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### Formation of the bilingual personality of a child in the family: philosophical reflection *Formación de la personalidad bilingüe de un niño en la familia: reflexión filosófica*

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#### ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses the formation of a bilingual environment that builds the child's personality in the family space. The authors substantiate the thesis that, in modern conditions of linguistic diversity and intensive mutual influence of various languages, the command of several languages is an essential condition for the development of thought and a guarantee for dialogue in the space of different ethnic groups. The criteria for conceiving a thought in a language is the ability to formulate sentences or texts directly in a given language, as opposed to a translation of a statement, previously constructed in another language.

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, bilingual personality of the child, family, thought development.

#### RESUMEN

El presente documento discute la formación de un entorno bilingüe que construye la personalidad del niño en el espacio familiar. Los autores corroboran la tesis de que, en condiciones modernas de diversidad lingüística e influencia mutua intensiva de varios idiomas, el dominio de varios idiomas es una condición esencial para el desarrollo del pensamiento y una garantía para el diálogo en el espacio de diferentes grupos étnicos. Concebir un pensamiento en un idioma es la capacidad de formular oraciones o textos directamente en un idioma dado, en lugar de una traducción de un enunciado, previamente construido en otro idioma.

**Palabras clave:** Bilingüismo, desarrollo del pensamiento, familia, personalidad bilingüe del niño.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The modern world of global innovations, having extensive as well as intensive impact, challenges individuals to solve a multitude of tasks in various spheres of public life, including the aspect of multicultural social communities and multilingual space. In this regard, the creation of conditions to develop global communication between cultures and countries, establish inter-ethnic relations, form the culture of inter-ethnic interaction, and maintain ethnic tolerance can only be stipulated by the unique means of communication – the language.

In modern conditions of linguistic diversity and intensive mutual influence of different languages, knowledge of several languages is an essential requirement and a guarantee for a dialogue in the space of different ethnic groups.

A fresh perspective on the problems of bilingualism from the viewpoint of family socialization within a family as well as attitudes of a modern family to language learning and preservation allowed to formulate the research objective as defining the role of the family informing bilingual thinking of the personality of a child.

## **METHODS**

In 2018 we conducted comprehensive sociological research using quantitative and qualitative methodology:

- A representative survey of the population in one of the Russian regions – the Republic of Tatarstan (n = 1241 people).
- In-depth narrative interviews with representatives of various generations of residents (n=20).

## **RESULTS**

Language is one of the most fundamental foundations of culture and human existence; it is inherently an object of philosophical reflection. Ancient philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle expressed their views on the language.

One of the most essential aspects of human existence in a multi-ethnic environment is the problem of understanding. The understanding phenomenon is directly related to the discourse of philosophical hermeneutics. Without analyzing the essence of understanding, it is impossible to judge human nature and the possibilities of personal adaptation and socialization.

The hermeneutic approach in the study of bilingual perspective is crucial, specifically when determining the role of the family as an environment for the formation of bilingual thinking. In the process of second language acquisition, changes occur in the structure of a child's consciousness, which are associated with the need for the coexistence of two language systems. An interaction occurs, and sometimes interference of various linguistic systems, their combination, and correlation in terms of presentation and understanding of the semantic content can be observed.

In current conditions, the factors contributing to the need for mastering foreign languages include globalization, various types of migration, multiculturalism, inter-ethnic marriages – a variety of processes making it more typical for people to stay or reside in the areas where a foreign language is spoken.

J. Hamers and M. Blanc use the term “individual bilingualism” or “bilingualism” which denotes the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one language code as a means of social communication (Hamers et al.: 2000). F. Grosjean considers the phenomenon of bilingualism from the perspective of the sphere of each language used by a bilingual person. He believes that it is meaningless to evaluate bilinguals by their level of language proficiency or by their “balance” in the individual’s mind, since bilinguals usually use their languages with different goals and in different spheres of life: in their family, at

work, in friendly informal communication. Such spheres of language use are denoted as "domains" by Grosjean who formulates the principle of complementarity of the languages spoken by one person (Grosjean: 2010).

O. García and A. Lin consider two ways for explaining the language interaction of a bilingual personality: the first is based on the assumption that two different language systems coexist in the mind of bilinguals, to which the speakers can alternately turn; the second option assumes the existence of one integrated linguistic system in the consciousness of an individual, and in this case researchers are most interested in dynamic mental processes associated with the use of a language (García: 2017).

Many philosophers accept the impossibility of the existence of thought without it being expressed in the language as an axiom. This idea was actively developed by representatives of the analytical movement in the philosophy of the twentieth century, which was mainstream in the field of philosophical studies of language. The leader of the movement, Bertrand Russell, considered the link between the act of thought and its verbal form as essential. Russell argued that language serves not only to express thoughts but also to make thoughts possible because without language they could not exist. He believed the main functions of the language to be the expression of a person's own thoughts and emotions, on the one hand, and, interpersonal communication, on the other. Assuming the existence of the simplest thoughts without being formed into words, Russell did not doubt that all quite complex thoughts require words (Russell: 2009; Reyazi & Aghaei: 2017).

Applying this fundamental philosophical proposition to define the methodological basis for recognizing an individual as a bilingual, we should, first of all, come to the conclusion that the criterion of bilingualism should not be sought in the ability to speak the second language per se, but in the ability of a person to generate thoughts in a given language. The criterion for the ability to think in a language is the ability to formulate sentences or texts directly in a given language, as opposed to a translation of a statement, previously constructed in another language.

According to the philosopher, there are certain mental processes that can be carried out only by means of language, namely, processes of understanding and implication, and the only function of signs of the language is to induce such processes (Bandstra: 2002, pp. 297-308).

British philosopher G. Ryle examines the relationship between thinking and language in detail. He analyzes the algorithm on how a small child learns to think: firstly, the child learns to speak the language out loud and only then learns to think in the language keeping silent. Acquiring the ability to speak silently to oneself — that is, to think — requires a certain amount of time and effort, and a necessary condition for mastering this ability is that a person first learns to speak out loud reasonably and understand other people speaking (Ryle: 2009)

Thus, we can say that the philosophical approach to the problem of language and understanding includes a range of problems affecting the impact of bilingualism on personality formation. If we proceed from the fact that thinking is operating concepts, then the wealth and versatility of people's thinking, formed in the bilingual environment, are undeniable. This fact is explained on the basis of the thesis that language and thinking are one whole. Accordingly, variability and ambiguity of the language should lead to the variability of thinking. If bilingualism contributes to the versatility of thinking, then it is obvious that the bilingual environment requires an active formation. In this case, the family acts as the first and most important source of such a formation (Murzinova et al: 2018).

A variety of processes occurring between the family and its social environment influence and form certain behavior patterns of the representatives of different generations in the family in terms of language acquisition.

Culture of inter-ethnic dialogue and ethnic diversity, formed in the polyethnic region of Russia – Tatarstan, create a favorable environment for learning the languages of the peoples living in it. According to the results of a mass survey, the linguistic identity of the population of Tatarstan is as follows:

- more than half of the inhabitants of the Republic (52%) call Russian as their native language;
- about half of the respondents (46.4%) consider Tatar as their native language;
- a significant proportion of the non-Russian population of the Republic (68.5%) noted that, in addition to the native language, they have a command of Russian;
- a minor share of the respondents mentioned their command of the Tatar language as a second language (14.4%) (Maximova: 2018).

The Tatar language competence is considered necessary and useful in mono-ethnic Russian families of our informants: "There are 4 people in my family: parents, me and my younger brother, who is 11 years old. All family members are Russian by nationality. Despite the Russian nationality, there is basic Tatar language knowledge, which is enough to support a conversation"(male, 20 years old).

Representatives of inter-ethnic marriages hold the same opinion when answering the question of whether they would like their children to have good Tatar language skills. The informant, Russian by nationality, who lives with her husband, whose nationality is Tatar, believes that their son should have a command of the Tatar language: "I would like, yes. After all, he is Tatar, it turns out, after his father. I would like that he would know, understand and communicate in the Tatar language as far as we live in Tatarstan, after all" (female, 37 years old).

Representatives of the Tatar ethnos highly estimate the role of the Russian language as a language of inter-ethnic communication, a language capable of discovering unique possibilities of life success. An informant is a man, Tatar by nationality; since his childhood, he spoke the Tatar language in the family, and he emphasizes the significance and role of the Russian language he learned in school, which helped him to realize all the life plans of professional development: "It helped me, yes. In my career, in almost everything, and in getting a higher education, but also later, when working as a teacher".(male, 56 years old).

The position regarding the learning of languages of other ethnic groups is upheld by informants who support a respectful attitude to the people living next to them.

A number of factors affect a person's conscious decision to learn a language. One of the determining factors for the formation of bilingualism and multilingualism is the degree to which the social institution of the family is involved in this process (Moghadam et al.: 2019, pp. 24-30).

Thus, the formation of language competence largely depends on the conditions that can be provided by the family, performing an educational function.

The families of our informants implement different models of language education, which are very different in their modes and, as it seems, effectiveness. For example, one group of families provides children with complete autonomy and freedom in making decisions to study languages, including native ones. The group acts in accordance with the following principle: "if you want to, you can learn a language, but if you don't want to, do not learn it", "... having a desire to learn, they'll learn it": "... if they have eagerness, I won't be against it; basically, that is their decision, let them decide for themselves: if they want to – let them learn a language, if they don't want to – allow them not to learn ...".(male, 45 years old)(Sheikh & Emadian: 2019, pp.15-21).

Presumably, this situation can be stipulated by the fact that at present some parents, in their desire to follow the trends of modern educational concepts and demonstrate a high level of their "democracy" in relation to the younger generation, completely forget about the need to fully implement the educational function as well as about the responsibility for the content of the educational process (Ferretti: 2019, pp.1-7).

It is indisputable that the eagerness to absorb and master languages cannot be imposed artificially. However, the optimal organization of language teaching in a family, including a mother tongue, implies the presence of permanent language exposure as well as purposefulness and consistency, a certain degree of perseverance on the part of parents and diligence on the part of learners. Only in this case a result can be obtained in the form of defined linguistic competences – a person's ability to have a command of several languages at such a qualitative level that would allow him or her to exercise interpersonal and professional

communication freely (Pakdel & Ashrafi: 2019) This point of view is also shared by some informants: "Children might need to be forced, because if they are given the right to choose, all of them will refuse, they need a minimum load, and if they are given such a choice, then children will naturally refuse, many of them will refuse". (female, 38 years old). Such statements unite the second group of families, which, in contrast to the first one, aspires to fully realize its parental, educational resource and insists on learning the native language. As informants believe, it is more preferable in this case to have an option of early second language acquisition in combination with family and pre-school educational institutions.

The ability to acquire new knowledge by making efforts, the activation of motivation mechanisms to learn languages, i.e. the creation of conditions for mastering languages in the family space and educational institutions – all these factors contribute to the formation of a bilingual and multilingual personality (Martins et al.:2019).

Although the decision on second language acquisition seems to be the priority right of each family, it would be wrong to impose those duties only on the educational institution dealing with language teaching. Indeed, when defining education as a process of influencing children by parents and other family members in order to achieve the desired results, one should not forget about the need and strength of this constant impact. Moreover, our informants are convinced that in the process of a bilingual and even multilingual personality formation the leading role is attributed only to the family, and, in their opinion, it is the family micro-community where the linguistic basis is formed: "You can preserve the language only in the family, it is definite. Schools have nothing to do with it. It depends on many factors. Of course, the family will contribute more to preserve the Tatar language ... and why should I rely on someone, teachers ..."(male, 56 years old).

No matter how fundamentally opposing the opinions of informants are, no matter how the representatives of different generations of the family express various points of view on ways and means of linguistic competences mastering, it is only a complex approach that makes it possible to ensure the formation of a linguistic identity and a system of tolerant inter-ethnic interactions. The main principle of this approach is a systematic approach to master languages, which is implemented through the interaction of family, education, and society. In this case, their simultaneous action will not be summed up, but multiplied, yielding an effective result.

In the modern world, language mastering transforms into a continuous process that requires the participation of various social institutions, several generations of the modern family, multiple completion of the language resource of a person in order to solve emerging practical problems in the space of modern multilingual interaction. Therefore, the use of the multifaceted potential of the family which provides an immersion into the language environment, the formation of motivational attitudes to master languages, including the native language, can qualitatively change the language skills while maintaining interest in the cultural and linguistic values of the native ethnic group.

## **CONCLUSION**

It can be agreed upon the conclusions of a number of philosophers that there is a direct link between the child's mastery of the language and the formation of the child's thinking. It is possible to use these theoretical positions as criteria for explaining the linguistic mechanism, which is characteristic of bilinguals. When a person who acquires a second or subsequent language develops the ability to express a thought by correctly making up a sentence in that language, regardless of their first language, it becomes possible to talk about bilingualism. Thus, when mastering two languages spoken in the society that surrounds the child, the function of thought formation is most fully realized, which, in turn, means that the language starts to be used by a person in its main purpose. In our opinion, this is the criterion frontier for second language acquisition at an early age in the family environment, which allows speaking about the actual beginning of bilingualism.

Knowledge of two languages and two linguocultures creates a full picture of a person's own culture, enriches their knowledge of the world, broadens the horizons of their worldview, and generally contributes to the full development of the personality. It leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to form bilingualism and to study this phenomenon in depth from the philosophical perspective.

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