

Abstract

The subject of this diploma thesis is the natural bilingualism in children. In the theoretical section, the work has the objective of providing a comprehensive overview of the current perspective on issues of bilingualism, with emphasis on summarizing the latest studies and research. The empirical section of this diploma thesis is drawn up as a mapping study. The data are analyzed with the aid of qualitative research methods. The sample of twenty Czech-German bilingual families are studied for their strategies of bilingual upbringing, the parents' attitudes towards languages and respectively bilingual upbringing, and the proportional representation of these languages in their children's everyday life. The principal method of collecting data from the parents in this regard was by a questionnaire. Further The Active Vocabulary Test ASWT-R was conducted on twenty-five pre-school children from these families, to determine to what extent Czech and German language development in these children is well-balanced or if alternatively one of them is dominant. The following steps then focused on observing the related circumstances.

Qualitative analyses of the data showed that within the framework of our studied sample, the parents' approach to bilingual upbringing is very conscientious and also, that even if one of the parents does not understand the language of the other, this is no barrier to raising children as bilingual. It was also shown that while the overwhelming majority of the children used their mother's language to begin with – she being the one with whom they had the most contact at first – later, the dominant language for most of them became that of their local environment. In accord with the claims of many authors, the well-balanced development of both languages was shown to be the exception.

Key words: child bilingualism, bilingual cognitive benefits, bilingual speech development, active vocabulary, language dominance, bilingual family