

Bilingualism and Social Flexibility

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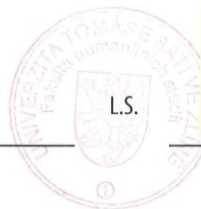
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ABSTRAKT

Bilingvismus a jeho spojitost se sociální flexibilitou je téma, které je zkoumáno již několik posledních desetiletí. Předchozí studie poukazují na četné pozitivní dopady v oblasti kognitivního rozvoje zapříčiněné bilingvismem. S pomocí odborné literatury z oblasti bilingvismu a sociální flexibility a informací plynoucích z analýzy rozhovorů s jednotlivými bilingvními respondenty, se tato práce zaměří na zodpovězení otázky: Jakými způsoby a do jaké míry ovlivňuje bilingvismus sociální flexibilitu? Na základě přehledu literatury o bilingvismu a jeho spojitosti s kognitivními procesy jedince popisuje tato práce teorii bilingvismu, konkrétně definici pojmu bilingvismus, jeho propojení s oblastí jazyka a historický přehled. Dále tato práce vymezuje typy bilingvismu a jeho spojitost se sociální flexibilitou, tzn. s kognitivním rozvojem, schopností empatie a komunikačními dovednostmi. Součástí této práce je také výzkum, jehož se zúčastnilo šest bilingvních respondentů. Tento výzkum je proveden pomocí metody rozhovoru a dotazníku s otevřenými otázkami. Výsledky poukazují na výrazný potenciál bilingvních jedinců v oblasti sociální flexibility. Nicméně tento potenciál je limitován určitými osobnostními vlastnostmi (například mírou sebevědomí). K potvrzení této teorie je zapotřebí dalšího výzkumu s větším počtem respondentů.

Klíčová slova: bilingvismus, cultural frame switching, empatie, komunikační kompetence, osobnost, semilingvismus, sociální flexibilita

ABSTRACT

Bilingualism and its connection to an individual's social flexibility is a topic that has been researched for the last few decades. The past studies have suggested that numerous positive effects in the area of cognitive development are related to the notion of bilingualism. Based on given information and data in the field together with my own research, this thesis is focused on answering the question: In which ways and to what degree does bilingualism affect social flexibility? This thesis describes the theory of bilingualism, types of bilingualism, and the connection of bilingualism to social flexibility, i.e. cognitive development, empathy, and communicative competence. Based on this theory, I carried out a study with six bilingual respondents, using an interview and questionnaire as research instruments. The results of the study demonstrated that bilinguals have a significant potential for an increased degree of social flexibility. However, these capabilities are hindered by certain personality characteristics (e.g. low self-confidence). For an affirmation of this theory, more research with a higher number of respondents is needed.

Keywords: bilingualism, social flexibility, communicative competence, cultural frame switching, empathy, personality, semilingualism

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

Jiří Král

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INTRODUCTION

Until recently, bilingualism was perceived as a special case of language development. Although many monolingual individuals confronted foreign languages in numerous instances, the idea of speaking a second language fluently always seemed rather remote (Pearson, 2007: 1). Most monolingual speakers seldom attain the native fluency in their non-native language (Hornby, 1977: 1). However, the mobility of people has increased in the last two decades, resulting in the emergence of a greater number of bilingual families (Paradis, 2007: 15).

The bilingual language experience of bilingual and multilingual individuals differs from person to person based on a variety of different criteria, such as the situation in which the languages are used and the age at which the languages were acquired. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to inform the public about the characteristics of the notion of bilingualism, the challenges surrounding it, and above all, its advantages (Paradis, 2007: 15).

This thesis aims to highlight the possible positive perks of bilingual language acquisition in terms of individual's social flexibility.

This thesis consists of a theoretical and an empirical part. The theoretical part attempts to describe the notion of bilingualism to the reader. This is mainly achieved in Chapter 1, by explaining the main characteristics of the notion of bilingualism and by presenting a number of its definitions provided by adept linguists, followed by a brief historical overview of the topic. In Chapter 2, the types of bilingualism are classified. Chapter 3 focuses on the possible areas of benefit emerging from second language acquisition, including cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence.

In the empirical part, I investigate social flexibility of bilinguals by conducting my own study with a sample of six bilingual respondents. I decided to acquire the information for my study by sending my respondents a questionnaire in order to learn more about their language background, experience, and proficiency, followed by conducting an interview. In the interview, I asked the respondents questions related to the four aforementioned areas (cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence).

Based on the information obtained from my research, I attempt to answer the question: In which ways and to what degree does bilingualism affect an individual in terms of social flexibility?

I. THEORY

1 BILINGUALISM: AN INTRODUCTION

As an introduction to this bachelor's thesis, I present a brief discussion concerning the topic of how 'bilingualism' could be defined in the best possible way. The main point of focus is the inconsistency in definitions of the concept of bilingualism. Furthermore, I describe the contribution of bilingualism to the development of language skills and abilities. I conclude this introductory chapter by providing a historical overview of this topic.

1.1 Definitions of Bilingualism

To decode the meaning of the word bilingualism, it is necessary to examine its syntactical structure. The prefix 'bi-', originating from Latin, denotes "two," and the root 'lingua' is generally translated as "language." Literal syntactical meaning stands for 'two languages,' which does not give any insight into its semantical meaning. According to the Merriam Webster's dictionary (n.d.), bilingualism is: "the ability to speak two languages." In comparison, the adjective 'bilingual' is defined as "using or be able to use two languages, especially with equal fluency." Based on what Harding-Esch and Riley (2006: 22) state in conclusion to their research, when we publicly ask what being a bilingual means, people usually have a very general understanding. Most of them will say it means to be able to control two languages to some extent. This explanation is a very bare one. Bilingualism is a broad concept which does not allow for a single definition. It proves to be extremely difficult to clearly define a point at which one can be referred to as a bilingual individual, and even adept academics have different opinions on this topic. Below are shown some definitions of bilingualism as presented in Harding-Esch's and Riley's work (2006: 23):

1. "Bilingualism [is] native-like control of two languages... Of course, one cannot define a degree of perfection at which a good foreign speaker becomes bilingual: the distinction is relative."
(L. Bloomfield, 1933)
2. "Bilingualism is understood... to begin at the point where the speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language."
(E. Haugen, 1953)
3. "The phenomenon of bilingualism [is] something entirely relative... We shall therefore consider bilingualism as the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual."
(W. E. Mackey, 1962)
4. "The bilingual or wholistic view of bilingualism proposes that the bilingual is an integrated whole which cannot easily be decomposed into two separate parts. The bilingual is NOT the sum of two complete or incomplete monolinguals; rather, he or she has a unique and specific linguistic configuration."

(F. Grosjean, 1992)

These examples show that the definitions concerning the degree of a language for an individual to be called bilingual vary.

In her work, Romaine (1995: 11) presents us with a notion of bilingualism as a spectrum on which an individual's position is determined by his or her language proficiency. On one side stands Haugen's (1969: 7) statement that bilingualism begins once a language speaker is capable of producing complete and meaningful utterances in the second language.

A similar explanation has been provided by Diebold (1961: 97), who introduces the notion of 'incipient bilingualism' which is viewed as a point at which an individual has reached an absolute minimal proficiency needed to fall into the category of bilinguality. Based on this definition of bilingualism, it may be possible to be considered a bilingual individual by having only a minimal competence in any language ability (i.e. listening, reading, speaking, writing) while having no control in others (Baker, 2001: 5; Diebold, 1961: 97). The skills and abilities of language are described in more detail in Chapter 1.2. For instance, one may not possess any proficiency in productive skills of a language, but may be able to understand certain utterances, to have receptive skills, allowing them to possess the title of bilingual (Romaine, 1995: 7). Other linguists call this limited control of a language 'passive' or 'receptive' bilingualism (Romaine, 1995: 7). Hockett (1958: 327) calls this term 'semi-bilingualism.' However, despite all these terms having a similar explanation, the term of incipient bilingualism is unique as it refers only to an absolute initial point of language control, while other terms are broader (Diebold, 1961: 98).

The category of 'minimal bilingualism' or semi-bilingualism (eventually even receptive or passive bilingualism) could apply to, for instance, tourists or business people who know just a few phrases, sentences, or greetings (Romaine, 1995: 7, Baker, 2001: 6). However, this theory, often known as minimal bilingualism, proves to be too inclusive to be relevant. Almost everybody has come to contact with a foreign language and managed to remember at least a few of its words, especially in the present age of globalization and advanced technology (Baker, 2001: 6).

On the other side of the spectrum stands the theory of 'maximal bilingualism.' In accordance with this notion, bilinguals should be considered individuals that fulfill the more typical and general idea of perfect language control. Excellent and also one of the first examples of maximal bilingualism can be seen in Bloomfield's (1933: 56) definition

of bilingualism, as seen in the example (1), where Bloomfield refers to the ‘native-like control of two languages.’ But contrary to the minimal bilingualism, this theory seems to be too narrow, as most foreign language learners hardly ever manage to reach the goal of ‘native-like’ control (Baker, 2001: 6).

Based on the definitions so far presented, we can see that bilingualism is a question of relativity. Further on, all previously shown definitions focus namely on the level of proficiency in both languages, but the nature of bilingualism is not limited only to linguistics. Those who study bilingualism are expected to have an insight into psychology, sociology, biology, etc. as well (Hamers et al., 2000: 7). “We view bilinguality as the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication. This access is multidimensional as it varies along with a number of psychological and sociological dimensions.” (Hamers et al., 2000: 25). Examples of such multidimensionality of bilingualism can be found in Harding-Esch’s and Riley’s work (2006: 22), where they provide us with a case of a bilingual lawyer who uses English at work and her second language, French, at home. Her domestic French is far more advanced than her domestic English, while in the case of legal language, her English is much more superior than French. Another example shown by them is of a chess player who lives in England. He meets a French boy who turns out to be a chess player as well and decides to talk with him about his hobbies in French. But as it turns out, he does not know how to talk about chess in French. Based on this, it becomes apparent that our degree of bilinguality depends on much more than just a linguistic proficiency. Depending on how individuals spend their time and communicate with people, the activities they perform and are interested in all influence the level of their bilingual language competence (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2006: 22).

In order to get a holistic impression of an individual in the matter of bilingualism, many different dimensions need to be taken into consideration, as they influence speaker’s linguistic choices, style, and abilities (Romaine, 1995: 12). The notion of bilingualism is a concept of great inconsistency defined variously even among linguists.

1.2 Degree of Bilingualism

The degree of bilingualism is strictly connected to the levels of linguistic proficiency in all four linguistic (language) abilities in two different languages. According to Baker (2001: 4), four basic abilities of language exist. Listening, writing, speaking, and reading. These

are further divided into receptive and productive skills and also into oracy and literacy, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1 Language abilities

	Oracy	Literacy
Receptive skills	Listening	Reading
Productive skills	Speaking	Writing

(Adapted from Colin Baker, 2001: 5)

All abilities shown in the table are learned individually. It is not uncommon for a person to possess a different degree of proficiency in all of them. As already stated in the previous chapter, for instance, users of a language who have a good passive understanding of a language (receptive skills) may not be very proficient in the active abilities of language (productive skills) or vice versa. Someone else may be a good listener and speaker, but his literary linguistic capabilities may be lacking. Different users have all of the listed abilities on different levels. Further on, all of these listed abilities can be divided into simpler, more specific elements of a language, so-called ‘skills within skills’ (Baker, 2001: 5). These are, for instance, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, semantic and pragmatic abilities, styles, etc. Because every person acquires different abilities at a unique pace, it is extremely difficult to holistically measure one’s linguistic grade of control of a language. The concept of language is, therefore, multidimensional and hard to specifically categorize (Baker, 2001: 5). This concept is broad and abstract, with many variables that make it nearly impossible to measure someone’s degree of control of a language and further on comparing this degree with someone else’s. For instance, new words, phrases, and grammatical elements are being developed every day. Certain technical terms will always remain unknown to somebody who did not invest his resources into learning them etc. Thus, for users of language, it is impossible to learn and know everything in a language. They always end up with a limited proficiency of abilities of languages (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2006: 22).

Romaine (1995: 13) supports a similar idea to Baker (2001), as seen in the previous paragraph. In her work *Bilingualism*, she presents us with a matrix that can be used for measurement of an individual’s degree of control of a language in both languages A and B.

Table 2 Measuring degree of bilingualism

Skills	Levels				
	Phonological/Grammatical A/B	Lexical A/B	Semantic A/B	Stylistic A/B	Graphic A/B
Listening					
Reading					
Speaking					
Writing					

(Adapted from Mackey, 2000: 28 and Romaine, 1995: 13)

In cases of multidimensionality provided in a previous chapter, the speaker may sometimes have difficulties finding the right words, phrases, etc. needed for the specific conversation and needs to resort to using other non-optimal deviations instead. This is called as interferences. In their work, Harding-Esch and Riley (2006: 35) present us with Weinreich's (1953: 1) definition: "Those deviations from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language." Interferences are observable at any level of language function or structure. For illustration, at the phonetic level, where an incorrect pronunciation leads to accents. At the level of vocabulary, where someone who learns English as a second language may, for instance, confuse words such as 'bookstore' and 'library,' due to their similar meaning. In grammatical structures, using the word order in a way which may seem unnatural to a native speaker, etc. (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2006: 35).

Speaker's degree of bilingualism roots from the complexity of the concept of language itself and its abilities (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2006: 22; Romaine, 1995: 12-13).

1.3 Bilingualism: A Historical Overview

This chapter focuses on a brief historical overview of the topic of bilingualism, presenting ideas and opinions of some of the most influential researchers in the field with a preferred focus on the research relevant to the subject of this thesis.

One of the earliest studies of bilingualism was carried out by Bloomfield (1927). In his famous account of English/Menomini bilingual children, he describes lower linguistic achievements in bilingual children compared to their monolingual counterparts. A similar negative outlook regarding the topic of bilingualism can be seen in the work of Hakuta et al. (1985: 320). In the early studies, bilinguals were presented as lacking in language abilities in both of their respective languages, not being able to match the abilities of monolin-

guals (Shin, 2013: 6). These findings usually became widely respected in the field of linguistics and affected bilingual educational practices and policies in a negative manner for future advancement in the field of bilingualism (Milroy, 1998: 3).

Based on more recent researches by Romaine (1995) and Grosjean (1998), it is very likely that the reason for such a negative outlook on bilingualism in the early studies was due to methodological problems. These early studies failed to account for variables such as sex, educational, socio-economic status, and other biographical data. The majority of linguists used to ignore such data, and therefore this is the reason why early studies of the topic of bilingualism are considered invalid (Hakuta et al., 1985: 320). However, a few exceptions can be found. Hakuta et al. (1985: 321) mention two studies that took these major methodological flaws into consideration. The first one was carried out by McCarthy (1930), who presented us with a fact that over half of the bilingual school children in the US came from families with low socioeconomic status. The second study was conducted by Fukuda in 1925. In this research, Fukuda found out that the majority of monolingual speakers who scored the highest results in psychometric intelligence tests came from executive and successful, supposedly much better educated, higher classes.

Another issue mentioned by Hakuta et al. (1985: 321) was an insufficient effort in choosing the bilingual subjects. Their background wasn't always clear, and researchers failed to acknowledge the subjects' proficiency in both languages. Without taking such information into account, the past researches lose its credibility, and new, more accurate studies are required to get further insight into the topic. It is impossible to know for sure whether subjects chosen in the past were fluent bilinguals or just monolinguals in the process of acquiring a new language (Hakuta et al., 1985: 321).

These methodological issues lead to the emergence of the theory of 'semilingualism.' Based on Grosjean (1998: 133), to fall into this category of semilingualism, an individual's proficiency in both of their languages needs to be lower than the already stated native-like level. The deficiencies in their language abilities may lie in the size of their vocabulary. They may mix their languages etc. Being semilingual is therefore seen as a handicap. Though as Grosjean (1998: 133) states, it is essential to ask three questions before classifying someone as semilingual: Is the individual still in the process of acquiring or restructuring his or her languages, or is he or she still adjusting to a new linguistic environment? Is the individual mostly in a mixed, bilingual mode, where he or she uses both languages daily (for illustration at home) or if the monolingual version of one language is

just being newly discovered? And finally, have the individual's needs for communication been met in the past? After answering all these questions, it becomes possible for us to understand that the majority of these semilingual subjects are probably adjusting to a new social environment, new domains of use of language, new language skills, or its varieties or just to new language in general (Grosjean, 1998: 133).

As the years went by, the view of bilingualism slowly began to improve. A huge stepping-stone that helped to improve the image of bilingualism was the work named *The Relation of Bilingualism to Intelligence*, written by Peal and Lambert in 1962 in which they focused on 10-year-old bilingual and monolingual children. For their study, they chose 'balanced bilinguals' (for an explanation, see Chapter 2.2) from a similar socio-economic background. All of their subjects were selected from Montreal (Canada) from the same school system. To make sure their samples of monolinguals and bilinguals were indeed on par, they tested the children (their possible research subjects) by four measures. "The measures were: (1) the relative frequency of words provided in a word association task in L1 and L2; (2) the relative frequency of words in L1 and L2 detected in a series of letters; (3) the frequency of words recognized in L2 (English) from a subset chosen from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; and (4) subjective self-ratings & ability in speaking, understanding, reading, and writing in L2." (Hakuta et al., 1985: 322).

Based on the results of this measurement, Peal and Lambert were able to distinguish between balanced bilinguals and so-called 'pseudo-bilinguals.' Peal and Lambert's definition of pseudo-bilinguals is: "The pseudo-bilingual knows one language much better than the other, and does not use his second language in communication..." (1962: 6).

In Peal and Lambert's experiment, the participants were the children who appeared to have high levels of proficiency in both of their languages and thus were considered balanced bilinguals. Contrary to past research, bilinguals in this experiment performed significantly better than monolinguals. They reached higher scores in cognitive tests and even in tests of verbal and non-verbal abilities. "Overall, bilinguals were found to have a more diversified pattern of abilities than their monolingual peers." (Hakuta et al., 1985: 322).

But even these findings seemed to be slightly biased, in this case, towards bilinguals. The project has been met with a certain degree of criticism as the bilingual subjects used in this experiment were children who passed a certain score in the English *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test*. This test is usually used to measure the intelligence of monolingual students, so it is possible that the bilinguals' superior results were connected to their

overall high levels of intelligence. Moreover, the bilingual children were in general older than their monolingual counterparts, meaning that they had been exposed to formal education for a more extended period of time and had more opportunities to improve their language skills (Hakuta et al., 1985: 322).

Despite its criticism, Peal and Lambert's research concerning bilingual children is still considered a significant contribution to the field. It resulted in increased awareness of the importance of selecting appropriate bilingual samples for further studies in the field of bilingualism (Hakuta et al., 1985: 323).

1.4 Summary

This introductory chapter explained possible definitions of bilingualism. Furthermore, it examined its connection to the field of language and finally presented a brief historical overview of the topic. Based on the information covered in this chapter, it becomes clear that bilingualism is a notion of great inconsistency.

2 TYPES OF BILINGUALS

The following chapter covers types of bilinguals. As bilingualism is a notion with no single agreed-upon definition, researchers in the field came up with various differing classifications determined by various dimensions relevant to the topic (Moradi, 2014: 107).

2.1 Early and Late Bilinguals

According to the age of exposure to two or more languages individuals can be divided into early and late bilinguals. When a child is exposed to and starts acquiring its second language in the pre-adolescent phase of its life, he or she is considered an early bilingual. Opposed to that, late bilingualism has been considered the acquisition of two languages, where one language is acquired before the beginning of the adolescent phase (occurs around the 11th year of life), and the second language is learned after the beginning of the adolescent phase. (Beardsmore, 1986: 28).

The main distinction between early and late bilinguals is observable based on their attained linguistic competence. Early bilinguals are usually considered to be able to achieve native-like linguistic competence in both languages (Beardsmore, 1986: 33). Late bilinguals, in contrast, usually reach lower linguistic competence in their second language and are typically regarded as non-native speakers of the second language. Their linguistic shortcomings are most notable in their inability to detect linguistic ambiguities and in structural, grammatical inadequacies (Beardsmore, 1986: 34).

2.1.1 Simultaneous and Sequential Bilingualism

Early bilingualism can further be divided into two types. The first one being simultaneous early bilingualism. This occurs in a situation where a child starts acquiring two languages from birth, at the same time. Such a child usually becomes a strong bilingual with similar language proficiency in both languages. The second type, called sequential early bilingualism, occurs when a child starts acquiring its second language after having already reached a certain proficiency in its first language. Example being, when a child moves to a different place where the commonly used dominant language is not its native one. As a result, this individual still becomes a strong bilingual, but the time to fully reach the native-like competence in his or her second language is longer and requires more time as opposed to simultaneous early bilinguals (McLaughlin, 1984: 101).

Late bilingualism generally refers to individuals who started to learn their second language later in life, during adulthood or adolescence. Since these individuals have al-

ready acquired their first language, they use that linguistic experience to learn the second language (Beardsmore, 1986: 28).

2.2 Balanced and Unbalanced Bilinguals

Another distinction divides individuals into balanced and unbalanced bilinguals. This division was firstly used in the work *The Relation of Bilingualism to Intelligence* by Peal and Lambert (1962) in which they carried out an experiment trying to compare the cognitive capabilities of monolingual and bilingual children. The topic of this work is covered in this thesis in Chapter 1.3.

The distinction between balanced and unbalanced bilingual lies in the comparison of achieved proficiency and fluency in their respective languages. Those who manage to reach a similar degree of mastery and proficiency in both of their languages are considered balanced bilinguals. On the contrary, bilinguals, whose degree of proficiency of one language notably exceeds the proficiency of the other language, are considered unbalanced bilinguals. They are more competent in one language than in the other, while balanced bilinguals reach a similar level of competence in both languages (Peal and Lambert, 1962: 6).

2.3 Coordinate, Compound, and Sub-Coordinate Bilinguals

Romaine (1995: 79) presents us with Weinreich's (1968) distinction of bilingualism. His division of bilinguals into, coordinate, compound, and sub-coordinate is connected to how an individual's concepts of a language are encoded in his or her brain. According to his opinions, the differences in how these concepts were encoded vary based on how different languages in question were acquired.

In coordinate bilingualism, the languages are acquired in separate environments resulting in the words of different languages being stored in different meaning units. Romaine (1995: 79) uses an example of a person whose native language is English, who then later in school learned French. Based on this theory, due to him or her being exposed to both languages in different contexts and environments, it is believed that different conceptual systems would develop for the two languages. According to this explanation, the word 'book' would have a separate meaning from the word 'livre' in French.

In compound bilingualism, an individual acquires the languages concurrently, in the same context, leading to a fused representation of those languages in the brain. In this case,

both of the previously presented words (French 'livre' and English 'book') would have a common mental representation in the person's brain. They would be two different verbal labels attached to a single concept (Romaine, 1995: 79).

Romaine (1995: 79) further informs us that Weinreich divided bilingualism into another sub-type, the sub-coordinate bilingualism. Romaine (1995: 79) presents us with a definition: "In the sub-coordinate type, bilinguals interpret words of their weaker language through the words of the stronger language. Thus, the dominant language acts as a filter for the other." Hence, if the English/French bilingual speaker's weaker language is French, the word 'livre' will evoke the English word 'book.'

2.4 Folk and Elite Bilingualism

The main idea of this classification lies in an individual's social status. Explained by Harding-Esch and Riley (2006: 24), people who decided to go abroad and learn the second language voluntarily are considered as elite bilinguals or 'elitists.' In general, especially in the past, such behavior was affordable, usually by wealthy individuals from successful high- or middle-class families. It was seen as a voluntary privilege. While in contrast to elitist bilingualism stands the folk bilingualism. Such individuals had their second language forced upon them to survive. This was common in the past, especially among migrant communities. Harding-Esch and Riley (2006: 25) present a well-written explanation on this topic by Tosi (1982): "The distinction is a crucial one, as it shows that whilst the first group uses the education system which they control to seek bilingualism, the second group has bilingualism foisted upon it by an education system which is controlled by others."

This distinction is becoming less relevant as the middle class is becoming much wider, and the population of the lower-class nowadays has easier access to the possibilities of acquisition of the second language (Harding-Esch and Riley, 2006: 25).

2.5 Additive and Subtractive Bilinguals

Lambert (1973: 25) distinguished between additive and subtractive types of bilingualism. The former, additive type of bilingualism, implies that an individual that is in the process of learning his second language suffers no loss in the proficiency of his or her first language. The process of learning a second language does not interfere with his first language, and both languages develop. In the opposite case, the subtractive bilingualism, an individual manages to learn a second language at the expense of his or her first language profi-

ciency. The mastery and competence of the individual's first language diminish, while the proficiency of his second language augments.

This distinction is relevant, particularly in the contemporary educational system as students nowadays have extensive possibilities concerning foreign language learning. Some of those individuals may prefer the learning of their second language, disregarding the importance and improvement of their native language, leading to its decline in terms of proficiency (Lambert et al., 1998: 2).

2.6 Conclusion

It is important to understand that the presented distinctions of bilingualism are often inter-related. Bilinguals are classified regarding different facets and dimensions corresponding to their social and individual background. Based on this, a person can be classified into various types of bilingualism. For instance, it is common for a folk bilingual to be an un-balanced bilingual as well. It is important to emphasize the fact that such dimensions are continuous, with no exact point at which an individual can be divided into one type or another. No clear boundaries between different types of bilingualism exist within a given dimension (Moradi, 2014: 111).

3 THE EFFECTS OF BILINGUALISM ON SOCIAL FLEXIBILITY

The main topic of the following chapter is focused on the relationship between bilingualism and its effects on social flexibility. It will cover the possible advantages and disadvantages caused by the acquisition of multiple languages in four areas: cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence. These areas are believed to have an impact on one's social flexibility (Meiran, 2010: 203; Ikizer and Ramírez-Esparza, 2018: 4; Dewaele and Wei, 2012: 4; Lawrence et al., 2004: 911; Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 231).

3.1 Bilingualism and Cognitive Flexibility

Before discussing the aforementioned areas, it is important to explain the term 'social flexibility.' Ikizer and Ramírez-Esparza (2018: 2) define the term as: "[...] the ability to (a) switch with ease between different social environments and (b) accurately assess cues in social interactions." Generally, higher degree of social flexibility supposedly leads to increased social capabilities.

Many researchers (Bialystok et al., 2003; Peal and Lambert, 1962, etc.) have investigated the bilingual advantage related to cognitive development. Some of them (Paap and Greenberg, 2013; Paap et al., 2014) suggest that the benefits (further described in the rest of Chapters 3.1 to 3.4) are related to other factors than bilingualism (e.g., socioeconomic status, cultural differences, immigration status, etc.).

One specific area in which bilinguals seem to outperform monolinguals is the advantage of switching between two mental sets. This phenomenon of switching between different control operations to deal with various tasks is described as cognitive flexibility by Meiran (2010: 203). Studies have shown that bilinguals exhibit improved capability of switching from one task to another, which is suggested to be the result of their experience of having to switch between different languages (Ikizer and Ramírez-Esparza, 2018: 4).

Based on the research by Ikizer and Ramírez-Esparza (2018: 4), cognitive flexibility is not only fundamental for solving cognitive tasks. It plays a crucial role in relation to social interaction as well. In order to solve a problem, a person needs to consider different perspectives and how these are related to shared knowledge. Supporting example for this argument can be seen in a research conducted by Bonino and Cattelino (1999) in which they examined the results of children taking the *Wisconsin Card Sorting task* (a test focused on cognitive flexibility assessment, where undergoers need to inhibit a learned clas-

sification to find a new one) in pairs. The results show that children who demonstrated a stronger cooperative spirit performed better than those who decided to take more of an individualistic approach. “This cooperative interaction involves emotion regulation to evaluate the social signals in a certain situation and bring out the social strategies necessary for that situation, which is functionally analogous to cognitive switching.” (Ikízer and Ramírez-Esparza, 2018: 4). Thus, as can be seen from this study, increased cognitive flexibility leads to heightened social flexibility. Specifically, to an increased capacity to adapt to a social environment and to read social cues (Ikízer and Ramírez-Esparza, 2018: 4; Meiran, 2010: 203).

3.2 Bilingualism and Empathy

Empathy indicates our capacity to understand the feelings of other people, and based on those feelings, get an assumption of what they might be thinking. Empathy is an essential skill that helps us interact, as it allows us to interpret the intentions of others and predict their behavior. Jean-Marc Dewaele and Li Wei (2012: 4) define empathy as the glue of the social world, which helps us understand others and prevents us from unintentionally hurting them. Psychologists differentiate between two types of empathy: emotional empathy, which allows us to follow emotional responses of others and cognitive empathy, which enables us to apprehend the mental state of other people by applying our cognitive functions such as our intellect and imagination. With our understanding of others improved, we can then alter our behavior, which helps us to enhance our social flexibility (Dewaele and Wei, 2012: 4; Lawrence et al., 2004: 911).

Empathy has also been considered an important factor in the language acquisition process. Guiora et al. (1975: 48) suggest: “To speak a second language authentically is to take on a new identity. As with empathy, it is to step into a new and perhaps unfamiliar pair of shoes”. Keeley (2014: 71) is also of the opinion that language learners with higher levels of empathy have a higher predisposition of achieving more native-like pronunciation of the language. He has it that this phenomenon is influenced by our mental flexibility of ‘ego-boundaries’ or so-called ‘ego permeability.’ This notion can be understood as to how easily we let our personality be affected by new experiences, perceptions of other people, cultural features, etc. People with greater ego permeability are usually considered as more open-minded and receptive. This helps them to interpret subtle nuances of language and adopt them more easily. Furthermore, Guiora (1990: 7) also states that children acquire

their first language in a state of ego-permeability, but as the child grows older, the ego-permeability decreases progressively (Guiora, 1990: 7; Keeley, 2014: 71).

Further relation of bilingualism to empathy is presented in a recent study conducted by Moberg (2019). This research was focused on comparing the degree of empathy between monolingual and bilingual subjects. Before the start of the experiment, the subjects underwent a pilot data collection, measuring their empathy, cognition, language proficiency, mood, etc. The experiment consisted of two parts. In the first part, the subjects had to read notes, supposed to evoke a certain degree of emotional reaction in the participants. The degree of their actual emotional reaction was then measured by a questionnaire. The second part consisted of the subjects playing an economic game. “This game involved a participant allocating \$9, which they can split between themselves and the confederate in one-dollar increments of their choosing.” (Moberg, 2019: 9). Their actions were monitored, and based on them, the subjects’ empathy was measured in terms of interpersonal reactivity, empathetic concern, perspective-taking, and prosocial measure based on the monetary offers made by the participants during the game. During the experiment, the subjects’ brain activity was being monitored as well (Moberg, 2019: 9).

The results of this research showed a higher amount of areas with increased activation in the bilingual brain compared to the brain of monolingual. The bilingual participant also reached a higher score in perspective taking, based on the higher amount of monetary offer given in the economic game, but both subjects achieved virtually the same score in the area of empathic concern (Moberg, 2019: 9-12).

Moberg (2019: 13) states: “There is an increasing amount of evidence that bilingual individuals tend to have higher levels of empathy. It is possible that the mechanism for this relationship is that bilingual individuals have higher executive functioning^[1] compared to monolingual individuals.”

Although empathy is widely believed to be closely connected to how we acquire and use our language, the bond between empathy and bilingualism should be further researched to make exact outcomes (Keeley, 2014: 71; Moberg, 2019: 15).

¹ “...a loosely defined set of cognitive skills and processes that appear critical for complex thought and behavior.” (Daniels, 2006: 2)

3.3 Bilingualism and Personality

Speaking different languages changes the way we behave and feel. Bilinguals connect each of their controlled languages with different experiences and cultural references. Based on this, one's emotions, behavior, and personality may diverse depending on the momentarily used language (Roselli et al., 2017: 260).

In subjects who are able to speak multiple languages, the changes in their behavior are apparent based on the language they are using. Individuals influenced by different cultures while growing up behave according to different cultures in connection to the context they find themselves in. This phenomenon is called the 'cultural frame switching' effect (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002: 493). Individuals shift attributions and values based on external situational cues. This switching is present in individuals that have internalized feelings, actions, and values of different cultures and signify increased levels of cultural and linguistic proficiency. In bilinguals, it is very common to be multi- or at least bicultural, so this phenomenon is displayed quite often (Roselli et al., 2017: 260).

Other interesting findings were discovered in Dewaele's and Van Oudenhoven's research (2009) in which they analyzed how culture and language influenced certain personality traits. For this research, they chose multicultural teenagers in London as their respondents. For this, they used the *Multicultural Personality Questionnaire* (Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002: 684) in which participants were assessed in five dimensions (Flexibility, Open-Mindedness, Emotional stability, Cultural Empathy, and Social Initiative). Based on these findings became apparent that teenagers who came from a different culture and later moved on to London during their childhood reached higher levels of Open-Mindedness (they proved to be more unbiased and open towards notions and ideas of different cultures) and also of Cultural Empathy (better ability to empathize with subjects from a different culture and with their emotional aspects). On the other hand, they lacked and reached lower results in Emotional Stability (the ability to stay calm during stressful situations) in comparison to teenagers who were born and raised in London. Further on, the authors of this research observed that experience and proficiency of a language influenced the personality profile of their respondents. Participants who had high proficiency in multiple languages managed to reach significantly higher scores in Open-Mindedness, Cultural Empathy, but significantly lower scores in Emotional Stability than subjects who were dominant in just a single language. Thus, this research supports the idea that having an increased proficiency in more than one language (being bilingual or multilingual) as well

as being multicultural (adapting to different cultures and their notions across a person's lifespan) shapes one's personality (Roselli et al., 2017: 260).

A similar study was carried out by Ramírez-Esparza et al. (2006), where they decided to test how bilingualism can influence one's personality. Their respondents for this research consisted of Spanish-English bilinguals from Texas. As a method of measurement, they used the comparison of the respondents' *Big Five Inventory* (BFI) language scores. Based on the source from Benet-Martínez and John (1998), Roselli et al., (2017: 260) describe the BFI such as: "The BFI is a widely used 44-item scale that classifies participants based on five dimensions of personality (openness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, and conscientiousness), with valid and reliable versions available in English and Spanish." In this study, Ramirez-Esparza found out that Bilinguals were more agreeable, extroverted, and conscientious in English compared to Spanish. "Interestingly, the authors found a strong positive correlation between the Spanish and English versions of the personality questionnaire suggesting that individuals tended to retain their rank ordering within a group, but the group as a whole changed." (Roselli et al., 2017: 261) Put differently; an extroverted person does not suddenly turn into an introvert as he or she switches languages. But bilingual shows objectively higher levels of extroversion when using the English language rather than Spanish while also retaining the same rank order in each culture/language of the groups (Roselli et al., 2017: 261).

Even though the use of a dominant language can seem to heighten certain personality features, the reach to which one's personality is influenced by language is not clear or exceptionally ground-breaking, and further research should be attempted to measure precise extent to which cultural factors influence individual subject's personality and language (Roselli et al., 2017: 261).

3.4 Bilingualism and Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is a set of skills acquired by individuals, either monolingual or bilingual, which makes it possible for them to communicate. Based on the context they find themselves in, they learn how to choose a particular style of communication and how to express and communicate their thoughts as effectively as possible (Nicoladis, 2008: 173). Bilingual individuals, in contrast with their monolingual peers, need to additionally learn to choose which language to use in a particular context. Such appropriateness is different based on a language and its culture, and a bilingual speaker needs to learn these dif-

ferences (Nicoladis, 2008: 173). Consequently, bilingual speakers, rather than monolinguals, may have better predispositions to understand the communicative needs of their partner with whom they communicate (Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 231).

Nicoladis (2008: 174) presents us with a study of French/English bilingual children from Montreal carried out by Genesee et al. (2003). Throughout the experiment, Genesee visited each child a few times to observe their interaction with unfamiliar speakers. Genesee found out that when the child's conversational partner mixed languages, the child would match his or her rate of language mixing. This indicates bilingual children's ability to adjust their language choices to meet the communicative needs of their interlocutors (Nicoladis, 2008: 174).

But monolingual children have also shown a certain degree of sensitivity towards the linguistic skills of their interlocutors. Comeau and Genesee (2001: 234) point to research carried out by Gelman and Shatz (1977). In this research is presented how monolingual 4-year-olds are aware of lower linguistic abilities of younger children. The 4-year-olds tried to communicate in a simpler way, using attention-getting devices (i.e. calling the child's name or showing the child toys) more frequently, articulating slowly, using shorter sentences, etc., when communicating with 2-year-olds. When interacting with their peers of the same age, they did not restrict their language skills (Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 234).

Based on these studies, it is clear that both monolingual and bilingual children have a good understanding of communicative skills even before fully developing their language (Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 237). But this information does not compare communicative competence between the groups of monolinguals or bilinguals.

To compare these groups, Nicoladis (2008: 174) uses her own research, conducted together with Rhemtulla in the year 2005. Their goal was to study how both groups of children manage to communicate with interlocutors using a language they have no proficiency in. In this experiment, both groups of children were asked to decide whether a word uttered by their communicative partner who used foreign, and to the children unknown language (in this case Chinese) denoted familiar or unfamiliar concept or object. The results showed that bilingual children had a better understanding that the utterances spoken by their interlocutor could indicate a thing or a concept for which they already have a word in their mother tongue. Monolinguals, in comparison, were more likely to choose that the Chinese words denoted objects unknown to them, thus proving that bilinguals tend to be

more open-minded and more willing to respond to their conversational partner's feedback (Nicoladis, 2008: 174).

As stated earlier in this chapter, communicative competence consists of more than just responsivity to the specific linguistic needs of an individual's interlocutor. Smoothness and effectiveness also play a significant role in communication. During communication, there is always a possibility that breakdown occurs, caused by many various factors, such as inaccurate pronunciation, speaking in a low voice, etc. When such a breakdown happens, the interlocutor attempts to fix the communication process as quickly as possible. However, the individual needs to deduce what is the cause of the breakdown before trying to fix it. In this area, the bilinguals seem to have a disadvantage as in their communication, more possible causes of breakdowns exist. They may encounter breakdowns caused by language choice or mismatch, which could not happen in monolingual communication (Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 232).

To get insight into this topic, Comeau and Genesee (2001) conducted yet another research with bilingual children. In this case, they chose as their subjects a group of 3-year-old French/English bilinguals, who they visited on a few occasions. During these visits, the researchers first examined the linguistic proficiency of subjects' languages and then tried to communicate with them, only in their subjects' weaker language, attempting to evoke communicative breakdowns. When a communicative breakdown happened, the researchers then examined the children's ability to fix the process of communication. If the child failed to get the communication back on track on their own, the researchers helped by asking predetermined questions offering solutions of fixing the process, with every question offering an easier way of fixing the breakdown than the previous. The results of this study show that the bilingual children experienced quite many communicative breakdowns, but seemed to easily identify the cause of the breakdowns even without specific feedback. The subjects were also able to quite often come up with a reformulation or translation if the breakdown was caused by linguistic factors (Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 253).

3.5 Summary

This chapter focused on the relation between bilingualism and an individual's cognition. Firstly, the emphasis was put on how acquiring a second language, thus becoming a bilingual, can influence the cognitive flexibility of individuals. Further on, this chapter presented how these cognitive changes affect an individual in terms of empathy and

personality, and finally presented a research explaining and comparing certain communicative competences of monolinguals and bilinguals.

II. ANALYSIS

4 INTRODUCTION

The topic of bilingualism and its connection to one's social skills and abilities has been researched by linguists and educators for decades. The studies in the past have usually focused on the differentiation of language in bilingual individuals and on the possible influence the bilingualism could have on one's intellectual and linguistic abilities. Both these issues, as agreed upon by Hakuta et al. (2000:141) and Milroy et al. (1995: 2), arise from the assumption that the monolingual individuals represent a norm in terms of cognitive processes and linguistic capabilities. From this assumption emerged a fear that bilingual development and bilingualism itself would have a negative effect on the speaker, specifically in terms of intellectual, linguistic, emotional, and social capabilities (Hakuta et al., 1985: 320, Shin, 2013: 6).

However, recent studies have not reflected the same negative results of the past researches conducted in the field of bilingualism. On the contrary, a considerable amount of study has shown that bilingualism benefits individuals in a variety of ways (see Chapter 3).

This analysis aims to evaluate a sample of balanced bilingual respondents in terms of their social flexibility. Even though certain variables such as the age at which individuals started to acquire their languages or their socioeconomic status in the society play a role, the primary focus of this research is the outcome and most importantly bilinguals' benefits in connection to the areas of cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence. As recent researches pointed out the possible advantages of bilingualism, I decided to affirm some of the advantages by conducting the following research.

4.1 Method

As a means of collecting data for my analysis, I chose to interview my respondents individually. I also created a questionnaire, which I sent out to my respondents. The nature of my research is qualitative (Cropley, 2005), as I decided that conducting a quantitative study on this topic with such a limited number of respondents could lead to inaccurate and ambiguous results. Furthermore, due to the topic of my research being social flexibility, I wanted to make actual personal contact, to see how my respondents deal with a communication with a stranger.

To explore the linguistic capabilities of my respondents, I designed a questionnaire based on an example provided in the work of Harding-Esch and Riley (2006: 89 – 92) and

also on *The Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire* (LEAP-Q) (Marian et al., 2007). The questionnaire used for my research consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the linguistic background of the respondent and the second part on his or her linguistic experience and proficiency. This questionnaire was sent out to my potential respondents before the interview to check their viability for my research.

The interview aimed to analyze my respondents' social flexibility. For this purpose, I prepared a set of questions in advance to help me navigate through the interview. The questions used were based on the *Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire* (TEIQue) created by the Founding Director of the London Psychometric Laboratory and a current Professor of Psychology and Psychometrics at University College London, Konstantin V. Petrides. TEIQue is an openly accessible questionnaire created to measure emotional intelligence (Petrides, 2009). Because an interview is a qualitative research method, and TEIQue is of quantitative nature, I had to choose a set of questions from the TEIQue and modify them to fit the needs of my research. That means I needed to sort out the questions concerning the individual's cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence and, furthermore, change their nature from quantitative to qualitative.

4.2 Participant Selection Process

To ensure that the obtained data for my further analysis is as legit as possible, I decided to find a sample of balanced bilinguals (for an explanation, see Chapter 2.2), with all the respondents being in the similar age group. The minimal criteria for the respondents to be viable for my research were:

1. falling into the age category of 18 – 30 years.
2. achieving the aforementioned native-like proficiency in at least two of their languages

During the participant selection process, I attempted to put special effort to find respondents that were exposed to both of their main languages in the early years of their life. All my respondents encountered both of their main languages before the age of 3, with the exception of one respondent. I still decided to include the respondent into my research, as the proficiency of her second language reaches that of a native speaker. However, I will consider her results with a reserved approach.

4.2.1 Description of Participants

In the following chapter is presented a description of all the individuals participating in the research. A total number of 6 balanced bilinguals was amassed for this study. For reasons of respect towards my respondents and their personal data, all names of participants taking part in this study have been changed.

4.2.1.1 *Stella*

Stella is a 23-year-old female and currently studies the English language at a university. Her mother comes from a Czech family, while her father is German. Both of her parents are very supportive of the notion of bilingualism and are glad that their child grew up acquiring both of the languages.

In the first few years of her life, she lived with her parents in Germany, which was the first language she started acquiring. During this period, Stella also came into contact with the Czech language, mostly when communicating with her mother's family and the mother herself as she primarily talked to Stella in Czech. During the seventh year of her life, she moved together with her family to the Czech Republic, where she currently lives. Despite living in the Czech Republic, where Stella mostly communicates in the nation's language, she still continues to talk with her father using his native language, ensuring the preservation of the native-like level of language proficiency in both languages. Furthermore, around the 8th year of her life, while attending elementary school, she started learning the English language. She later decided to study this language, and according to the answers I obtained from the questionnaire I sent out to my respondents, she claims to have achieved a native-like proficiency in this language as well. In her free time, Stella also studies Japanese.

Despite Stella living in the Czech Republic for the majority of her life with her main languages being German and Czech, she seems to have chosen English as a language of her preference. Based on the results of the language background questionnaire, around 45% of her communication happens in English, mostly in school and on the internet (where Stella spends a considerable amount of time on a daily basis). She also states that around 75% of her inner dialogue takes place in English, while only 15% happens in Czech. Even after asking in which language she would read her favorite book, she declared that the language of her choosing would most definitely be English as it is the language she got used to the most.

In my opinion, the main reason why Stella decided to adopt English as her new main language is because of its extensive use in the world, opening many new possibilities for improving her life. I personally consider English the language of the internet, where Stella likes to spend her time and being able to communicate in it allows the internet users to access the most of its content (books, TV series, informative articles, movies, games, social webpages, etc.).

4.2.1.2 Lily and Emma

Lily (aged 22) and Emma (aged 19) are daughters of a Czech/English couple. Similar to the previous respondent Stella, Lily's and Emma's mother and her family are Czech while the father is English with his family originating in Britain. Likewise, in Stella's case, both parents considered bilingualism a useful asset and decided to raise their children bilingually. Lily was born in the Czech Republic, where most communication took place in the nation's language. But soon after her birth (roughly one year), the family moved to an English speaking community located in the German city Bad Fallingbosten. The reason of this move being the father's job, as he is a marine. In Germany, she attended an English elementary school. In her personal life, she communicated with her mother using the Czech language and the English language with her father. As a consequence of living in Germany, she also got the opportunity to communicate in the German language. Although such communication was scarce.

Emma has the same language background as her sister, except she was born in Germany. As a result, she was exposed to the Czech language less than her sister during her early years of life.

When Lily was eight and Emma five, the family moved back to the Czech Republic, and both girls started attending a Czech elementary school (Emma a year later due to her being too young). Because of Lily's past experiences in Germany, she decided to take up German language, and three years later (when she was eleven and decided that she wanted to study languages) started attending a French language course. Later on, one of her graduation subjects from high school was the German language. However, after her graduation, she lost interest in this language.

As Emma was still too young when their family left Germany, she did not get influenced much by this language and decided to take up Spanish in high school as her third language instead. Emma did not reach any significant level of proficiency in this language, and she stated that she had forgotten most of it.

After her high school graduation, Lily decided that the subject she wanted to study at a university was French, which she found much more attractive than German. Lily currently studies French at Karlova Univerzita in Prague and has recently moved to France for one semester with the student mobility program Erasmus.

Differently from Lily, Emma did not choose to follow the linguistic route, and after finishing high school, she decided to attend a university in the field of medicine.

Based on the result of my questionnaire sent to my respondents, it is clear that the language both sisters are the most used to is Czech as they communicate in this language with their family, friends, at their universities, in public, etc. Both of them state that 70% of their communication happens in Czech. The rest takes place in English or, in Lily's case, English and French. The sisters use the English language when speaking to their father and the rest of their English relatives, occasionally even at the universities as they both attend some English courses there or with their English speaking friends, on the internet, etc. Furthermore, Lily and Emma even state that their inner dialogue happens mostly (60%) in Czech, and the rest (40%) in English (out of which, in Lily's case, 1% of her inner dialogue takes place in French).

It only seems natural that the sisters would choose Czech as their language of preference as they have lived in the Czech Republic the most recently and also for the majority of their lives. But even despite this preference, the strong connection to their native English identity, adopted from their father, is apparent. In the questionnaire, Lily and Emma both state that they mostly identify themselves with the Czech and the English culture.

4.2.1.3 Sarah

Sarah is a 30-years-old female with origins in the Czech Republic. She is a unique case among the rest of my respondents, as she is older than the other respondents and grew up as a monolingual.

Sarah did not grow up in a bilingual family and encountered foreign languages only in school (English, German, and Italian). However, during high school and her studies at a university, Sarah decided to study languages, specifically English and German, as she wanted to move abroad. In the last nine years of her life, Sarah has lived and worked in either the United Kingdom or the United States.

Despite living most of her life in the Czech Republic using the nation's language, she has adopted English as her main language. Sarah herself insisted on filling out my

questionnaire in the English language. The idea of her adopting the English as her main language is further supported by the results of the questionnaire when answering the question, “In which language would you read your favorite book?” she answered English. Furthermore, in the questionnaire, Sarah stated that 75% of her communication happens in English, while only 25% of her communication takes place in Czech. She uses Czech only when talking to her family (especially her grandma, whom she calls every day). The culture Sarah most identifies with is British (35%), and 70% of her inner dialogue takes place in English.

Sarah told me she has decided to choose English as her main language, mostly due to her job and the place of living. She works in the field of human resources, where the majority of her work activities takes place in the English language, and a high level of language proficiency is required

4.2.1.4 Marzia

Marzia (25) is a daughter of a Czech/Russian couple. During the first three years of her life, Marzia lived in Russia, acquiring mainly the Russian language. Despite Russian being the main language used at her home, she communicated in the Czech language occasionally with her father and her other Czech relatives. Even if her parents did not put much emphasis on raising their daughter bilingually, her father still often talked to her in his native language. She also came into contact with the Czech language during occasional visits of her father’s Czech relatives.

When Marzia was three, her family moved to the Czech Republic. One year later, Marzia started attending a local kindergarten. At elementary school, Marzia started learning English and later in high school, the German language. After her final exams, Marzia decided to study English at a university.

Marzia states to have reached an expert level of proficiency so far in the Czech and Russian languages. In her language background questionnaire, Marzia states that 45% of her communication happens in Czech, mostly when communicating with her colleagues (Marzia works as a financial consultant), her Czech friends and classmates, and in daily-life situations. Further on, 35% of her communication takes place in Russian, mainly when communicating at home and with her Russian relatives and friends. The rest 20% takes place in the English language, for instance, during her leisure activities, such as browsing the internet, watching TV series, etc.

Marzia considers Czech as her main language. When I asked her in what language she would read her favorite book, she stated that Czech would be her natural choice. Furthermore, Marzia states that 60% of her inner dialogue happens in Czech, 35% in Russian, and 5% in English.

Based on the questionnaire, Marzia identifies equally with both Russian and Czech culture.

4.2.1.5 Moon

Moon is a 21-year-old Chinese female living in Hong Kong. She did not grow up in a bilingual family, but she still falls into the category of balanced bilingualism.

Despite not growing up in a bilingual family, Moon still achieved an expert level of proficiency in three languages – her native Cantonese, English, and Mandarin. Both of Moon's parents are proficient English language speakers who used to watch English TV channels very frequently. Since Moon was born, she used to sit in front of the television, slowly absorbing the English language. Her parents occasionally taught her basic English words and sentences, and Moon herself demonstrated an interest in learning the language she heard from the television.

Once she reached the age of six, her parents enrolled her into an English language course, where her proper second language learning began. At this age, she also started to learn her third language, Mandarin.

Despite spending her whole life in Hong Kong in China, she proactively looked for opportunities to improve her language abilities. During her teen years, she even decided to take up Korean, Russian, and Spanish languages. However, Moon did not reach a significant level of proficiency in these languages and stopped learning them, never getting beyond the proficiency level of a beginner. Moon decided to focus on English instead. She currently studies the English language with a focus on translation.

Based on the results of the questionnaire I sent to my respondents, Moon states to have reached an expert level in her native Cantonese, English, and Mandarin. Despite living in Hong Kong, Moon states that 50% of her communication takes place in English, and she has adopted English as her main language. Moon is an upper member of the AIESEC (Association for the International Exchange of Students in Economics and Commerce) organization, and she communicates with other members all around the world almost every day. She also states that she uses the English language during leisure activities (watching

TV series, reading books, browsing the internet, etc.). The rest of her communication happens mostly in Cantonese.

Furthermore, Moon also states that 100% of her inner dialogue takes place in the English language, and the cultures she identifies herself with are Cantonese (70%) and American (30%).

During our personal communication, Moon told me that the reason for her adopting English as her main language is due to its extensive use, allowing her to communicate with people from all around the world.

4.3 Interview Analysis

In the following chapter, I will present and discuss the results acquired from the interview with my respondents on the topic of Social Flexibility in the four aforementioned areas (cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence).

4.3.1 Cognitive Flexibility

A few questions in my interview were focused on the level of cognitive flexibility. These were, for instance: *“Do you consider yourself an adaptable individual, or do you have to have the main say?”* or *“How do you manage difficult life situations, such as conflicts?”*.

Higher levels of cognitive flexibility are strictly connected to an individual’s ability to adapt to different situations (Meiran, 2010: 203). In terms of bilingual individuals, a higher level of cognitive flexibility is expected, as, during the acquisition of their multiple languages, the bilinguals need to be able to switch between different mental sets, based on the currently communicated language (Ikizer and Ramírez-Esparza, 2018: 4). Work that supports the Ikizer and Ramírez-Esparza’s theory can be found in the research conducted by Bonino and Cattelino (1999) based around the results of bilingual children attempting the *Wisconsin Card Sorting task*, described in Chapter 3.1.

During my interview, my respondents demonstrated high levels of cognitive flexibility. They have stated to be very adaptable to different situations and opinions of others. Their answers to the questions related to cognitive flexibility were, in fact, almost identical, with just a few exceptions.

The most prominent one being in Emma’s case. When asked: *“Can you empathize with the other person’s situation?”* Emma stated that she finds such a task difficult, while all the other respondents agreed on the capability of projecting themselves in other individuals’ perspectives.

Another exception occurred when analyzing the answers to the question “*Do you consider yourself an adaptable individual, or do you have to have the main say?*”. All my respondents stated that they consider themselves adaptable to various situations and open to the ideas of others, generally not feeling the need to be in control. However, taking control of the situation can also be a sign of adaptivity. Stella elaborated on this question, providing me with an example of such adaptivity. She stated that in specific situations (e.g., romantic relationships), she tries not to submit herself too much. In her current relationship, she decided to adopt the more dominant and deciding role as she considers her partner too indecisive and incapable of having the main say.

In conclusion, despite slight differences among my respondents, I still conclude that they are characterized by increased adaptivity and high levels of cognitive flexibility.

4.3.2 Empathy

Empathy, the ability to understand other’s feelings, is also considered to be closely related to social flexibility (Dewaele and Wei, 2012: 4). Empathic people are considered to understand better other people’s emotions, based on which they can alter their behavior to reach their desired result during communication with other’s (Dewaele and Wei, 2012: 4; Lawrence et al., 2004: 911).

Based on past research, individuals with higher levels of empathy are considered to have a better predisposition to learn their second language (Guiora et al., 1975: 48; Keeley, 2014: 71). Furthermore, the research carried out by Libby Moberg (2019) points out that bilinguals tend to reach higher levels of empathy, which could be the result of bilingual’s increased executive functioning (see Chapter 3.2).

In my research, I also decided to investigate the area of empathy in connection with bilingualism. Some of the questions focused on this area were: “*Can you control the other person’s inappropriate behavior?*” or “*Do you easily establish contact with strangers?*”. My goal was to evaluate my respondent’s level of empathy based on their answers to my questions during our interview.

The interview yielded some exciting results. Despite all my respondents considering themselves as empathic people, stating that they are capable of understanding the emotions of others’, my respondents seem to fail to utilize this ability in practice. When asked questions about their ability to confront and influence the behavior of other people (“*Can you control the other person’s inappropriate behavior?*”), my respondents mostly stated that they understand the cause of the other person’s inappropriate behavior, but lack the

motivation to act upon the situation. This issue is probably connected to their personalities and will be elaborated upon in the following chapter.

4.3.3 Personality

Based on past researches (Jean-Marc Dewaele and Jean Pieter Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Ramírez-Esparza et al., 2006), bilingualism is shown to influence certain personality traits.

In my interview, several questions were focused on getting insight into my respondents' personality. Examples of such questions being "*Will you start to miss social interactions after some time?*" or "*Can you control your emotions?*". Most of my respondents appear to be reserved, and self-sufficient individuals, usually with no significant need to socialize.

Despite most of my respondents appearing rather introverted, they still, in general, consider themselves as social individuals, enjoying the company of others. They, however, seem to be very selective in their social situations and the people they decide to socialize with. This statement of their selective behavior is further supported in my respondents' answers to the question "*How many close friends do you have?*" to which my respondents' answers moved between three to five. The only exception was Sarah (the only respondent who did not come into contact with her second language before the third year of her life), who stated to consider up to twenty people as her close friends.

Another common perk among all my respondents is their perception of their self-confidence. All my respondents stated to have below-average or, at most, average levels of self-confidence. This lowered level of self-confidence could be the reason why my respondents seem to be unable to act in certain situations, despite having a supposedly good understanding of them. Even when asked more specific questions such as "*How do you manage difficult life situations, such as conflicts?*" or "*Can you control the other person's inappropriate behavior?*", the majority of my respondents stated that unless the situation is critical, or is not influencing them directly, they tend to keep their opinions for themselves. Even if they get into a position where their involvement is needed, my respondents, in general, stated to have a reasonable control of their emotions and refrain from acting on an impulse. My respondents prefer to analyze the situation calmly, realizing their options and possible scenarios, and only after then dealing with the situation at hand.

Of course, not all my researched individuals are the same, and even in this area, I came across certain exceptions. The most noticeable one being Marzia. She considers herself a strong extrovert, enjoying approaching even strangers and being very vocal about

her opinions even in uncomfortable situations. Furthermore, she considers herself a dominant individual. But despite her extroversion, she is still quite comfortable being alone even for prolonged periods of time and, just as other respondents, states to have a below-average level of self-confidence. I believe her extroversion could, to some point, be artificially developed due to the nature of her job, as she works as a financial consultant, and for her to be successful, she needs to appear approachable and confident.

Another exception, similarly to Marzia, is in Moon's case. She considers herself to be rather introverted as well, but despite that, she states that she is more of a dominant individual. Especially in certain situations when people are not talkative, and the situation feels "awkward," she tends to adopt the role of a leader to smoothen the communication. In contrast to other respondents, Moon tends to be more vocal about her opinions, as she states to be very straightforward. From the results of her interview, I got the feeling that she adopts the role of a leader so that others do not have to. Just as in Marzia's case, I believe this 'forced dominance' is a result of her being an upper member of AIESEC organization, where she communicates with people all around the world almost daily.

In general, however, most of my respondents seem to be reserved and introverted, keeping their opinions mostly for themselves. They also seem to deal with their problems in a very rational manner, not letting themselves be controlled by their emotions.

4.3.4 Communicative Competence

The final area my study focuses on is communicative competence. It is a set of skills acquired by an individual, which makes it possible for them to communicate. Individuals, based on the context of the situation they find themselves in, need to decide how to express and communicate their thoughts as effectively as possible (Nicoladi, 2008: 173). Bilinguals also need to learn which language to use in a particular context. Such appropriateness is different based on a language and its culture (Nicoladis, 2008: 173). Because having to make such decisions, some researchers believe that bilingual individuals may have better predispositions to understand the communicative needs of their interlocutors (Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 231).

Based on the results of my research, my respondents demonstrated opinions supporting the theory of the bilinguals' higher levels of communicative competence. For instance, when asked the question: "*Do you easily establish contact with strangers?*", my respondents, in general, stated, that they are capable of establishing a successful and

natural communication with unknown individuals, but do not enjoy such communication most of the time. Some of my respondents even stated that such communication with a stranger (even if it goes smoothly), is tiring. Moon and Lily stated that they tend to pretend to be more sociable if the situation requires it. The only respondent who stated not to be capable of establishing such a successful communication occasionally is Stella. Stella claimed she finds such communication awkward and usually struggles to maintain the flow of the conversation with someone she is not familiar with. An interesting notion is that most of my respondents stated that they consider the ability to establish such communication as a learned skill resulting from past experiences rather than an innate trait of early second language acquisition.

However, in situations in which they feel comfortable, my respondents state to become rather communicative and vocal, feeling no discomfort giving their opinions. Even if they are aware that their interlocutors will likely disagree with them.

Based on the results of my interview, I conclude that in general, my bilingual respondents indeed reach high levels of communicative competence and in understanding the communicative needs of others.

4.4 Summary

In summary, my respondents, in general, demonstrated high levels of cognitive flexibility, empathy, and communicative competence. Such traits are believed to improve an individual's social flexibility (Meiran, 2010: 203; Ikizer and Ramirez-Esparza, 2018: 4; Dewaele and Wei, 2012: 4; Lawrence et al., 2004: 911; Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 231).

However, in the area of personality, my research yielded interesting results. My respondents exhibited low levels of self-confidence combined with reserved and introverted personality features. From analyzing my respondents' answers during the interview, I adopted the opinion that their personality features are a limiting factor during their social interactions. Thus, hindering their social flexibility. To affirm whether such behavior is a common feature among bilinguals, more specific research with a higher number of respondents is required.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this bachelor thesis was to investigate the possible positive relation between bilingualism and social flexibility. This relation is mostly described and highlighted in Chapter 3 and the empirical part of my thesis.

The theoretical part of this thesis begins by Chapter 1, in this chapter, my thesis explained the main characteristics of the notion of bilingualism and presented a number of definitions provided by adept linguists from the field. Following this explanation, the thesis presented a connection of the notion of bilingualism to the concept of language and further on, provided a brief historical overview of the most influential studies of bilingualism.

Chapter 2 provided a list of possible classifications of bilingualism. Due to bilingualism being a notion reaching into numerous scientific fields, many various types of classifications exist, based on the notion's connection to those areas.

I concluded my theoretical part of the thesis with Chapter 3, which focuses on the possible areas of benefit emerging from the second language acquisition. I discussed areas of cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence. I discussed these areas as they are believed to improve one's social flexibility (Meiran, 2010: 203; Ikízer and Ramírez-Esparza, 2018: 4; Dewaele and Wei, 2012: 4; Lawrence et al., 2004: 911; Comeau and Genesee, 2001: 231).

In the empirical part of my thesis, I investigated the social flexibility of bilinguals by conducting my own study with a sample of six bilingual respondents. As a means of obtaining the information from my respondents, I chose a questionnaire focused on my respondents' language background, experience, and proficiency, followed by an interview. In the interview, I asked my respondents questions related to the areas of cognitive flexibility, empathy, personality, and communicative competence.

Based on the information gathered, I concluded that my respondents have good predispositions for reaching a high degree of social flexibility. However, these predispositions are hindered by their personality.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIESEC	Association for the International Exchange of Students in Economics and Commerce
BFI	Big Five Inventory
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
E.g.	Example Given
Etc.	And So On
I.e.	That Is
LEAP-Q	The Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire
N.d.	No Date
TEIque	The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire

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Appendix 1

Otázky k Interview na Téma Sociální Flexibilita (Social Flexibility Interview Questions)²

1. Považujete se za přizpůsobivého jedince, nebo musíte mít hlavní slovo?
(Do you consider yourself an adaptable individual, or do you have to have the main say?)
2. Dokážete se vcítit do situace druhého člověka?
(Can you empathize with the other person's situation?)
3. Cítíte se v sociálních skupinách dobře? Pokud ne, uveďte prosím, z jakého důvodu.
(Do you feel good in social groups? If not, please state the reason.)
4. Jakým způsobem zvládáte náročné životní situace, například konflikty?
(How do you manage difficult life situations, such as conflicts?)
5. Navazujete snadno kontakt s cizími lidmi?
(Do you easily establish contact with strangers?)
6. Dokážete usměrnit nevhodné chování druhého jedince?
(Can you control the other person's inappropriate behavior?)
7. Začne Vám sociální interakce po delší době chybět?
(Will you start to miss social interactions after some time?)
8. Jste v sociálních situacích spíše dominantní nebo submisivní?
(Are you more dominant or submissive in social situations?)
9. Považujete se za společenského člověka?
(Do you consider yourself a social individual?)
10. Dokážete ovládat své emoce?
(Can you control your emotions?)
11. Máte problém vyjadřovat své názory? V jakých situacích?
(Do you have a problem expressing your opinions? In what situations?)
12. Máte dle Vašeho názoru spíše vysoké sebevědomí?
(In your opinion, do you have a higher level of self-confidence?)
13. Máte nějaké vlastnosti, kterých si obzvlášť ceníte? Dokážete nějaké vyjmenovat?
(Do you have any qualities that you especially appreciate? Can you name some?)
14. Kolik máte blízkých přátel?
(How many close friends do you have?)

² Based on the TEIQue by Petrides (2009) and on qualitative research theory by Cropley (2005)

Appendix 2

Dotazník na téma Jazyková Minulost, Zkušenosti a vlastnosti (Language Background, Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire)

Part 1: Jazyková minulost (Language Background)³

1. Jaké jazyky ovládáte?
(What languages do you speak?)
2. Vyrůstal jste v bilingvní rodině? Pokud ano, jakými jazyky se u Vás doma hovořilo?
(Did you grow up in a bilingual family? If so, what languages were spoken at home?)
3. V kolika letech jste si Vaše jazyky začal/a osvojovat?
(At what age did you start learning your languages?)
4. V kterých zemích jste žil/a?
(In which countries did you live?)
5. Jak dlouho?
(For how long?)

Part 2: Jazykové Zkušenosti a Vlastnosti (Language Experience and Proficiency)⁴

1. Ohodnoťte svoji úroveň znalosti jednotlivých jazyků na stupnici společného evropského referenčního rámce (CEFR) od stupně A1 (úplný začátečník) po stupeň C2 (expert).
(Assess your level of language proficiency on the Common European Framework of Reference [CEFR] on a scale from A1 [complete beginner] to C2 [expert]).
2. Seřad'te své jazyky podle doby osvojení (od rodného po nejnovější).
(Sort your languages according to the time of acquisition [from native to most recent].)
3. V jakém poměru se setkáváte se svými jazyky v běžném životě? Prosím vyjádřete v procentech.
(In what ratio do you encounter your languages in everyday life? Please express as a percentage.)

³ Based on examples presented in Harding-Esch and Riley's work (2006: 89-92)

⁴ Based on LEAP-Q by Marian (2007)

4. V jakých situacích své jazyky používáte?
(In what situations do you use your languages?)

5. V kterém jazyce byste si přečetl/a svoji oblíbenou knihu?
(In which language would you read your favourite book?)

6. V jakých jazycích probíhá Váš vnitřní dialog (např. při přemýšlení)?
(In what languages does your internal dialogue take place [e.g., when thinking]?
Please express as a percentage.)

7. S kterými kulturami a v jakém měřítku se ztotožňujete? Prosím vyjádřete
v procentech. (příklady kultur: česká, anglická, japonská, atd.)
(Which cultures and to what extent do you identify with? Please express as a per-
centage. [examples of cultures: Czech, English, Japanese, etc.]