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## Assessing child bilingualism in plurilingual families. A case study

### Słowa kluczowe

dwujęzyczność, zamiana kodów, mieszanie kodów, wyrażanie emocji, poziom biegłości

### Keywords

bilingualism, code-switching, code-mixing, expression of emotions, level of proficiency

### Introduction

There are many different definitions of bilingualism. Nordquist<sup>1</sup> offers a snappy one, stating that this is “[...] the ability of an individual or the members of a community to use two languages effectively”. However, every person who reflects on bilingualism thinks of this phenomenon in his or her own way. Some consider bilingualism as a situation when a person

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Nordquist, “Definition and Examples of Bilingualism”, *ThoughtCo*, Aug. 27, 2020, accessed 25.09.2020, [thoughtco.com/what-is-bilingualism-1689026](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-bilingualism-1689026).

is able to communicate in two languages but does not use them in everyday life<sup>2</sup>. Also, there are definitions that present bilingualism as the regular use of both languages (or dialects) in different daily situations<sup>3</sup>. One of the first definitions of bilingualism was Bloomfield's idea that it would be "[...] native-like control of two languages"<sup>4</sup>. Haugen states that we can talk about a bilingual person when s/he starts producing full, correct, and understandable statements in the other language<sup>5</sup>.

The majority of people in the world are bilingual due to the fact that they can talk and understand two languages no matter if they acquire them as children or later in life<sup>6</sup>. As Patterson claims, many bilingual children have contact with two languages since early childhood - this process is called simultaneous acquisition<sup>7</sup>. The second type of acquisition of languages is the sequential one. Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams describe it as less advantageous than simultaneous bilingualism due to – as they put it – worse pronunciation, less sophisticated vocabulary and a lower amount of words, in sum less overall proficiency<sup>8</sup>. In their opinion, one of the reasons is the fact that children know their first language at a high level, and then they start to acquire the second one.

### 1.1. Code-switching and code-mixing

One of the most recognizable features of a bilingual person is code-switching. It can be noticed during everyday conversations in different environments as well as when expressing emotions<sup>9</sup>. Meisel presents the definition of the code-switching as follows:

Code-switching is the ability to select the language according to the interlocutor, the situational context, the topic of conversation, and so forth, and to change languages within an interactional sequence in accordance with sociolinguistics rules and without violating specific grammatical constraints<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Marc Deweale, Alex Housen, Li Wei, eds., *Bilingualism: Beyond Basic Principles* (Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> François Grosjean, *Studying Bilinguals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935), 56.

<sup>5</sup> Einar Haugen, *Bilingualism in the Americas: A bibliography and research guide* (University of Alabama, Alabama Press, 1953).

<sup>6</sup> François Grosjean, *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Janet L. Patterson, "Relationships of expressive vocabulary to frequency of reading and television experience among bilingual toddlers", *Applied Psycholinguistics* 23 (2003): 493–508.

<sup>8</sup> Krista Byers-Heinlein, Casey Lew-Williams, "Bilingualism in the early years: What the science says", *LEARNing Landscapes* 7 (2013), 1: 103.

<sup>9</sup> Kira Hall, Chad Nilep, "Code-switching, identity and globalization", in: *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Tannen, Heidi E. Hamilton, Deborah Schiffrin (London: Blackwell, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Jürgen Meisel, Code-switching in Young Bilingual Children: The acquisition of grammatical constraints, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 16 (1994), 4: 415. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263100013449>.

Ariffin pays attention to some contextual factors which can be influential during the process of code-switching: /1/ the relationship between interlocutors; /2/ the environment in which the conversation takes place; and /3/ the topic of the conversation<sup>11</sup>.

The next essential concept, which often appears in respect to bilingual people and derives from code-switching, is code-mixing. Wardhaugh defines code-mixing as changing single elements of the utterance by people who speak two languages<sup>12</sup>. In the scholar's opinion, code-mixing does not generally change the topic of conversation.

To sum up, the main difference between these two notions can be found in the fact that code-switching is a process in which the speaker uses the second language to complete the utterance in the first language in the form of words, phrases or even full inclusions while in code-mixing the speaker uses only single words from another language and his or her statement is based on the first dominant language.

## 1.2. Bilingual expression of emotions

Pavlenko claims that if the second language is acquired later than in childhood, then its level of expression of emotions becomes lower due to the fact that the person was brought up in the L1 environment and learned to express their own emotions<sup>13</sup>. As was demonstrated by the scholar, one's education in the L1 environment and subsequent acquisition of a second language will result in a limited ability to express emotions in the language acquired later. While focusing on the differences between languages and cultures in the context of perceiving and expressing emotions, a division into internal and external events has been introduced, together with an assertion that both types of events can have an impact on people's perceiving of emotions, and the ways of their expressing<sup>14</sup>.

Another reason for expressing emotions in different languages by bilingual people is the sense of belonging to a given culture. According to Evans' cultural theory of emotions<sup>15</sup>, emotions, like languages, are learned and transferred culturally by people – it means that people from different cultures should feel different emotions than people from other countries and cultures. Ożańska-Ponikwia describes it as “[...] the relationship between emotions and culture is a very important one, as culture ‘shapes’ the perception and expression of emotions through the social constructions of reality that presumably characterize important

<sup>11</sup> Kamisah Ariffin, Mysyana S. Hussin, “Code-switching and Code-mixing of English and Bahasa Malaysia in Content-Based Classrooms: Frequency and Attitudes”, *Linguistic Journal* 5 (2011): 220.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 130.

<sup>13</sup> Aneta Pavlenko, “Bilingualism and emotions”, *Multilingua* 21 (2002).

<sup>14</sup> Aneta Pavlenko, “Emotion and emotion-laden words in the bilingual lexicon”, *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* 11 (2008), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Dylan Evans, *Emotion: The Science of Sentiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

aspects of one's culture"<sup>16</sup>. Also Wierzbicka claims that there are both universal (common for all people) and cultural-specific emotions, and only those who belong to a given culture are able to express and recognize the latter in other people<sup>17</sup>. According to Ożańska-Ponikwia<sup>18</sup>, people are able to recognize universal emotions around the world, but also at the same time to learn and experience new emotions which are characteristic of the specific culture to which people can belong by living in a foreign country and using a foreign language every day. The scholar also observes that if the exposure to aspects of the second language gives a learner a chance to develop their emotional concepts, it can be influential for perception and expression of emotions both in the native and acquired language.

## 2. Study description

The objective of the present study is twofold. First, we would like to analyze the use of two languages in everyday situations, including code-switching and code-mixing, as well as expressing emotions in them; second, we would also like to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference between using both languages in different everyday situations?
2. Does our subject switch between the two languages in some selected situations?
3. Is there a difference between the subject's expression of emotions in both languages?
4. What are the possible factors which can have an impact on the expression of emotions in L1 and L2?

### 2.1. Study participant

The subject of this study is a bilingual girl. Sarah is 13 years old, she lives in a small city near London and she goes to a public school for music and art class. Sarah is bilingual – she speaks British English, which is her (officially recognized) first language, and Polish – which is the language she can use at home. She was born in England, but her parents are Polish and they communicate in this language every day. Since birth, she has mostly spoken English using it in different environments, like school, public places, and during meetings with friends, but when at home Polish is recognized the main language of communication. Sarah's mother is also bilingual because she was born in Poland and at the age of 23 she moved to England where she has lived for 14 years. Now, she speaks both

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<sup>16</sup> Katarzyna Ożańska-Ponikwia, *Emotions from a Bilingual Point of View: Personality and Emotional Intelligence in Relation to Perception and Expression of Emotions in the L1 and L2* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Anna Wierzbicka, *Emotions Across Languages and Cultures: Diversity and universals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Ożańska-Ponikwia, *Emotions*.

languages fluently. The girl's father is bilingual, too. He was born in Poland and he moved to England with his family at the age of 25. His Polish is very good, but his English is quite limited; obviously, he can communicate, but he makes a lot of grammatical mistakes while talking. Sarah and her parents also live with her grandmother, who speaks Polish only, so they mostly use this language at home. She often visits Poland spending her time with her Polish-speaking family in a small village near Białystok. Sarah, together with her parents and her grandmother, comes there at Christmas and – sometimes – on summer holidays. Sarah also has some Polish friends who live nearby her uncle's house in Poland and she can communicate with them in Polish without any difficulty. Sometimes, however, she forgets some words and tries to paraphrase them or say them in English. The Polish members of her family cannot speak English fluently, but they can communicate with Sarah when she does not know some Polish words, especially their dialectal forms. Sarah likes speaking Polish, but she feels more comfortable when speaking English. When asked which language she recognizes as her first language, Sarah openly admits it is English.

## 2.2. Instruments used in the present study

To assess Sarah's bilingualism and her level of expressing emotions, the following instruments were used: the Polish Placement Test, the Questionnaire Measuring Perception, and the Expression of Emotions in the L1 and L2, as well as a semi-structured interview conducted with the subject of the study.

### 2.2.1. The Polish Placement Test

The first instrument, which is the Polish Placement Test, is a test consisting of 100 questions. All of them are related to different grammar structures because in each question the subject has to choose or fill in the correct forms of words given to them. The majority of the questions are of the multiple-choice type, where the participant has to choose one correct answer from 3 different possibilities. There are also some open questions, where the subject of the study has to write her own answers. The test itself, as well as its diagnostic results have been elaborated on the ideas found at the website of Krakowska Akademia im. A. Frycza-Modrzewskiego<sup>19</sup>.

In order to make the test comparable with other tests that can measure the levels of proficiency of some other, generally recognized as weaker, language we have decided to employ some of the indications found in Ellis<sup>20</sup>. The tests suggested by the scholar entail /1/ an oral imitation test involving both grammatical and ungrammatical sentences;

<sup>19</sup> Krakowska Akademia im. A. Frycza-Modrzewskiego. *Test plasujący*, accessed 23.05.2019, <https://www.ka.edu.pl/dla-studentow/studium-jezykow-obcych/test-plasujacy/>.

<sup>20</sup> Rod Ellis, *Measuring implicit and explicit knowledge of a second language: a psychometric study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

/2/ an oral narration test; /3/ timed and untimed (GJT) grammaticality judgment tests; and /4/ a metalinguistic knowledge test. Naturally, unlike Ellis, we elaborated a procedure that the use of Polish, and the used analogical items.

### 2.2.2. The Questionnaire Measuring Perception and Expression of Emotions

The second instrument used in the study is the Questionnaire Measuring Perception and Expression of Emotions in the L1 and L2. It was found in Ożańska-Ponikwia<sup>21</sup>. By the author's permission, this questionnaire was mostly used in its original form, but some questions had been changed to be more appropriate for a 13-year-old girl; for instance *I use English when I talk to my children* was changed into *I use English when I talk to my parents*. The questionnaire, prepared strictly for this study, contained 28 sentences, of which only four were in the form of questions and the rest of them were the statements to agree or disagree with. The questionnaire was presented in the form of a grid, where the subject had to choose an answer from the range 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree) for the first 23 questions. In the next question, the participant had to indicate the more often used language (from 1 – Polish to 5 – English). The last 4 questions concerned the frequency of using Polish and/or English language in expressing some emotions – the subject of the study had to choose from the range 1 (not at all) to 5 (very often).

### 2.2.3. The semi-structured interview

The third instrument was the semi-structured interview prepared by the researchers. The interview consisted of ten general questions and some more detailed ones which were to be asked additionally during the conversation with Sarah planned by us. The first ten questions were related to the subject's everyday life and her point of view on her own language choice; there also were a few questions about ways of expressing selected emotions. The posed questions were asked as follows: *In what language do you feel more comfortable when speaking?*, *Which language is closer to you?*, *Do you switch between languages? If yes, in what situations?*, *Do you understand Polish TV programs or books when watching or reading without any problems?*, *Can you write in the Polish language?*, *Which language do you prefer during talking with a person who speaks both of them?*, *Do you sometimes talk to yourself in Polish?*, *Do you write a diary?*, *What language do you speak when you are happy and sad?* and *Do you prefer saying <Kocham Cię> or <I love you>?* During the interview, more detailed questions were asked to either make sure or clarify some issues recognized as not fully transparent after the general questions had been asked, or they may evidently require longer or more detailed explanation.

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<sup>21</sup> Ożańska-Ponikwia, *Emotions*.

### 3. Data analysis

Below we present all the data collected during the research: the assessment of Polish and English language skills and the level of code-switching and code-mixing, as well as the ways of expressing emotions in both languages.

#### 3.1. The assessment of Polish language level

The number of points scored in this test determines the language proficiency level, which is presented as follows: the first 14 items entail an oral imitation test based upon grammatically correct sentences; the next 19 items entail an oral imitation test based upon grammatically incorrect sentences; another 20 items entail an oral narration test; similarly, the next 20 items entail timed GJT; the next 15 items entail untimed GJT; and finally, the last 12 items entail a metalinguistic knowledge test. In this way, the sum of the scored points determines the language level of the subject of the study. All the results and the number of points scored in each level and in the whole test of the participant in a given study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The assessment of Polish language level of the research subject (own elaboration)

Level of language proficiency	Sarah's score (%)	Maximum score (%)
Oral imitation test (grammatical sentences)	12	14
Oral imitation test (ungrammatical sentences)	7	19
Oral narration test	12	20
Timed GJT	10	20
Untimed GJT	3	15
Metalinguistic knowledge test	1	12
Total	45	100

As it is presented in the Table above, Sarah scored 45 points out of 100 possible, which gives her a 45% score. It means that the girl's Polish language proficiency cannot be estimated as very good. When it comes to assessing each level separately, the highest score was obtained in the oral imitation test that was based upon grammatically correct sentences, where the participant scored 12 points out of 14 possible, which gives a result of 87.7%. In the second of her tests, an oral imitation test that referred to grammatically incorrect statements, Sarah gave 7 correct answers only (from 19 given), which indicates a percentage result of 37%. As for the correctness of the answers to the items in the oral narration test, the result is 12 points out of 20, which gives a result of 60%. The worst result was obtained in the metalinguistic knowledge test, where Sarah gave only 1 correct answer (8,4%).

### 3.2. The results of the Questionnaire Measuring Perception and Expression of Emotions in L1 and L2

As the second element of the research, the participant had to complete a questionnaire related to her perception and expression of emotions. It contained 30 multiple choice questions regarding the frequency of use in each of the two languages. The girl's answers allowed us to assess her way of feeling and expressing emotions in both Polish and English. In most questions that concerned English as a language in which she can express or feel certain emotions, the average score is 5 (the highest), which means that English is definitely the language recognized as dominant by her. In the case of questions about the Polish language, in which she has difficulty in understanding emotions or in comprehending other people speaking in this language, her answers were 1 (the lowest). In questions about Polish as a language of communication on a daily basis, the average was 2 because Sarah uses this language only to communicate at home. In questions about emotional expression in Polish, the average of results was 3. As pointed out by Sarah (and also observed) all positive emotions are expressed in English, this allows her to share these emotions with other people who surround her. However, in the case of negative emotions or unpleasant experiences - the participant chooses the Polish language because in such situations she resorts to closest family members, from whom she receives support and can talk about her problems (Figure 1).

### 3.3. The frequency of code-switching and code-mixing

During the observation, we have noticed a few situations in which the participant switched between languages and mixed them. Such situations took place mostly at the girl's home, especially when the interlocutor changed during talking. It was observed a few times that when Sarah was with her grandmother and some English-speaking friends, she switched between Polish and English to communicate both with the grandmother and the friends. Also, she acted as a translator because she conveyed messages between her friends and her grandmother so that every participant in the conversation could understand its full content. What is more, while she was outside home with her mother, for example for shopping, she spoke to her mother in Polish while she was communicating in English with a saleswoman. The other reason why the girl switched between the two languages was when she wanted to tell something in Polish but – as it seemed – she was not able to find the proper word in this language or the word was too difficult to pronounce. In such situations, Sarah switched to English and sometimes continued her statement in English. The next important reason for switching between Polish and English occurred when talking about emotions. As it was observed, the girl preferred to talk about her positive emotions in English, but she evidently preferred to talk in Polish when expressing some unpleasant emotions.



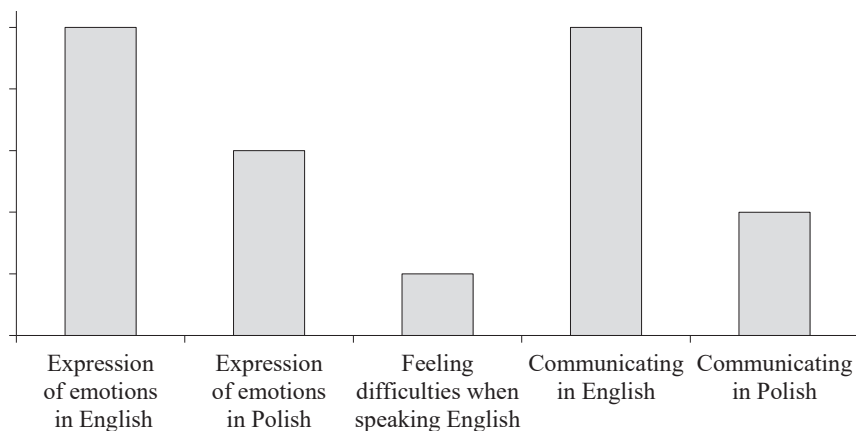


Figure 1. The results of the Questionnaire Measuring Perception and Expression of Emotions in L1 and L2 (own elaboration)

Similar conclusions were drawn when regarding the frequency of code-mixing. During the same observation, situations were also observed when code-mixing occurred. The reasons were the same as in the case of code-switching; these mostly occurred when changing an interlocutor, when she apparently could not find an appropriate word in Polish (or the word pronunciation was too difficult for her), and when expressing (mostly negative) emotions.

Analyzing what has been presented above, it can be said that there are some specific situations in which Sarah switches between languages and/or mixes them. The situations observed there are, however, more or less similar to these mentioned in Pavlenko's paper<sup>22</sup>. The phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing that have been observed in the case of Sarah often occur in the processes of communication of bilingual persons, in situations that are specific to them and depend on their individual approach to the way they express their thoughts.

#### 4. Discussion

In this section, each of the consecutive paragraphs contains conclusive answers to the research questions; the conclusions were drawn from the research and compared to the data presented in the theoretical sections.

In the first research question, we asked about a difference between using both languages in different everyday situations. The study indicated the clear use of both languages

<sup>22</sup> Aneta Pavlenko, "Bilingualism and emotions", *Multilingua* 21 (2002).

in various everyday situations; the choice depended on either the environment, or the interlocutor and their language preferences were taken into account, or else the language skills of the examined bilingual person were at stake. As demonstrated in our study, in a home environment where the participant and her family talked in Polish, this language prevailed due to the desire to maintain it, as it is the mother tongue of the girl's parents and her grandmother. However, in situations where the subject of the research was out of the house, English became the dominant language because she lived in an English-speaking environment, so meeting friends, learning at school, or shopping were connected with communicating with the interlocutors in English. When focusing on communicating at home, this research showed that there was an emphasis on speaking Polish there. In this instance our findings approximate the results discussed by Byers-Heinlein<sup>23</sup>, the only visible difference being that our research mostly focused on a family where using Polish became a natural consequence of the family beliefs. In the research carried out by her, only 4% of parents declared that they communicate with their bilingual children in one language whereas 14% reported that they try to communicate in one language only. When asked about languages they talk at home, 40% of parents answered that they speak English (L1) and 60% declared speaking their L2 (using Polish being one of the languages indicated in the said research). The parents that took part in the said research were also asked about situations in which they use one language only (i.e. either L1 or L2) and the answers were that 60% of them used one such a language when having family-related conversations, while 40% said that they use this language at home generally. What is more, when it comes to speaking both languages at home, 33% of parents declared using both English (L1) and their other language for communication every day at home. To sum up, it can be said that choosing the primary language to use at home is an individual choice of the parents. In the present research, both parents were Polish-speaking, so this was the main reason why Polish was the primary language of communication at home. Thus, our research differed from the said Byers-Heinlein's research, as well as the one of Lew-Williams<sup>24</sup>, who examined families in which both parents speak different mother tongues.

Analysing the second research question which focused upon situations that triggered switching between the two languages, it can be said that code-switching occurred quite frequently. The analysis of the results of the semi-structured review revealed that the situations, in which switching between languages (or even mixing them) can be observed in the participant of this study, mostly involved changing the interlocutor, telling secrets to friends (or family members), expressing emotions and when not being able to know the Polish word, or being unsure about the pronunciation of such a word. As we observed during the study, when Sarah talked with different people, she often shifted to the other language

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<sup>23</sup> Krista Byers-Heinlein, "Parental language mixing: Its measurement and its relation of mixed input to young bilingual children's vocabulary size", *Bilingualism* 16 (2013), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Byers-Heinlein, Lew-Williams, "Bilingualism in the early years".

when meeting a person normally using Polish (or English) on a daily basis. Another such situation was when telling a secret to her mum in Polish in the presence of her English-speaking friends.

Also, in case of expressing emotions, the girl used to switch between Polish and English because, as indicated in the previous part of this study, she preferred to express her positive feelings and emotions in English; but she generally chose Polish to talk about her problems and unpleasant things to her mum. What is more, she mixed Polish and English in situations when she could not pronounce a Polish word correctly or when she did not know the Polish words and was sort-of forced to use their English equivalents. The same reasons for code-switching were presented by Ariffin et al.<sup>25</sup>; he also noted that the topic of conversation can cause switching between languages, which can be compared to the situation when there is a lack of an appropriate word when speaking. Furthermore, Hall and Nilep<sup>26</sup> demonstrated that the phenomenon of code-switching occurs when bilinguals are talking about different everyday situations in various environments and also when expressing emotions. Also, Meisel described code-switching as a linguistic phenomenon that occurs when changing the interlocutor, the topic of conversation, or situational context<sup>27</sup>. Judging from what could be found in literature and what we were able to observe in Sarah's behavior, it can be said in respect to our bilingual subject that code-switching was frequently in use.

The third question related to possible differences when expressing emotions in both languages. Also, our final question was about possible factors that can have an impact on the expression of emotions in L1 and L2. In the present research, we made an attempt to demonstrate that the individual experiences of the girl decided on what language she would prefer to express her emotions. As described earlier, Sarah liked to share positive and pleasant experiences with people around her, so she expressed this kind of emotions in English because she could talk about them with everyone. As for the negative and sad experiences, the girl definitely preferred to speak about them in Polish only, in the company of the closest family members, because she knew that she would find support and help from them. Pavlenko noted that internal and external personal experiences have a huge impact on expressing emotions in different languages due to the existence of various cultural and linguistic differences<sup>28</sup>. The same scholar also mentions that even physiological reactions influence the choice of the language. Also, Ożańska-Ponikwia reported that belonging to a given culture may lead to the choice of the language associated with it in the context of expressing emotions<sup>29</sup>. She noted that belonging to the Polish culture has a large influence on the perception of the phrase <Kocham cię> rather than <I love you> because it is

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<sup>25</sup> Ariffin, Hussin, "Code-switching".

<sup>26</sup> Hall, Nilep, "Code-switching".

<sup>27</sup> Meisel, "Code-switching in Young Bilingual Children".

<sup>28</sup> Pavlenko, "Emotion and emotion-laden".

<sup>29</sup> Ożańska-Ponikwia, *Emotions*.

a kind of a culture-specific emotion; it can be said that only those who communicate in Polish understand the importance of this expression in respect to the feeling of love. In comparison to this statement, Sarah also stated that she prefers using the phrase <Kocham cię> because she recognizes herself to be a part of the Polish family then; by using this phrase she makes sure that she expresses a true and sincere feeling with regard to her relatives.

The overall outcome of all of the research questions was that bilingualism and expression of emotions are closely related to each other. What is more, as observed by numerous scholars<sup>30</sup>, speaking two languages in different situations and switching between them is justified by specific reasons due to which such language occurrences come up when bilingual people tend to produce comprehensible messages. Also, differences between the use of languages in expressing emotions and factors that influence the choice of a given language have been analyzed and presented in a plain and straightforward manner.

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<sup>30</sup> Mary Besemeres, *Different Languages, Different Emotions? Perspectives from Autobiographical Literature* (Curtin: Curtin University of Technology, 2004); Ida Kurcz, *Psychologiczne aspekty dwujęzyczności* (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2006); Eunhee Kim, "Reasons and Motivation for Code-Mixing and Code-Switching", *TESOL Journal* 4 (2006); Carol Myers-Scotton, *Multiple Voices: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (Blackwell Publishers, 2006); Jean-Marc Dewaele, *Multilingualism and Emotions* (Oxford: OUP, 2010); V. Chandra Sekhar Rao, "The Significance of the Words Borrowed into English Language", *Journal for Research Scholars and Professionals of English Language Teaching* 6 (2018).

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## Assessing child bilingualism in plurilingual families. A case study

### Summary

This article focuses on the assessment of the level of bilingualism of a Britain-born Polish-speaking girl, as well as to explore ways of expressing emotions by her. The study participant was a 13-year-old bilingual (Polish-English) girl who lived with her parents in the UK from birth. We have assessed her language proficiency in the Polish language, situations in which there is code-switching and code-mixing, and situations in which each of the two languages becomes dominant when expressing emotions. The results showed that the dominant language in everyday situations is English, while Polish is used mainly at home, in the company of the closest family. What's more, the frequency count of code-switching, and code-mixing showed that these two phenomena are largely dependent on the interlocutor, the topic of conversation, language skills in a given language and emotions being expressed. When it comes to emotions, it has been demonstrated that positive emotions are expressed mainly in English because of the joy and willingness to share pleasant experiences with others, while expressing negative emotions and sad experiences the dominant language becomes Polish because of the sense of belonging to a Polish family and a sense of trust and security among its members.

## Ocena dwujęzyczności dzieci w rodzinach wielojęzycznych. Studium przypadku

### Streszczenie

Artykuł jest próbą oceny poziomu dwujęzyczności osoby zamieszkałej w Wielkiej Brytanii, a także zbadania sposobów wyrażania emocji w obu językach przez osobę dwujęzyczną. Uczestnikiem badania była 13-letnia dwujęzyczna dziewczynka, władająca polskim i angielskim, która od urodzenia mieszkała z rodzicami w Wielkiej Brytanii. Analiza danych pozwoliła ocenić poziom biegłości językowej języka polskiego, sytuacje, w których następuje przełączanie i miksowanie kodów oraz sytuacje, w których każdy z dwóch języków staje się dominujący podczas wyrażania emocji. Wyniki pokazały, że językiem dominującym w codziennych sytuacjach jest angielski, natomiast polski jest używany głównie w domu, w towarzystwie najbliższej rodziny. Co więcej, relatywne częstotliwości przełączania i miksowania kodu pokazały, że te dwa zjawiska są w dużej mierze zależne od rozmówcy, tematu rozmowy, umiejętności językowych w danym języku i wyrażanych emocji. Jeśli chodzi o emocje, udowodniono, że pozytywne emocje wyrażane są głównie w języku angielskim ze względu na radość i chęć dzielenia się z innymi przyjemnymi doświadczeniami, podczas gdy w przypadku wyrażenia negatywnych emocji i smutnych doświadczeń dominujący język staje się polski ze względu na poczucie przynależności do polskiej rodziny oraz poczucie zaufania i bezpieczeństwa wśród jej członków.

### Cytowanie

Maruszczak, Katarzyna, Krzysztof Polok. „Assessing child bilingualism in plurilingual families. A case study”. *Studia Językoznawcze. Synchroniczne i diachroniczne aspekty badań polszczyzny* 20 (2021): 91–104. DOI: 10.18276/sj.2021.20-07.