

EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN FROM BILINGUAL FAMILIES - PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Rozana Petani¹, Matilda Karamatić Brčić¹, Tamara Baždarić²

¹ University of Zadar (CROATIA)

² High school Vladimir Nazor Zadar (CROATIA)

Abstract

The inclusion of children from bilingual families in educational system ought to be considered from pedagogical perspective since the emphasis is placed both on upbringing and education. The subject of bilingualism is relevant to social and pedagogical context in terms of the application of new methods and forms of work to the process of bilingual development of children in families as well as in educational institutions. Whether monolingual, bilingual or multilingual a family is one of the most important factors for child development having almost crucial influence on a child's personality. The aim of this paper is to present the role of bilingualism in the family context which is the primary factor of education as well as its role in the context of the later inclusion of bilingual children in the institutional system of education. In the context of this study bilingualism is defined as simultaneous acquisition of two languages up to pre-school years with special emphasis being placed on "one parent-one language" method. The upbringing of a child represents a way to raise the awareness about the sense of belonging to a particular environment; it is a way to increase the awareness of personal and cultural identity for every family, above all, for bilingual families with both parents aspiring to convey their language, culture and history to a child. In order to highlight some of the common parental misconceptions about the negative impact of simultaneous bilingualism on speech and language development in children this paper provides an overview of speech and language development in bilingual children compared to monolingual children, while emphasizing at the same time the belief that the success parents would reach in bilingual education is above all directly related to their personal definition of a family and their attitudes towards bilingualism. Bilingual education and bilingualism are challenges placed in front of the entire family and educational institutions. Such perception highlights the relevance of the theme in wider social and narrow pedagogical context.

Keywords: bilingualism, simultaneous bilingualism, educational institution, family, inclusion, parenting.

1 SOME FEATURES OF MULTILINGUALISM AND EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION IN CROATIA

In the context of this study bilingualism is considered as pedagogical and social phenomenon. The positive effects of bilingualism mostly depend on social factors, or the type of bilingual community which the bilingual speakers belong to [13]. In the contemporary educational discourse, multilingualism represents a challenge for a wider social and narrow pedagogical context in which the emphasis is on a clearly defined role of the family and teachers in the educational process and life. Baker and Prys Jones (1998) classify the benefits of being bilingual in the following three groups: communicative, cultural and cognitive. In the context of this study, all three aspects are intertwined in problematizing the relationship between multilingualism, family and educational environment. The inclusion of children from bilingual families in the educational process is called educational inclusion. Educational inclusion is focused on the inclusion of all children in the regular education system whereby the emphasis is not only put on the inclusion of children with specific intellectual or physical disabilities, but also the socially marginalised, culturally deprived and ethnic minority children in a country. Given the subject matter of this paper, all of the above can be linked to the role of bilingualism in families, as well as to the situation of children in a bilingual environment in the context of their growing up and adjustment in the education system. The World Conference on Education for All [28] establishes six key education goals directed towards educational policy and educational practice of each country which are the following: expand and improve early childhood care and education, provide free compulsory education for all, promote quality learning and life skills for young people and adults, increase adult literacy, achieve gender equality in primary and secondary education, ensure the quality education for all children. The implementation of inclusive practices in schools in the Republic of Croatia implies in between the inclusion of ethnic minority children in education system as well. Despite the fact that there is no one single education policy document in Croatia that would

elaborate on certain models of implementing the inclusive concept, the inclusion is nevertheless being promoted as one of the key principles within the frames of existing documents on education [15]. According to the data collected by the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities in Croatia, the members of ethnic minorities exercise most of their ethnic rights through regular institutions of the Republic of Croatia, as the majority of Croatian people which decreases assimilation and enables them development of their cultural and ethnic identity with the aim of integrating them into Croatian society. The Republic of Croatia acknowledges 22 national minorities: Albanians, Austrians, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Czechs, Hungarians, Macedonians, Germans, Poles, Romanies, Romanians, Russians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Serbs, Italians, Turks, Ukrainians, Vlachs, and Jews (http://www.uljppnm.vlada.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9&Itemid=51).

Law on Use of Languages and Scripts of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia [11] governs the terms of the official use of language and script of national minorities to whom equality with the Croatian language and Latin script is being ensured [18]. The integration of ethnic minority children within the regular education system is being realized in the minority language, wherefore the education of minority children in Croatia is the integral part of the national education system. The organization, structure and content of education system have been determined by the Constitutional Law on national Minorities [12], the Law on Education in Languages and Scripts of National Minorities [11] and the Law on Primary and Secondary education as well as "minority" curricula [10]. In a theoretical and practical solution educational inclusion goes a step further in relation to the integration of children in the sense that it refers to the entire school system and educational practice. The basis of an inclusive concept is acceptance and acknowledgement of diversity as a stimulus to learning and not an obstacle. From the perspective of school practice, this means that classrooms become places where the differences such as bilingualism come to be respected and accepted. In the process of the implementation of inclusion, it is on school to ensure the access to quality learning and teaching without segregation and/or isolation [6]. In the pedagogical context of taking bilingualism as social and educational phenomenon, the implementation of inclusive education is focused upon the successful acquisition and development of the necessary competencies of bilingual pupils: the acquisition of knowledge, skills and habits. The prerequisite of successful implementation and deployment of inclusion is the provision of necessary support for every child involved in regular education. Ways of implementing and realization of teaching for minority children have been organized in line with the new socio-cultural trends of education and existing Croatian laws on education [10]. Due to the fact that in the last decade of educational policy in European countries the concept of educational inclusion has been strongly emphasized together with its importance for the wider social context, it is emphasized that educational inclusion means the reform and restructuring of the educational process in its entirety. The role of the family in the planning of the bilingual upbringing and simultaneous bilingualism in children will be discussed further.

2 FAMILY DECISION AND MAKING PLANS

Expecting a child in a bilingual home requires a family plan of the child's bilingual development which implies parental decision-making on interaction strategies with the child once it is born. The bilingual upbringing commonly requires the parents and extended family members to create a language-rich, stimulating environment for the child to get everyday support in its linguistic development at home. The latter even includes some major family adjustments such as changing the old, pre-established patterns of communication.

In a one language couple relationship, with both spouses sharing the same nationality and both spouses being fluent speakers of their mother tongue - regardless of the fact that their parents had immigrated in a foreign country before they were born or perhaps during their early childhood period – no problems or potential misunderstanding should arise on the field of communication or when it comes to choosing the common language of communication. Given their common background, the decision is simple for them: they either speak their mother tongue or official language of their new country between themselves, while in the company of others they speak official language of the new country. However, the situation is not as easy for a marriage couple with different nationalities - so called *mixed language couple* - living in a native country of one of the spouses. Usually the linguistic situation depends on where they live and how well each of the spouses speaks the other's language. However, problems occur when a marriage couple, whether with a common or different background, leave their child out of their linguistic arrangements and planning. Even in such cases when both parents already have shaped and fixed positive attitudes towards bilingualism, they should nevertheless think about, discuss and anticipate all the potential difficulties and consequences before

their final decision to raise a bilingual child. The couple who want to bring their child up with two languages should think about and discuss the way they envisage their child's linguistic development before the birth of their first child, e.g. who is going to speak which language to the child, and whether this will change according to the situation. In addition, they need to consider some important factors influencing the child's linguistic development such as the country they live in, parental employment, environmental stimulation etc [5]. Although the very idea of language choice may sound absurd to one, since it is natural for every parent to speak to their child in their mother tongue, some authors [22] claim that for some bilingual parents, the language choice is not always obvious and sometimes only reveals itself the first time they hold their children. However, before that moment, most parents face some common parental dilemmas and questions.

A major question facing many immigrant and minority group parents is whether or not they should raise their children bilingually in the first place. Only parents are adequate enough to answer to this question, since they know their family circumstances and situation better than anyone else and depending on it, they make plans and decisions for their child's future [1]. On the other hand, some authors [5] explain that parents know the answer deep down and are able to cognize it by answering a simple question which should trigger all the future decisions of the prospective parents: *What do I want for my child?* Depending on the parents' circumstances and their plans for the future, they will regard different things as important, e.g. a couple who plan to stay only a few years in a country before returning to their mutual home country will want to plan differently from a family where one parent has immigrated permanently to the other's country. Nevertheless, regardless of the variety of family situations, at least one of the following four priorities will appear on the list of the majority of parents: speaking an immigrant parent's language; belonging to a minority group in the country of residence; feeling at home in the immigrant parent's home country; being able to communicate with relatives [5]. The four common priorities serve as guidelines to parents who follow them in their language teaching or bilingual upbringing. In order to reach the goal, it is necessary to consider in advance all the possible key factors which could influence the development and which serve as indicators of the final success. Therefore, in the context of parental aspirations, it is inevitable to mention some of the most important factors parents take into consideration whilst planning the bilingual upbringing for their child [8]: the parents' own language background and history, the possibility of introducing some changes in the way parents communicate with one another, the choice of people that will look after the child in the future, parents' attitude towards their own language, the contacts they have with the rest of the family, the relative status of the pair of languages in question, (both within the family and within society at large); the availability of means of support (materials) for maintaining the language. It is impossible to adhere a degree of importance next to each of the factors due to a variety of family situations, that is to say, one factor may be of crucial importance for one family while at the same time considered insignificant in some other family. Therefore, each one of the factors is considered equally important. Whatever decision the parents make, it is important that it is based on their own attitudes and feelings. King and Mackey (2007) point out that choosing the best language for a child is a personal and intimate decision which primarily rests upon parents and involves their getting to know themselves as well; not only do parents who base their decision on their feelings and attitudes make the right decision, but also they become aware of their own thoughts, attitudes and feelings related to their mother tongue. However, this does not imply that any useful and well-meaning advice coming from a member of extended family or close family friend should be rejected. Many authors who write about bilingual upbringing consider it desirable to consult with the rest of the family and sometimes even with closest friends. Some authors emphasize the importance of considering all the questions of language choice with all those who are involved in caring for their child as well/ family members or caregivers who have a role in raising their child: grandparents, nursemaid etc. Grandparents play a pivotal role in a child's life, and strong relationships with grandparents and members of extended family can contribute greatly to the child's bilingual development, especially if they speak the heritage language. This claim is supported by the fact that most authors who writing about raising bilingual children [2, 5, 8, 22] consider relationships with extended family and relatives as one of the most important factors in the process of decision making.

Nothing is more helpful to parents who decide to raise their children bilingually than meeting other families who have been or are in similar situations to their own. However, if there is no other bilingual family in the nearby, parents often turn to pedagogues, psychologists or family doctors for advice hoping that these experts may help them solve some dilemmas.

According to some authors [8], if one is to give advice about bringing up a family bilingually, the following qualifications are necessary: commonsense, personal experience, knowledge of bilingual families in general, knowledge of this family in particular. It is most unlikely that any outside expert or

specialist could ever have the detailed knowledge about the family backgrounds and relationships, interests, tastes and personalities, aims and activities and plans for the future that such a decision involves. This all implies that the only people who possess all of the qualifications required and can really take the decision to raise a child bilingually are the parents themselves (ibid.). When it comes to bilingual upbringing, each parent knows the true answer to the question “*What do I want for my child?*” deep down and any advice coming from the experts is therefore unnecessary. One thing is certain: if parents decide to face this challenge together before the child’s birth - driven primarily by their own feelings and attitudes whilst considering carefully all the advantages, as well as anticipating possible difficulties in their future bilingual journey - any decision they make will be the right one for the whole family.

2.1 Simultaneous bilingualism

Simultaneous bilingualism from the day one implies simultaneous exposure to two languages from the very first day of the child’s life, immediately after its birth which is why some authors [25, 8] use the term *infant bilingualism*. This term may be confusing to one since the English term *infant* has typically been applied to newborns and babies, still ‘unable to speak’. However, the use of the term is justified by the fact that the baby exposed to two languages goes directly from not speaking at all to speaking two languages. Saunders (1988) explains that infant bilingualism is the term often used by linguists to describe the type of bilingualism resulting from a child’s being exposed simultaneously to more than one language from birth. In other words, in order for a child to be called bilingual, it must be pre-exposed to two languages from its birth.

Harding-Esch and Riley (2003) claim that amongst the families they observed and interviewed for their research, simultaneous acquisition of both languages from birth was one of the most common and successful types of bilingualism. A typical example of simultaneous bilingualism is when a child’s parents speak different languages and each one of them uses his or her own language when addressing the child. Nevertheless, Medved Krajnović (2010) notices that this type of bilingualism includes the cases of children that have been exposed to second language from birth (i.e. language which is not the dominant language of a wider social community) at home, but, on the other hand, have been involved from their early age in the institutionalized ways of caring (nurseries, playrooms) where their acquisition of the dominant language (i.e. first language) began.

There is more than one parental strategy for simultaneous acquisition of two languages, but the following two patterns of exposure to a second language are the most common:

1. One person-one language (e.g. where one parent or other family member speaks one language, and another parent or family member speaks a different language);
2. Both parents (and other family members) speak both languages (<http://www.learninglinks.org.au/>).

When it comes to ‘mixed language family’, the ‘one person-one language’ approach may be the best one since it helps children to separate and learn the two languages at the same time (<http://www.learninglinks.org.au/>). It is based upon a principle of connecting each parent with one language and expecting a child to switch languages when needed. The main advantage of this approach, besides consistency in communication, is that the child organizes the world of its knowledge and shares it with the adult, which leads to a better understanding between the child and its interlocutor [27]. The consistent language use is a considerable advantage as it ensures that the children have regular exposure to, and have to make use of, each language, which is particularly important for the language which has little outside support, weakly placed language (*minority language*) [25]. Alongside everyday parental duties, parents must ‘record’ the amount of language input provided to a child on a daily basis. The one person-one language method helps parents in balancing the language input¹ and minimizes the possibility of official language pre-dominance. The investment of equal amount of effort and time in bilingual upbringing on the part of both parents is surely the best way of ensuring the successful acquisition of the two languages.

¹ Language input is the key element in all phases of language development. Language input is a prerequisite for a language development [16].

3 SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

It is often assumed that bilingual children simultaneously exposed to two languages from birth and children raised in monolingual family differ greatly in their speech and language development. It is our opinion that one should not talk about the phases of speech and language development in bilingual children if this was not preceded by comparison of speech and language development in bilinguals and monolinguals. Some of the characteristics of language acquisition in monolinguals are being attributed to bilinguals as well with the exception of some additional phases, typical for simultaneous acquisition of two languages. Posokhova (2008), for example, provides a detailed overview of speech development in monolingual children from birth to preschool years. On the contrary Barron-Hauwaert (2004) highlights the main characteristics of linguistic development in young bilingual children who are exposed to two languages from birth. The comparison of speech and language development in monolingual and bilingual children will be provided further below.

3.1 Newborns and infants (0-1 year)

In this phase the acquisition of speech and pronunciation in children takes place gradually. Commonly, first sounds produced by young children are acoustically vague and unclear or difficult to understand considering pronunciation. Over the years, the child improves his or her pronunciation and gradually becomes able to pronounce correctly every sound [21]. Nevertheless, before this phase, all young children share a common characteristic – they are all exposed to so-called ‘baby talk’ (also known as ‘motherese’ or ‘fatherese’), a way of talking designed for young children to be able to understand most of what they hear [4]. In children, this phase of vocal production is known as physiological period of development and formation of sounds [21]. At the beginning of language development most young children usually comprehend many more words than they can produce and in most cases comprehension begins some months before word production or speech [19]. Barron-Hauwaert (2004) indicates that a newborn baby is aware of two languages and may well have heard them in the womb too. In the first few months, the child shows sensitivity for its mother’s voice, as she is usually the primary caretaker. Therefore, from three to six months onwards a linguistic rapport is set up between mother and child, with the baby preferring her voice and being soothed by it. He or she smiles, gurgles and babbles in response to being talked to or sung to. The father’s voice has a similar effect on child: the child recognizes it and reacts to it positively.

3.2 Age 1

During their first year, children experience the intense development of intonation patterns of speech in connection with emotions, gestures and facial expressions. This phase is characterized by an early word comprehension and preparation of speech organs on the basis of which an early word production takes place with first meaningful words produced by a child [21]. It is also known as ‘preparatory stage’ – the first of the stages of speech and language development that all normally developing children pass through [5]. When it comes to bilingual children, this phase is also characterized by the production of first words, and as it is the case with monolingual children, these words usually refer to close carers, e.g. mommy, daddy, and objects within reach, e.g. teddy [4]. It is our conclusion that a child’s sensitivity to language, or the ability to distinguish between all sounds which is innate to all children, reduces and disappears gradually as the child reaches its first year of life and produces its first words.

3.3 Age 2

A speech of a two year old child, especially in the first half (12-18 months) of the second year of life, consists of individual words (nouns and verbs) that the child has adopted from adult speech (e.g. mommy, daddy, granny, milk, teddy etc.) or created itself (e.g. yummy, coo-coo). Within the last half of the second year the child usually strings words together spontaneously and creates its first sentences composed of two or three words (e.g. “Give me teddy!”, “Where’s mommy?” etc.). The intense development of children’s understanding of words is continued - a two-year-old understands many more words than he or she can use in speech. The pronunciation of most sounds is still unclear and difficult to understand while the meaning of some words is broad. The same sound pattern is used in different situations to designate different objects. Instead of linking a word with a particular object, a child connects the word to what he or she finds interesting at a given moment. This phenomenon, typical for children from one to two and a half years old, gradually decreases and disappears as the child’s vocabulary expands with new words [21]. Around age two, a child growing up with two

languages becomes aware that communication can take place in two languages. He or she realizes that some people speak different languages or some speak only one language. The toddler realizes that objects may have two different labels. The child may mix languages in an attempt to communicate ('language mixing') and lacking enough words he or she may substitute or borrow words across his two languages ('language borrowing') [4].

3.4 Age 2-3

Speech and language acquisition of all normally developing children from age two to six is characterized with the following changes: sound pronunciation gradually becomes comprehensible and clear, vocabulary expands and speech becomes grammatically correct [21]. On the other hand, in this very phase, around age two or three, a bilingual child becomes aware that each language is different. This phase is known as "language differentiation". The child will try to respond in the appropriate language to the right person, though he or she still mixes languages sometimes [4].

3.5 Age 4-6

Every normally developing child from age four to six is able to understand more complex, expanded sentences. He or she has acquired the meaning of most of grammatical categories and is now able to use them in his or her own speech [21]. Nevertheless, for a bilingual child age four represents another milestone in speech and language development. At around age four the child gains more social awareness; talking the right language to a speaker. At that age, mixed language use fades out with monolingual speakers as he or she realizes it is simply not appropriate or accepted. Hence, the phase of language differentiation takes place; the child is aware of the two languages, and is able to decide and choose the right language of communication depending on the interlocutor. In the nursery school, the child becomes aware of the use of language in the wider society outside of his or her family and friends. Consequently, he or she will make an effort to choose the appropriate social form with prior knowledge. As it is the case with most monolingual speakers, bilingual children at around age five experience no serious difficulties when it comes to grammatical correctness of sentences [4].

3.6 Preschool years

The early childhood with preschool years is the time when children acquire fundamental knowledge to be able to master other basic language skills - reading and writing. Compared to monolingual children, a bilingual child shows no difficulties in mastering these skills as well. He or she begins to read and write and explore the world through text and writing [4]. Finally, at about age six or seven the child reaches a stage where he is capable of switching languages according to speaker, topic, setting, language hierarchy and the social norms ('language switching'). Fierro-Cobas i Chan (2001) divide all of the above characteristics of speech and language development in bilingual children into two stages of bilingual language development (Table 1).

Table 1 Simultaneous acquisition of two languages (Fierro-Cobas i Chan, 2001)

Age	Stage	Milestone
Birth-2 months	Undifferentiated (contains elements from both languages)	Cooing
2-6 months	Undifferentiated	Babbling
6-15 months	Undifferentiated	First words
1-2 years	Undifferentiated	Language blend (parts of words in both languages are blended in the same word)
2-3 years	Undifferentiated	Language mixing (words of different languages are used in the same phrase or adapted to the grammar of the other language)
4 years and older	Differentiated	Uses each language as a separate system+

The first stage is an undifferentiated, 'single-language' system composed of elements from both languages. The second stage (differentiated) occurs when a child begins to differentiate the two language systems, using each one as a separate system for distinct purposes. The child may learn to

associate each language with a specific person (parent vs. babysitter), age group (playmates vs. adults) or situation (home vs. playground). He then develops the ability to alternate language, using a specific language to communicate in a specific context. If the family code switches multiple times within one conversation, the child will learn the pattern. Children exposed to simultaneous bilingualism usually go through a phase of language mixing. Most parents are unaware of the fact that language mixing is a normal temporary phase in bilingual development of their child. Linguists explain that based on a level of competence which a child may reach in both languages it is possible to identify two types of bilingualism: balanced bilingualism and dominant bilingualism. Balanced bilingualism means that a person is equally competent in two languages, though this does not necessarily imply a high level of competence, or a higher degree of bilingualism, but only the balance between the two languages. However, in dominant bilingualism, the competence is significantly higher in one language. In the case of simultaneous bilingualism, a child will be equally exposed to both languages in a family home during the early childhood and the child's parents will insist on the equal use of both languages. However, the first time the child meets its peers - on the playground, birthday party or any other social event – he or she will communicate with them in the dominant language which they all use. When he/she goes to nursery school/preschool/school the child will again use the dominant language in communication. Therefore, despite the equal amount of exposure to two languages from birth, most children are not absolutely balanced when they are small. One language is always stronger and more dominant in relation to the other [16].

Many parents in mixed and minority language families report that their children's dominance in the languages involved goes in waves, e.g. the minority language may be stronger while the children are small, while the other takes over when they start school [5]. Considering the comparison of speech and language development in monolingual and bilingual children and characteristics of simultaneous bilingualism in children (Table 1) we conclude that bilingual children differ from monolingual children in the fact that they go through some additional phases of simultaneous bilingualism: language mixing and language differentiation (separating two language systems). One of the main questions that contemporary studies deal with is the very question of similarity and difference between monolingual and bilingual development as well as the question of language differentiation in bilingual children.

4 MEANS OF SUPORT AND MATERIALS FOR NURTURING THE MINORITY LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Books are an important resource of rich vocabulary for children and one of the best materials for learning about the parent's minority language. Reading to a child is a great way of stimulating speech and language development. No amount of visiting the country where the language is spoken or contact with other speakers can give a child as rich a vocabulary and such a mastery of the nuances of the language as a thorough immersion in its children's literature [5]. Reading to a child from the early age has a multiple positive effects [1]:

1. Reading is an activity which offers close emotional contact between parent and child. This is not only important in itself, but also because learning which takes place in such circumstances is facilitated.
2. The child learns from an early age that books are important. This is greatly important for the child's later progress at school where the main way of gaining knowledge about the world is through extracting information from printed materials.
3. Reading increases the child's fantasy and develops the child's creativity.
4. Reading, by offering the child an opportunity to identify with others, helps the child to understand his/her feelings.

Each one of the parents should support the child's development in both languages just as they would if each was the only language in the family. Thus, the child will learn to nurture the feeling of equal importance and the need to use both languages. When it comes to reading, as a way of stimulating language development, another valuable reason for reading in the native language is the colorful cultural vignettes in well-chosen books that teach children about where their family comes from, about their cultural background [22]. A bilingual child, whose native country is withal the motherland of one of his parents, usually learns about the cultural heritage of his/her native country in a kindergarten, preschool and this process continues later in school. Some of the objectives of the regular educational program for preschoolers focus on the development of sensitivity towards cultural heritage, its protection and learning about the customs and traditions of homeland [23]. However, the task of

exploring the cultural heritage of the native country of the other parent is left for parents. Some of the best possible ways of encouraging a child to explore the cultural heritage of his/her second-language country are regular visits to that country; summer and winter holidays spent in a distant homeland with his relatives on his/her mother's or father's side. Since not every family can afford constant travelling, a temporary replacement for a visit may be found in children's literature, which in an amusing and appealing way explores some specificities of natural and cultural heritage of a mother's or father's native land.

Colorful vignettes and books are not the only means of support and materials in bilingual upbringing. Today's world with the advanced technology offers a multitude of opportunities to learn in a fun way. Whatever materials parents select – didactic toys, compilation of nursery rhymes, colorful vignettes or workbooks for preschoolers, animated movies, games educational computer games – they must make sure that these materials, apart from improving the child's logical thinking and concentration and developing creativity, also teach the child about his/her other country. One should never forget that a bilingual child always 'plays in two languages', and should therefore be provided with a variety of such age-appropriate materials.

What parents should also pay attention to when it comes to toys, are the cultural features of toys. Of the numerous cultural products, a child seems to prefer the toy the most from its first days of life [17]. Social communities differ in many factors and some of these factors (culture, tradition) have an important role in determining toys. Wherever there are children, there are toys. Yet, every cultural and social community has its own toy, and its own specific way of creating it. It is always a reflection of time and place in which it was made, and represents a way of life and culture of a particular socio-cultural area. Almost every country offers folk toys made in traditional styles, toys stemming from legends and important historical events, as well as toys representing the most important symbol of a country: this all is a good way of introducing a culture to a child [17]. Some examples of such toys are: reindeers pulling a sled (Finland), Russian babushka (Russia), plush kangaroo (Australia), double-decker bus (England), Venetian mask (Italy), a wooden horse on wheels (Croatia), etc.

The easiest way to introduce a language to a child is through a game. As it is well known, what is learnt through a game remains permanently in memory [20]. When it comes to preschoolers, some authors [5] put the emphasis on role playing games, since such games, apart from developing creativity, require a larger amount of verbal communication. This makes sense if one remembers that the child is given the opportunity to use the vocabulary which he/she were pre-exposed to that day, while listening to conversations between family members. In these spontaneous situations, learning is facilitated, followed by no fear of failure or negative evaluation – in its broadest sense learning is accompanied by maximum evaluation. Therefore, parents should, whenever possible, provide entertaining language-learning materials and stimulate situations which enable them to impose their language in a fun way, subconsciously. Game is a spontaneous condition, human language is spontaneous. Parents should make use of this natural connection between language and the game. A child who enjoys the game with his/her friends is not concerned about the grammar or proper use of language, but absorbs the language subconsciously, with no fear of mispronouncing a word or mixing the two languages [9].

Songs, nursery rhymes and lullabies make an important part of every child's childhood. In all cultures, no matter how different they may seem, it is common to sing to a child. While listening to a song or stories, children acquire their first language experience regarding the use and expansion of vocabulary beyond direct, immediate needs [26]. Generally, songs are a suitable medium for bringing closer a foreign language to children as it enables them to practice pronunciation of voices, listen and notice the language structure and to enrich their vocabulary. In addition, they provide children a great joy and pleasure while integrating the movement, listening and repetition of the melody, a familiar and meaningful content. Children enjoy the songs for their own sake; consequently, their attention is being directed to spontaneous use of language in songs and nursery rhymes and their expressiveness. Certain songs may present an excellent opportunity to practice certain language structures or pronunciation of some sounds which children may be unaware of. Of greater importance is that they enjoy the very singing of songs and nursery rhymes, while understanding their content at the same time [26].

5 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF BILIGUALISM

Bilingualism involves much more than the ability to speak two languages fluently. Bilingual speakers, unlike monolingual speakers, enjoy numerous advantages in different areas. Some of the potential

advantages of bilingualism and bilingual education may be summarised as follows [2]: communication advantages (wider communication, e.g. extended family, community, international links; literacy in two languages), cultural advantages (broader enculturation, a deeper multiculturalism, two 'language worlds' of experience, greater tolerance, less racism), cognitive advantages (thinking benefits such as creativity, and sensitivity to communication, mental flexibility) character advantages (raised self-esteem, security in identity), curriculum advantages (increased curriculum achievement, easier to learn a third language) cash advantages (economic and employment benefits).

If one takes into consideration the fact that good relations within the family, quality communication between parent and a child, good relations with the extended family of the child - together with the revival of the awareness and development of positive attitudes in the child towards his/her parents' origin and cultural heritage – are some of the most important factors of creating the stimulating environment for the normal development of every child in every family, monolingual or multilingual, then one may learn that the contribution of bilingual upbringing in these areas is very important indeed.

A child who communicates with his/her mother in one language and with his father on the other language, benefits twice since he or she gets the chance to enjoy with both his parents the shared intimacy of the linguistic situation while they are at the same time passing on their cultural background to the child. Moreover, he or she has a channel open for communication not only with the parent or parents who speak the language, but also with grandparents, cousins and family friends and their children [5].

This implies that bilingual upbringing provides the chance for children to understand where they come from and who they are as a whole and thus has an important role in terms of building and strengthening their personal and cultural identity. Consequently, children grow up with a sense of pride and accomplishment. As they grow up, their wish to visit their relatives in distant homeland becomes stronger. This is the feeling of pride and nostalgia for their homeland - the feeling that gets stronger and stronger each day and eventually becomes hard to resist.

These are (according to Raguenaud 2009) some of the most important 'lifelong benefits' of bilingualism because by helping the children sustain their first language, we're securing their ties to their first cultural group, which will always remain an important part of who they are – their definition of themselves. A healthy sense of self – knowing who you are and understanding where you came from – leads to a more integrated cultural identity. Therefore, many children who are bilingual speakers grow up with developed cultural awareness and sensitivity, and become open to new experiences and living styles. They develop intercultural awareness which leads to increased flexibility in situations in which they become faced with different opinion and behaviour – this advantage is important to keep up with the demands of globalized world.

Although there are many advantages of raising children bilingually, there are times when life with two languages seems difficult to bilinguals. Within the OPOL approach it is quite often the case that one parent does not understand the other's language enough to follow conversations or one parent may be totally uninterested in learning the other parent's language. Before the birth of a child, this may never be a problem since they both speak either the majority language or another common language (e.g. English). However, with the new baby it all changes. In the early stages when the child is still a baby it is not an issue either. But as the mother or father starts reading a story or having a conversation with the child the other parent may find it difficult to understand [4]. If the minority language parent wants to introduce his or her own language for the first time when speaking to the baby through nursery rhymes, songs or baby-talk, the other parent may quickly begin to feel left out. This may provide the necessary motivation to learn the language in question, or it may become a major source of friction in the family, and in some cases might even destroy the whole idea of exposing the child to both parents' languages [5].

Grandparents and some other members of extended family may have an important role to play in helping language acquisition, however, there are some grandparents who are against the idea of bilingualism. These are usually conservative grandparents who were brought up in a monolingual environment and therefore find the new multicultural generation all too much. Older generation grandparents may feel out of their depth with the child's second language and culture or feel their grandchild is not really 'theirs' because he or she speaks another language. They usually 'accept' the OPOL approach but not in *their* house and will not tolerate the minority-language parents or the child using their minority language in their home [4].

Due to the fact that one of the languages has the status of the 'weaker' language, parents who decide to keep up this language must be prepared to meet a certain amount of incomprehension or prejudice which, over the years may be very discouraging and demand an extra amount of effort and will-power. When it comes to some of the most common misconceptions about bilingualism, parental prejudice on negative effects of bilingualism usually stems from the fact that bilingualism often involves a language that is not very popular within society (low prestige language) [24].

Although adolescents tend more to be affected by what their peers' say about them, and usually find a reason to be ashamed of their parents, younger children do not want to stick out in the crowd either. Hence, when they hear other children commenting on their mixed-language family and their parents' accents they will probably wish their parents to be exactly like everyone else's. Children hate to 'be different' and parents should not be surprised when they are requested not to speak the home language to them in front of their friends. These are the times when only parental support and affection can help the child overcome what are usually temporary difficulties [8].

The decision to raise children bilingually affects not only the lives of children but also the entire family. Those parents who decide to raise their children bilingually must be prepared to certain adjustments, constant investment of effort, some unexpected situations and sometimes even the undesired outcome. However, despite all the effort, most parents are aware of the numerous advantages of bilingualism and view the bilingual upbringing of their child as an investment in their child's future.

6 CONCLUSION

In the contemporary educational discourse multilingualism represents a challenge, not only to society at-large, but also to families and educational institutions. The emphasis in this paper is placed on the definition of bilingualism and the position of a child in bilingual family, as well as the role of society and parents in the process of speech and language development. While for some people bilingualism may be the mere knowledge of two languages, for a child growing up in a bilingual family with mother and father who do not have a common background, it is much more. This is a combination of different ways of life, the combination of different cultures. A child's fundamental right is the right to know its origin, and to meet its spiritual and material cultural heritage, as the fundamental right of humans is the right to education. Bilingualism and bilingual families in this paper are presented in a relationship with social and educational inclusion. In a bilingual environment, parental tasks include choosing a bilingual upbringing for their child, raising their children in their mother tongue, and meeting their child with its cultural heritage. This 'symbiosis' must never be disabled. After all, the child growing up far from its relatives, that has never had the chance to learn his parent's language is at loss for nothing can replace to the child the spontaneous moments of childhood filled with conversation, laughter or play with members of either his immediate or extended family. From a pedagogical point of view, we believe that bilingual upbringing becomes the right of every child within the process of its development and education, and bilingualism becomes an important part of parental heritage aimed at nurturing national and cultural identity. Thus, bilingualism forms part of the consciousness and conscience of the child and its parents.

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