

AND THE WOLF SAID: “HOW A TASTY PIG!?”: LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE AND INTERPRETING SKILLS IN BILINGUAL CHILDREN

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Abstract

The study investigates the linguistic and natural interpreting competence of two balanced Slovak-English bilingual children (siblings) while comparing the lexical and morphosyntactic production of *The Three Little Pigs* story through an interpreting activity in both language directions. Our research lies on the assumption that bilingual children are also natural interpreters who possess a bi-directional third competence (Harris 1976). The main objectives are to examine how children perform interpreting tasks, what types of errors they commit and what instances of cross-linguistic influence occur during these activities. From a broader perspective, the results of our research confirm that bilingual children can faithfully interpret the story in both language directions from Slovak to English and from English to Slovak. Both respondents demonstrated a high level of linguistic (lexical and morphosyntactic) and pragmatic competence in interpreting, which was done without any additions or omissions that would alter the meaning of the source message in the target language. Errors occurred mainly on the structural level, most of them were developmental errors and errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence. The presented data shed more light on the nature of bilingual language acquisition in children and their interpreting skills which constitute a natural part of this process. The findings move the field forward through building a better understanding of the capabilities of simultaneous bilinguals, to support the hypothesis that in an encouraging environment they can become proficient communicators and successful interpreters.

Keywords

bilingualism, competence, natural interpreting, language acquisition, errors

1 Introduction

Due to increasing migration and population mixing, bilingualism is a widespread social phenomenon in the modern world. Although precise numbers of children acquiring two or more languages in a natural environment at home are difficult to obtain, common estimates say that more than half of the world's population is bilingual (Harding & Riley 1999: 27, Bialystok 2017). In Europe, as a result of the presence of plentiful minorities, migrant communities and intermarriages, a variety of languages are employed on a daily basis. According to the latest statistics, the continent has a very high percentage of bilingualism (67%) (Byers-Heinlein et al. 2019), so growing up bilingually is certainly no

exception. The term “bilingual” is one of the key concepts in the language acquisition field, but a fully exhaustive or universal definition does not exist. In this article, we use the term bilingualism in line with the recent developments of Western and Slavic linguistic research (Harding & Riley 1999, Štefánik 2000, Jelínek 2004/2005, Paradis 2007, Grosjean 2008, Nicoladis 2008) to denote a child’s ability to use two (or more languages) alternatively for communication. In this view, bilingualism does not refer to equally fluent, perfect or native-like mastery of two languages. Quite the contrary, being bilingual corresponds to a varying degree of communicative competence in at least two languages. A great deal of research shows that certain aspects of phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic acquisition in bilingual children, compared to monolinguals, differ. In addition, a distinctive feature of biliterate children is developing an ability to distinguish between languages as early as at the age of 2;00 or even earlier (Paradis 2007: 22). Research evidence suggests that emergent bilinguals are able to construct meanings and codeswitch during natural conversations. They do so systematically and purposefully according to the interlocutors. As Nicoladis and Genesee (1996: 15) point out, “True bilingual communicative competence entails the ability to adapt one’s language use on-line in accordance with relevant characteristics of the situation, including the preferred or more proficient language of one’s interlocutor”. This means that bilingual children can adjust their utterances when communicating with parents (Nicoladis & Genesee 1996) or strangers (Genesee et al. 1996, Tare & Gelman 2010) and rely on their context sensitive pragmatic skills. The components of pragmatic competence (Miššíková 2007: 72-73) are essential to the ongoing process of children’s biliteracy development.

In recent years, researchers have thoroughly investigated bilingual language acquisition in children from different perspectives focusing on various aspects of their language and cognitive development (Patterson & Pearson 2004, Nicoladis 2008, Bialystok 2011, Bialystok 2017), metalinguistic awareness (Pontecorvo et al. 1989, Grazzani & Ornaghi 2002, Serratrice et al. 2009), and cross-linguistic influence (Müller 1998, Yip & Matthews 2000, Nicoladis 2002, Cenoz 2003, Nicoladis 2019). While there is a vast amount of literature on children simultaneously acquiring world dominant languages, notably English, Spanish, Chinese, French or German, the studies exploring the competence of Slovak bilinguals are relatively rare (Smetanová 2017, Vozníková 2021).

The development of bilingual competence is a complex and multifaceted process during which children, in contrast to monolinguals, acquire a broad spectrum of linguistic, cognitive, and sociopragmatic skills. The idea that dual language acquisition in children inherently also involves the ability to

translate can be traced back to the 1970s works of Harris on natural translation/interpreting (Harris 1976, Harris & Sherwood 1978). Harris postulated that by having an additional third competence, all bilinguals can translate without being trained in it. Taking this claim as a starting point, the researchers (Álvarez de la Fuente & Fernández Fuertes 2012, 2015, 2017, Álvarez de la Fuente et al. 2019) conducted further empirical investigation of natural interpreting skills in bilingual children and revealed the direct links between children’s multiple language learning experiences and orally performed translations. As for the types of interpreting strategies, scholars have shown that bilinguals can employ diverse procedures ranging from simple lexical pairings to deeper linguistic transformations such as reductions and expansions (Álvarez de la Fuente & Fernández Fuertes 2015, 2017, Hornáčková Klápicová 2021a, 2021b). Other studies drew on a sociolinguistic perspective to explore the situations, communicative purposes and the roles of children in interpreting (Coyoca & Lee Sook 2009, Lynch 2018, Álvarez de la Fuente & Fernández Fuertes 2024). Natural interpreting is carried out by children in domestic interactions, between siblings, parents or other relatives. By contrast, interpreting activities in which children function as mediators outside family settings are referred to as language brokering. Language-brokering events where children are engaged in interpreting verbal communication occur in a variety of more formal contexts.

This article seeks to contribute to the fields of translation, interpreting studies and bilingual language acquisition focusing on the particular case of natural interpreting by a Slovak/English/German balanced trilingual child (Respondent 1) at the age of 11;01 and 11;02 and a Slovak/English/German balanced trilingual child (Respondent 2) at the age of 8;11 and 9;00. It follows up on previous longitudinal research carried out with the same respondents during different stages of their language development. Examining their natural interpreting competence is part of a larger parental study including an analysis of the respondents’ linguistic competence on various levels of language (phonological, morphological, syntactical, lexical, semantic and pragmatic) as well as an analysis of some of the social aspects of code-mixing and code-switching in their speech production (e.g. Hornáčková Klápicová 2017, 2018, Hornáčková Klápicová 2021a, 2021b). To the best of our knowledge, there is a gap in the area of research where Slovak would be one of the languages in the language pair. The aims of our case study are specifically to provide more insights into the evolution of natural interpretation skills in Slovak bilingual children over a period of time in order to assess their interpreting and linguistic competence, consider the possible crosslinguistic influence on the lexical and morphosyntactic levels, document the types of errors produced during interpreting and affirm that

these errors did not induce misinterpretation of source language (SL) messages in the target language (TL).

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Which factors influenced the level of lexical and morphosyntactic competence in each participant in each language?
2. What types of lexical and morphosyntactic errors did the participants produce in the TL sentences?
3. Were the errors the result of a cross-linguistic influence or rather developmental errors?
4. Did the errors induce miscomprehension of the TL text during interpreting?
5. Which interpreting strategies did the participants use during interpreting and how did these influence the lexical and morphosyntactic forms in the TL?

2 Research methodology

The answers to the research questions were obtained through an analysis of data collected from the participants' interpreting the *The Three Little Pigs* story in both language directions and comparing the results with their earlier interpreting activities. Examples of the participants' oral productions presented in this paper are transcribed in the CHAT format. By experimental interpreting we mean an activity in which the participants were requested to provide interpretations of *The Three Little Pigs*. The term natural interpreting is applied to indicate all forms of restating source-language sentences in the target language orally. Our research is qualitative in nature, and there exist previous similar studies which were done on one or two bilingual or plurilingual children (e.g. Álvarez de la Fuente & Fernández Fuertes 2024). In the paper, we do not use the term experiment in the rigorous sense of a traditional quantitative research method, involving hypotheses testing, experimental and control groups and statistical analysis of numerical data. What we mean by experimental design is the context and tasks which children are required to perform. In the case of the present study it is bidirectional interpreting from Slovak to English and from English to Slovak, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the developmental processes of interpreting and linguistic competence.

The Three Little Pigs story was selected for interpreting because both children were familiar with the story in the languages in question, and the lexical, semantic and stylistic composition of the story matched their knowledge of the world and their linguistic competence at the given age. While monolingual children are likely to master the grammar of their language approximately at the age of three and begin spontaneously producing narratives around the age of four (Kováčová 2017: 99), there is a delay in language development especially on the structural

and lexical levels in bilingual and plurilingual children (Paradis 2007, Nicoladis 2008). Since there is only a two-year difference between the respondents, and given the delayed language development in bilinguals, we believed that the chosen story could fairly measure the children’s ability to interpret the text naturally in both language directions, without exposing them to a situation which would surpass their knowledge of the languages in question or their natural interpreting competence at that stage.

2.1 Data collection and selection

We analysed the participants’ interpreting – transcoding from Slovak to English and from English to Slovak – of *The Three Little Pigs* (see Appendices 1 and 2). During interpreting, the participants were expected to provide sentences in the TL containing coherent sentence structure and meaning. The SL text included topics, lexicon, idiomatic expressions, and forms within the range of knowledge of the participants. The basic aims of interpreting were a) to show the participants’ competence in encoding the SL messages in the TL accurately using the appropriate lexical equivalents and structural forms; and b) to document the types of errors produced during the participants’ interpreting and assess whether these errors may have induced misinterpretation of the SL text in the TL.

2.2 Data range

The collected data include natural interpreting in two languages actively spoken by the participants: English and Slovak. The data were collected in the form of audio-recordings in a naturalistic setting (at home). The collected material contained 2,441 words in total.

3 The main sources of linguistic input

Respondent 1

The mother tongue of Respondent 1 was Slovak, spoken to her by her parents and other relatives from birth. She was born in Slovakia but moved with her family to a German-speaking country (Austria) when she was 3;02. She began acquiring English at the age of 1;01 years from native speakers of English (generally 3 days a week; 5 hours a day) and German at the age of 3;02 years in a German-speaking kindergarten in Austria (commonly 5 days a week; 5 hours a day). She attended a German-speaking elementary school in Austria from 6;02 to 9;06 years. From 9;06 to 11;00 she attended a primary and later a secondary school in Slovakia where Slovak was the language of instruction. From that time on she was exposed to Slovak for approximately 70 per cent, to English 20 per cent, and to German 10 per cent of the day.

Respondent 2

Respondent 2 was Respondent 1's younger brother. Slovak was spoken to him by his parents and other relatives and English by native speakers of English from birth. German was spoken to him by teachers, friends, and other native speakers of German from the age of 1;00. He acquired German in kindergarten for three years and in elementary school in Austria for two years. He was exposed to German for approximately 4 to 5 hours a day, to Slovak for approximately 3 to 4 hours a day, and to English for approximately 3 hours a day. From 7;04 to 8;11 Respondent 2 was exposed to Slovak for 5 hours a day in a Slovak speaking elementary school. The family generally used their mother tongue (Slovak) at home; however, code-switching commonly occurred especially in communication between Respondent 2 and his sister (Respondent 1) and occasionally with his mother. All three languages spoken by the participant were positively valued and emotionally and academically supported by his parents.

Other sources of linguistic input for both respondents were family, relatives, friends, instructors, care takers, free time activities, stories, fairy tales, television, DVDs and other sources of audio and video recordings, children's literature, nursery rhymes, songs, and skits.

The respondents were siblings who had been raised in the same social and educational environment. Their linguistic input was very similar in most aspects; however, there appeared to be differences in their language development and language production at different ages. This could be due to their different personalities and cognitive skills.

4 Results

4.1 Interpreting strategies

During interpreting, Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 used the following strategies to reformulate source language messages in the target language.

Lexical selection – when a lexical item in the source text may allow a number of possible translations in the target language and the interpreter chooses the most suitable equivalent.

- (1) Respondent 1 at 11;01 years
@Begin
@Languages: → slk, eng
@Participants: → RE1 Respondent 1, Target_Child, RES Researcher
@Situation: → Respondent 1 interpreting *The Three Little Pigs* from Slovak to English

*RES: → *aké chutné prasiatko!*@slk
%eng: → *what a tasty pig!*
*RE1: → *look at the **delicious** pig!*@eng
@End

In Example 1, Respondent 1 used the strategy of lexical selection by choosing the most suitable equivalent of the Slovak adjective “chutné” (tasty, delicious) – “delicious” – in the English (TL) sentence. The English synonym “tasty” would also be acceptable in the TL sentence. However, Respondent 1 seemed to give preference to the adjective “delicious”, which may be more stylistically marked and, therefore, intensify the property of the subject.

Lexical collocation – “one lexeme requires the use of particular accompanying lexemes” (Hornáčková Klapicová 2018: 53).

Respondent 2 at 9;00 years

(2) @Begin
@Languages: → slk, eng
@Participants: → RE2 Respondent 2, Target_Child, RES Researcher
@Situation: → Respondent 2 interpreting *The Three Little Pigs* from Slovak to English
*RES: → *ale domček neodfúkol*@slk
%eng: → *but he couldn't blow the house down*
*RE2: → *but he didn't **blow the house away***@eng
@End

In Example 2, Respondent 2 used the appropriate accompanying particle in the English phrasal verb “blow away” in the TL sentence while placing it in the correct position after the direct object.

Idiomatic translation – “Idioms and other figures of speech of the source text need to be recognized and translated respecting the style of the source language. Idiomatic translation follows the structure of the TL and sounds natural while communicating the exact message of the source text” (Hornáčková Klapicová 2018: 53).

Respondent 2 at 9;00 years

(3) @Begin
@Languages: → slk, eng
@Participants: → RE2 Respondent 2, Target_Child, RES Researcher
@Situation: → Respondent 2 interpreting *The Three Little Pigs* from English to Slovak

*RES: → *Once upon a time, there were three little pigs@eng*
 *RE2: → *raz boli tri malé prasiatka@slk*
 %eng: → *there were once three little pigs*
 @End

In Example 3, Respondent 2 used an appropriate idiomatic translation of the English expression “once upon a time there were three little pigs”. “Once upon a time” is a common opening phrase in the English stories and the expression “boli raz tri malé prasiatka” [there were once three little pigs] is also a common way to begin a story in Slovak.

Respondent 1 at 11;01 years

(4) @Begin
 @Languages: → slk, eng
 @Participants: → RE1 Respondent 1, Target_Child, RES Researcher
 @Situation: → Respondent 1 interpreting *The Three Little Pigs* from English to Slovak
 *RES: → *Once upon a time, there were three little pigs@eng*
 *RE1: → *Kde bolo tam bolo, boli tri malé prasiatka@slk*
 %eng: → *once upon a time, there were three little pigs*
 @End

In Example 4, Respondent 1 also used an appropriate idiomatic translation of the English sentence “once upon a time there were three little pigs”. “Kde bolo tam bolo” [once upon a time] is an even more common opening phrase in Slovak stories and fairy tales and Respondent 1 readily chose the best equivalent.

Respondent 2 at 9;00 years

(5) @Begin
 @Languages: → eng
 @Participants: → RE2 Respondent 2, Target_Child, RES Researcher
 @Situation: → Respondent 2 telling the story of *The Three Little Pigs* in English following illustrations
 *RE2: → *Once upon a time, were three little pigs@eng*
 @End

In Example 5, Respondent 2 used the appropriate idiomatic expression in English to open the story.

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Language direction	Respondent 1	Respondent 2
English → Slovak	Kde bolo tam bolo, boli tri malé prasiatka. (Once upon a time, there were three little pigs.)	Raz boli tri malé prasiatka. (There were once three little pigs.)
Slovak → English	There were three little pigs.	There were once three little pigs.

Table 1: Idiomatic expressions used by Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 in interpreting

Table 1 shows the production of idiomatic expressions opening the story during interpreting in both language directions in each respondent. Respondent 1 used the appropriate idiomatic expressions in Slovak and in English. Respondent 2 used the appropriate idiomatic expression in Slovak and in English with a word order error produced in the Slovak sentence. The order of “Raz boli...” (“There once were...”) should be inverted to “Boli raz...” (“There were once...”).

Language direction	Respondent 1	Respondent 2
English → Slovak	[Vlk] fúkal, fúkal a [...] dom spadol. ([The wolf] huffed, puffed and [...] the house fell down.)	On fúkal a fúkal a fúkal a on [...] odfúkol ten dom. (He huffed and puffed and puffed and he [...] blew the house away.)
Slovak → English	[...] he huffed and puffed and blowed the [...] house down.	[...] he has huffed and puffed so strong that the house [...] flied away.

Table 2: Idiomatic expressions used by Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 in interpreting

Table 2 shows the production of idiomatic expressions referring to the wolf blowing the pigs’ houses down during interpreting in both language directions in each respondent. Both respondents used appropriate idiomatic expressions in Slovak and in English with a few grammatical and intrusion errors. For instance, the erroneous simple past forms of verbs “blowed”, “flied away” and the unnecessary insertion of the personal pronoun “on” (“he”) and the demonstrative pronoun “ten” (“that”) in “on fúkal” (“he huffed”), “on odfúkol” (“he blew”), “ten dom” (“that house”).

Syntactic transformations – “Transformations occur when a new construction is created from an existing syntactic structure by performing one or more of the following three operations upon it: movement, deletion, or insertion. These operations are constrained by a number of rules and traditionally adhered-to

constraints” (Hornáčková Klapicová 2018: 53).

Respondent 2 at 9:00 years

- (6) @Begin
 @Languages: → slk, eng
 @Participants: → RE2 Respondent 2, Target_Child, RES Researcher
 @Situation: → Respondent 2 interpreting *The Three Little Pigs* from Slovak to English
 *RES: → *boli raz tri malé prasiatka@slk*
 %eng: → *there were once three little pigs*
 *RE2: → *there [...] were once [...] three little pigs@eng*
 @End

In Example 6, Respondent 2 correctly inserted the deictic expression “there” in the English (TL) sentence, even though it is absent in the Slovak (SL) sentence.

Deeper linguistic transformations: expansions and reductions – “Expansions and reductions are frequent procedures when a translator has to translate a longer stretch of text” (Hornáčková Klapicová 2018: 54).

Respondent 1 at 11:01 years

- (7) @Begin
 @Languages: →slk, eng
 @Participants:→ RE1 Respondent 1, Target_Child, RES Researcher
 @Situation: → Respondent 1 interpreting the story of *The Three Little Pigs* from Slovak to English
 *RES: → *Prišiel k domčeku zo slamy a fúkal a fúkal tak silno, že domček odfúkol@slk*
 %eng: → *He came to the house of straw and he huffed and he puffed so strong that he blew the house away.*
 *RE1: → *Er he came to the house with straw and huffed and puffed and blowed the first little and the youngest pig’s house down@eng*
 @End

In Example 7, Respondent 1 used expansion as an interpreting strategy through adding information “the first little and the youngest pig’s”. By means of this strategy Respondent 1 explicated the meaning of the source text and made the story more expressive in the TL.

Lexical approximation – “Lexical approximation is treated as a case of pragmatic vagueness. Encoded word meanings are no more than a clue to the speaker’s meaning, and are typically adjusted (broadened or narrowed) in the course of the comprehension process” (Hornáčková Klapicová 2018: 55).

Respondent 2 at 9;00 years

- (8) @Begin
 @Languages: → slk, eng
 @Participants: → RE2 Respondent 2, Target_Child, RES Researcher
 @Situation: → Respondent 2 interpreting *The Three Little Pigs* from Slovak to English
 *RES: → *prvé prasiatko nebolo veľmi statočné@slk*
 %eng: → *the first little pig was not very brave*
 *RE2: → *the first pig was not er very clever@eng*
 @End

In Example 8, Respondent 2 used the adjective “clever” in the TL sentence, which did not correspond to the adjective “statočné” (brave) in the SL sentence. However, the adjective selected by Respondent 2 can be considered as the lexical approximation strategy to avoid omission of a word in the TL sentence. On the whole, this substitution did not alter the core meaning of the message of the SL sentence in the TL.

4.2 Types of errors produced during interpreting

Type of errors	Respon- dent 1 (11;01 years)	Slovak → English	Respon- dent 1 (11;02 years)	English → Slovak	Respon- dent 2 (8;11 years)	Slovak → English	Respon- dent 2 (9;00 years)	English → Slovak
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Crosslin- guistic influence	0	0	26	70.3	5	33	30	75
Develop- mental errors	6	66.7	8	21.6	6	40.2	8	20
Omissi- on /Loss	1	11.1	0	0	3	20.1	2	5
Addition	2	22.2	3	8.1	0	0	0	0
Code- -swit- -ching	0	0	0	0	1	6.7	0	0
Total #	9		37		15		40	

Table 3: Errors produced by Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 during interpreting

During interpreting, errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence, developmental errors, omissions, additions, and code-switching were observed

and documented (Table 3). During interpreting from Slovak to English, Respondent 1 produced no errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence (0%), six developmental errors (66.7%), one omission (11.1%), two additions (22.2%), and no code-switching (0%). Respondent 2 produced five errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence (33%), six developmental errors (40.2%), three omissions (20.1%), no additions (0%), and one code-switching (6.7%). During interpreting from English to Slovak, Respondent 1 produced 26 errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence (70.3%), eight developmental errors (21.6%), none from omissions (0%), three additions (8.1%), and none from code-switching (0%). Respondent 2 produced 30 errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence (75%) eight developmental errors (20%), two omissions (5%), none from additions (0%), and none from code-switching (0%).

5 Discussion

During interpreting, both respondents were able to make inferences: listen closely, use words they knew and the context itself to guess meanings of new words. They were able to identify a word's function in a sentence (subject/action word/description) and infer meaning from context. They sometimes asked questions about unknown words or asked the researcher to repeat the SL sentence when they did not pay close attention to the SL message or missed a part of it. Even if the respondents did not provide the appropriate equivalent immediately and used strategies such as lexical approximation (semantic narrowing or broadening), reductions or expansions or literal translation, they often corrected themselves and provided the accurate equivalent subsequently. Expansions did not alter the overall meaning of the SL message; on the opposite, they contributed to the intensification of the stylistic expression in the TL text. Most lexical and other morphosyntactic errors were either the result of cross-linguistic influence or developmental errors and they did not induce miscomprehension of the SL messages. There was one instance of code-switching from English to Slovak; however, the respondent immediately provided the appropriate English equivalent afterwards. Both respondents were very flexible, focused and creative when reformulating SL messages into the TL. They were capable of encoding even idiomatic expressions in the TL adequately, either using the equivalent idiomatic expression in the TL (provided there was one), e.g. "The wolf huffed and he puffed and he blow the house down" (both respondents when interpreting the story from Slovak to English) or substituted the SL idiomatic expression with a novel stylistically marked expression, e.g. "The wolf ran so fast that he could not even feel his own feet" (Respondent 1 interpreting the story from Slovak to English). Their linguistic competence as well as their interpreting competence

and style proved to be quite proficient for the amount of experience in interpreting stories that they possessed in both language directions.

The variables influencing the level of lexical and morphosyntactic competence of both respondents during interpreting were: a) the used SL text (told by the researcher); b) the influence of the SL text on the TL sentences; c) the use of specific interpreting strategies selected by the respondents; d) no visual representation of the SL messages, just linguistic representation; e) time pressure; f) interaction with the researcher during interpreting.

Most of the documented errors in interpreting in both language directions were the result of cross-linguistic influence (26 errors in Respondent 1 and 35 errors in Respondent 2), while developmental errors represented a smaller portion (14 errors in Respondent 1 and 14 errors in Respondent 2). Other types of observed and documented errors were omissions, additions, and code-switching.

Moreover, the outcomes of language production in both respondents reveal the growth of their linguistic competence as well as of their natural interpreting competence when compared with the results obtained from the studies carried out in 2021 (Hornáčková Klápicová 2021a, 2021b). From the point of view of the types of errors committed at earlier stages, Respondent 1 and Respondent 2 mostly produced errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence, developmental errors, omissions, few literal interpretations, insertions of false cognates or vocabulary, and intrusions or code-switching. The errors documented in this case study include errors resulting from cross-linguistic influence, developmental errors, omissions, additions, and only one instance of code-switching.

From the point of view of the quality of sentence interpretations – assessed in terms of being correct (containing adequate vocabulary and sentence structure), partially incorrect (if a word or essential concept was omitted or if erroneous grammatical or syntactical structures were inserted in the interpretation), or incorrect (if the interpretation contained both lexical and syntactic errors) – the results of the study from 2021 show that a) zero per cent of the English-Slovak interpretations were incorrect and eight per cent partially incorrect; while one per cent were incorrect and twelve per cent partially incorrect in the Slovak-English interpretations in Respondent 1; and b) in the English-Slovak interpretations, one per cent were incorrect and seven per cent partially incorrect; in the Slovak-English interpretations, two per cent were incorrect and ten per cent partially incorrect in Respondent 2. In the present study both respondents demonstrated zero per cent incorrect interpretations in both language directions. Respondent 1 showed 18 per cent partially incorrect translations in the Slovak-English interpretations and 23 per cent partially incorrect translations in the English-Slovak interpretations.

Respondent 2 showed 52 per cent partially incorrect translations in the Slovak-English interpretations and 23 per cent partially incorrect translations in the English-Slovak interpretations. Even though the percentage of partially incorrect translations in both language directions in the present study is higher in both respondents when compared to the percentage of partially incorrect translations in both language directions in the study from 2021, it must be accounted for that the level of language and style of the text to be interpreted is much higher than the short simple sentences consisting of elementary vocabulary which the respondents interpreted for the previous study. The text of *The Three Little Pigs* consisted of simple, compound and complex sentences including direct and indirect speech and reported speech, idiomatic expressions, stylistically marked vocabulary and many synonyms. Therefore, it may be concluded that both respondents demonstrated significant linguistic, stylistic, and pragmatic growth as well as improvement in their interpreting skills.

Even though the time of exposure to both languages was approximately the same in both respondents, it is noteworthy to point to the fact that interpreting production was not equal in the siblings. The number of correct and partially incorrect interpretations was the same in both respondents in the English-Slovak direction; however, the number of partially incorrect interpretations was higher in Respondent 2 than in Respondent 1 (23% vs 18%) in the Slovak-English direction. This may have been due to the fact that English seemed to be the dominant language in Respondent 1 and Slovak seemed to be the dominant language in Respondent 2.

6 Conclusion

To sum up, the presented research is based on the premise that bilingual children are natural interpreters. Their awareness of two language systems and interpreting skills manifest at a very young age through naturally performing bidirectional translations. The primary aim of the study was not to investigate whether this capacity to translate is an innate mechanism or not, but to show the interaction between the two closely linked competences: bilingual and interpreting, which are complementary. The former refers to “a unique and specific linguistic configuration” (Grosjean 2008: 13), and the latter describes children’s ability to convey the same message in two languages (Fernández Fuertes & Álvarez de la Fuente 2017: 144). While analysing less explored language pairs (Slovak – English), our findings confirm and add to previous research on natural interpreting. In this study we have described a variety of interpreting strategies skilfully used by two Slovak bilingual children and demonstrated that their translation competence develops simultaneously with

their linguistic competence in multiple languages. The development of linguistic and interpreting competence in both respondents has been studied longitudinally through different types of interpreting tasks (both spontaneous and elicited interpreting) beginning with simple lexical and morphosyntactic structures and gradually moving to more complex sentences and styles.

Bilingual language acquisition in children involves learning phonological, semantic and morphosyntactic aspects of words (Patterson & Pearson 2004). Although the process of lexicon building of children exposed to two or more languages in terms of using some general strategies is not strikingly different from their monolingual peers, it does exhibit certain characteristic properties resulting from language contact. In this specific situation, cross-linguistic influence from the other language (either Slovak or English) emerges as an important phenomenon and the most frequent cause of lexical and morphosyntactic errors. We have identified two major types of errors interpreting, and thus brought more insights into understanding of the processes of language development in bilingual children. During interpreting the children proved to be competent in both languages and were able to accurately and idiomatically turn the SL messages into the target language in both directions without misleading additions, omissions or other factors that would alter the intended meaning of the SL text.

Appendix 1

O troch prasiatkach – the story in Slovak

Boli raz tri malé prasiatka, ktoré sa rozhodli, že si postavia tri domčeky. Prvé prasiatko, najmladšie a nie veľmi múdre, si postavilo domček zo slamy. Druhé prasiatko si postavilo domček z dreva. Tretie, najstaršie a najmúdrejšie prasiatko si postavilo domček z tehál. Keď boli prasiatka hotové, išiel okolo vlk a chcel prasiatka zjesť. Prišiel k domčeku zo slamy a fúkal a fúkal tak silno, že domček odľúkol. Prvé prasiatko nebolo veľmi statočné, triaslo sa od strachu a vlk zvolal: „Aké chutné prasiatko! To bude dobrá večera!“ a hodil ho do vreca. Potom išiel k domčeku z dreva. Znova fúkal a fúkal tak silno, že domček odľúkol. Ani druhé prasiatko nebolo veľmi statočné, celé sa triaslo od strachu a vlk zvolal: „Aké chutné prasiatko! To bude dobrá večera!“ a hodil ho do vreca, kde už bolo prvé prasiatko. Keď vlk prišiel k domčeku z tehál, aby ho odľúkol a ukradol aj tretie prasiatko, fúkal a fúkal, ale domček neodľúkol. Tretie prasiatko bolo veľmi múdre a statočné. Pripravilo pre vlka horúci kúpeľ v hrnci na ohni, do ktorého vlk spadol cez komín. Svojich bratov vyslobodilo z vreca. A vlk utekal tak rýchlo, čo mu nohy stačili a sľúbil, že sa tam už nikdy viac neukáže.

Appendix 2

The Three Little Pigs

Once upon a time, there were three little pigs who wanted to build their own houses. The first little pig, the youngest one and not very clever, built a house of straw. The second little pig built a house of sticks. The third little pig, the oldest and smartest one built a house of bricks. When the pigs were finished, a wolf went by and wanted to eat the little pigs. He came to the house of straw and huffed and he puffed and blew the house down. The first little pig wasn't very brave, it was trembling with fear and the wolf said: "What a tasty little pig! It will be a great dinner!" and he put the little pig in a bag. Then the wolf went to the house of sticks. And again he huffed and he puffed and he blew the house down. The second little pig wasn't very brave either, it was trembling with fear and the wolf said: "What a tasty little pig! It will be a great dinner!" and he put the little pig in the bag. When the wolf came to the house of bricks, he huffed and he puffed but he couldn't blow the house down. The third little pig was very clever and brave. It prepared a hot bath for the wolf in a pot where the wolf fell through the chimney. The third little pig freed his brothers from the bag. And the wolf ran away as fast as he could and he promised never to show up again.

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