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The difficulties of becoming bilingual – Hungarian children in the United Kingdom

Nemes, Magdolna

Between the child and the parent, a bridge is provided by speech, the basis of human communication. In order to create this bridge, the child has to be in an environment filled with speech. However, that environment may offer as communication media not just one but several languages that link the child to other members of the immediate speech community. In our paper, we give an insight into families living in the UK in which one of the parents is a Hungarian native speaker. Within these thirty families, a total of fifty children are being raised in contact with at least two languages in a natural way (2019–2020). Multilingual parenting can be carried out in several ways, for example when the mother's and the father's first language is the same and they both use it when talking to the child, who is exposed to another language outside the home. It is more outstanding, however, when the father and the mother are from different nationalities and use their own language when speaking to the child, but the parent can communicate with the child in a language learned by him/her as well. In our paper, we write about the advantages of being bilingual as well as the sometimes unforeseen difficulties multilingual families might face while bringing up children.

Keywords: multilingual families, language acquisition, language retention, code-switching, nurturing Hungarian traditions

Introduction

Defining bilingualism is rather difficult because several factors must be taken into consideration; this phenomenon therefore has no uniformly accepted definition. According to Skuttnabb-Kangas, bilingualism can be divided into four categories based on the following criteria: 1) the time of the acquisition of both languages (origin) 2) the language knowledge level of the speaker and the characteristics of their language usage (competence) 3) use of two languages in most speaking situations (function) and 4) whether it is decisive for the identity of the speaker (attitude). Bilinguals are those who identify themselves as bilinguals (or with access to two cultures) or whom others identify as bilinguals (Borbély, 2014 p. 25). According to Bloomfield's maximalist definition (1933), *true bilingualism* means that a person has 'a native-like control of two languages', i.e., they can use both with perfect grammatical correctness and without an accent. However, Haugen (1953) believes bilingualism begins when the speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in

another language. Diebold, however, claims that a person is also bilingual even if he or she does not speak the other language but understands it; he calls this *incipient bilingualism*. Diebold (1964) believes that a person can be considered bilingual if he or she possesses at least one of the following basic skills in any given foreign language: speech production, speech comprehension, reading, writing (I6).

The above definitions of bilingualism represent two extremes (Bloomfield and Diebold) while the solution is presumably somewhere in the middle. For our present purposes, all persons are regarded as bilingual or multilingual who are able to use two or more languages effectively to succeed in life, even if their knowledge of and speech production in the two languages represent significantly different developmental levels.

In our paper, we briefly review how children can become bilingual within or outside of their families, followed by the results of our survey conducted with part-Hungarian families living in the UK. In our analysis, we also examine code-switching and code-mixing, which is common among bilingual people. Finally, we also discuss families' efforts at language retention and maintaining Hungarian traditions.

Becoming bilingual

Bilingualism can develop in several different ways. Bilingualism can be interpreted as a personal path that is individual in each case rather than a planned process that can be divided into categories based on a pattern. When studying the phenomenon from the aspect of its origin, there are several circumstances that contribute to developing the ability to effectively use a second or third language. As to the origin of bilingualism, the literature distinguishes the following models for language acquisition.

Minority bilingualism (Navracsics, 1999; Klein, 2013) is perhaps the most natural phenomenon in a social context, as there is practically no country on Earth without some kind of ethnic minority (Borbély, 2014, p. 28). According to the principles set out in a document entitled The *Oslo Recommendations*, minority communities have the right to use their own language, publish media content written in that language, operate a minority organisation, practise their cultural and religious customs, and the right for registration in their own language. It cannot be denied that there is pressure to learn the official language of the country as well, especially when the majority society is less tolerant towards the minority language. Immigration (Navracsics, 1999) creates a pressing necessity for language learning. Parents must adapt to their environment on a high level and the effective use of the foreign language is their means to do so. Their vocabulary can improve in an accelerated manner and their language competence may develop spectacularly within a short time. Although children are forced to acquire the language of the receiving country as soon as possible in order to take part in the education process successfully, their mother tongue is usually spoken in the home. Ideally, this additional language helps strengthen family ties, although it must not be forgotten that

the children's language knowledge will strongly be influenced by the parents' linguistic standard and the quality of their language use.

Somewhat similar to immigration is temporary migration (Navracsics, 1999), the purpose of which is usually to establish or stabilise the family's financial situation or maybe gain experience in a given professional area. While it is hard to foretell whether somebody will become bilingual during a temporary stay such as this, it is logical to presume that the longer time one spends abroad and the more they use the language, the more likely they are to become bilingual. However, the 'danger' of such bilingualism is that many language users only gain fluency and effective communication skills in the work-related area. It can also be observed that when those who work abroad form a closed community (e.g., they jointly rent a home and also work together) they do not acquire the language of their environment as they only communicate among themselves. In the event that the immigrants work together with locals, it can occur that the locals will learn the vocabulary used in everyday working situations, as was the case with a Hungarian building team working in Germany: instead of the Hungarians learning German, it was the Germans who had to learn the Hungarian work vocabulary (chisel, trowel, hammer, etc.).

Elite bilingualism (Navracsics, 1999; Klein, 2013) is a specific linguistic phenomenon: speakers undergo a deliberate language learning process in the hope of gaining the benefits of bilingualism. There are families that hire a foreign nanny or baby-sitter who looks after their child(ren) while speaking his/her first language to them. Also, parents can send their children to bilingual or international schools where the language of teaching is different from the majority language of the country. Although the word 'elite' is used to define this kind of bilingualism, nowadays this idea is not necessarily restricted to the cultural elite. When this phenomenon was first studied, the most typical examples were families of diplomats and children of the aristocracy (see also: Nemes 2016, 20I8). In the eighteenth century, Russian nobility used to speak French whereas Hungarian nobility preferred the German language. One reason for this was the separation between the 'common' versus 'elite' strata of society, as well as the origin and upbringing of aristocrat families. Some aristocrats did not even speak the national language.

Territorial bilingualism (Navracsics, 1999) is closely connected to geographical boundaries. Together with the boundaries of their language use, a language community's territory is defined by geographical formations, such as mountains, hills, and valleys. In such areas, communication between communities is aided by a shared intermediary language, a so-called *lingua franca*, used in intercultural interactions. In medieval Europe, the Latin language served as a *lingua franca* and was replaced in the seventeenth century by French, which became the main tool of diplomatic and cultural communication for the nations of Europe (Bárdosi & Karakai, 1996). In the twentieth century, as Great Britain and the United States became great political and economic powers, English become the new intermediary language.

Language teaching in schools (Navracsics, 1999; Klein, 2013) is also supposed to contribute to the development of bilingualism, although it is more of an active

and forced learning process than effective language acquisition. Bilingual preschools, primary and secondary schools have been popular among parents when sending their children to an educational institution. In today's globalised world, with the expansion of the Internet, it is very easy to get access to foreign language media, whether a moving picture, interactive or written content. One of its advantages is that it supports the acquisition and the passive use of foreign languages (Nemes & Guzina, 2017). Media consumption is largely a deliberate process that requires strong motivation on the part of the user (children and adults alike), such as the desire to research materials related to one's interests, be up-to-date with media products, read literature necessary for one's professional development, etc. Among families aiming for bilingualism, the media is regarded as an effective but not exclusive tool of raising bilingual children.

The term 'family bilingualism' (Navracsics, 1999; Klein, 2013) means that in the given family, two parents who come from different countries and speak different languages are raising children together. This form of bilingualism consists of complex cause and effect relationships and family types since the family as the primary socialisation scene plays a key role in the children's development. The child has different emotional and communicate relations with the parents which motivate him to acquire their first language.

In the vast majority of cases, family bilingualism occurs when the parents of different mother tongues realise that their children will benefit greatly from knowing both languages. Family bilingualism can be divided into different family models on the basis of three main aspects developed by Riley and Harding (Nemes, 2016).

- Do the parents speak each other's mother tongue?
- What is the relationship between the languages used by the parents and the language of the community?
- The parents' language use with each other and the children

In the context of our paper, it is worth devoting a few lines to one of the most popular methods that parents hope to lead to bilingualism. The OLOP (One Language–One Parent) method is a child-rearing technique based on parental division of labour along the lines of language, whose purpose is to approximately balance the language input in the home (Klein, 2013). The first child-rearing process based on the OLOP-method was documented by Ronjat who, similar to other researchers of the age, also observed and experimented on his own children. He believed that children can develop their competence in both languages without the languages interfering with one another while the OLOP method would ensure the children's connection with both languages form birth. According to the writer, if used consistently, the OLOP method can be an effective tool in developing bilingualism and also seems to be the best method for creating balanced language input for children. At the time, theorists believed that associating each language with a different person was the only way to prevent bilingual children from confusion of the languages. However, this early notion has been proven to be false (Byers et al., 2013, p. 4) as several factors have to be met to achieve bilingualism. The condition for

the effectiveness of the method is for both parents to spend approximately the same amount of quality time with the children. Also, the quality of the language input plays an important role in the development. Children acquire language as a communication unit in the family, therefore, in the case of two languages, both languages will become a part of communication provided that each parent consistently speaks his or her own mother tongue to them. Otherwise, it may happen that the child will use one of the languages passively, that is, understand it but not speak it (Borbély, 2014).

The development of children's linguistic codes are influenced by the environment surrounding them, which first means the immediate family and later the wider social community they grow up in. Researchers mostly agree that in the linguistic development of bilingual children, three main phases can be distinguished. 1) In the first phase, the child's vocabulary includes elements of both languages but words of equivalent meaning from both languages are rarely present. 2) When two-word sentences appear, they will include words of both languages. The degree of language mixing decreases steadily with age. As the vocabulary expands intensively, words with the same meaning appear in both languages, but the child uses a single set of rules for a long time. 3) The development of two separate language rule systems, approx. from the age of five. Also, some surveys report language delay affecting mainly vocabulary in case of bilingual children, although this seems to be a temporary disadvantage (Borbély, 2014).

However, there is no consensus among researchers on exactly how the process of building vocabulary takes place. According to those supporting the hypothesis of a unified language system, a bilingual child does not differentiate between the two language systems in the initial stage of language acquisition but uses a hybrid system. During linguistic development, this hybrid system will gradually be separated. According to the hypothesis of separate language systems, the child can already distinguish between the two language systems at an early stage of linguistic development. From the beginning of language acquisition, an independent brain centre develops for each language, so they are acquired independently of each other. According to this hypothesis, the reason for mixing words is that two imperfect language systems are evolving side by side. That is, when an appropriate language tool is not available in one language system, the child will automatically turn to the other language. Research also points out that it is not necessarily the lack of lexical knowledge that is responsible for mixing language systems, but rather the ease or difficulty of retrieval. The bilingual child may know the necessary word in both languages, but may use it more often in one, so (s)he will be able to retrieve it from the mental lexicon faster.

In the case of bilinguals, speech development is not necessarily delayed, but rather it takes more time for speakers to decide in which language to respond to whom and in what situation. Research has also revealed that bilingual children may know fewer words in each of their languages compared to their monolingual peers, yet this difference disappears when we calculate bilingual children's conceptual vocabulary across both languages (cited in Heinlein

& Williams, 2013, p. 8). A conceptual vocabulary means that, when adding together the words known in both Hungarian and English without taking cross-language synonyms into consideration twice, then bilingual children know approximately the same number of words as their peers. Nor should it be forgotten that monolingual children may also start to speak later, a phenomenon that stems from the fact that every child develops at his or her own pace regardless of whether they are spoken to in one or two languages. In general, the mother's language will be the child's mother tongue; even if the mother speaks two languages to the child, one will still be more dominant and will become the child's mother tongue. In early childhood, the mother typically spends more time with the child, so her language is dominant. However, this may change as the child goes to kindergarten and then school, at which time the language of his/her wider environment becomes dominant.

Later in life, second-language acquisition in childhood appears to yield positive results in all respects. Bilingualism gives speakers an advantage that not only allows them to know another language, but also maintain a better position in terms of culture and traditions compared to an individual who knows and uses only one language. Bilingualism has no detrimental effect upon cognitive development. As is especially true of knowledge acquired during childhood: the child is given the gift of another language with which (s)he can express himself/herself in the same way as his/her primary mother tongue (I9). Bilingualism is on the rise in many parts of the world as more and more children are exposed to two languages from an early age (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams 2013, p. 1). Speaking more than one language is important for travel, employment, speaking with members of one's extended family, making friends from different backgrounds, and maintaining connection to family and culture. Several studies have shown that bilinguals have non-linguistic advantages when it comes to social understanding, sensitivity to certain features of communication, memory, and other cognitive advantages (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013, p. 3). As for the cognitive development of children, according to some research, bilingualism has positive effects on children's problems-solving skills, creativity, and working-memory throughout their lives. However, some surveys were not able to prove either the pros or the cons of bilingualism at an early age (Borbély, 2014).

There are basically two forms of childhood bilingualism based on when and how the child acquires the two languages. We speak of simultaneous bilingualism when a child acquires the two languages parallelly before the age of three. This is mostly the case in bilingual families, where the child is in contact with both languages from birth. This usually happens with the application of the *one language – one parent* (OLOP) method, when the parents consistently speak their own language to the child. This is regarded as the most widespread method that parents hope will lead to bilingualism. In situations where the parents spend the same amount of time with the child, OLOP can be a great way to ensure equal exposure. On the other hand, when exposure is limited to the weekend or occasional visits of grandparents, the method is unlikely to lead to balanced language input. Afterwards, perfectly balanced language exposure will not necessarily lead to later bilingualism as the

language of the community has a great influence on the children. The language of the community where the child lives is known as the *majority language* while the less widely spoken language is known as the *minority language*. As children grow, the majority language becomes more important as it is the language of the preschool, school, and (later on) work, etc. In contrast, the minority language is used in the home with the members of the family (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013, p. 5). This is why parents provide opportunities for children to play with other kids in the minority language. What is more, previous research indicates that if children hear two languages from the same bilingual parent they are *often* able to learn two languages since the *one language – one parent* method is not necessary nor sufficient for successful bilingualism (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013, p. 4).

Another form of childhood bilingualism is sequential bilingualism, wherein the second language is learned during childhood after the acquisition of the first. Some researchers think the child has to be exposed to the new language by the age of three (Borbély, 2014). There is no consensus among researchers regarding this so-called 'critical age'; however, experience suggests that the sooner the process begins, the higher the level of language competence will be and after the teenage years it seems impossible to overcome the effects of the first language's effect on accent (Borbély, 2014). Many emphasise that age is only one of the factors influencing the successful acquisition of a second language. The language learning environment and other subjective factors such as the quantity of exposure to each language and the quality of language input (as well as motivation, attitude, etc.) also play an important role. Thus, it is more expedient to talk about sensitive periods instead of a critical age in relation to the acquisition of a second language. It has been established that there is an ideal age to acquire certain language levels and structures. Hahne's research made it clear that younger children tend to adapt to the syntactic structures of the second language more easily than older children. On the other hand, older learners seem to be better at learning vocabulary and pragmatics (cited in Klein, 2013). Nikolov (2004) underscores that it is possible to achieve native-like proficiency even after adolescence. She adds that, in the case of children, the process of language learning matters a lot. Moreover, when working with children it is important to motivate them, encourage them to form a positive attitude to the new language, and improve speaking skills.

In the case of children growing up in a bilingual family, the parents' decision and consistency will determine whether they become simultaneously versus sequentially bilingual or monolingual. The process is largely determined by the communication customs created in the family and the parents' sense of identity. This factor is also considerably influenced by the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the broader environment. While there is no ideal age to start learning a second language, the environment where the child grows up plays an important role in the child's successful language learning process. Children do not learn more quickly, indeed they learn a language in a different way than adults. Peltzer-Karpf-Zangl suggest that preschool-aged children are eager to speak, therefore it is beneficial when they are encouraged to speak in the

second language. If a language difficulty occurs, they are easily able to bridge it with nonverbal cues, onomatopoetic words, literal translations or even made-up words (cited in Klein, 2013). Also, children talk about specific things and generally do not need to change verb tenses or use complex syntax or vocabulary. Bilingualism and cognition are complex issues that depend upon themselves as well as several other factors (Klein, 2013).

Linguistic socialisation by no means ends in childhood: especially for bilinguals, this aspect is a lifelong process. Bilinguals are constantly faced with the challenges of language retention and language shift. The relationship between languages can be multifaceted and interference phenomena include code-mixing and code-switching. If bilingualism is balanced and usage of the two languages is well distinguished, the phenomenon of interference will be less pronounced. Interference phenomena can also be detected among simultaneous bilinguals. Code-mixing in children is not significantly different from that in adults, yet its incidence is higher among children in whose environment adults also mix the languages (I4). For bilingual children, successful linguistic socialisation also means that they are aware of their bilingualism and know that they can choose one or the other communication system in their possession according to the given situation and/or person. During the linguistic socialisation of bilinguals, the linguistic effects of communication between siblings and contact with peers as well as the language(s) of education all play a key role.

The process of language acquisition of Hungarian children living in the UK – the study

In the course of our research, we conducted interviews with Hungarian families living in the UK. To suit out research purposes, we looked for Hungarian families living in the UK with at least one preschool-aged child or cases in which the child had lived in the UK between the ages of three and six. The semi-structured interviews usually took 30-35 minutes to complete and contained questions related to the language development of the bilingual child, integration into the kindergarten, and language retention. Some interviews were conducted in person, but we also used some advances in modern technology, such as Skype or Facebook. Finding the families posed some difficulties because it was important for us that one of the parents be Hungarian. During the interviews, a personal relationship was established with the interviewees who could also answer other questions that arose during the interview. We tried to take a more linguistic perspective when asking parents to remember code-switching situations and family stories in connection with their bilingual children's language development. All the examples in our paper come from our empirical research recalled by parents used in natural and spontaneous speaking situations. During the study that took place between 2019 and 2020, we contacted thirty families raising a total of fifty children (1–18 years). There were also children in the interviewed families who had first gone to kindergarten in Hungary and then to a kindergarten in the UK. A number of works have been written on bilingualism, most of which focus on its benefits. Little does the literature deal with the difficulties and problems

arising during the process: in our research, we also asked parents to tell us what difficulties the appearance of the second language caused in their child's life and how it affected the child's speech development.

As was mentioned before, literature on raising bilingual children has focused almost exclusively on its advantages. Previous research indicates that code-switching is a natural phenomenon among children brought up in families using more than one language. When we started our research, it was hypothesised that Hungarian children living in England also code-mix from an early age. Another aim of our study was to determine whether families with at least one Hungarian-speaking parent use the one-person-one-language method as it is a very popular strategy for raising bilingual children. We also hypothesised that one of the languages used within the family would be Hungarian. Finally, we investigated the role and importance of retaining Hungarian language and traditions. We assumed that families with Hungarian ties find it relevant to keep in touch with Hungarian relatives, celebrate Easter and Christmas in accordance with Hungarian customs, and introduce Hungarian folk tales, nursery rhymes, books, and cultural heritage in general to their children.

Upon reviewing the information on the parents' educational background, results show that the majority of respondents are graduates while the minority have secondary (technical) school or vocational school diplomas. Twenty of the mothers have university or college degrees; four have a secondary technical school diploma while two of them completed secondary school and two vocational school. Out of the fathers, seventeen have completed tertiary education, five have a diploma in vocational education while two have technical school certificates and two secondary school diplomas.

The majority of respondents have been living in the UK for a longer period of time and work full time; some of the mothers are homemakers. There may be several reasons for why the women stay at home, e.g., if the family cannot afford a private kindergarten for their child(ren) during the day, thereby making it necessary for women to remain home. When examining the roles of women versus men, we found that nine mothers stay at home, six work part-time and ten work full-time. All of the men in the study work full-time (100%).

Before conducting the interviews, we had assumed that the Hungarian language was spoken within the family and English outside the family. However, in addition to Hungarian and English, the Spanish, Portuguese, German and, in two cases, Slovak languages were also present among the surveyed families. Five of the interviewed parents stated that they considered it necessary to introduce the third language. They believe that the first language of both parents is important, but these are not the same as the language of the community (English), which the child will need in everyday life. One Hungarian father has a Portuguese wife and, along with English, three languages are constantly present in the children's lives. *'I am the one talking to the children in Hungarian, we have Hungarian storybooks, they talk to their grandma on Skype, but the problem is that I don't get to spend much time with them because of my work, so English goes perfectly, they also speak Portuguese nicely, but Hungarian is a bit of a "minority" language in our home'* (Interview 14).

Our research revealed that the parents made a conscious decision to raise their children to be bilingual. They also agreed who should speak to the child(ren) in which language. The *one parent – one language* method was chosen by 22 couples; two reported that the two languages could not be used simultaneously because the child insisted on only one language. Here is the account of one of the mothers: *'The youngest one doesn't want to speak Hungarian, he understands what is said, he can even read, so I don't force it.... The difficulty was that I spoke to them in Hungarian, and they answered in English'* (Interview 19). Another mother said, *'We'd planned that I would only speak English and István only Hungarian, but somehow it didn't turn out that way'* (Interview 1). In families where one parent is Hungarian and the other is not, it was mentioned as a disadvantage that puns, humour, and language jokes could not be enjoyed together. In these families, the father typically does not speak Hungarian, so he missed the metaphors and symbols in literature, poetry or music that can only be understood in Hungarian. For the same reason, the 'funny' stages of children's language development cannot be shared by the parents, either (Interview 26).

Even in families where the mother tongue is Hungarian and both parents are from Hungary, the language of the home is not always Hungarian (10 families). In nine cases, two languages are spoken at home: *'My husband only talks in English and I talk in English and Hungarian, but I prefer to speak Hungarian if my husband is not at home'* (Interview 6). In the same vein: *'We, the parents, always speak Hungarian to each other, the girls also speak it to us, although they often switch to English in these days of adolescence. Among themselves, the children only speak English and switch to Hungarian if necessary"* (Interview 28). We also saw an example of one parent providing the child with both language inputs due to the other's busy schedule: *'I spoke English and Hungarian alternately [to the child], but I messed up a little at the beginning because I didn't set up a system for him when to have Hungarian and when English, and I mostly spoke to him in English; I tried telling stories, looking at pictures, and saying words in Hungarian. The bedtime story was not always told in Hungarian'* (Interview 6). In one family, the mother speaks to her child in three languages: *'I sometimes speak Hungarian to her, but rather English or German. We want to move to Germany soon, so it'll probably be the most dominant for him'* (Interview 13).

Among the interviewed families, some speak Hungarian at home and switch to English when they go out. *'We only speak Hungarian at home, because my partner and I are both Hungarian"* (e.g., Interviews 19 and 29). In these families, the child learns the language of the community when (s)he first goes to kindergarten. Hungarian-speaking parents try to help their child learn English by reading storybooks in English, as the following example shows: *'At that time, we deliberately tried to speak both languages, we often read English bedtime stories so that he could adapt to the kindergarten faster, but at the same time we also taught him Hungarian because there were times when his Hungarian was getting worse'* (Interview 3). Regarding home language use, we can also see that there are families where they only communicate in English at home: *'My husband is English, we speak English at home'* (Interviews 16 and 19).

Based on the literature, we also hypothesised that bilingual children do not begin to speak later than their monolingual peers. We divided the children included in the study into two parts: the first group included children whose speech development had not yet begun before moving to the UK (10 children, plus the 20 children who were born after moving to the UK). In the case of these children, some parents reported that they started speaking later than their monolingual peers. One mother reported that her child was only using baby-talk even after the age of two (e.g., *guli-guli-guli, bababa, hajaja*). He would sometimes utter a word or two, but had not really start talking yet. The parents said they were worried at first and even asked professionals if it was normal for a child not yet to speak at the age of two (Interview 6). Another child used Hungarian and English side by side: *'Little Bende's first word was* "még". *And to make everyone understand what he wanted, he added* "more". *Since then, he has been using the two words together* (még-more)*'* (Interview 5).

The second group included children who had already started using Hungarian as their first language before moving to the UK (20 children). Their parents continued to speak to them in Hungarian, but they also tried to introduce them to English (e.g., through picture books, English stories) so that they could hear it as often as possible. *'We spoke Hungarian to her as a baby, but I taught her a lot of songs, poems and rhymes in English'* (Interview 29). Three of the parents also attended playhouses regularly, thereby motivating their children to learn and use English by giving them the opportunity to meet English-speaking children. Some parents reported that after moving to the UK, their child's speech development was somewhat halted, which they attributed to the fact that the child was suddenly 'dropped' into an English-speaking environment. As one mother reported: *'In the first few months, there were problems with English in the kindergarten when our daughter couldn't say what she wanted, which made her shy, but it only lasted a month or two. From her point of view, she said that about three months later, she learned English out of anger because the other children didn't play with her because she couldn't communicate'* (Interview 3). Although the three-year-old child's Hungarian language competence was appropriate for her age and she was able to express herself in Hungarian, the new language did not yet give her the opportunity to do so.

One mother recalls, *'Jázmin first learnt Hungarian, she didn't speak English yet. This was a great disadvantage for her, because she did not feel comfortable in the kindergarten in the first few weeks as there were many things she didn't understand'* (Interview 29). In Interview 30, the parents state that *'Sári had some difficulties after about 4 months. Everybody had told her in encouragement that children would learn the new language quickly. Aged 7, she had a completely different idea of this. She thought it'd be a really short time, maybe a month or two. When she realised it wasn't so easy and she couldn't make it in such a short time, she was rather desperate. When we explained to her how the adults had meant it, she calmed down.... What made things a little easier was that a Hungarian girl came to her class, who had been living in the UK for about a year and a half, and her English was better. She encouraged Sári to speak.'*

Parents also related that when they moved to the UK, their child did not want to speak English at first: *'Bíborka, my 10-year-old daughter, had already learnt English at home for two years in a bilingual elementary school. We thought it would be the easiest for her – and for sure, she understood a few things at school already on the first day. But she wouldn't speak for half a year! The formerly chatty little girl, with whom the main problem at school was talking too much, suddenly became completely silent at school. For a breakthrough, we had to invite her English friend to our home. There was nothing else to do but talk to her. By the end of the two-hour visit, we were astonished to realise that our child was speaking English! Her English friend was equally surprised: "Gee, Bíborka is so talkative!"'* (Interview 5) One mother tried to speak English to four-year-old Zsóka as much as possible, *'but she is very stubborn and doesn't want to speak English, she insists on the Hungarian language. She has extra lessons in the kindergarten because she doesn't want to speak English. She understands everything but she does not want to use it'* (Interview 10). One parent says that the children started school immediately after moving to the UK, where *'they were thrown in at the deep end. Both of them were shy and didn't dare to speak English, even though they knew some words, for example those having to do with eating and drinking'* (Interview 30).

The parents related that English kindergartens helped the children adapt linguistically: teachers gave 20–30-minute extra lessons to the newly arrived Hungarian children (Interview 22). In Interview 30, parents related that, in school, teachers had a very kind and flexible attitude to the children that helped them relax. '*Dani became braver in using English after about a year. He had understood a lot before that, too, but he would rather play with his classmates silently, so he took longer to learn the language than Sára, who was talking to her classmates more.'*

Six parents emphasised that their children *'soaked up'* the English language *'in a jiffy'* (Interview 5). Children corrected their parents' and their siblings' English, too. *'My big daughters were very funny. Now they already teach the little ones and correct them if they mix something up'* (Interview 14). Some children prefer speaking English to Hungarian: *'We noticed that if she was asked a question in Hungarian, especially by strangers, she would automatically answer in English"* (Interview 11). Some, however, switch between languages: '*Bende answers in the language that is spoken around him. In Hungarian to us, but if the Spanish teacher is here, he complains about a pain in his "cabeza" when he hits his head'* (Interview 14). It is natural even for siblings growing up in the same environment to display different linguistic development. '*In our family, Sára speaks English best. The school and her friend helped her a lot'* (Interview 30). One mother noticed that, for her daughter, English gradually came to the fore: *'Now she already thinks in English, it's easier for her to play in English, and she prefers watching stories in English, too. When she talks in Hungarian, she first composes her sentences in English and then translates them into Hungarian in her little head. Therefore, she speaks Hungarian more slowly and she has to think more. Sometimes she even mixes the two languages'* (Interview 29). Another mother, however, observes that her children do not

translate from one language to the other but think and interpret the world in the given language (Interview 26).

Ten of the parents reported that children did not like talking about schoolwork in Hungarian because they did not have the necessary vocabulary, which made them uncomfortable (e.g., Interview 28).

Examining the appearance of code-switching and code-mixing

Code-switching and code-mixing are a natural part of bilingualism. Code-switching has several definitions, the most common of which is the following: *'Code-switching is the alternate use of two or more languages within the same utterance or discourse'* (Bartha, 1999). That is to say, the speaker may use words of a different language *(guest language)* within the same sentence in the *matrix* or *base language*. This happens more often while children are still learning both languages and they cannot think of a word in the language they are actually speaking, so they 'borrow' it from the other language. For example: *'Anya, egy* bottle *vizet kérek' [Mummy, please give me a* bottle *of water]. 'Csak magyarul beszélünk itthon,* all the time*' [We only speak Hungarian at home,* all the time*]* (Interview 22). *'Annyi, annyi minden van itt,* I don't want any gift. All right*' [There are so many things here,* I don't want any gift. All right*]* (Interview 23). While hiking in the forest, one child warned, *'Ez egy veszélyes* bug*'* [This is a dangerous *bug*] (Interview 30).

There may be various reasons for code-switching. For the speaker, both languages are active as (s)he uses them on a daily basis, therefore the languages are in connection with each other. As a result, one of them may sometimes interfere with the speaking process and code-switching occurs. It may also occur when a topic, character, location, or quote arises in the conversation that the speaker cannot express in the given language, so (s)he continues to communicate in the language that has been passively present so far (I7). As bilingual children get older, the topic becomes a more important factor in code-switching due to life experience. In this case, the absence of lexical knowledge may be responsible for a switch that is based on the experience they are talking about; for example, children talking about their day at school and the weekend. In the case of Hungarian children living in the UK, code-switching means children use English words or phrases from English in place of those in Hungarian within a single sentence. Similarly, they can also switch between languages based on changes in the speech situations wherein the topic (e.g., school life vs. family weekend) or the members of the conversation change (e.g., they talk to their English friends at school or talking to their parents). It has also been reported that code-switching behaviour can change depending on the level of stress in the environment (Basnight et al., 2007, p. 80), an element that is obviously present in a child's life who recently moved to a new environmental and linguistic context.

Code-mixing is relatively common among bilingual children, especially if the parents are also bilingual even though they have agreed on using the OLOP method. Some parents worry about this, but research says bilinguals cope with

code-mixing from an early age (Heinlein & Williams, 2013, p. 6). Also, code-mixing may lead to cognitive benefits as the speakers have become familiar with switching languages back and forth (Heinlein & Williams, 2013, p. 6).

For adults, the trigger may be the desire to demonstrate social or intellectual superiority or as a defence mechanism (Basnight et al., 2007, p. 70); for children, a more thorough knowledge of the given topic in the other language will lead to code-switching. A typical example: *'A nagymama beengedte a házába a farkast, [The grandma let the wolf into her house]* after that the wolf have devoured the grandma*.'* Also, children and adults may code-switch when there is no identical translation in the target language (*I had fun with my* padtárs*. We had a giant* pogácsa.) or it has better translation in one language (e.g, *my …. elzsibbadt a lábam*) (Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 70).

In the case of code-mixing, the speaker inserts a full word into the utterance or inflects it according to different grammatical rules. In such cases, the speaker typically applies the grammatical rules of the dominant language to the words borrowed from the language that is passive in the given speech situation. A typical example for code-switching at word level is when a Hungarian-English bilingual child code-switched to English: *'Kérek szépen* bread-*et!' [Can I have some* bread*, please?]*. A Hungarian mother remembered the following sentence: *'Anya, amikor a* two-*hoz ér a nagymutató...' [Mummy, when the big hand gets to the* two*]* (Interview 23). Another memory by a mother: 'Anyu *cooking* nekem *eggs,* vagy now *akarni menni…." [*Mummy *cooking eggs* for me *or* now *wanting to go]* (Interview 6). And another: *'Anyu, add már ide a* milk-*et' [Mummy, give me the* milk*], 'Ki fogja a szőlőt* harvest*oln?' [Who will* harvest *the grapes?]* or, when hurrying on the way to school: *'Ne* waste*old az időt!' [Do not* waste *the time]* (Interview 7). In the aforementioned sentences, the children code-switched at word level in a natural environment due to greater cognitive and emotional availability of words.

Code-mixing requires a higher bilingual competence, which may suggest that when it happens, the two languages are on the same level or close to one another, therefore code-mixing happens more often (I7). Some parents noticed that their children would use Hungarian syntax when saying English sentences. *'For both of my children, English is their second language. When they make sentences in English, they put them together as if they were Hungarian sentences, that is, according to Hungarian rules'* (Interview 25). In four cases, parents reported that they also used the languages in this way, that is, mixing Hungarian with English. *'Unfortunately, we talk to our child in a mixed language; sometimes we mix English words into our Hungarian'* (Interview 9). Another comment describes this as, *'Total chaos.... Unfortunately, we mix words, too, if they don't come to mind in one language, or just out of laziness'* (Interview 10). In Interview 28, the parents said that their daughters *'find it funny to mix the two languages in one sentence because we, parents are even more mixed up. My husband tries to avoid this mixing, but it's sometimes difficult. I would sometimes also explain something to the girls in English, or maybe in both languages.'*

Children also engaged in code-switching and code-mixing, as was recalled by a father: *'Because of the many languages, they were mixing the words of all*

three. They would say interesting sentences, which started in Hungarian and ended in Portuguese, with some English words thrown in' (Interview 14). A Hungarian mother answered that *'Since we've been out here and the children are learning English, they've been mixing a great many English words into their sentences because they don't know enough English words to put a sentence nicely together... I've noticed that they can't express themselves in English as well as in Hungarian, and it sometimes makes them anxious and therefore mix the languages. Sometimes they miss the Hungarian environment'* (Interview 12). In another interviewed family, parents believed that code-switching was more deliberate than accidental. The children switched to Hungarian when they did not want their mates to understand them. With the expansion of their vocabulary, they did less and less code-switching but rather circumscribed the word that they did not know or did not come to their mind, so communication became easier. *'It would sometimes happen that the appropriate word didn't come to their mind, then there was mixing (words or even half sentences) and laughing. As time passed, they made fewer and fewer mistakes'* (Interview 30). Two of the families claimed that they did not notice their children mixing or having mixed the two languages.

Attempts at language retention

Before conducting the interviews, we had thought that retaining the Hungarian language would not be a problem while living abroad. Our research has made it clear that it is important for the surveyed parents to retain their Hungarian language (and other mother tongues) (25 families). Parents are very creative and purposeful in using several different methods to retain their languages.

It seems that Hungarian is most often used in the home, which gives children an opportunity to hear it continually, thus compensating for an all-English language input during the rest of their day in school or kindergarten. One of the parents says that *'We were worried that they would forget Hungarian'* (Interview 30). Besides, families often spend the summer and other school holidays in Hungary, where communication with family and friends helps the children practise their Hungarian. In Interview 10, the parent claims that, '*Hungarian is only necessary for the sake of relatives, because I don't want to go home, I would like my child to grow up here'.* Families sometimes entertain Hungarian relatives and friends in their UK homes. *'We are trying to bring relatives out here to nurture traditions, as we don't have much leave to go home'* (Interview 11). Every family uses Skype, Viber or social media (e.g., Facebook) to keep in touch with family members in Hungary. Parents usually provide Hungarian-language storybooks, videos, cartoons, and music to their children, as reported by a mother. *'They love Hungarian Folk Tales [a popular cartoon series], watch them with their mouths open, and also like Hungarian folk songs very much, which they also dance to'* (Interview 15).

One of the interviewees reported that, in order to retain their mother tongue and alleviate homesickness, they attend a Hungarian Weekend once a month. At Hungarian clubs, children can meet their Hungarian mates

and there are also several teachers among the parents who help each other's children to learn the basics of Hungarian literacy.

A mother of three reported that Hungarian was not easily retained, despite her providing books and stories on videos to her children. *'Actually, it is exceedingly hard to retain a language. Even though we had bought books and DVDs, after a day's work, homework, extra lessons and other activities it's rather hard for everyone to make time for them'* (Interview 5). It also happens that children speak English even to their Hungarian friends living in the UK, whose Hungarian is also good, because '*if the friend has been living here for a long time, she has been going to school here, then English will almost certainly be the preferred language*' (Interview 28).

One of the families moved back to Hungary after four years in the UK (Interview 30). The parents reported that the children had no problem with everyday/colloquial Hungarian, but the Hungarian grammar and literary language required in school posed a challenge. They used English word order and often made mistakes in conjugation; therefore, reading and writing did not go smoothly, either. *'They still have problems with expressing themselves in Hungarian, especially Dani. Sári adapted easily, but sometimes she, too, makes mistakes. The extended family (grandparents, cousins), Hungarian education, new schoolmates and friends all helped them improve quickly.'* Children retain bilingualism almost automatically. Sári and her English friend keep in touch via Skype and she also talks to her cousin living in the UK in English. Sometimes, Sári and Dani, too, talk to their sister Lilla, born after returning to Hungary, in English. Parents believe that *'bilingualism can only be retained with practice. For example, we deliberately create an English environment around us by listening to stuff or watching movies in English. Even for our youngest child, I put on the video story in English whenever possible. They like reading in English and, given the opportunity, they also speak it to each other'.* The parents report that for the children, bilingualism was hard to achieve but it is worth it in the long run because it improves several skills, such as problem solving, intercultural communication, different thought structures, acceptance, team work, and flexibility.

Nurturing Hungarian traditions in the UK

In the final chapter of this paper, we find it important to discuss whether the Hungarian families living hundreds of kilometres from their homeland nurture Hungarian traditions and how and to what extent they keep Hungarian customs. In the interview, six parents emphasised that they considered it important to acquaint their children with Hungarian history. Fostering family ties plays an important role not only in the acquisition of the mother tongue but also in the transmission of cultural heritage. Spanish, English, Slovak, German, or Portuguese grandparents will certainly relate different memories to their grandchildren than Hungarian ones, thus connecting the child to their own historical and cultural background.

Among the interviewed families, holidays show a very vibrant image. Some families celebrate birthdays in the UK, but always travel home to Hungary for

Christmas and Easter. Some of the families who spend Christmas in the UK celebrate with Hungarian customs. *'We celebrated Christmas and Easter here and I tried to do everything like at home. I cooked traditional foods. At Easter, we painted eggs together with the boys and they sprinkled their grandma via Skype'* (Interview 12). Other families celebrate in the UK with English customs. In one family, they *'agreed to hold an English Christmas. We eat traditional food in our own country and out here [in the UK] we keep the English customs'* (Interview 14).

Summary

Research demonstrated that children are born to be able to learn the languages of their environment without confusion or delay (Heinlein & Williams, 2013, p. 10). Parents have to ensure opportunities to speak and hear the language and promote motivation and ongoing language usage opportunities for the children. The children included in the study adapted well to their new environment, new language, to the actual "new world". The parents reported that after a while, the children's English language skills were more developed than the parents' and children would teach certain terms to their parents. The parents tried to choose a high-quality kindergarten close to their home.

When speaking of bilingualism, it is not a negligible aspect how the child is affected by being torn out of the Hungarian-speaking environment and moving to an English-speaking environment. According to the interviewed parents, children were not only disturbed emotionally by the separation from relatives and friends, but also by the fact that they could not express themselves in English as fluently as in Hungarian, which frustrated them. Children record many experiences unnoticed, but at the same time it is necessary for parents to consciously create opportunities for their children to meet speakers of the language used in the family, e.g., their cousins, grandparents, and family friends, in order to develop children's language competence. It is important that children receive language input not only from the parent, but also from speakers of the language of different ages, occupations, and educational backgrounds. For children up to the age of 5–6, communication with parents is the primary medium of linguistic socialisation, so it is worth the parent's while to watch or read a story together with their child in order to discuss an unfamiliar word, phrase, or more complex scene.

Literature about the development of childhood bilingualism has studied code-switching patterns in the natural speech of children and we also asked our respondents to provide us with examples of this phenomenon. Also, the research literature suggests that children's code-switching patterns do not really differ from those observed among adults (Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 77). However, one highly debated question is the age at which a child can begin to code-switch. An interesting result of examination of a two-year-old Norwegian-English bilingual child indicated that even very young children are able to develop some sort of language awareness of their two languages (cited in Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 77). Another research examined

two-year-old French-English bilinguals' code-switching behaviour over a time frame of 18 months. It became clear that, over time, the children violated one of the constraints less frequently, a change that points to a developmental change in code-switching (Basnight-Brown & Altarriba, 2007, p. 78). Unfortunately, our respondents could not tell us when their children started code-switching even though they remembered several examples of them switching. It can, however, be stated that our respondents reported more code-switching behaviour in the beginning of the language learning process. Previous research offers a descriptive account of the various aspects of code-switching and the variety of its influences. The parents involved in our research suggested that their bilingual children code-switched to Hungarian when the words were harder to retrieve in English. As time passed and the children became more familiar with the new language, they made fewer and fewer mistakes. Future research should more thoroughly examine the relationship between age, mode of acquisition, nature, and the frequency of code-switching among Hungarian-English bilingual children. Also, this study failed to show code-switching from the listener's perspective, a factor that appears to be rather interesting.

Our findings provide strong evidence that the 'one-person-one-language' strategy is common among the families involved, yet families still have to consider what strategies they can use to promote early bilingual development. As we could see, most families used the OLOP method, although in several families it was impossible to provide a balanced exposure of languages in the early years. Moreover, a third language was also introduced in five families. It was hard for some parents to speak English to their children at home, which might help them learn English. Parents were also challenged when the child did not want to accept the new language, even though each family eventually overcame this initial difficulty. In other cases, what proved difficult was the incorporation of the Hungarian language into everyday life in the UK. *'Simply because outside our home everybody speaks English and sometimes it may appear rude and lame to insist on Hungarian by all means. What's more, it can sometimes have really embarrassing results'* (Interview 5). For the children, it is natural to speak in two languages, as this is the way they are growing up. Parents report that their high-school children '*are also a little proud of it, because they can have an advantage over their classmates in language lessons*' (Interview 28). For siblings, their mother tongue/first language may even become some kind of secret language that their environment does not understand.

Closely related to language is culture: the preservation and nurturing of Hungarian traditions are present in different ways in the lives of families living in the UK. Our study confirmed that all of the involved families find it important to strengthen family relations and introduce Hungarian literature, history, traditions and culture to their children. The habits of the parents are also important for children; for example, if the Hungarian father watches football every weekend, after a while, his children will follow suit and keep track of the results (Interview 27). In the future, as a continuation of our research, we would like to include more families in our research as well as survey the bilingual child-rearing practices of Hungarian families living in other European countries.

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Appendix

Details of families participating in the survey

Families	Family models	Age of child(ren)	Languages spoken by parents
Family 1	two parents	5, 3	English-Hungarian
Family 2	two parents	1	English-Hungarian
Family 3	two parents	10, 3	English-Hungarian-Spanish
Family 4	two parents	6, 1	English-Hungarian-Slovakian
Family 5	two parents	13, 11, 5	English-Hungarian
Family 6	single parent	4	English-Hungarian
Family 7	two parents	6, 1	English-Hungarian
Family 8	two parents	3	English-Hungarian
Family 9	two parents	4	English-Hungarian-Slovakian
Family 10	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 11	two parents	14	English-Hungarian
Family 12	two parents	4 (twins), 1	English-Hungarian
Family 13	two parents	7	English-Hungarian-German
Family 14	two parents	12, 10, 5, 3	English-Hungarian-Portuguese
Family 15	two parents	6, 3	English-Hungarian
Family 16	two parents	3	English-Hungarian
Family 17	two parents	1.5	English-Hungarian
Family 18	two parents	7, 4, 3,	English-Hungarian
Family 19	two parents	18, 16, 7	English-Hungarian
Family 20	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 21	two parents	2	English-Hungarian
Family 22	two parents	5	English-Hungarian
Family 23	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 24	two parents	6, 3	English-Hungarian
Family 25	two parents	5, 3	English-Hungarian

Family 26	two parents	8, 6	English-Hungarian
Family 27	two parents	6, 2	English-Hungarian
Family 28	two parents	14, 12	English-Hungarian
Family 29	two parents	4	English-Hungarian
Family 30	two parents	10, 8, 3	English-Hungarian