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Bilingual Family

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis focuses on bilingual speakers and factors that influence their knowledge and usage of two languages. It is based on research where bilingual speakers were observed in ordinary situations and on interviews, which were recorded, with the speakers. The case study proves lexical and grammatical interference from one language to the other one. Furthermore, the case study shows that the bilingual speakers are capable of acquiring a language proficiently, if they are surrounded by native environment of a certain language.

**Key words:** Sequential bilingualism, simultaneous bilingualism, infant bilingualism, child bilingualism, adolescent bilingualism, adult bilingualism, code-switching, language acquisition, interference, errors

## **ANOTACE**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá s bilingvními mluvčími a faktory, které ovlivňují znalosti a použití dvou daných jazyků. Tato práce je založená na výzkumu, kdy bilingvní mluvčí byli pozorováni v běžných životních situacích. Dalším zdrojem případové studie jsou rozhovory, které byly nahrány s bilingvními mluvčími. Tato případová studie dokazuje lexikální a gramatické pronikání do obou jazyků navzájem. A dále ukazuje, že bilingvisté nabývají jazykových schopností přirozeněji v určitém prostředí daného jazyka.

**Klíčová slova:** sekvenční bilingvismus, souběžný bilingvismus, bilingvismus nemluvněte, bilingvismus dítěte, bilingvismus dospívajícího, bilingvismus dospělého, přepínání z jednoho jazyka do druhého, osvojení jazyka, interference, chyby

## **STATUTORY DECLARATION**

I herewith formally declare that I have written the bachelor thesis independently. I did not use any other sources except for the ones listed in this thesis.

Prague 29.3.2012

Aneta Kliková

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## **INTRODUCTION**

I decided to write about bilingualism when I became a part of a bilingual family. As a student of foreign languages, I am very interested in how languages work and how one uses more than one language fluently and quite naturally. It is impressive when one is able to switch from one language to another one without any difficulties. Although bilingual people can speak both languages fluently, there can be some imperfections while using one of those two languages.

This thesis focuses on a case study of a bilingual family living in the Czech Republic and coming from the USA. The aim is to explore the language competence of the bilingual children. I focus on their speaking skills. I deal with errors they make either in English or in Czech. I also deal with interference in lexical and grammatical structures of those two languages. I focus on code-switching and the reason why they use some particular Czech words in English and why some particular English words in Czech. My aim is also to deal with their feelings and what language is more comfortable for them when they want to express their emotions and why it is so, when they can speak, comprehend and use two languages proficiently.

Of course, there is also a difference at what age children become bilingual, so my thesis deals with five boys who became bilingual at different ages and I focus on what had an impact on their language skills.

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first part – theoretical contains the theory of bilingualism, simultaneous and sequential bilingualism, infant bilingualism, child bilingualism, adolescent bilingualism, adult bilingualism and first language acquisition. The second part – practical contains interviews which were recorded

with five bilingual speakers. Furthermore, it deals with frequent usage of a particular language, accent, code-switching, mistakes and the nature of expressing oneself.

## **1. THEORETICAL PART**

### **1.1. BILINGUALISM**

The term bilingualism is derived from Latin. Bilingualism is a speaker's ability to speak two languages as native speakers. Linguists cannot agree on one conclusion, as it has not been specified how much knowledge of two languages a bilingual speaker has to acquire in order to be classified as bilingual. Thus there are many different definitions of bilingualism. One of them is that "bilingualism is the ability to use two languages at a native speaker's level." (Riley, Harding-Esch, 40) Whereas it is possible to define who is a bilingual person, it is not possible to define the degree of proficiency, where a person becomes bilingual (Riley, Harding-Esch, 40).

The first definition describes bilingualism as the ability to use two languages at a native speakers' level. According to Riley, Harding-Esch (40) bilingualism is alternation of two languages used by only one speaker.

Generally speaking, bilingualism is alternation of two or more languages used by one speaker and it is the ability to communicate in two languages proficiently. According to Sander (4) bilingualism is defined as being able to communicate in two languages.

According to Černý (360, 361, 397) bilingualism is an alternating usage of two languages alternated by only one person. Bilingualism can be individual or collective and it can have many aspects such as logical, linguistic, sociolinguistic or psycholinguistic.

Furthermore, according to Černý (396, 397) one can divide bilingualism or multilingualism into either a psycholinguistic group or a sociolinguistic group. Bilingualism as a part of psycholinguistics focuses on a speaker alternating two languages where he or she knows both languages like a native speaker. On the other hand, bilingualism as a part of a sociolinguistics deals with social bilingualism, in other words, it deals with society using two languages in communication. Even a whole state can be bilingual or multilingual for example Belgium is bilingual.

As it has been mentioned, psycholinguistics focuses only on an individual speaker alternating two languages. According to Černý (396, 397) psycholinguistics deals with persons, who are considered to be bilingual speakers. It explores if one is able to acquire both languages proficiently and also if one is able to use the languages in the full range of a mother tongue. So this means that psycholinguistics deals with an individual bilingual speaker and how well he or she can use two languages at a native speakers' level.

In contrast to psycholinguistics, there is the other linguistics field so called sociolinguistics. Černý (396, 397) claims that sociolinguistics does not deal with an individual bilingual speaker but with social bilingualism. Social bilingualism is related to bilingualism of social groups of a whole language community. Sociolinguistics considers sufficient to call a certain society or country bilingual or multilingual if in society there exist two languages at the same time, regardless of how many inhabitants are able to speak those languages. From this point of view, Canada can be considered as one of the bilingual states.

### **1.1.1. SIMULTANEOUS AND SEQUENTIAL BILINGUISM**

Čermák (53) claims that according to the aspect of time bilingualism is divided into two sorts – simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. If one learns both languages at the same time it is simultaneous bilingualism. If one learns one language first for instance in his or her native country and then he or she acquires the second language later because of for instance immigration to another country, it is called sequential bilingualism.

Simultaneous bilingualism occurs in families where the mother and the father are of different nationalities and they speak different languages. They want their child to speak two languages. Parents usually want their child to speak both languages proficiently and natural sounding, however, this is not quite possible. Nobody can ever speak both languages perfectly.

The usage of both languages is not balanced because a bilingual speaker prefers to use one of the languages more often as he or she has more experience and knowledge of the language for a certain situation. In specific situations a bilingual speaker uses one of the two languages more naturally. Bilingual speakers prefer the first language to the other one and vice versa in some situations. If a speaker wants to express emotions, one of the languages is more natural for him or her to use.

A bilingual person can be more educated in one of the languages in some specific areas because he or she uses only this language in the situation. For example, a Canadian lawyer speaks English and French but at work he speaks only French. His speaking law skills in French are better than in English as he uses all the terms in French. Even though he is bilingual he does not know both languages perfectly.

Sequential bilingualism occurs mainly in immigrant families. In contrast to simultaneous bilingualism, a person becomes bilingual later or when he or she is more than three years old and does not learn two languages at the same time. Sequential bilingualism appears for instance in a family that moves to another country to live there. The members of the family learn a new language, the language of the country they have moved to. They must adapt to a new culture, language, surrounding, mentality, etc. In this case, their parents do not speak the “new” language; the children must rely only on the local community, which is the only way for them to learn the language. The children who trust the community and find friends can learn the language faster. It depends on the child’s approach towards to the community and its language, and whether he or she wants to be different or whether he or she wants to be a “normal” part of the community as fast as possible.

According to my case study, each of the American boys had to adapt to Czech environment. They started to attend nursery and school without any knowledge of the Czech language. The only way for them to acquire Czech was by being surrounded by Czechs so they could hear and try to understand the language. After several months they were capable of communicating in Czech as they were surrounded by Czechs daily and they could adapt to the “new” language and its community quite fast (“see section 2.1. Case Study – Bilingual Family, p. 17”).

Sequential bilingual speakers are able to acquire a second language as proficiently as their first language. However, it has been proven that children are more capable of acquiring a second language than adolescents and adults. According to Riley, Harding-Esch (90) younger people can learn a second language and acquire its accent, whereas older people are not able to completely acquire its accent. It is based on Critical Period Hypothesis which claims that the human brain is

programmed to learn a language in a period from being an infant until being an adolescent. The “natural way” of acquiring a second language gradually declines the older the person is. A child can fully concentrate on acquiring a second language because the society is designed for it.

Thus according to my case study, the younger boys were more capable of acquiring the Czech language as they have been surrounded by it since they started to attend nursery. Their Czech language skills are more proficient than the older ones (“see section 2.3. Thomas, p. 20; 2.4. Samuel, p. 25; 2.5. Peter, p. 28; 2.6. Dane, p. 31; 2.7. Jeremy, p. 33”).

## **1.2. THE EMERGENCE OF BILINGUALISM**

Riley, Harding-Esch (60) divides the emergence of bilingualism into four age categories. The age categories are infant, child, adolescent and adult.

### **1.2.1. Infant bilingualism**

People are considered infants once they are born up until they are three years old. Some could object that infants cannot speak so it is not possible to define infants’ speaking skills. However, according to Riley, Harding-Esch (60) infants are able to listen to their parents’ languages. This stage of a human being is the most important when it comes to perceiving a language.

According to Černý (26), the first five years of an infant’s development is the most important. It is the particular part of the development where an infant gets to be able to speak a mother tongue and master its rules from a point zero of language knowledge. The very first communication between an infant and an adult is crying of the infant. For instance, the infant cries because he or she is thirsty and the adult reacts to his or her crying and gives him or her milk, which assures him or her that his

or her crying expresses his or her needs and the adult understands it. Then the communicative ability of the infant develops month by month. The surrounding where the infant grows up is the most important factor that influences his or her language knowledge.

According to Riley, Harding-Esch (61) if an infant grows up for example with an American mother and a Czech father, he or she can perceive two languages and then when he or she is older, he or she can master both languages. However, bilingual children start to speak a bit later than monolingual children. The other factors that can play a role at the beginning of children's speaking can be the difference of a boy and a girl. Girls usually start to speak earlier than boys.

Another factor that can influence when a child starts to speak is the birth order of children in a family. It can happen that the first born child speaks a little earlier than the second born child. There are many particular factors that influence when a child starts to speak.

According to my case study, the boys are sequential bilingual speakers and as infants they acquired only one language. Their mother says that each of them started to speak approximately at the same age. However, when they started to become bilingual speakers, the parents say that Thomas and Samuel started to speak Czech as the latest ones of the boys. The reason is they were influenced by American environment for several years. So it was a big change for them to move to the Czech Republic, where they had to adopt a new language and surrounding. The younger boys encountered Czech environment when they were little children at nursery so it was not such a "shock" as for the older boys. Thus it took a bit longer for the older

sons to start to speak the second language (“see section 2.3. Thomas, p. 20; 2.4. Samuel, p. 25”).

### **1.2.2. Child bilingualism**

As I have mentioned we distinguish simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. According to Riley, Harding-Esch (62) an infant is capable of acquiring two languages within his or her first three years of life, then such bilingualism is called simultaneous.

Sequential bilingualism is related to children who emigrate with their parents from their country to another one and they want to adapt to the country where they begin to live (Riley, Harding-Esch, 90). According to my case study, the family moved from the USA to the Czech Republic mainly for business reasons. The children had to adapt a new environment as they wanted to become a part of their new community. Each of them is a sequential bilingual speaker as they acquired a second language after they had moved to the Czech Republic and had started to live here (“see section 2.1. Case Study – Bilingual Family, p. 17”).

Such children have to learn the second language and be proficient at the language in order to study at school. Children are able to adapt to a new environment quite fast and they are also able to learn a second language very fast. Such children go to school every day, they spend time with native speakers of the certain language and they are surrounded by people speaking that language. Even though they do not realize it he or she learns that language explicitly, they learn the language because they hear it. In the end, they use two languages naturally like native speakers.

They maintain their mother tongue and use the other language proficiently in certain occasions. They experience ordinary life situations and find out how to express their

needs, opinions, requests and so on. They can adapt very fast and without problems, however, such a period of their life can be very stressful for them as they are exposed to a new environment and they must become a natural part of it (“see section 2.3. Thomas, p. 20; 2.4. Samuel, p. 25; 2.5. Peter, p. 29; 2.6. Dane, p. 31; 2.7. Jeremy, p. 33”).

According to Černý (27), children need to become a part of their society. While he or she is becoming integrated into the society, he or she is getting ideas about the world, by which he or she is surrounded. This period of children’s development is very demanding and it can influence children’s language abilities for example it can cause some children to stammer, to have a lisp or some other speech defects. So the surrounding and society where children become a part of is very important for children’s correct development of their language skills.

The boys say that Czechs were always very polite and benevolent to them so they enabled them to become a part of the society easily. However, Samuel remembers that some of their classmates laughed at him sometimes as he did not understand something and for example he brought skates instead of swimsuit to school. Another example is when he pronounced something incorrectly and it sounded quite funny so his friends or classmates made fun of him. He says that he is not self-confident enough in Czech because of those experiences from school (“see section 2.4.2. Pronunciation and accent, p. 24”).

### **1.2.3. Adolescent and adult bilingualism**

People who become bilingual after puberty are so called adolescent bilingual speakers and people who become bilingual after they reach the age of twenty and later are so called adult bilingual speakers (Harding-Esch, Riley, 64).

According to Montrul (22) in these both age periods there is unlikely that such learners would acquire a second language in such full competence as their first language. Harding-Esch, Riley (64) shows that the sign of child bilingualism is acquiring of a competent and proficient accent whereas at a later age acquired languages are followed by a foreign accent.

Adolescent or adult bilingual speakers, as they are not as adaptable as children and while it is possible that they will speak without mistakes, will have a foreign accent. Adults are not so flexible in learning a new language to use it proficiently and to sound like a native speaker ("see section 2.3.2. Pronunciation and accent, p. 21").

### **1.3. FIRST LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

According to Fletcher and Garman (9) the first language acquisition is the ability of human beings to comprehend and use a language in order to communicate. Children acquire a sign system which is important for their life relating to cognitive and social aspects. According to Černý (26) children acquire their language and grammatical rules without being openly taught ("see section 2.3. Thomas, p. 20; 2.4. Samuel, p. 25; 2.5. Peter, p. 28; 2.6. Dane, p. 31; 2.7. Jeremy, p. 33").

Whereas monolingual speakers acquire only one language, bilingual speakers acquire two languages. All speakers acquire a language without being explicitly taught.

According to Černý (27) in case of bilingual speakers there appears infiltration either of a grammatical or a lexical system from one language to the other one ("see section 2.3.3. Errors, Czech in English, English in Czech, p. 22; 2.4.3. Errors, Czech in English, English in Czech, p. 26; 2.5.3. Errors, Czech in English, English in Czech, p. 30; 2.6.3. Errors, Czech in English, English in Czech, p. 32; 2.7.3. Errors, Czech in English, English in Czech, p. 34").

While speakers acquire a language, the major task is to understand and produce a language. According to White (2) a major task for the first language acquirer is to arrive at a linguistic system accounting for the input, which allows the child to build linguistic representations so the child can understand and produce language. The first language is permitted to arrive at a grammar on the basis of linguistic experience, as Universal Grammar is proposed as a part of an innate biological language endowment.

So every human being is capable of acquiring languages without being openly taught. He or she is not limited by an amount of how many languages he or she is able to acquire. Every human being is able to acquire languages on the basis of linguistic experience in order to understand, produce and communicate in a language.

## **2. PRACTICAL PART**

### **2.1. CASE STUDY – BILINGUAL FAMILY**

This thesis deals with an American-Czech family of seven members coming from the USA. They have been living in the Czech Republic for fourteen years and several months. The mother is an American and the father is a Czech. The father's parents with their two sons immigrated to the USA from the Czech Republic in 1968. They immigrated for political reasons. They did not speak any English when they moved to the new country. Nowadays they all are fluent in English and also still in Czech. The father became bilingual in the USA when he started to attend school and had to adapt to new environment.

After several years, he met his wife – an American native speaker and they speak only English to each other. They have five sons who are Thomas, Samuel, Peter, Dane and Jeremy. As the parents thought their children would never have to use the

Czech language, they spoke only English with them. They also demanded the father's Czech parents to speak to their children only English, although father's parents' English is not so good – Czech accent and poor grammar which has been mentioned by many American relatives (English native speakers). The father did not speak Czech with his children. He used Czech in the USA only when he spoke with his parents. He thought his Czech was not good enough anymore and he had gotten use to communicating in English in general so he spoke to his sons in English, as he feels more comfortable, natural and skilled in this language. The reason is that he used to use that language in day to day situations. The community is very important for bilingual speakers in order to use the language proficiently.

The parents are Christians and in the 90's they were thinking about coming over to the Czech Republic as missionaries and at that time the father had also started to do business with Czech companies. In 1998, they finally decided to move to the Czech Republic in order to start their missionary work and not to mention it made doing business easier.

None of the family members could speak Czech, except the father who had maintained his Czech language abilities with his parents in the USA. The children started to go to school and nursery without any knowledge of the Czech language. The mother took up private Czech lessons only a few times a week.

Today each one of them can speak English and Czech proficiently. The mother can also speak Czech, however, not as proficiently as the boys. The reason is that she became bilingual when she was an adult and she is not surrounded by Czech community as much as the boys. The boys learned Czech mainly at school and in the Czech community they had been surrounded by. At home, they speak only English

with each other. There are only several exceptional occasions, when they use the Czech language between each other.

I have spent a lot of time with the family and I have observed their speaking abilities.

I researched the usage of two languages, pronunciation, accent, code-switching and errors that sometimes appear while speaking.

I focus on the ordinary daily situations in their lives and on a short Czech and English interview.

## **2.2. CODE-SWITCHING**

As the family has been living in Czech for fourteen years, they are mainly surrounded by Czech community. They sometimes use Czech words while speaking English in order to express some particular words properly. The reason is they do not have the appropriate word in English for some Czech words which is closely connected to different cultures – for example Czech and American culture.

One very special kind of food in Czech is an open sandwich, which is called in Czech “chlebíček”. When they speak about this kind of food in English, they do not use the English expression “open sandwich”; instead they use the Czech expression “chlebíček”. For instance, their Czech grandmother came over to visit them and made open sandwiches for them. When there were only few open sandwiches left, Samuel asked his father “Can I have one more chlebíček, please?” His father responded: “Yes, you can have one chlebíček.” The family says that an open sandwich is a very typical snack in Czech and they think the expression “open sandwich” in English does not depict that particular Czech food.

The other very frequent word used in Czech, while they are speaking English together, is Wiener schnitzel. The same reason is as I have mentioned above. The family says that Wiener schnitzel is again a very typical Czech food so they rather use

the Czech expression “řízek”. For example Samuel was calling his brother and they were arranging when Samuel should pick Thomas up. Thomas’ answer was “You can pick me up, when I finish my řízek, which will be in 10 minutes.”

Peter attends secondary school and he is in his last year. This spring he is taking the leaving exam in order to finish his secondary education. This exam is called in Czech “maturita” and the family does not use “leaving exam” or “GCSE exam” while speaking English. They use only the Czech word “maturita”. Peter’s parents’ most frequent question is “Have you started to study for your maturita yet?”

Although each of them can speak Czech proficiently and knows Czech grammar rules, they use Czech words in the basic form when they speak English. They keep the English structure of the language and its rules so thus when they use “chlebíček” (“open sandwich”) in English, they do not follow the Czech rules, however, the English ones.

There are several Czech expressions they use in English generally because these words concern Czech culture and community. It is part of their life because they have been living in Czech for a long time and they have adapted to it. When the family members speak with each other and each of them are bilingual speakers, they use some Czech words in English. They feel these particular words describe particular things more properly.

### **2.3. THOMAS**

Thomas is the oldest son. At this time, he is twenty-six years old. When he moved to the Czech Republic with his family, he was eleven years old and did not speak any Czech at that time. Their parents speak only English to him. The only way for Thomas to learn the Czech language was to start attending school and to be surrounded by Czechs. His parents were worried about Thomas and his Czech and how he would be

able to handle everything so they decided that Thomas would start attending the fifth grade instead of the sixth.

Now he is a bilingual speaker and his bilingualism is considered sequential bilingualism because he learned the second language after he had moved to the Czech Republic and became a part of Czech community. According to the theoretical thesis, his bilingualism is child bilingualism. However, his bilingualism can be considered adolescent bilingualism as he has been learning Czech since he was eleven, almost twelve years old. When one learns a second language at such a later age, it is possible that one is not able to learn the second language proficiently and some errors can appear. Concerning Thomas, although his Czech is perfect, he still has difficulties with the Czech accent and pronunciation of some particular, for foreign learners very demanding, consonants and words. As the oldest one he was able to acquire English more proficiently than Czech.

### **2.3.1. The usage of the English and Czech language**

Thomas uses the English language with the members of his family, his relatives, and friends from the USA and at English lessons at school. Although his father is Czech, he speaks with Thomas only English as they are used to speaking English to each other and it is natural for both of them. In other ordinary situations, he uses the Czech language as he works in a Czech company, attends a Czech university and dates a Czech girl. Mostly, he is surrounded by Czech community and its language. He encounters the English language only in his family or through electronic mail with his American relatives and friends.

### **2.3.2. Pronunciation and accent**

Thomas pronounces English words proficiently with an American accent as he lived in an American surrounding the most time in comparison to his brothers. We can say

that he was influenced most by that environment. Despite he has been living in the Czech Republic for fourteen years, some errors still appear in his Czech pronunciation and accent. The cause of these pronunciation errors can be that he became a bilingual speaker when he was adolescent. At such an age, there can be some risks that the speaker is not able to acquire the pronunciation or accent properly.

He has difficulties pronouncing words beginning with the Czech consonant “ch”. He is not able to pronounce it properly and he substitutes that consonant with the Czech consonant “k”. For instance, words such as “chci” (“I want”) he pronounces as “ksi” or the word “chameleón” (“chameleon”) he pronounces as “kameleon”.

Thomas says that the biggest problem for him is to pronounce the word “hamburger” in Czech, even though this word is derived originally from English into Czech.

However, the pronunciation of these two words in English and in Czech is different.

He is not capable of pronouncing it in Czech. He has difficulties with the consonants “r” and “g”. Each of these consonants is pronounced fully and strongly in Czech, whereas in English these consonants are reduced and are not pronounced so strongly. It is difficult for him to concentrate on pronouncing this word properly.

### **2.3.3. Errors, Czech in English, English in Czech**

Although bilingual speakers acquire two languages proficiently, some errors can appear while using one of the languages. The cause is unconscious lexical or grammatical penetration of one language into the other one.

Thomas’ first language was English until he was eleven years old. Then he became a part of Czech community and started becoming a bilingual speaker of English and Czech. He acquired English as the first language and he maintains his English particularly only with his family. While I was recording him, he did not make any mistakes in English. He is very fluent in the language. However, according to my long-

term research I have found out that he interferes of the Czech language structure into English but very rarely. For instance, one says “způsob, jak“, literally translated into English “the way how”, however, the right grammatical usage of that expression in English is “the way to.”

He is also fluent in the Czech language although a good amount of errors appear in speaking. The main reason is that he is a sequential bilingual speaker and he acquired the second language when he was an adolescent.

The main difficulty for him while speaking is declension of nouns, adjectives, pronouns and distinguishing genus of nouns and adjectives. For instance, one of the most confusing words for him is “bread” in Czech formally spoken “chléb“, informally spoken “chleba”. He found out that the formal word “chléb” is male genus in Czech. The informal form “chleba” is still male genus; however Thomas thinks that “chleba” is female genus. The reason of his thinking so is that he knows that almost all Czech words ending with the letter “-a” are female genus. He feels that he should use the female genus as it is ended by that letter which indicates the characteristic of female genus. However, in this case the word “bread” is always male genus, no matter if it is formal or informal.

One of his very common errors is relative clauses. When he uses “which” or “who” in relative clauses and he is supposed to give the right declension form and the right genus he usually does not know what the pronoun is related to. For instance he wants to say “He asked that woman who was sitting near him.” In Czech he is supposed to say “Zeptal se té ženy, která seděla blízko něj.” However, he usually confuses himself and he says “Zeptal se té ženy, který seděla blízko něj. “ He uses the pronoun “which” as male genus, although he must use female genus because the pronoun relates to the woman, who is a female. He says that he is confused about

whether the pronoun is connected to the man who asked or the woman who was asked.

#### **2.3.4. Conclusion**

For Thomas it is more natural to speak English, since he acquired the Czech language at his subsequent age. It happens that he communicates or discusses something with his parents or brothers in Czech because in a certain situation they are surrounded by Czech people so they do not want to interrupt the discussion with Czech people and the whole bilingual family communicates in Czech with each other. There are some situations where the whole family speaks Czech with other Czech people, friends or whoever. If the discussion gets tenser and a dispute arises, Thomas usually cannot bear such situations emotionally and always likes to express his opinion because he is very talkative and opinion-sharing. In such situations, he automatically switches into English as he is not able to discuss topics he feels strong about in Czech. He is not able to express himself naturally in Czech.

Thomas' English is proficient - correct accent, pronunciation and usage. The only problem is that his English does not "update" since he does not live in his native country anymore. He is not in that community and he is not able to learn neologisms, slangs and so on. His vocabulary is influenced by the usage of English only with his family and relatives.

His Czech sounds artificial. The cause of this artificiality is his accent and pronunciation, which is more English than Czech. As an adolescent bilingual speaker he was not able to acquire the Czech accent and pronunciation proficiently. However, he knows many neologisms and slangs because he spends a lot of time with his Czech friends, colleagues and many Czech people and this is the only way to get those new slangs and words that emerge.

## **2.4. SAMUEL**

Samuel is the second born son. At this moment, he is twenty-three years old. He speaks English and Czech proficiently. He was eight years old when he moved with his family to the Czech Republic. He spoke only English and no Czech at that time. He started attending the third grade without any knowledge of Czech. The school surrounding was the only way for him to acquire Czech. The first month he did not understand at all. The teachers were very benevolent and did not test him at the beginning of his studies. He could not understand anything and he only listened to the language. During breaks his curious classmates kept asking him many questions but he could not answer as he did not understand them so he only listened to them. After one month of having gone to school, he began to understand more and he was able to work and complete written exercises with the teachers. After half a year he could understand, speak and use the language very well. The most helpful aspect was his Czech classmates and friends he was surrounded by.

Now he is a bilingual speaker and his bilingualism is considered as sequential bilingualism because he acquired the second language after he had moved to the Czech Republic and became a part of Czech community. According to the theoretical thesis, his bilingualism is child bilingualism as he became bilingual when he was eight years old.

### **2.4.1. The usage of the English and Czech language**

Nowadays he is more used to using the Czech language as he is married to a Czech woman. He associates mostly in Czech environment as he attends a Czech university, has Czech friends, lives with a Czech woman and meets up with Czech in-laws very often. He speaks English only when he communicates with his relatives, at English lessons at university and at work because he is an English teacher. He feels that he is

becoming more fluent in Czech now as he does not use the English language so frequently.

#### **2.4.2. Pronunciation and accent**

Samuel pronounces English words proficiently with an American accent. He acquired that accent when he was an infant as English is his first language. In contrary to his older brother Thomas, he acquired the Czech accent proficiently as well.

However, in his case several errors appear in his pronunciation. Mostly it regards words such as in Czech “co” (“what”), “cop” (“plait”) or cement (“cement”) so words that begin with the letter “c” and then follows a vowel. Samuel has sometimes difficulties to pronounce such words correctly especially when he gives a longer speech. In such situations he tends to pronounce the “c” as the English consonant “e”. In the Czech language his pronunciation is considered as speaking with a lisp and he must concentrate on such words beginning with the consonant “c” in order to speak without a lisp.

#### **2.4.3. Errors, Czech in English, English in Czech**

Samuel’s first language was English until he was eight years old. Then he became a part of Czech community and started becoming a bilingual speaker of English and Czech. While I was recording him he did not make any mistakes in English. A mistake appeared when he was talking Czech. He used a wrong declension form of the word “dog” in Czech. He was saying “Vzal jsem **pes** na procházku.” (“I took the **dog** for a walk.”), however, he was supposed to say “Vzal jsem **psa** na procházku. “

One of the most difficult grammatical Czech parts is declension for Sam. He has the same difficulties with some grammatical aspects as Thomas. The main difficulty is declension of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numbers and distinguishing genus and

adjectives. Even though he has acquired the Czech language proficiently and has been using the language every day for fourteen years, he still makes mistakes. The most frequent mistake is the number “two” in Czech “dva” or “dvě”. We distinguish “dva” and “dvě” (“two”) according to its genus in Czech, so it is divided according to either female genus or male genus. When Samuel speaks he is not able to realize where to use “dvě” or “dva” (“two”) automatically. Mostly, he makes mistakes in using these two words. One day he went to a restaurant and he wanted to order two pies for him and his brother. He asked the shop assistant for two pies. He asked in Czech “Můžu si objednat **dvě** koláče?” (“Can I order **two** pies?”). In this case he was supposed to say “Můžu si objednat **dva** koláče?” (“Can I order **two** pies?”).

Another very confusing Czech grammatical phenomenon is similar to “dva” and “dvě” (“two”) and it is the difference between “dva,dvě” and “dvoje” (“two” and “pair”). He says that he cannot understand the Czech rule how to use it and he tries to use it correctly according to how he has acquired that through listening to Czech native speakers.

Americans usually write titles of their relatives with capital letters. They write “Mother”, “Father”, “Granddad” and “Aunt” etc. Samuel believed this rule is also valid in the Czech language. So he writes “moje Mára” (“my Mom”), “naše Teta” (“our Aunt”). In spite of that, he has been explained these words are written with no capital letter in the Czech language. However, he does not want to accept this rule as he feels that “mother, father, etc.” are considered as the names of his relatives. In this case, he keeps the American rule as he feels to write it this way is correct.

#### **2.4.4. Conclusion**

Samuel is another example of sequential child bilingualism. He can speak two languages proficiently, although he is perfect at neither of them. Since he has been living in the Czech Republic for fourteen years, he has missed learning new English vocabulary, idioms or phrases. He personally feels he is not fluent in English 100% and the same he feels in Czech. Sometimes he wants to say something in Czech but he is not able to use the right expression, since he does not know it. The same happens to him when he speaks English. He can say a particular word in Czech but he does not know how to say it in English.

As he uses two languages on a regular basis, he does not know both languages perfectly. The main aspect that influences his language skills is his usage of the language such as frequency or in which specific areas he uses the language. For instance he does business with his father so he mostly uses business vocabulary in English, thus he is more capable of talking about business in English.

He uses the Czech language very frequently so his skills in this language are proficient.

He expresses his emotions, opinions, ideas and so on more naturally in English because it is his first language. Moreover, he is not so self-confident in Czech because of bad experiences that he experienced at school. Some of his classmates and friends laughed at him when he made a mistake and Samuel took it very personally.

#### **2.5. PETER**

Peter is the third born son. At this moment, he is twenty years old. He speaks English and Czech proficiently. When he was five years old, he moved with his family from the USA to the Czech Republic. He spoke only English and no Czech at that time.

Peter had a bit easier conditions than Thomas and Samuel. As he was five years old, he started to attend nursery. The nursery and its environment was the only factor

that influenced Peter in acquiring the Czech language. It was better for Peter as he did not have to learn and take tests like Thomas and Samuel at school. He could only listen to his teachers and classmates and acquired the Czech language that way.

During the first year at nursery Peter acquired the Czech language quite well and he began first grade at school with great knowledge of the Czech language so he did not feel like a stranger as Thomas and Samuel did. The most helpful aspect for Peter was that he could listen and talk to his classmates at nursery. He was surrounded by his friends so he could acquire the Czech language quite naturally.

The teachers were again quite benevolent to Peter and took into consideration that Peter was becoming a bilingual speaker.

Peter has been a bilingual speaker since he was a child and his bilingualism is considered as sequential bilingualism because he acquired the second language after he had moved to the Czech Republic and started to attend nursery. His type of bilingualism is child bilingualism as he acquired the Czech language when he was around six years old.

### **2.5.1. The usage of the English and Czech language**

Peter uses the Czech language very often as he attends a Czech high school, has a Czech girlfriend and Czech friends. He spends most of his time in Czech community. He uses English only when he speaks with his relatives or at English lessons at school.

### **2.5.2. Pronunciation and accent**

Peter pronounces English words proficiently with an American accent. He acquired the accent as his first language when he was an infant. Since Peter acquired Czech when he was at nursery, his Czech accent is perfect. He pronounced everything correctly with the correct stress and intonation. His American and Czech accents are proficient.

### **2.5.3. Errors, Czech in English and English in Czech**

Peter speaks quite proficiently both languages; despite there appear several mistakes sometimes. Whereas his Czech is slightly better than Thomas' and Samuel's, his English is slightly worse than Thomas' and Samuel's. The reason is that he acquired the Czech language at an earlier age than Thomas and Samuel and he was not surrounded by American community as much as Thomas and Samuel.

Peter's English language skills are perfect. However, sometimes he cannot remember some basic words in English. For instance once he was having dinner with his family and he wanted to say "This cake is a bit bitter." but he could not remember how to say "bitter" in English. So he said "This cake is a bit ... how do we say "hořký", ("bitter") in English? " Although his first language is English, nowadays he is more proficient in Czech as he associates mostly in Czech environment.

Peter usually switches from English to Czech when he talks to his relatives and wants to say what he has experienced in Czech community. For instance he said to his father: "Today I had a chat with a friend of mine and I was like "Jak se ti líbil ten film?" ("How did you like that film") and he was like "Jo, byl super." ("It was cool.") I do not understand why he liked that film, dad, because it was a really stupid film." So if Peter experiences an interesting dialog in Czech it feels more natural for him to convey that experience to his relatives in the Czech language, although they mostly speak only English with each other.

### **2.5.4. Conclusion**

Peter spends most of his time in Czech surrounding, which really affects him. He is more used to speaking in Czech. He has acquired Czech slang, neologism and the teenagers' way of speaking. As he does not live in the USA anymore, he does not know the neologisms or the nowadays teenagers' way of speaking in English.

He uses English mainly at home with his family. He is still proficient in English, but as he is not surrounded by American community he forgets English vocabulary from time to time. He does not remember many English words; he acquires more and more Czech words as he has been a part of Czech community for fourteen years and uses the language day by day. Despite all of these facts he feels more natural expressing himself in English, as it is his first language.

## **2.6. DANE**

Dane is the fourth born son. At this moment, he is sixteen years old. He speaks English and Czech proficiently. When his family moved to the Czech Republic, he was three years old. He spoke only English and no Czech at that time. Dane had similar advantages like Peter in acquiring the Czech language. The first year of living in Czech he did not attend any nursery and did not speak any Czech. He began attending nursery when he was four years old. He began to acquire Czech at nursery when he had to communicate with his teachers and classmates. When he started to attend first grade, his Czech language skills were excellent. He could understand and speak Czech at school without any problem. The teachers helped Dane to become a natural part of Czech community and supported him in learning at school. Despite he acquired the Czech language at nursery, he was still learning new words at school because he took several different subjects such as math, domestic science etc. which were not taught in nursery.

### **2.6.1. The usage of the English and Czech language**

Dane uses Czech very often since he attends a Czech high school. He is surrounded by Czech environment every day– his friends, school, TV, radio etc. He uses English only with his relatives and at English lessons.

### **2.6.2. Pronunciation and accent**

Dane's Czech and American accents are proficient. He acquired the American accent as the first language. He acquired the Czech accent while he was attending nursery and was around Czechs. He sounds very natural in English and he sounds also very natural in Czech.

### **2.6.3. Errors, Czech in English and English in Czech**

As Dane has been living in the Czech Republic for fourteen years, he has acquired the Czech language very well in contrary to his older brothers. He barely makes mistakes in Czech. However, more mistakes appear while speaking English. He had lived in the USA only for three years as an infant before he immigrated with his family to the Czech Republic. While I was recording him, I did not detect any mistakes, he spoke very fluently and without mistakes. As he has grown up in Czech community, his Czech is excellent compared to his older brothers Thomas and Samuel. On one hand, he was a part of Czech surrounding, when he was a little boy and he could adapt to it much easier than his older brothers, on the other hand his English language skills are not as proficient as his older brothers' English language skills. The reason is that he has spent more time in Czech surrounding and less time in American surrounding. The consequences of that are that the Czech language structure appears very often while speaking English.

Dane wanted to suggest to his family to go get some pizza. In Czech we usually use the preposition "on" if we want to go to a restaurant to get some food. So Dane used the Czech structure and its preposition and said "Let's go **on** pizza."

Dane mostly uses incorrect structure of indirect sentences in English. He does not keep the English word order. He usually says for instance "Tell me where is it." His parents keep correcting these mistakes that he makes very often.

#### **2.6.4. Conclusion**

Dane has been living most of his life in the Czech Republic and he uses Czech more often than English. As he does not have much experience with the American environment he does not have much experience with the language as well nowadays. Although he seems to be very fluent in Czech, he feels more natural expressing himself in English as it is his first language. He prefers to say his opinions, ideas, or experiences in English, despite that he is very proficient in Czech and makes mistakes mostly only in English.

#### **2.7. JEREMY**

Jeremy is the fifth born son. At this moment, he is fifteen years old. He was a little baby – six months old, when his family and he moved to the Czech Republic.

Although he was so small when they started to live in Czech, his parents talked to him only English and they relied on that he would acquire the Czech language at nursery and school like his brothers. Jeremy started to attend nursery when he was four years old. Since that time he has been surrounded by Czech community where he has become a bilingual speaker.

In contrary to his older brothers his English language skills are weaker. The cause is that he has been involved in the Czech environment since he was one year old and has not been involved in American environment as much as his older brothers.

Jeremy is weak mainly in English vocabulary as he does not have so much experience with the language's surrounding.

Jeremy needed his teachers' and classmates' help and support like his brother did. It was not easy for him to learn the Czech grammar. Nowadays, he is more proficient in the Czech grammar than his older brothers according to the results at school.

### **2.7.1. The usage of the English and Czech language**

Jeremy uses Czech very often as he attends elementary school and has many Czech friends. He speaks English only with his relatives and at English lessons at school.

### **2.7.2. Pronunciation and accent**

Jeremy's American accent is proficient. However, his Czech accent is quite weak, although he has been living in Czech community since he was six months old. He is not able to pronounce all Czech words properly with the correct stress and intonation. It is quite difficult to understand him sometimes as he does not pronounce all letters in words for instance he wanted to say "nestranný" ("unbiased") and he did not pronounce it properly and the word sounded like "nesranný".

### **2.7.3. Errors, Czech in English and English in Czech**

Jeremy as the youngest son has most difficulties in English and also in Czech. He does not use correct structure in any of the languages. In his case there is lexical and grammatical interference into both languages very often. Once Jeremy was in the kitchen and I was helping him with the dishes. He tried to explain me where the dishes go. In Czech we use "the dish **belong to** that cupboard" literally translated but Jeremy did not use that Czech structure when he was telling me where I should place the dishes and he kept telling me for example "Ty talíře jdou sem" ("The plates go here.") or "Ty lžíce jdou tam" ("The spoons go there"). So he used the English structure in Czech. Jeremy also does not use indirect questions in English correctly and his parents keep correcting him. He told his father: "Dad, granddad asked me how was I at the camp."

Jeremy was talking to me in Czech and he wanted to tell me something but then he switched into English and asked his father: "Dad, how can I say "zasnoubit se" (get

engaged) in English?” so he also does not know many words in English that he has not been confronted with yet.

Jeremy also makes mistakes in Czech declension of nouns, adjectives and pronouns.

He said that it is very difficult for him to concentrate on the correct form of a word while speaking. He was telling me a joke and many times he misused declension forms for instance he said: “Zeptal se té dívky, **kterou** byla v prvním patře. “ (“He asked that girl **who** was on the first floor.”) He was supposed to say “Zeptal se té dívky, **která** byla v prvním patře.”

#### **2.7.4. Conclusion**

Jeremy has been living in the Czech Republic most of his life and he uses Czech in very common life situations, whereas he uses English only at home. As he is so much younger than the three oldest sons he does not have such a close relationship with them and he spends most of his time with his brother Dane. They speak English together but both of them make mistakes in English and they acquire those mistakes unconsciously. As they both spend a lot of time in Czech environment and then they speak English only with each other most of the time, thus there emerges interference of lexical and grammatical structure of those two languages.

As Jeremy does not live in the USA anymore, his vocabulary is not as large as his older brothers' and he sometimes asks his parents for the meanings of words. Jeremy's Czech vocabulary is broader as he lives in Czech surrounding. Yet, his English is not so proficient and lives in Czech; he feels more natural expressing himself in English as it is the first language that he acquired.

## **CONCLUSION**

In my bachelor thesis I deal with bilingualism in a family. I describe at what age bilingualism can emerge and under what circumstances one can become a bilingual speaker. There are several reasons why one becomes a bilingual speaker. One of the reasons can be that one has his or her parents of different nationalities and each of the parents wants his or her child to speak his or her language. If a child acquires two languages at the same time, it is so called simultaneous bilingualism.

The other reason can be that one immigrates to another country and must adapt to its environment. When one acquires a second language at a later age, it is so called sequential bilingualism. I research a family that moved from the USA to live in the Czech Republic. The mother is American and the father is Czech. Although the father is Czech, he does not speak Czech to his children so his five sons had to acquire the Czech language when they come to the Czech Republic and started attending nurseries and schools. The case study is based on interviews, which were recorded with these five sons and on many experiences that I have experienced with this family. I was able to spend a lot of time with them and observe their language choice in certain situations, natural expressing, errors, code-switching and many other factors that concern bilingual speakers.

According to my case study, the main factor that affected the bilingual speakers was the environment they are surrounded by. This is one way to acquire and maintain language skills. If bilingual speakers are not surrounded by a particular language environment it is simply impossible to acquire neologisms or maintain a language. They can even forget some of the vocabulary as each of the boys does.

For bilingual speakers it is very typical to interfere lexical and grammatical structure of one those languages into another one. He or she is influenced by two structures of two languages and sometimes they tend to penetrate into each other.

Although bilingual speakers are capable of using two languages proficiently, one language is always more natural for them to use. It regards so called language choice when a bilingual speaker chooses one of those languages to use. The reason is that he or she has a larger vocabulary on a particular subject in one of the languages as he or she uses only that one language for the subject. Even though he or she is able to speak two languages under all circumstances, they use one of the languages more naturally for a certain situation.

This case study shows that sequential bilingual speakers express themselves more naturally in the language that they acquired as the first one. It proves that it is very important to be surrounded by the environment of a particular language in order to enlarge vocabulary and maintain knowledge of a certain language. The older boys are more capable of using English as they attended school in the USA and grew up there more years than the younger ones. On the other hand, the younger ones are more capable of using Czech as they have been surrounded by Czech environment since they started to attend nursery. The younger ones have become a natural part of Czech community at the expense of losing some skills of the English language. Thus bilingual speakers are dependent of how often they use a particular language, in which situations in order to have a large vocabulary and use correct grammatical structures.

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