech. However, this is completely natural and I think that monolingual children have similar issues, as they sometimes don’t know some specific word. They just need to learn that, right?”* [my translation] Unlike code-switching, which is described as switching in between two languages, code-mixing describes the cases when children mix words and phrases of both of their languages unintentionally. Code-switching is done in purpose, for instance, when a bilingual speaker communicates with a speaker of a foreign language. (Khullar 2018) For more information about code-switching, see Chapter 2.

All respondents described that their children occasionally mix their languages together. For example, when Petra was younger, she quite often said half of the sentence in Czech and the other half in English. Karin, for instance, often mixed Czech words with German words together. However, all parents agreed that this cannot be considered as an issue. All of them described these occurrences as a natural way how bilingual children develop and that it should not be looked at as something unhealthy. This corresponds with the fact provided by Harding-Esh and Riley (2003, 66) that mixing utterances can be caused by number of other factors rather than it is caused by the inability of the bilingual children to separate their two language systems.

All children also occasionally switch between their languages. Anna and Petra often switch between English and Czech when they cannot remember the word in the language they just use. They use Czech words in English sentences and vice versa. However, according to their mother, it’s more likely because they are *“lazy to think”*.

### 6.2.2 Speech development

When children are born, they can only produce sounds. When they are about two years old, they can create a simple two-word utterances and by the age of three, children are able to use language and hold conversations. (Lyon 1996, 13) As I have already stated in Chapter 4, speech delays sometimes occur among children growing up with two languages.

However, only one child in our research experienced delay in her speech development. Anna started to speak when she was almost three years old and immediately started to speak both Czech and English at the same time. Vivien started to speak French much later than Czech even though she was exposed to both languages simultaneously since she was born. However, according to her mother, this delay was caused by the fact that she was raised in Czech language environment.

### 6.2.3 Summary

To summarize, none of these bilingual children experienced any kind of issues connected to their language development. Fierro-Cobas and Chan (2001, 91) claim that bilingual children appear to be slower in the development of their speech in comparison to monolingual children. However, only one of the bilingual children participating in our research began to speak later than it is usual. These findings support the statement of Baker and Jones (1998, 8) that as far as the delay in the speech production is concerned, bilingualism is often falsely blamed.

All parents noticed their children mix both languages and switch from one language to another within a conversation or if they cannot remember a certain word in one of their languages. However, all parents agreed that these language alternations naturally belong to the process of bilingual development.

## 6.3 Learning languages in school

I asked the parents whether their children experienced any issues connected to learning their languages as subjects in school. According to some experts (e.g. García 2009, chap.1, Fierro-Cobas and Chan 2001, 91), people often assume that child bilingualism cause learning difficulties. However, all parents claimed their children have never experienced any kind of serious difficulties in learning their language(s) in school. However, two of them had issues with their teachers. When Petra was in the fourth grade, her English teacher tested the knowledge of her pupils by only testing the vocabulary. Despite the fact that Petra was able to speak English and Czech, she was not able to translate in between those languages, which

made these tasks very difficult for her because her teacher insisted on her translating the vocabulary. Now, neither Petra nor Anna experience any problems. According to their mother, in some cases, both of them have to check the grammar to see how the English tenses are called or to see which verbs are irregular but there are no other issues.

Karin experienced similar issue. Her father said: *“When she was in the third or fourth grade, her teacher complained that her vocabulary in Czech could be richer but the teacher herself later admitted that it’s not that bad considering she has already developed the same vocabulary in Czech and German.”* [my translation]

### 6.3.1 Learning the 3<sup>rd</sup> language

All parents supported the argument of Baker (2001, 271–272) claiming that with the ability of speaking two languages, bilingual children seem to have a great advantage in learning the third language. All parents agreed that the bilingual language development of their children positively affected the learning process of their foreign language(s).

Vivien learns English as her third language, and she is already able to watch English movies with her mother. Karin’s father also admitted that the fact that Karin already speaks German and Czech helped her in learning English. However, he thinks that the fact they often travel to the English-speaking countries, for example to the United Arab Emirates, helped her in learning English much more than her bilingual development.

Petra’s and Anna’s mother also admitted that when they started to learn German, the fact that they already spoke Czech and English helped them a lot. She said: *“They knew there is another language and that there is a use for that language.”* [my translation]

These findings correspond with the argument that bilingual children can positively apply their bilingual development to learning process of the third language. (Cenoz 2013, 72)

### 6.3.2 Creative thinking

Considering the influence that bilingual language development has on the creativity of bilingual children, Bialystok (1991, 167) claims that simultaneous bilingual language acquisition has positive effects on children’s creative thinking. I asked all parents if their children enjoy or excel in any activities related to creative thinking. Alex, for example, likes to solve puzzles. Despite his very young age, he is now able to solve puzzles with 35 pieces.

Karin likes to draw and craft. Vivien also enjoys drawing, however, her mother does not consider her creativity affected by the fact she is bilingual. On the other hand, Anna is very creative and according to her mother, she can become an artist. However, her older sister focuses more on the usage of her languages for her future career.

### 6.3.3 Summary

Summing up the findings regarded to the advantages and disadvantages of learning languages and the development of creative thinking in bilingual children, it was found that bilingual language development has positive effects on learning the third language. All parents agreed that the bilingual development of their children made it easier for them to learn their third language. Moreover, these findings show that bilingual children are able to perceive language(s) as complex systems that have a purpose. (King and Mackey 2007, 5) Furthermore, our interviews revealed that three children enjoy creative activities such as drawing or solving puzzles. However, the rest of the parents did not observe any creative attributes caused by the bilingual development of their children.

## 6.4 Communication and family relationships

The bilingual advantage gives children the opportunity to communicate with their parents, relatives and friends in two languages. Many bilingual parents find it very important to be able to speak to their children in their native language. (Baker and Jones 1998, 6) Furthermore, according to King and Mackey (2007, 11–12), maintaining the heritage language of the family contributes to stronger family relationships.

I asked the respondents in what language their children communicate with their relatives. I also wanted to find out if the bilingual communication of their children has positive effects on family relationships. All the children communicate with their relatives with the languages of their mother and their father. The only exception is Karin that speaks to her brothers in a combination of Russian, English, German and Czech.

Considering the influence of bilingual language development on the family relationships, most of the parents argued that the fact their children speak two languages has positive effect on their family. For example, Vivien has great relationships with her Czech grandparents and her friends living in the Czech Republic as well as with her cousins from France with whom she often communicates through the internet in French. Karin's father also stated that the language possibilities his daughter has helped her to establish better relationships with her relatives.

However, Anna's and Petra's mother did not associate the bilingual communication skills of her daughters with the family relationships. She said: *"I wouldn't connect those two things together at all, I think it has nothing to do with the fact they are bilingual."* [my translation]



### 6.4.1 Traveling

Baker and Jones (1998, 6–7) claim that with the ability to speak two or more languages, bilingual speakers have better opportunity to build new relationships with people from different countries. For example, Karin spends more than one month in a year in Germany and she fluently communicates with locals. According to her father, she sometimes has to look up some new German words but overall, she has no issues with communicating with German people. As I have already mentioned in section 6.3.1., she often travels with her parents to English speaking countries such as United Arab Emirates, which according to her father, significantly helps her with learning English.

Anna's and Petra's family do not visit their father's family at all. Occasionally, they visit their relatives in Canada. Last year, they travelled to Miami and both Anna and Petra enjoyed communicating with locals in English a lot. According to their mother, when it came to communication between her daughters and locals, she said: *"In Miami, they could communicate with whomever and wherever and it just felt like home."* [my translation]

Vivien travels with her family regularly to France and she has also no issues connected to the communication with French people. According to her mother: *"Everyone would say she's French."* [my translation]

### 6.4.2 Summary

All children communicate with their relatives in the language(s) of their father and their mother. The only exception is Karin that speaks with her brothers in a combination of four languages (Russian, English, German and Czech). Most of the parents agreed that the fact their children can communicate with their relatives in their native languages positively influenced their family relationships. This supports the argument of Shin (2018, 15) that if the children develop the languages of their parents and ensure the communication with their parents and relatives, it can be beneficial for the whole society.

I also wanted to find out whether the children experience communication issues while traveling. Overall, neither of the children experienced any kind of language barrier. Most of them enjoy to communicate with people from different countries and find it relatively easy, which corresponds with the idea of Baker and Jones (1998, 6–7) that bilingual speakers have the advantage to communicate with people from different countries, build new relationships and penetrate new cultures.

## 6.5 Future success

Despite the fact Alex is only 4 years old, when it comes to his future career, his father considers his bilingual development very important. Vivien, for instance, already considers studying in France. On the other hand, according to Karin's father, whether Karin's bilingual language development would or would not be beneficial for her depends on the career path she will choose.

Anna's and Petra's mother also stated that bilingual language development can help her daughters in their future career. According to her, Petra appreciates the fact she speaks both English and Czech very much because as she said, you get "*one language for free.*" Growing up as bilinguals also gave Petra and Anna the positive attitude towards learning other languages because as their mother said: "*They can see the use for it.*" Their mother also stated that in today's world, it's always useful to be able to speak more than one language.

### 6.5.1 Summary

As I have stated in Chapter 3, in today's globalized world, the number of professions that require the knowledge of more than one language is increasing. (King and Mackey 2007, 13–14) The findings presented in the above section lead me to conclude that all parents believe that the bilingual development of their children will positively contribute to their future educational and career success.

## 6.6 Psychological issues

According to Baker and Jones (1998, 8) bilingual speakers are often expected to be equally fluent in both of their languages which may cause the feeling of embarrassment when the equal proficiency in both languages is not reached. I asked the respondents whether their children have ever struggled with their own identity and if they have ever faced humiliation or bullying in the connection to their bilingual language development.

### 6.6.1 Identity issues

Karin was never confused about her own identity, however, when she was three or four years old, she refused to speak German for a while. Vivien experienced similar issues, as she started to speak French later than Czech. However, according to Vivien's mother, Vivien has never developed any personality disorder in the connection with her bilingual language background. Similarly, Anna and Petra have never experienced any kind of identity issues.

According to their mother, thanks to the fact they live in the Czech Republic, they do not have to be confused about their own nationality or identity.

Alex's father claims that thanks to the international society in Zürich, Alex has many friends from Poland, Turkey or South Afrika. These children also come from a multilingual background and their families speak more than one language which makes it easier for Alex to not stand out.

### 6.6.2 Bullying

Neither Alex nor Karin were bullied. In some situations, Vivien was bothered by her classmates at the Czech elementary school because she came from a different language background than other children. As her mother said: "*She was an exception,*" and she felt unwelcomed. Vivien started to visit French school where she met children with a similar language and national background as her family, which helped her to feel happier.

Petra was bullied when she was in the fourth grade. One of the reasons was that her classmates used her and her knowledge of English for cheating during tests and she had no real friends in her class. According to her mother, they also struggled with a negative attitude of one teacher towards Petra and the parents themselves. After discussing these problems with the teacher, the principal and the special pedagogist, Petra had to be moved to a different class.

### 6.6.3 Summary

To summarize this section, we can say that bilingual language development does not necessarily lead to the development of psychological issues. Neither of the interviewed children have ever struggled with any personal disorders nor they were confused about their own identity. However, Petra and Vivien were bullied because of their untraditional language background. As a result, Petra had to move to a different class and Vivien started to visit French school.

These important findings lead me to conclude that children growing up in a bilingual language environment may be bullied by children from monolingual families, which correlates with the argument of Baker and Jones (1998, 9) that bilingual children are often judged by monolingual norms. Moreover, bilingual children can be humiliated, bullied or embarrassed due to their different language and cultural background.

## CONCLUSION

The bilingual language development in children became a broadly researched topic. Studies conducted during the first half of the 20th century mostly illustrated the negative impacts of bilingualism on the language development of young children such as confusion or the inability to develop cognitive functions as children that grow up with one language. (Bialystok 2017, 1) However, later studies mostly focused on the benefits of bilingual language development. (Hamers and Blanc 2004, 92)

Whether the language development of young bilinguals can be considered as an advantage or a disadvantage is questionable. (Baker and Jones 1998, 6) The main goal of my bachelor thesis was to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual language development in young bilingual children. The findings were demonstrated in the practical part of my thesis.

The theoretical part consists of four chapters. The aim of Chapter 1 was to provide an introduction to the study of bilingualism and to stress the importance of the non-linguistic factors in developing a more accurate profile of a bilingual person. Moreover, I described how the approach towards bilingualism changed over time. I concluded this chapter by describing the difference between bilingual individuals and groups.

In Chapter 2, I discussed child bilingualism and the processes of simultaneous and successive bilingual language acquisition in children. In the next chapter, I illustrated the advantages and benefits that the dual language exposure brings to the children raised in the bilingual environment. The positive aspects discussed in this chapter include metalinguistic awareness, advanced cognitive thinking, the advantages in learning the third language and the benefits connected to communication and family relationships.

I concluded the theoretical part with Chapter 4 that was mainly focused on the disadvantages of bilingual language development, such as slow lexical development, the delay in the speech production, psychological problems, identity issues and bullying.

In the practical part, I presented my research. Firstly, Chapter 5 provided the overview of the research, including the research method and the characterisation of the participants. I have conducted 4 qualitative interviews with the parents of 5 bilingual children in order to find out whether the bilingual language development influences the lives of these children positively or negatively.

Chapter 6 presented the data analysis of the findings obtained during the research. The chapter focused on the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual language development in

the connection with linguistic skills, learning languages, creativity, communication, traveling, educational and future career success and psychological issues.

In my research, I came to the conclusion that bilingual language development is associated with undoubtable benefits, rather than with problems. My research shows, that none of the bilingual children participating in my research experienced any linguistic complications. From the 5 bilingual children, only one began to speak later than it is usual.

Considering the problematic of learning the third language, all parents concluded that the dual language exposure of their children, made it easier for them to learn the third language. Moreover, only 2 children experienced issues connected to learning languages in school. When it comes to communication and family relationships, the findings lead me to conclude that the fact that bilingual children have the opportunity to communicate with their family in their native language(s) strongly contributes to the strengthening of family relationships. Moreover, bilingual language development enables the children to communicate with the people from foreign countries. I also found out that bilingual language development is not directly related to the development of psychological problems such as the confusion about children's identity. However, two children in our research were bullied or bothered in school because of their various language background.

As Baker and Jones (1998, 8) point out, many issues can be falsely attributed to bilingual language development, but it would be wrong to assume there are none. However, according to my findings, bilingual language development is associated mostly with positive impacts on children's cognitive and educational development.

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