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**Bilingualism – Language Acquisition
or Language Study?**

Bachelor Thesis

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ABSTRACT:

This bachelor's thesis deals with the phenomenon of bilingualism. The aim of this thesis is to find out, whether it is possible to achieve bilingualism through the process of learning a second language. My principal hypothesis is that one does not need a bilingual background to become a bilingual. The theoretical part compares and contrasts the terms language acquisition and language study in order to demonstrate the differences between them. It also provides an overview of learning strategies that are characteristic of each concept. The practical part presents the research, conducted among the students of Charles University's Faculty of Education and Czech Technical University's Faculty of Transportation Sciences, in a form of a questionnaire. The conclusion confronts the results with the initial hypothesis and comments on other possible research.

KEYWORDS:

Bilingualism, language acquisition, language study, learning strategies, research, questionnaire, evaluation

ABSTRAKT:

Předložená bakalářská práce pojednává o fenoménu bilingvismu. Cílem této práce je zjistit, zda je možné dosáhnout bilingvismu procesem učení druhého jazyka. Mojí hlavní hypotéza je, že není třeba pocházet z bilingvního prostředí, aby byl člověk bilingvní. Teoretická část porovnává pojmy osvojování jazyka a učení se jazyku za účelem jejich srovnání a zdůraznění jejich odlišností. Tato část obsahuje také přehled strategií učení charakteristické pro příslušný koncept. Praktická část představuje výzkum, provedený mezi studenty Pedagogické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy a Dopravní fakulty Českého vysokého učení technického v Praze, ve formě dotazníku. Závěr porovnává výsledky vyhodnocení dotazníků s počáteční hypotézou a nabízí podněty k dalšímu možnému zkoumání.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

Bilingvismus, osvojování jazyka, učení se jazyku, strategie učení, výzkum, dotazník, vyhodnocení

Declaration

I declare that I wrote this bachelor thesis independently and I used only the resources that are listed in the bibliography.

Prague, 14 March 2010

Tran Thu Tra

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Acknowledgement

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I. INTRODUCTION

Bilingualism is a phenomenon present in our everyday life. Not many people may know the term bilingualism as such, but they have certainly encountered some form of bilingualism in their life.

Francois Grosjean, professor of linguistics and an expert in this area, has even stated that "bilingualism is present in practically every country of the world, in all classes of society, in all age groups" and that "it has been estimated that half of the world's population is bilingual" (both Grosjean Preface vii).

We live in the 21st century, surrounded and overwhelmed by trends such as globalisation, free movement of people and growing migration. The ability to speak at least one foreign language, mainly English, is one of the requirements people have to meet in order to succeed in their (not only professional) lives.

In consequence, children are being taught foreign languages from their early childhood. Sometimes even from their first grade of the primary school, and, therefore, simultaneously with their mother tongue. It would seem that being bilingual is almost unavoidable nowadays. Everyone should be able to use a foreign language, English in this particular case, on a high level of proficiency.

In this thesis I reflect upon this matter. I chose this topic because I am bilingual myself, and I have always been interested in this subject.

My subject of interest is bilingualism and its attainability. The aim of this thesis is to find out, whether it is possible to achieve bilingualism through the process of learning a second language.

The theoretical part provides the relevant linguistic context of bilingualism. Firstly, it explains the difference between theoretical and applied linguistics. Secondly, it presents the main definitions and points of view of bilingualism. Thirdly, the differences between the terms language acquisition and language learning are stated. The following chapters *A Bilingual Child* and *A Non-Bilingual Student* present the different strategies when learning a language by a bilingual and a non-bilingual. Both concepts are illustrated with their definitions and an overview of pertinent learning strategies.

The practical part presents the research. It was conducted among the students of Charles University's Faculty of Education and Czech Technical University's Faculty of Transportation Sciences in form of a questionnaire. Firstly, the research is introduced. The expectations and hypotheses of the research are listed. The method is

declared and the respondents are introduced. Secondly, the questionnaire evaluation is presented. It is divided into the sections *Information About You, Grammar, Use of English, Vocabulary, Translation, Overall Performance* and *Levels of English*. Thirdly, the research results are stated.

The conclusion confronts the results with the initial hypothesis and comments on other possible research.

II. THEORETICAL PART

2.1 Theoretical Preliminaries

In order to discuss the term bilingualism, it is inevitable to provide the relevant linguistic context first.

Linguistics is a scientific study of language. According to Fromkin, it is divided into several subfields, such as theoretical linguistics, descriptive linguistics, historical linguistics, mathematical linguistics, computational linguistics etc. (Fromkin 4). However, these disciplines tend to overlap and, therefore, it is problematic to classify them precisely and it varies from linguist to linguist. This thesis will discern two subfields: theoretical linguistics and applied linguistics.

Theoretical linguistics deals with language, its nature and structure. It describes the language and studies it. It is subdivided in linguistic branches such as phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicology, semantics etc.

Applied linguistics, on the contrary, is meant to “solve real-world language-based problems“ and, in order to do so, “draws on knowledge from a variety of other fields as well – from anthropology, educational theory, psychology, and sociology, and from the sociology of learning, the sociology of information, the sociology of knowledge, etc.“ (both Grabe and Kaplan 3).

The most significant differences between these two subfields of linguistics are proposed by Grabe and Kaplan. They claim that theoretical linguistics regards language in isolation from its environment, whereas applied linguistics takes the social environment into consideration (Grabe and Kaplan 6). Moreover, applied linguistics uses the information gained from theoretical linguistics as its essential, but not exclusive, source, and uses it to its research or language-related problems solving (Grabe and Kaplan 16).

In conclusion, theoretical linguistics describes the language in order to learn to know it. Its purpose is search and classification. Applied linguistics undertakes research, which implements the knowledge and information of theoretical linguistics, aims to solve real-life problems and tries to reach a practical conclusion. This thesis will adopt the applied linguistics approach.

2.2 Bilingualism – A Brief Overview

In accordance with the classification I have provided earlier, bilingualism qualifies as a linguistic area of study dealt with by applied linguistics.

Bilingualism has been described at **three levels**, “***the individual, the group,*** and ***the nation*** (or, more specifically, the territorial basis)” (Grabe and Kaplan 214, italics and bold print added). This thesis deals with the *individual* level, i.e. how an individual masters languages.

There are many definitions of the term bilingualism. Grabe and Kaplan mention “being able to utter a meaningful phrase in two languages” and “native-like ability in two languages, including reading, writing, speaking, and understanding at a highly educated level” (Grabe and Kaplan 214).

However, Grosjean sees a problem of overestimation of fluency in the concept of bilingualism. He proposes a simply “functional definition” as “the regular use of two languages” (both Grosjean 230), and elaborates on it further. He dismisses the only criterion of fluency and takes other factors into account, such as “the regular use of two languages, their domains of use, and the bilingual’s need to have certain skills (reading and writing, for instance) in one language but not in the other” (Grosjean 231). He argues that if all these factors were taken into consideration, the definition would be more complex and valid (Grosjean 231).

Klein brings another point of view to discussion. According to him, a person is bilingual only when the language acquisition is connected with their “cognitive, social and linguistic development” (Klein 4). He argues that only a child learning both languages at once and discovering the world in both languages in parallel, is bilingual (Klein 4).

All of these definitions imply that a bilingual person was ideally born into a bilingual family, has grown in a foreign speaking environment, attended bilingual schools and masters both languages perfectly. However, not all bilinguals meet these requirements.

Grosjean himself is aware of this problem, since he admits that to pass as a monolingual in both languages is too demanding and would, as a result, disqualify the vast majority of people, who “use both languages regularly but do not have native-like fluency in each” (Grosjean 232). This would result in a paradox, hence the people would qualify neither as bilinguals nor as monolinguals (Grosjean 232).

People who are equally fluent in both languages are called '**balanced**' bilinguals (Grosjean 232, bold print added). But these are very rare, since the majority of bilinguals are '**nonbalanced**', who are "more fluent or dominant in one language" (Grosjean 233, bold print added).

For the purpose of this thesis, I take all the above mentioned definitions into consideration and merge them with a minor alteration. This thesis defines a bilingual person as someone who does not necessarily have to have a bilingual background, but has studied at least two languages (for the sake of this thesis, English has to be one of them) long and early enough to have a chance to pass as a bilingual.

2.3 Acquiring vs. Learning

The term bilingualism has already been defined, however, two important concepts have not been introduced yet. They are referred to as language acquisition and language learning and both lead to mastering a language.

Language acquisition is a process of learning a first language, in other words, mother tongue. It normally takes place in childhood, since it is the first language a person learns. Haynes asserts that "children acquire language through a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules" and that "they get a feel for what is and what is not correct" (Haynes). She also emphasizes the importance of the communicative intention over the form.

Language learning, contrarily, happens later in one's life. It does not involve much communication, but is rather a "result of direct instruction in the rules of language" (Haynes). Therefore, it is not suited for young children, Haynes adds and points out that a student who memorises all the language rules may be good at test, but still can make mistakes at speaking or writing.

To sum up, one acquires his mother tongue, but learns other languages. Language acquisition occurs unconsciously and without much effort. Language learning, on the other hand, is a conscious process with an uncertain result. I will explore this matter further in the following parts of this thesis.

2.4 A Bilingual Child

As I have already mentioned in the previous parts of this thesis, a bilingual person is somebody, who has been either born into a bilingual environment or has studied at least two languages long and early enough to pass as a bilingual.

Firstly, this chapter reflects on acquiring languages by a bilingual person. Secondly, it explains the concepts of simultaneous and successive language acquisitions. Thirdly, it provides an overview of the strategies of language acquisition.

2.4.1 The Acquisition of Two Languages

Bilinguals can acquire their languages either at the same time or one at a time. The first case is called simultaneous, the latter successive.

Simultaneous language acquisition means, according to McLaughlin, that a child “acquires two languages before the age of three” (qtd. in Grosjean 179). This is usually the case when a child lives in a bilingual family, e.g. his mother and father each speak their own (different) language.

Successive language acquisition occurs, as McLaughlin claims, when a child “acquires one language in infancy and the second after age three” (qtd. in Grosjean 179). This appears in children from linguistic minorities or when a child moves with his/her parents to a foreign country. It should be emphasized that they speak their mother tongue at home and acquire a second language by interaction with other children or teachers at school. If it was not a case of a natural interaction and only applying grammatical rules, it would not be acquisition but rather learning (Grosjean 192).

However, whether simultaneous or successive, this does not influence the degree of bilingualism attained, Grosjean adds. “It is psychological factors, such as the use of the language in the family or in the school, that will condition when, to what extent, and for how long a child will be bilingual, not the age of acquisition of the two languages” (Grosjean 179).

2.4.2 Strategies of Language Acquisition

Language acquisition typically takes place in childhood. Therefore, the strategies and theories I mention below are connected to children and how children acquire language, but they are implemented by parents.

❖ Family Strategies

These strategies are used by parents at home to make their children bilingual.

➤ One parent one language

- This strategy functions on a principle that each of the parents speaks their own mother tongue to the child. In ideal case, both parents understand the other language at least on a communicative level, so that it is practically doable in the long term. (Bilingual Families Connect).
- Grosjean points out that this strategy „allows each parent to communicate with the child in his or her native language“ and that it ensures „naturalness in communication while making the child bilingual“ (both Grosjean 173).

➤ Minority language at home

- Principle of this strategy is that family members speak their minority language at home or with one another. The other (community) language is spoken outside, e.g. at school. (Bilingual Families Connect)
- This is the strategy used „among numerous minorities throughout the world, where the minority language is used in the home and the neighbourhood, and the majority language is used at school, at work, and in the larger community“ (Grosjean 174).

➤ One language initially, the other later

- This strategy means that parents use one language when speaking to the child and later, when he or she is e.g. between three and five, they start using the second language. (Grosjean 174)

➤ Interchangeable language usage

- Principle of this strategy is that both languages are used “interchangeably in and out of the family, letting such factors as topic, situation, person and place dictate which language should be used“ (Grosjean 174).

- Schmidt-Mackey states that some families use “‘language time’ approach“, which means they use “one language in the morning and the other in the afternoon, or one language during the week and the other during the weekend“ (qtd. in Grosjean 174).

❖ Linguistic Theories

Linguists have always been fascinated by children’s ability to acquire language. They formed several theories that should explain how language acquisition works at its earliest stages with very small children. These should not be understood as separate concepts, but rather as different points of view of the same subject.

➤ Behaviourist position

- Behaviourism is a “school of psychology“ and it studies “observable and measurable behaviour“. Their focus is on the “observable stimuli and responses made by participants in specific situations“. The main representative is Burrhus Frederic Skinner (all Crystal 49). Behaviourist theory of language acquisition was dominant before 1960’s. (Littlewood 4).
- Principle: From the behaviourist point of view, children acquire languages by **imitation** and **habit formation**. Children copy what they hear from their parents and try to produce sounds. If they succeed and are understood, they are praised (Lightbown and Spada 1). “Habits are formed when learners respond to stimuli in the environment and subsequently have their responses reinforced so that they are remembered“ (Ellis 31). In other words, children are encouraged in their correct attempts to speak. In consequence, they will develop “habits of correct language use“ (Lightbown and Spada 1).
- Focus: The main focus is on “the quality and quantity of the language which the child hears, as well as the consistency of the reinforcement offered by others in the environment“ (Lightbown and Spada 1).

➤ Innatist position

- Founded by linguist Noam Chomsky as a reaction to behaviourism. Innatist theory points out that behaviourists cannot explain the fact that children learn much more about the structure of their language than possible from “the basis of the samples of language which they hear“ (Lightbown and Spada 8).

- Principle: Children “are biologically programmed for language“ (Lightbown and Spada 7). As they grow, their biological functions develop as well as their language. Language acquisition is compared to walking, “every child will learn to walk as long as an adequate nourishment and reasonable freedom of movement are provided. The child does not have to be taught“ (Lightbown and Spada 7).
 - Focus: The environment is “a basic contribution – in this case, the availability of people who speak to the child. The child, or rather, the child’s biological endowment, will do the rest“ (Lightbown and Spada 8). This theory proposes the idea of children’s **innate ability** to “discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system“ (Lightbown and Spada 8, bold print added). This special ability is based on Chomsky’s **Language Acquisition device** (LAD). It is explained as a black box existing in the brain, containing principles “universal to all human languages“ and activated by „samples of the natural language“ (Lightbown and Spada 8). LAD is sometimes also referred to as **Universal Grammar** (Lightbown and Spada 8, bold print added).
- Interactionist position
- This theory is based on the argument that the language “develops as a result of the complex interplay between the uniquely human characteristics of the child and the environment in which the child develops“ (Lightbown and Spada 14). The main difference between the interactionist and the innatist theory is that interactionists define children’s environment as “modified to suit the capability of the learner“, which is “a crucial element“ (both Lightbown and Spada 14). In other words, not just the environment as such, but the way adults talk to the child influence him or her.
 - Principle: The emphasis is on the “role of the linguistic environment in interaction with the child’s innate capacities in determining language development“ (Lightbown and Spada 13).
 - Focus: What is stressed is the interaction between children and adults, while adults „intuitively respond to the clues the child provides as to the level of language he or she is capable of processing“ (Lightbown and Spada 15). This modified communication is very important to the child’s development, because in case the child does not understand, the adult can repeat or paraphrase the sentence in order to make it understandable. This is

irreplaceable, since, for instance, television, even though speaking the language, can not do these adjustments (Lightbown and Spada 15).

To sum up, the above section *A Bilingual Child* has discussed the bilingual person. The aim has been to present the concept of bilingualism and its environment. Firstly, a definition of a bilingual person is mentioned. Secondly, the concepts of simultaneous and successive language acquisitions are explained. Thirdly, strategies of language acquisition - divided into family strategies and linguistic theories - have been provided.

2.5 A Non-Bilingual Student

When people begin to learn a foreign language, they usually set as a default, ultimate goal to become as fluent as a native speaker. The question, whether that is possible, arises.

This chapter focuses on the non-bilingual student. Firstly, it explores language learning strategies (as opposed to the bilingual ones). Secondly, it provides the reader with the language situation in the Czech Republic.

2.5.1 Language Learning Strategies

The only way to master a foreign language is to learn it. The strategies listed below are “the most widely used methods“ (Krashen 126) in teaching foreign languages in the present days.

❖ Grammar-Translation Method

- The grammar-translation method is a well known and broadly used strategy. Sometimes it is called the Classical Method, because it was used to teach classical languages such as Latin and Greek (Larsen-Freeman 4).
- Aim: Students should be able to read and “appreciate foreign language literature“; improve in grammar in the foreign language, as well as the native; and “grow intellectually“ (all Larsen-Freeman 4).
- Activities: This method usually includes a grammar explanation, a bilingual vocabulary list, a piece of reading and several exercises, all connected to the

grammar of a particular lesson. The main focus is on translating from the native language to the foreign language and vice versa (Krashen 127).

- Strengths: “Vocabulary and grammar are emphasized. Reading and writing are the primary skills that the students work on” (Larsen-Freeman 12).
- Weaknesses: Speaking and listening skills are not in the main focus. Pronunciation is neglected (Larsen-Freeman 12).

❖ **Direct Method**

- The direct method has been used in order to make students communicate in the foreign language, because the grammar-translation method did not focus on communication (Larsen-Freeman 18).
- Aim: “No translation is allowed” (Larsen-Freeman 18). Students should think in the foreign language directly (Larsen-Freeman 18).
- Activities: All discussion and instructions in the class are done in the foreign language. Students should “guess or work out the rules of the language” (Krashen 135) from the session of teacher’s questions and students’ answers (Larsen-Freeman 20).
- Strengths: “Vocabulary is emphasized over grammar” (Larsen-Freeman 25). All four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) are worked on, but “oral communication is seen as basic” (Larsen-Freeman 25).
- Weaknesses: The method is too grammar based. Students may be able to develop “classroom competence” (e.g. ask and answer questions about grammar), but not converse with a native speaker (Krashen 137).

❖ **Audio-Lingual Method**

- The audio-lingual method was “developed in the United States during World War II” for military purposes in order to speak foreign languages quickly (Larsen-Freeman 31). It is quite similar to the direct method in some aspects.
- Aim: Students should be able to “use the target language communicatively” without having to think about it (Larsen-Freeman 43).
- Activities: “The lesson usually begins with a dialogue, which contains the structures and vocabulary of the lesson. The student is expected to *mimic* the dialogue and eventually *memorize* it” (Krashen 130).
- Strengths: The structure of language is emphasized, vocabulary contextualized. All skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are worked on, but oral communication is given the most attention (Larsen-Freeman 44).

- Weaknesses: “Memorization of the dialogue, not the comprehension of a message” (Krashen 131) occurs. “No attempt is made to limit which rules are to be learned or when they are to be applied” (Krashen 132).

❖ **Suggestopedia**

- Suggestopedia believes that students are afraid of failure, of not being able to learn the language, in consequence, they built up “psychological barriers to learning“. These limitations have to be “desuggested“ (both Larsen-Freeman 72).
- Aim: By desuggesting students’ mental barriers “accelerate the process by which students learn to use a foreign language for everyday communication“ (Larsen-Freeman 81).
- Activities: A lesson consists of a review in form of a game, conversation, etc. New material presentation in form of long dialogues follows. It is read and translated by the teacher accompanied by a pleasant music. Students meditate while listening and then repeat the phrases when ready (Krashen 143).
- Strengths: “Vocabulary is emphasized“(Larsen-Freeman 83). Speaking, reading and writing skills are worked on (Larsen-Freeman 83).
- Weaknesses: “Grammar is dealt with explicitly but minimally“ (Larsen-Freeman 83).

❖ **Total Physical Response Method**

- The total physical response method is also called “the comprehension approach“, because “of the importance it gives to listening comprehension“ (Larsen-Freeman 109).
- Aim: Students should enjoy learning the foreign language, the stress of failure should be reduced. This method is also based on how children acquire their native language (Larsen-Freeman 116).
- Activities: Students listen to their teacher’s explanation, follow his/her instructions and orders. (Larsen-Freeman 110-113). They do not have to speak until they are ready, which usually happens after ten hours of instruction (Krashen 140).
- Strengths: Grammar and vocabulary are emphasized. “The spoken language is emphasized over written language“ (Larsen-Freeman 117).
- Weaknesses: “It may be difficult to remain interesting if one holds to the requirement of producing imperatives 100% of the time“ (Krashen 141).

2.5.2 Situation in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, 24% of population is able to speak English, 28% German and 2% French as a foreign language (Nation Master). According to the law, Czech is taught as the mother tongue from the first grade at primary schools, English (as a compulsory language) should be introduced in the third grade at the latest. Pupils should start studying a second language no later than in the seventh grade (Truksová). Nevertheless, the trend of speaking at least two foreign languages pushes schools to start teaching foreign languages even sooner than they are legally obliged to. English is sometimes taught from the first grade. The general tendency seems to be for children to be taught foreign languages sooner than officially required.

Moreover, not only children learn languages at school, they can also attend language courses, study abroad, travel, listen to (foreign) music and surf the Internet. They are surrounded by foreign languages, English in particular. To find out, whether these factors can contribute to attain a decent level of English, or even, bilingualism, is the main point of my research.

To conclude, the above section *A Non-Bilingual Student* has discussed on the non-bilingual person. It has provided the reader with an overview of the language learning strategies (as opposed to the bilingual ones). Because of the space limitation, I have limited my description to an introduction of each method, listing its advantages and disadvantages and briefly describing the language situation in the Czech Republic.

III. PRACTICAL PART

3.1 Research Presentation

This research should answer the question, whether it is possible to achieve bilingualism through the process of learning a second language.

Therefore, the aim is to find out, whether there are people in the Czech Republic who are bilingual through the process of learning a second language. As I have stated in the theoretical part, not many people can meet the requirements of a bilingual. Hence, this thesis defines a bilingual person as somebody, who has achieved the level C2 in English according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the Council of Europe. The overview of the level dealt with in this thesis is provided below.

❖ **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages**

➤ **B1**

- “Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans“ (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages 24).

➤ **B2**

- “Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options“ (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages 24).

➤ **C1**

- “Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously

without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices“ (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages 24).

➤ **C2**

- “Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations“ (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages 24).

3.2 Expectations, Hypotheses

My presumption is that to attain bilingualism one does not need to have a bilingual background.

The hypotheses to be proven are:

- 1) Bilingualism is attainable even in students growing up in non-bilingual environment.
- 2) Bilingualism can be achieved through education, therefore, school institutions have a major influence on the level of English.
- 3) Respondents trained in linguistics are better than respondents without specialised linguistic education in English in all language skills.
- 4) Grammar and use of English are the respondents' strengths, whereas vocabulary and translation are their weaknesses.
- 5) At least 10% of respondents have achieved the level C2 and can be, therefore, regarded as bilinguals.

3.3 Research Method

This research was conducted in the form a questionnaire. The responses should not have taken more than 15 minutes to help to maintain the respondent's focus.

Therefore, the questions (or exercises) were created to meet this criterion. Thus, the questionnaire is limited and could be expanded for further research if necessary.

The questionnaire is structured in 25 questions, of which the first five are related to personal data (sectioned as *Information About You*) and the other are related to the person's English performance (named *Grammar, Use of English, Vocabulary and Translation*).

All the questions are closed, formulated in a form of multiple choice, except the last set of 6 questions, which deal with translation and are, therefore, open questions.

Because of the time and space limitation, not all language skills are tested. Skills such as speaking, writing and listening were not included for the reasons of practicality.

3.4 Respondents

For the purpose of this research, I needed to find two groups of respondents. One with specialised linguistic education and the other without it. Respondents of both groups should be studying at a university, thus eliminating such differences as the level of education.

I have chosen students of Charles University's Faculty of Education (PedF UK) and Czech Technical University's Faculty of Transportation Sciences (FD ČVUT).

Students of the **Faculty of Education** are studying in the third year of three-year B.A. study programme. The level of English should be B2 at the beginning of their study (Student Information System) and C2 when graduating (Department of English Language and Literature). Language is studied in particular linguistic branches such as morphology, syntax, lexicology etc. Modern English, a practical oriented subject, is taught in all six semesters.

Students of **Faculty of Transportation Sciences** are studying in the first year of M.A. study programme. The preceding four-year B.A. programme contains four semesters of English concluded with an examination, M.A. programme two semesters of English concluded with an examination (Faculty of Transportation Sciences).

To sum up, both groups of respondents have studied English for three years at university and are, therefore, comparable in the context of the proposed study.

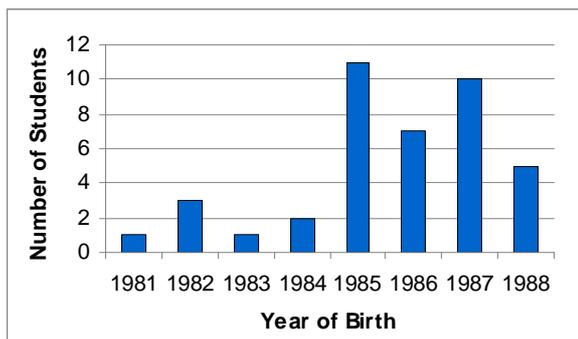
3.5 Questionnaire Evaluation

Forty questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. All questionnaires were returned completed. The questionnaire consist of five parts labelled *Information About You*, *Grammar*, *Use of English*, *Vocabulary* and *Translation*. Each of the parts are evaluated separately at first, then synthesized. This results into the parts *Overall Performance* and *Levels of English*. All parts are illustrated with charts and comments.

A. INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

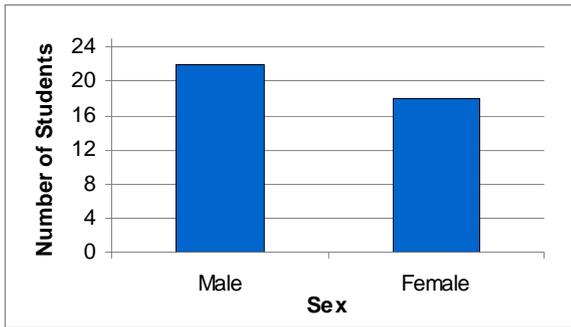
This part provides personal information about each respondent.

Chart no.1: Date of Birth



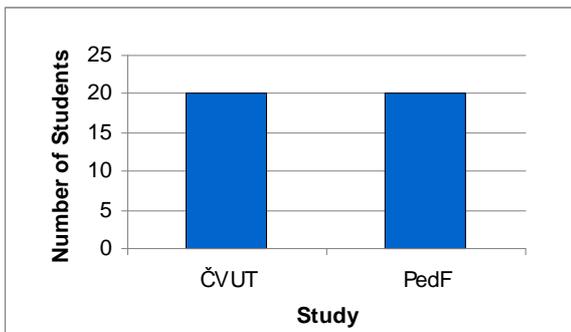
The chart above shows the age distribution among the respondents. Most of the students are between the age of twenty-two and twenty-five. Only seven students are over the age of twenty-five. The youngest students are twenty-two, the oldest is twenty-nine.

Chart no.2: **Sex**



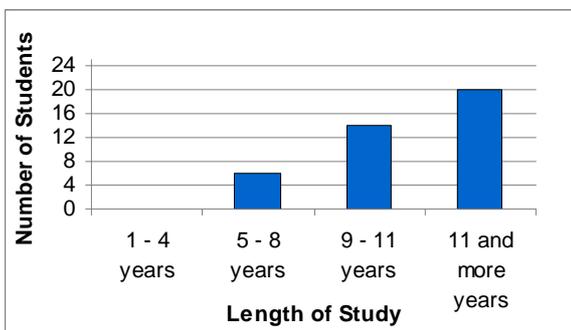
The sex distribution is slightly in favour of men. Twenty-two male students and eighteen female students took part in the research.

Chart no.3: **Current Studies**



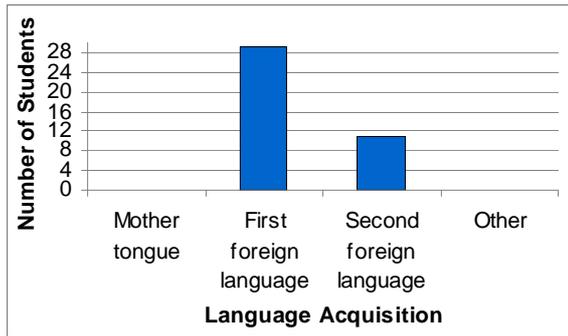
The ratio of ČVUT and PedF students is even, as I intended to ensure impartial and unbiased results drawn from the questionnaires.

Chart no.4: **Length of English Study**



Half of the students have studied English over eleven years. Fourteen students have studied English for nine to eleven years. The rest six make up students who have studied English for five to eight years. No one has studied English for shorter time than four years.

Chart no.5: **Language Acquisition**



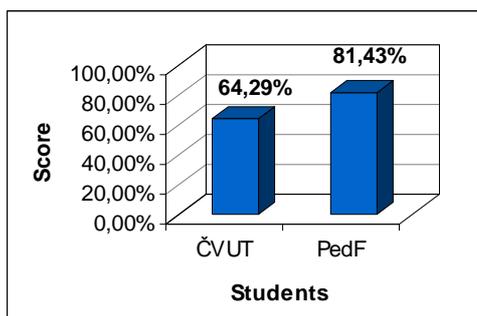
Almost two thirds of students have learned English as their first foreign language. The rest has learned English as their second foreign language. As expected, no one has English as their mother tongue, nor learned it as their third or fourth language. One case of bilingualism occurs, but it does not involve English, since the person is a Czech-Russian bilingual. Some students state that their mother tongue is not Czech, but Greek or Arabic. Two cases of Russian language as mother tongue occurred.

B. GRAMMAR

This part should have been relatively easy for the students, since, from my own experience, Czech schools typically put the main emphasis on grammar when teaching English.

The set of seven questions test the students' knowledge of countable and uncountable nouns, possessive pronouns, conditional clauses and transitive and intransitive verbs.

Chart no.6: **Grammar Performance**



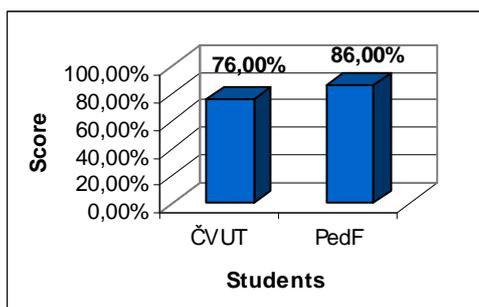
The chart shows the average result of each group of respondents. ČVUT's average score is 64.29%, whereas PedF students scored 81.43%. The difference between them is 17.14%.

The level of English of both groups of students is officially the same. Both groups use textbooks on the advanced level. From this point of view, the difference is quite significant.

C. USE OF ENGLISH

Use of English is, similarly to grammar, strongly emphasized in Czech schools. This part should partly make up for the absence of reading, since it requires students' text understanding. Use of English testing is realized in a form of a coherent text with gaps. The task is to understand the text in order to fill in the gaps to complete it.

Chart no.7: Use of English Performance



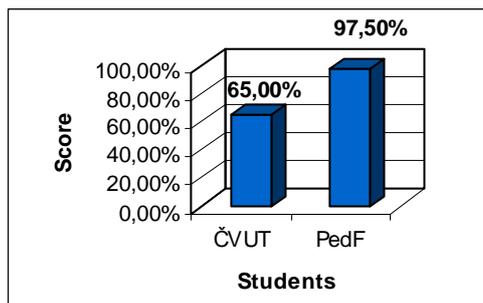
The chart indicates students of ČVUT scoring the average of 76%. Students of PedF have an 86% average score. The difference between both groups of respondents is only 10%.

Both groups of students performed well. The reason may be the need of reading study materials in English. Students of PedF have to read in English, of course. Students of ČVUT have to do so as well, since most of their specialised study literature is usually not translated.

D. VOCABULARY

From my own experience, vocabulary might be seen as the breaking point, where, for instance, an intermediate student differs from a beginner the most. It takes years to build one's word stock. In this part, words are provided and students are to match them with the correct definitions or synonyms.

Chart no.8: **Vocabulary Performance**

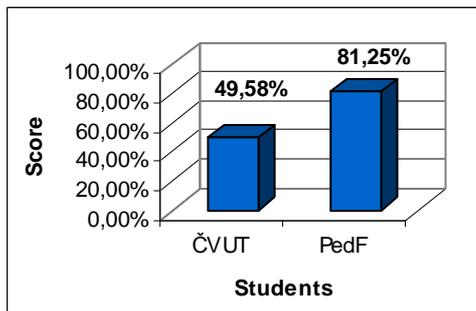


As presumed, students of PedF scored almost flawlessly, 97.5%. ČVUT students were not so successful, they achieved only 65% on average. The difference between the scores of both groups is the biggest so far, 32.5%.

E. TRANSLATION

To master a language means the ability to create native-like utterances. One has to be aware of the differences of a foreign language and one's mother tongue. This is probably the most difficult part of the test. The phrases to be translated were chosen to determine, whether the student is able to avoid Czenglish (common mistakes made by Czech speakers when speaking English).

Chart no.9: **Translation Performance**

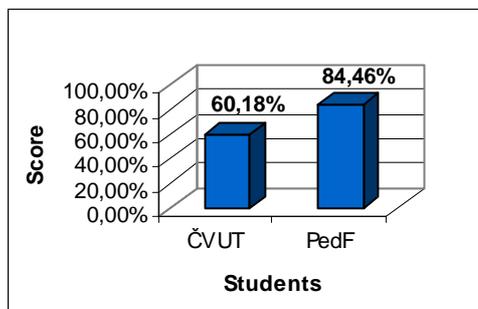


This chart shows the striking difference between the two groups of respondents. PedF students earned an 81.25% average score. Students of ČVUT gained only an average of 49.58%. The difference between them is great, 32%.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

After evaluating each part of the questionnaire separately, the conclusion of the students' score in the whole test is as follows:

Chart no.10: **Overall Performance**



PedF students fulfilled the expectations and reached an average score of 84.46% in the whole test. Students of ČVUT scored an average of 60.18%. The difference between them is thus 24.28%.

LEVELS OF ENGLISH

Based on the results of the test, students were classified into particular groups of levels of knowledge of English. The classification is provided in the table below.

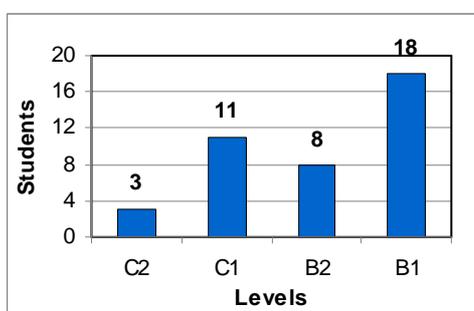
I have chosen the score minimum of 70%, as this usually is the minimum to pass a test at university. Each of the level stages is scaled up from this point until the maximum of 100%, accordingly.

Level	Percentage	Points
C2	100% - 91%	28 - 26
C1	90% - 81%	25 - 23
B2	80% - 71%	22 - 20
B1	70% -	19 -

Table no.1

The test maximum is 28 points. Each right answer in the sections *Grammar* and *Vocabulary* are credited with a point. Each right answer in the parts *Vocabulary* and *Translation* is awarded two points, because their level of difficulty is higher.

Chart no.11: Levels of English



From the chart above it is clear, that only three students gained at least 26 points, and, therefore, achieved the level of C2. These people can be considered bilingual. Eleven students are at the level of C1, eight of them at the level B2. Surprisingly, eighteen students are at the level B1, only.

3.6 Research Results

My first hypothesis, that bilingualism is attainable even in students without bilingual environment, was verified - however to a significantly lower extent than originally expected.

The second hypothesis that bilingualism can be achieved through education and that school institutions have a great influence on the level of English was also verified. None of the students come from the bilingual environment, however, they were successful in the test and achieved the level C2. Thus, three students have been classified as bilinguals. Students of PedF UK also have a higher average score.

The third hypothesis claiming that the respondents trained in linguistics are better in English in all language skills was verified in all types of results.

The fourth hypothesis was verified as well. Grammar and use of English were the parts, where the differences between students' performance were the smallest. Vocabulary and translation caused difficulties to both groups of students, however the yielded the most significant results.

The last hypothesis assuming that at least 10% of respondents have achieved the level C2 and can be, therefore, regarded as bilinguals was not verified. Only 3 informants scored enough points to be regarded as bilinguals, which makes 7.5% of respondents.

To sum up, four of the five hypotheses were verified, except for the last one.

However, I assume that had the results been more representative, i.e. completed by much larger number of respondents, the differences between both groups would be the same, but a larger number of bilinguals would occur.

IV. CONCLUSION

The number of bilinguals is rising. Whereas in the past it occurred only under special circumstances and was, therefore, quite rare; nowadays it is a common and even a desirable condition.

The knowledge of at least two foreign languages is not only required in one's professional career, but it is also a sign of one's education and social status. The growing importance of speaking foreign languages is felt in everyday life.

Linguists and methodologists have been trying to analyse the language system and a person's learning process to achieve an ideal outcome – a person speaking a foreign language as well as a native speaker.

For this purpose, new language strategies and approaches are being invented. The exposure to a foreign language is provided not just in the form of school teaching, but also in off-school activities such as attending language courses, listening to music and watching films in English, reading books and newspapers in English. Small children are taught English very shortly, sometimes even simultaneously, after being introduced to their mother tongue.

The borderline between the terms language acquisition and language learning seems to be disappearing. The question whether a person can attain a level of English comparable to a bilingual person arises.

In my thesis I have come to the conclusion that to attain bilingualism through the process of learning a second language is possible. My research has shown that among forty respondents, students of Charles University's Faculty of Education and Czech Technical University's Faculty of Transportation Sciences, three people have achieved such a high score in the test that qualifies them as bilinguals. It may be just a small percentage of the whole, but it shows that it is possible. Moreover, it may be just a question of time until the rest of respondents even up.

In addition, it can be expected that all of the respondents are more proficient in English than the generation of their parents and grandparents. If the language situation in the Czech Republic continues to follow this trend in the future, the number of people proficient in English, and maybe even bilinguals, will definitely increase.

My research has been limited, of course, by the time and space I had at my disposal. It can be certainly further elaborated with more in depth questions such as how the respondents have been developing their English so far, including school and off school activities. The language strategies they have been taught with can be

investigated, which can provide us with not only the list of the most common strategies used in the Czech Republic, but also with an insight into their effectivity. The questions can be modified to fit the area of research, and the results can be used, for instance, in pedagogy or language instruction.

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VI. LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Questionnaire (blank)

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire (filled in)

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. Your answers will be used in my Bachelor's Thesis regarding Bilingualism.

A. INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

1. Your date of birth: _____
2. Are you:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Your current studies:
 - a. PedF UK
 - b. ČVUT
 - c. Other (please, specify) _____
4. How long have you been learning English?
 - a. 1 - 4 years
 - b. 5 - 8 years
 - c. 9 - 11 years
 - d. 11 and more years
5. You have learned English as your:
 - a. Mother tongue
 - b. First (foreign) language
 - c. Second (foreign) language
 - d. Other (please, specify) _____

B. GRAMMAR

Choose the answer which **best** fits the sentence.

6. Would you like some more coffee? There's still _____ left.
A. a little B. little C. a few D. few
7. Mary wants to know if she can bring a friend of _____ to the party.
A. her B. him C. hers D. his
8. If you _____ soon, we'll miss the start of the film.
A. aren't coming B. don't come C. won't come D. wouldn't come
9. I don't allow my children _____ so badly.
A. that they behave B. behave C. to behave D. behaving
10. _____ that you would be at the meeting.
A. I was said B. It was said me C. I was told D. It was told me
11. Can you lend me _____ scissors?
A. a B. two C. a couple of D. a pair of
12. It will cost a lot of money to have _____.
A. that work done B. that work made C. done that work D. made that work

(Taken from: *iDnes* 16 February 2010. <http://zpravy.idnes.cz/soutez_test.asp?id=230>.)

C. USE OF ENGLISH

Read the text below and decide which word A, B, C or D **best** fits each space.

Romantic fiction is as old (13) _____ love itself and still very (14) _____ alive and well. An amazing 41, 000 Mills and Boon romantic novels are sold in the UK every day; that (15) _____ up to around 15 million copies a year. And (16) _____ being popular in the UK, these books have also been (17) _____ into 20 other languages and sold in over 100 different countries.

13. A. than B. so C. as D. of
14. A. than B. greatly C. much D. just
15. A. adds B. makes C. comes D. gives
16. A. although B. besides C. moreover D. whereas
17. A. interpreted B. transferred C. exchanged D. translated
- (Taken from: Kenny, Nick. *First Certificate Pass Key*. Oxford: Macmillan, 2003. <p.206>)

D. VOCABULARY

18. Loathe means to:

- a. dislike immensely
- b. become seriously ill
- c. search carefully
- d. look very angry

19. The closest meaning to the word **gleam** is:

- a. gather
- b. shine
- c. welcome
- d. clean

(Taken from: Hughes, Arthur. *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. <p.148>)

E. TRANSLATION

Translate to English.

20. chodit na základní školu = _____
21. podle mého názoru = _____
22. novoroční předsevzetí = _____
23. duševní stav = _____
24. šťastný konec = _____
25. bohatá fantazie = _____

Appendix 2

Q 011

Questionnaire

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. Your answers will be used in my Bachelor's Thesis regarding Bilingualism.

A. INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

1. Your date of birth: 1987
2. Are you:
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Your current studies:
 - a. PedF UK
 - b. ČVUT
 - c. Other (please, specify) _____
4. How long have you been learning English?
 - a. 1 - 4 years
 - b. 5 - 8 years
 - c. 9 - 11 years
 - d. 11 and more years
5. You have learned English as your:
 - a. Mother tongue - CZECH
 - b. First (foreign) language
 - c. Second (foreign) language
 - d. Other (please, specify) _____

B. GRAMMAR

Choose the answer which **best** fits the sentence.

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A. that they behave B. behave C. to behave D. behaving
10. _____ that you would be at the meeting.
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A. a B. two C. a couple of D. a pair of
12. It will cost a lot of money to have _____.
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14. A. than B. greatly C. much D. just
15. A. adds B. makes C. comes D. gives
16. A. although B. besides C. moreover D. whereas
17. A. interpreted B. transferred C. exchanged D. translated

D. VOCABULARY

18. Loathe means to:

- a. dislike immensely
 b. become seriously ill
 c. search carefully
 d. look very angry

19. The closest meaning to the word *gleam* is:

- a. gather
 b. shine
 c. welcome
 d. clean

E. TRANSLATION

Translate to English.

20. chodit na základní školu = attend an elementary school
21. podle mého názoru = in my opinion
22. novoroční předsevzetí = a New Year's resolution
23. duševní stav = mental state
24. šťastný konec = happy ending
25. bohatá fantazie = rich imagination