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Development of language skills and conditions for psychosocial development of children and youth in multilingual families

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This paper serves as a contribution to the debate on the author's studies concerning the correlation between the development of linguistic competence and the conditions for the psychosocial development of children and youth in multilingual families. The following deliberations present the point of view of a neurological speech therapist and concerns language difficulties, which are prevalent in multilingual people. This paper was based on the author's own studies and patient observations. The objective was to show that the linguistic and psychosocial development of people in bi- and multilingual families is different and carries additional risks. The following considerations lead to the final conclusion that being a citizen of the world and immersion in many cultures can be a beautiful adventure for a young person; in which they should be supported by family, teacher and multilingual speech therapist.

KEY WORDS: language competence, emigrants, psychosocial development, language, multilingualism, children, youth

Introduction

In the modern world, multilingual people are often shown, especially on radio, television and in the popular press. However, the issue is usually presented in a stereotypical and one-sided way, solely focusing on positive aspects. This is covered by J. Cieszyńska, who mentions that *on the basis of several well-known bilingual people, myths about the miraculous influence of bilingualism on life, professional career and cognitive development emerge*.¹ This paper is an attempt to outline a slightly broader perspective on the psychosocial and linguistic functioning of multilingual people, which poses a challenge that – in the age of globalisation – concerns more and more schools worldwide. The author is particularly interested in the psycholinguistic and speech therapy perspective on their psychosocial development: the analysis of the circumstances concerning the acquisition language skills by bilingual/multilingual children as well as other aspects of their development.

Bi- and multilingualism and language competence

Bilingualism, or even multilingualism, is an increasingly common situation for school students in Poland and abroad, which seems to be primarily the result of processes connected with globalisation. Due to the intensified and ever-intensifying migration processes, it is also one of the categories that every teacher in a kindergarten, school or educational institution should be aware of, as these institutions have the obligation to support the development of children and youth. What is more, Polish educational law enumerates 12 categories of students who might require special psychological and pedagogical assistance, including students with

¹ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, [in:] *Dysleksja w kontekście nauczania języków obcych*, Marta Bogdanowicz, Mariola Smoleń (eds), Gdańsk 2004, p. 20.

- language competence deficits and disorders;
- adaptation difficulties stemming from cultural differences or changes in the educational environment, including those related to prior education abroad.²

Multilingual children may be a part of both of these groups and in both cases there may be a need for specialist intervention – mainly speech therapy, although this is not the full extent of support that may be required.

The key issue covered by this paper stems directly from the postulate of the Polish philologist, Władysław Miodunka: *Research on bilingualism should not focus solely on linguistic phenomena, such as code switching, blending and language interference, but also on bilingual people, such as children and their parents, on the process of becoming bilingual, on maintaining the command of the language used more often, as well as on using each of the languages known to the speaker as a tool for self-fulfilment.*³

Referring to the quote by J. Cieszyńska, outlining the issue of bilingualism in an objective manner requires bringing examples of people for whom bilingualism was the cause of personality, school or adaptation problems; where it caused issues with determining their belonging and cultural identity.

According to the prominent Polish linguist, Polish and Slavic scholar Roman Laskowski, bilingualism can contribute to the proper development of a child only if *both languages are considered equal, if there are no defensive reactions against one of them, which is perceived by the child as 'inferior' (...) when parents are able to evoke respect to their own cultural heritage and language in their child.*⁴

² Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 9 August 2017 on the principles of organising and providing psychological and pedagogical assistance in public kindergartens, schools and institutions (Dz. U. [Journal of Laws] of 2017, item 159).

³ W. Miodunka, *Jak dwujęzyczność dzieci polonijnych może wpływać na ich szacunek do rodziców? Na marginesie badań prof. Jagody Cieszyńskiej*, [in:] J. Cieszyńska, Z. Orłowska-Popek, M. Korendo, *Nowe podejście w diagnostyce i terapii logopedycznej – metoda krakowska*, Krakow, 2010, p. 15.

⁴ R. Laskowski, *Język w zagrożeniu. Przyswajanie języka polskiego w warunkach polsko-szwedzkiego bilingwizmu*, Kraków 2009, p. 42.

The fact is that command of several languages most often enriches life, while making it easier to navigate; however, this phenomenon should not be conflated with bilingualism of emigrants, since learning a second language in one's home country is a conscious choice, takes place at a completely different time, circumstances and stems from different motivations. In the context of emigration, this is forced by the situation at hand and the need to find one's bearing in a foreign linguistic and cultural environment.

While working as a speech therapist, the author encounters multilingual families every day. In many cases, these families are Italian, French and Russian and – most notably – Polish, living in Western countries. Nearly all of them face the issues of bilingualism, both from the point of view of emigrant parents and their children. This paper is an attempt at outlining such situations connected with bilingualism, in which parents do not have full impact on their children's language acquisition process. Such a situation has *an enormous impact on the formation of relationships between parents and children, the formation of parental attitudes, as well as on the upbringing process in itself. The official (legal) stay abroad gives the second generation the opportunity to identify themselves as part of the community of their country of residence and enables them to take on the right attitudes. However, the level of parents' command of their new homeland's language disrupts the process of learning social roles by the young generation.*⁵

A bilingual person is a person who is able to use two languages simultaneously.⁶ Małgorzata Rocławska-Daniluk, a scholar who deals with the problem of bilingualism, treats it as *an individual feature of a given language user, which concerns a specific human ability to use two languages.*⁷ From the point of view of children of Polish emigrants, which are the main focus of this paper, bilingualism usually occurs in two forms. The first is classic bilingualism, where one of the par-

⁵ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, [in:] *Dysleksja w kontekście nauczania języków obcych*, Marta Bogdanowicz, Mariola Smoleń (eds.), Gdańsk, 2004, p. 32.

⁶ E. Sobol, *Nowy Słownik Języka Polskiego*, Warsaw 2002.

⁷ M. Rocławska-Daniluk, *Dwujęzyczność i wychowanie dwujęzyczne z perspektywy lingwistyki i logopedii*, Gdańsk 2011, p. 32.

ents is an immigrant and the other is a native speaker of the language of their new country of residence. Due to the author's professional experience, the author is better acquainted with the second type of bilingualism namely the first-generation bilingualism, in which a child is born or arrives in the host country during the pre-lingual period⁸, and their parents – Poles – have learned the language of the host country to varying extent.

The concept of bilingualism is also closely related to the concept of biculturalism, usually conflated with simultaneous and equal existence (drawing upon, immersion) in two different cultures. A bilingual person becomes (often unconsciously) bicultural due to the fact that the language is a carrier of cultural heritage. Janusz Anusiewicz, a contemporary linguist, who deals with the cultural theory of language, treats language as a kind of cultural archive of societies. *The scholar understands culture axiologically, as a set of values created and transmitted by a given language community. A simplified assumption can be made for study purposes – bilingual means bicultural.*⁹

It is worth noting the difference between the biculturalism of the ethnics¹⁰ and the biculturalism of the second generation, which contains new elements, typically not available to the first generation. However, the biculturalism of the children of emigrants is deprived of all the values which cannot be acquired in isolation from their homeland. According to another humanities scholar and one of the most eminent contemporary philosophers, Hans-Georg Gadamer: *language carries norms and behaviours, evaluations and values – not only moral, but also aesthetic and cognitive. In other words, language is used to convey the culture of a nation – at least its major part, if not the totality of it.*¹¹

⁸ The pre-lingual period (also known as the melody period) occurs until 12 months of a child's life. It denotes the time before the child manages to learn language and before the first sentences appear, [in:] Minczakiewicz E., *Logopedia. Mowa-rozwoj-zaburzenia-terapia*, Kraków 1997, p. 65.

⁹ J. Anusiewicz, *Kulturowa teoria języka. Zarys problematyki*, [in:] *Język a kultura*, vol. 1, Wrocław, 1991, p. 56.

¹⁰ The word "ethnic" stands for *relating to a particular race of people*, [in:] <https://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/etniczny;2557139.html>, retrieved on 15.09.2020.

¹¹ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 21.

The above mentioned Anusiewicz, who notes the essence of language as a kind of information warehouse in connection with the cultural heritage, presents this issue in a similar manner, whereas W. Rozenchwaj understands the notion of bilingualism as: *command of two languages and regular switching from one language to the other, depending on the communication situation*.¹² The scholar highlights the nature of the development of bilingualism, which develops in line with the conditions and circumstances of acquisition of a second language. If this occurs based on switching from one language to the other, *in this case a common set of two languages is formed, until a common language (...) with two different ways of expression eventually emerges*.¹³

American linguist Benjamin L. Whorf presents yet another perspective on the issue of bilingualism. He believes that the same insights and understanding of the surrounding reality can only be the basis of a common worldview if the language abilities of the observers are similar. This view raises the question of building a common world by emigrants and their children while their communication takes place in the language of the host country. Quoting Cieszyńska: *A child can learn two, even three or four foreign languages, but in order to do so effectively and without negative consequences, they need to be fully able to communicate with their parents in their ethnic language*.¹⁴ This is where we are touching upon an extremely important psychological issue, namely the disruption of the parent's image and authority, and even a negative attitude towards the father or mother, caused by an incomplete understanding of the cultural communication of children by adults. This primarily concerns language, but also aspects such the way of dressing, spending free time, music the child listens to, as well as their contact with culture.

¹² W. Rozenchwaj, *Podstawowe zagadnienia teorii kontaktów językowych*, [in:] M. Głowiński, *Język i społeczeństwo*, Warsaw 1980, p. 56.

¹³ W. Rozenchwaj, *Podstawowe zagadnienia teorii kontaktów językowych*, [in:] M. Głowiński, *Język i społeczeństwo*, Warsaw 1980, p. 76.

¹⁴ J. Cieszyńska, *Dwujęzyczność, rozumienie siebie jako innego*, [in:] J. Cieszyńska, Z. Orłowska-Popek, M. Korendo, *Nowe podejście w diagnostyce i terapii logopedycznej – metoda krakowska*, Kraków 2010, p. 53.

The communication relations between the emigrant and the native speaker are also very interesting. Members of a language community, for example of a subculture, professional or sports group, often understand each other without having to express themselves fully, while a person from outside the community, on the other hand, requires a slightly broader and more accurate explanation to be able to understand the message sender's real intention. Here, it is worth bringing up the quote of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger: *It is necessary to constantly keep in one's mind that the existence of the human being changes since they started describing their world in some other language, and that their first language has forever marked their place in the world.*¹⁵ This phenomenon was also covered by J. Cieszyńska: *When siblings of emigrants talk to each other in the language of the host country, the parent does not always fully understand the content of the conversation, which excludes them from the conversation.*¹⁶ Gadamer mentions similar limitations. According to the scholar, a parent who does not understand the language spoken by their children makes an attempt to translate individual words and phrases, doing so *from the point of view of a foreign language, shedding a new light on it.*¹⁷

It should be stressed that adults have very little chance to learn the language of the host country as well as their children do. *Phonetic and phonological errors, poor vocabulary and syntactic deficiencies cause linguistic communication to be impaired and disrupted, if parents wanted to use a foreign language for everyday communication.*¹⁸

This kind of communication would also be damaging psychologically, as children would be uncomfortable to hear their parents' mistakes. Parents, on the other hand, would experience a kind of cognitive dissonance and embarrassment, if their children corrected their language mistakes.

¹⁵ M. Heidegger, *W drodze do języka*, Kraków 2000, p. 32.

¹⁶ J. Cieszyńska, *Dwujęzyczność, rozumienie siebie jako innego*, p. 23.

¹⁷ H.-G. Gadamer, *Prawda i metoda*, Kraków 1993, p. 54.

¹⁸ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 21.

It needs to be pointed out that emigrants very rarely mastered the languages of their new homelands at a level stretching above basic.¹⁹ In many cases, their first contact with a new language occurs only after arrival in the host country. According to Cieszyńska: *This is the way of mastering the language observed in the first generation of emigrants, who use the language mainly in the workplace. Thus, they know the vocabulary connected with a given field, they master effective communication in standard situations, applicable in their work. They learn specific articulation (careless, characterised by consonant group reduction or vowel elision), which negatively impacts their ability to construct written texts, according to the spelling rules.*²⁰

It is also worth noting the vocabulary that emigrants commit to their memories the fastest, which includes emotional expressions, vulgarisms, as well as pejorative descriptors, which are used by many people regardless education level. By using such phrases, in a certain way the emigrants declare that they belong to a new country and linguistic community not only for themselves, but also their children. In most cases, this sense of belonging is fictitious at best, since – quoting Anna Wierzbicka – *languages differ, not only as linguistic systems, but also as cultural worlds, mediating ethnic identity.*²¹

Issues related to multilingualism

The presented analyses lead to the conclusion that parents with their first mother tongue and their children with their first foreign language (which – from the functional standpoint – is their first language) live in two cultural worlds, which are foreign to each

¹⁹ For more information on the subject of language acquisition by emigrants, read Krystyna Włodarczak's paper "Proces adaptacji współczesnych emigrantów polskich do życia w Australii", published in *CMR Working Papers*, no. 3/61, Australia, 2005.

²⁰ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 21.

²¹ A. Wierzbicka, *Podwójne życie człowieka dwujęzycznego*, [in:] W. Miodunka, *Język polski w świecie*, Kraków 1990, p. 56.

other. According to Cieszyńska: *the mother tongue is the first tool of communication, that is not learned, but acquired in the environment, starting with the mother. We learn a foreign language already knowing our mother tongue, usually outside our homes, and the learning process involves understanding, speaking, reading and writing.*²²

In other words, one could say that their *need for security clashes with their need for freedom;*²³ however, in this case one limits the other. *The problem of bilingualism is the search for a compromise between identity (security/freedom) and integration (freedom/security). In this split, the tragedy of a bilingual/bicultural person can be seen, always facing a choice between some "freedoms" and various "securities".*²⁴ This split clearly shows the tragedy of a bilingual and bicultural person, who will always face choices concerning "freedom" and "security".

In the case of many immigrants, the biggest problem does not concern learning a foreign language alone, but the ability to assess the communication situation and correctly read non-verbal signals that a native speaker would make, resulting in a sense of acceptance by a given social group. Having certain social skills is inextricably linked to linguistic and cultural circumstances. One of such factors is the face, which is the main source of information about the human being and their emotions. The gaze constitutes another important factor – looking somebody in the eye is not only polite, but also promotes the formation of bonds between partners in a conversation.

The interaction between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) is also extremely important, and it is something the author often encounters during conversations with parents and children in the speech therapy clinic. The interview data show that the language of the parents' home country (L1) is usually spoken at home and during trips to the grandparents' country, while L2 is used in other social situations in the country of residence – for example at work, at school or during social gatherings.

²² J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 22.

²³ L. Kołakowski, *O rozumie i innych rzeczach*, [in:] *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 41, 2003, p. 45.

²⁴ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 22.

Switching languages like that requires a bilingual person not only to master the vocabulary and rules of both languages, but also to learn the way of expressing emotions and feelings, seeing how the same experiences are often expressed differently in both languages. Before going to kindergarten or crèche, a child is confronted with various social situations, listening to Polish, as well as the language of their new host country in these situations. This interpenetration of the two languages results in significant disruption to understanding, resulting in slowing down the rate of acquisition of the first language. Learning a second language takes a long time, causing significant delays in their education. Submersion, or subtractive bilingualism²⁵ is a common issue seen in bilingual children, as mentioned by M. Rocławska-Daniluk: *In emigration conditions, submersion occurs when a child only becomes acquainted with a second language at school, surrounded by children who speak it. In the cases of subtractive bilingualism, children may experience lower self-esteem (...) as well as various school problems.*²⁶

The author's personal observation can be confirmed by the words of a contemporary humanities scholar and linguist Ewa Lipińska, who claims that *from the age of three, children are capable of separating two language systems and developing the two linguistic communication methods in parallel.*²⁷

Conditions for psychosocial development of children in multilingual families, educational and speech therapy support

Despite the issues outlined in the previous part of the paper, it is important to create favourable conditions for children to develop

²⁵ Absorption of the mother tongue (L1) by the second language (L2), also referred to as subtractive bilingualism.

²⁶ M. Rocławska-Daniluk, *Dwujęzyczność i wychowanie dwujęzyczne z perspektywy lingwistyki i logopedii*, Gdańsk 2011, p. 56.

²⁷ E. Lipińska, *Język ojczysty, język obcy, język drugi. Wstęp do badań dwujęzyczności*, Kraków 2003, p. 82.

their language skills, and the best way to do so is to start pre-school education in the language of the country of residence, resulting in *the emergence of language domains*.²⁸ Thanks to this, from an early age, the child learns new subject areas, discovers behaviours characteristic of children and adult speakers of the second language, in addition to those characteristic of their Polish parents. By doing so, they not only learn the language of their new home country, but also get immersed in its culture one step at a time. A child deprived of early contact with a second language faces social issues to a certain extent, as they do not partake in imaginative games, does not play the roles of their favourite fairy tale characters, because these activities require a linguistic description. They may also be considered shy and introvert, resulting in them being marginalised and misunderstood by peers, which makes it difficult to develop one's personality and self-esteem.

Another reason why a child's first contact with a new language should take place as early as possible is the emergence of aggression against parents. The transition from one language system to another often causes frustration and aggression, which the parents become the subject of. This process occurs as a defensive reaction, which can occur in a variety of ways. There are children who want to draw their parents' attention by isolation from their immediate circles, loneliness, sadness and crying, as well as reluctance to talk about what happened in the kindergarten. Others, on the other hand, will erupt in anger, screaming, destroying toys, and in doing so they will want their parents' understanding. In some cases such aggressive behaviour is perpetuated and spark a long-term conflict between children and parents. Cieszyńska believes that *the fact that many times the children of emigrants take on the role of translators in public places and in official capacities, since they have a proper command of the language of the new country, violates the natural order*.²⁹

A situation where parents feel helpless in formal situations is a threat to the child and causes a dysfunctional division of roles

²⁸ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 21.

²⁹ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 21.

within the family. This often results in the lack of respect for the parent, or even contempt. According to Miodunka: *If a child notices that their linguistic competences exceeds that of their parents, they slowly start losing their authority. An extreme case of a growing value crisis may lead to the child being ashamed of their parents.*³⁰

Children also feel a lack of security, stability and support, which can affect their whole adult life. *Failure to meet these needs in the children of emigrants may result in unsuccessful family relationships, difficulties in making friends and cooperation problems in future life.*³¹

The quote by Michael Walzer³² can conclude the above deliberations: *The point is not to teach children what it means to be different in a certain manner, but to teach children, who are different, how to be different the right way.*³³

A child who until the start of education only speaks in the parents' mother tongue should be prepared to face a new communication situation, which they might find difficult. An important role in this process is played by a bilingual speech therapist, who should introduce the child to new realities by conducting appropriate therapy and organising well-thought-out games to acquaint them with the new situation. The activities of a speech therapist should focus on introducing vocabulary of a given country's language, including words related to the names of family members, everyday activities, games, travel, hygiene and faith. It is also worthwhile to focus on grammar, not only to ensure understanding, but also to make sure that the child will be able to build them on their own. As Władysław Miodunka claims: *Polish communities need to teach Polish as a second language, which means acquisition in natural conditions (at home, during family visits) and teaching (guided by a parent, speech ther-*

³⁰ W. Miodunka, *Jak dwujęzyczność dzieci polonijnych może wpływać na ich szacunek do rodziców? Na marginesie badań prof. Jagody Cieszyńskiej*, p. 58.

³¹ W. Miodunka, *Jak dwujęzyczność dzieci polonijnych może wpływać na ich szacunek do rodziców? Na marginesie badań prof. Jagody Cieszyńskiej*, p. 58.

³² Michael Walzer (3 March 1935) – American philosopher and intellectual.

³³ M. Walzer, *O tolerancji*, Warsaw 1999, p. 83.

apist or teacher).³⁴ However, parents are very often sceptical about this way of organising Polish language teaching and they find it depreciating. Overcoming these emotional obstacles and helping the child is, however, worth their while. Speech therapy not only helps with acquiring proper language skills, but will also introduce the child to their new circumstances, providing them with an opportunity to learn about the world, which other children can easily acquire in their own language. A Polish child needs additional support and attention because, as the **Arab and Iran scholar, as well religion and Islam expert** Agata Nalborczyk points out: *in the first years, instead of learning new things, the child has to relearn the names of objects and concepts they already know, meaning that the process of knowledge acquisition begins much later*.³⁵ This, in turn, leaves a mark on the child's future adult life.³⁶

When a child, after going through the stages presented previously by the author, and overcoming the difficulties connected with learning a second language, masters it to a degree that enables free conversation in any situation, the Polish language gradually loses its importance. As such, it is used less and less frequently, if only to communicate with parents at home – it becomes unattractive, commonplace, monotonous and repetitive, as it is associated with specific situations. With time, it becomes a kind of a limited code, which instead of evolving slowly dies out.

This sparks new conflicts and leads to the first-generation emigrants getting distancing from their offspring. Feeling more and more free to communicate in their new language, children would like to talk about their problems in the very language in which they communicate with their peers and learn at school; however, adults

³⁴ W. Miodunka, *Moc języka i jej znaczenie w kontaktach językowych i kulturowych. Język jako wartość podstawowa kultury*, [in:] *Nauczanie języka polskiego jako obcego*, Kraków 2003, p. 158.

³⁵ A.S. Nalborczyk, *Zachowania językowe imigrantów arabskich w Austrii*, Warsaw 2003, p. 41.

³⁶ This creates delays in the learning process, which the author's cousins (mentioned earlier in this paper) also struggle with.

cannot always fully understand the issue raised by their children and sometimes they are also unable to solve them. Over time, children understand that they can only rely on themselves and they stop asking their parents, as the language becomes a carrier of different meanings, representative of different worlds of thought, and children, who find themselves in this situation, often feel misunderstood. For parents, the mother tongue remains their main language. L2 becoming the main functional language for the second generation of emigrants results in loosening family bonds and makes communication between the family members significantly difficult. This is because, as Gadamer says: *language is not only a system of meaning, but a plane of semantic activity that arises between one person and another, as well as between the person and the world.*³⁷

The reluctance of children to speak their parents' mother tongue is also a significant obstacle to taking a cultural root, impeding the transfer of cultural aspects such as patriotism, hierarchy of values, ethics and faith.

The author would also like to address the psychosocial impact of emigration. Adults often do not realise that in addition to learning a new language (or the need to use a foreign language they have learned in the past) they will also encounter the need to build a new cultural identity for themselves and their children, which needs to represent the conditions and circumstances of their new country – its traditions, customs and worldview. In many people, this causes a certain duality; however, parents should take full responsibility for this situation of double identity that they have put their children in. Their task is to introduce children to the new world in the least-painful way possible and to strive to integrate their family into the community of their choice. Adults should not reprimand their children for not feeling the connection to their country of origin – instead, they should do everything in their power to make sure that their children draw full benefit from the multicultural source in which they live. First generation emigrants, on the other hand, should not forget about their native culture, but should share it and

³⁷ H.-G. Gadamer, *Rozum, słowo, dzieje*, Warsaw 1979, p. 136.

pass on the models they have learned from their homeland to the residents of the community in which they live. Thanks to the promotion and dissemination of the minority culture, native inhabitants of the country of emigration become more open and very often reject their prejudices.

This is also related to the common phenomenon of the clash of cultures in multilingual families: the homeland of parents with the culture of the country of emigration. However, as J. Cieszyńska states, the language community with parents, contact with grandparents and family in the country of origin is particularly important for children brought up in foreign countries. *This is a condition for the formation of an identity, which I refer to as "glued together". The lack of ethnic language causes a split, which in some cases can make it impossible to find one's way in life and creates a sense of emptiness, making it difficult or impossible to take on life's roles and achieve full intellectual and emotional development.*³⁸ The scholar also notes that *it is very difficult to function well in two systems at the same time, and this certainly cannot be achieved by an uncompromising youth.*³⁹

This often results in an indifferent attitude towards the parents' country of origin, a lack of understanding of its customs and traditions, and also affects the reluctance to learn the language of their ancestors. It can be said that the second-generation language is limited by a rigid framework and its development has stopped at a childhood stage. This is something that is mentioned by Roman Laskowski, Polish linguist and Slavic Studies scholar: *Children (of emigrants) use the language of the country of settlement as a developed code, while the Polish language, originally their mother tongue, gradually becomes their restricted code.*⁴⁰ This is evidenced by clumsy style, as

³⁸ J. Cieszyńska, *Rozwój mowy polskich dzieci na obczyźnie – zjawiska normatywne czy zaburzenia rozwojowe?*, [in:] M. Michalik, A. Siudak, Z. Orłowska-Popek, *Nowa Logopedia. T. 3. Diagnoza różnicowa zaburzeń komunikacji językowej*, Kraków 2012, p. 36.

³⁹ J. Cieszyńska, *Lingwistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 21.

⁴⁰ W. Miodunka, *Jak dwujęzyczność dzieci polonijnych może wpływać na ich szacunek do rodziców? Na marginesie badań prof. Jagody Cieszyńskiej*, [in:] *Nowe podejście w diagnostyce i terapii logopedycznej: metoda krakowska*, J. Cieszyńska, Z. Orłowska-Popek, M. Korendo (eds.), Kraków 2010, p. 12.

well as a large number of diminutives, characteristic for the language of small children – *autko, herbatka, cukiereczek*, which can be often seen in the vocabulary of the author's patients. Due to the fact that in most Polish families abroad, the mother tongue is used only in everyday communication with parents, it is very easy for children to guess their parents' intentions, which makes further exploration unnecessary. Very rarely is the Polish language of young people living outside Poland characterised by rich vocabulary and abstract phrases, which results from the experience of living in two cultures, which are represented by two different languages. According to Cieszyńska: *The world of everyday home life, led in Polish, is distinct from the everyday school and professional life, led in Austrian. This is compounded with the discrepancies between the Polish experiences of the real world of the parents, as well as the experiences of children in the new reality. This clash is linguistic in its essence.*⁴¹

Such a lack of mutual understanding is the reason for the difficulties in building up emotional relationships between first generation emigrants and their children. This is due, on the one hand, to the limitation in sharing emotions and feelings mentally, and on the other hand, to an incomplete understanding of the intentions of the speaker by the recipient, which results in the difficulty to learn alternating roles, as a result of which they are often switched. An example of this phenomenon is a conversation between parents and their children at home, when someone who does not speak Polish appears. In such cases, the child takes over, becoming more talkative and boldly expressing their views, thus assuming the role of a parent. From the point of view of Polish culture, such behaviour could be considered rude, but in reality it is forced by the situation at hand.

Conclusion

Children and adolescents living abroad are deprived of the possibility of natural acquisition of norms accepted in a given society in

⁴¹ J. Cieszyńska, *Linguistyczne i psychologiczne problemy osób dwujęzycznych*, p. 22.

early childhood, and they could not learn this in a natural way, in the Polish family home. Thus, they find it difficult to teach their children the language, culture and desired patterns of behaviour, including linguistic habits. This process occurs automatically, unconsciously and without our knowledge or willingness, as people acquire cultural knowledge with every moment of their lives.

The richness of knowledge and life in two cultures is not only a great adventure, but also gives rise to a number of dangers – making it difficult to fit the right linguistic and cultural patterns to a given situation in order to be able to properly function in the world. A teacher working with multilingual migrant children – including Polish children returning to Poland, which becomes a more and more prevalent situation in Polish schools – should be aware of at least the basic problems and conditions concerning the development of students' language skills in the case of multilingualism.

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