

## **A Case Study of a Hungarian-English Bilingual Girl's Code-switching Practices between the Ages of Three and Eleven**

August 2023 – Volume 27, Number 2

<https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.26106a11>

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### **Abstract**

The paper investigates a Hungarian-English bilingual child's Sarah's second language acquisition (SLA) with a special focus on how she integrated English (L2) into her speech to convey the intended meaning and negotiate the multiple identities she developed in her bilingualism in various social contexts. An ethnographic single-case study research seemed to be a relevant method of giving an exploratory, interpretive, and in-depth description of my single participant's language development (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, Duff, 2007). The applied qualitative data collection comprised the participant's everyday interactions, semi-structured retrospective interviews, and her own spontaneous reflections. The findings indicate that Sarah used L2 as a complementary set of linguistic forms to differentiate meaning and as a social site for negotiating and gauging her own and her interlocutor's conduct and language use. Use of L2 expanded her linguistic repertoire, conveyed communicative intentions, and shed light on her transitory bilingual roles. The various feedback she received from her social environment shaped her self-concept and called for discussing and revisiting her own language competence. What she thought about peer feedback exerted a powerful impact on her self-image. The study might provide incentive for teaching English to young learners in home settings and might underpin the relevance of investigating single-case scenarios.

**Keywords:** language-related discourse, code-switching, communicative intentions, self-perception, multiple identities

### **Significance of the Study**

The transition and change of regime in Hungary in 1989 brought about a booming demand for foreign language knowledge, stimulating the usage of individual resources both in formal and informal contexts and directing attention towards autonomous and family-oriented second language acquisition. The climate of interculturalism coupled with introducing English as the most widely taught foreign language in public education turned attention to the importance of plurilingual competence and generated the need for teaching English to children at an early age even in Hungary where monolingualism used to be the norm. Parents more than ever tended to

feel responsible for providing their children English language learning opportunities, seeing these as an important investment for their children's future by giving them an intellectual asset for achieving educational success and better life prospects (Rokita-Jaškov, 2015).

### **The Case History**

The imperative for foreign language proficiency, predominantly for English as a lingua franca gave rise to the idea of integrating English in our home and prompted me to research my own child's English development in our home-established bilingual environment. As a mother and a language teacher I have always attributed high significance to a supportive home environment in language acquisition. Socializing my children into communicating in two languages and displaying appropriate communicative and behavioural norms have always been among my highest priorities. To exercise our parental responsibility and maximize the benefits of our professional and social background, my husband and I decided to integrate English as a second language into our daily life despite the fact that we are non-native speakers and our speech community provided limited native control of English. These circumstances imposed an additional task on us. Apart from fulfilling our jobs as caregivers we were challenged to serve as language providers in terms of L2. Our goal with a dual Hungarian-English language family context was to create favourable conditions for our children to cope with communicational challenges in our multilingual environment. Having families of mixed nationalities among our relatives, and native English-speakers in the circle of our friends provided regular, early exposure to L2 outside our bilingual home. We assumed that the timing and conditions offering a combination of maturational, affective, cognitive, and social factors would positively affect the language outcome. Based on recent research on a "critical or sensitive period" (DeKeyser, 2012; Nikolov, 2009) we knew that early exposure to L2 alone would not make Sarah a successful language learner, however, we hoped that early acquisition of English would provide her with different ways of internalizing knowledge. As a tool for interpersonal interactions, the second language would scaffold her development of a functional and holistic approach to language and would facilitate emotional associations in language acquisition. The most challenging part of our endeavour was making English usage a family routine. Allocating consistent time management to use the second language at home was a key. At the outset, we promoted using a language boundary system where we all agreed to adjust our home routine so we could use English, the second language, consistently in certain situations and places, bearing in mind the language competence of those with whom we needed to interact. Later we advocated for dynamic bilingual language usage inspired by Sarah's fluid languaging practices that she used on a daily basis. Simultaneous coexistence of her two languages allowed her to transcend language boundaries and use all her linguistic resources fluently to convey meaning and communicate (García, 2009). Her language usage represented a complex and dynamic process where she needed both languages simultaneously to convey and process information, which made language separation untenable.

### **Sarah in Her Late Teens and Today**

Although I have no scientific evidence on whether Sarah scored higher in English than her peers learning in an early-start foreign language programme, I can state that her family-context bilingualism had a clearly positive effect on her English language skills and academic achievements. Up to the present she feels at ease when using English in multilingual contexts. Her English competence certainly contributed to how successfully she functioned while living abroad. During my time teaching in Oman between 2014 and 2016 Sarah, at the age of 15,

participated in a homeschool program where she attended preparatory classes conducted by tutors of different nationalities, Canadian, Omani, Kenyan and Pakistani. The Omani context meant invaluable practice and motivation for Sarah to use her English knowledge at a C1 proficiency level in a non-native environment both with native and non-native speakers. Her experiences with English in Oman strengthened her instrumental motivation to learn French too. By using her B2-level French language skills, she could get a student job at a restaurant in France in 2018. Looking back on that experience she realizes how valued her language competence was during her study and work-abroad adventures. Exposure to two languages did not wield any negative impact on Sarah's development in her L1. The calibre of her academic functioning could be evidenced in the fact that she passed all her baccalaureate exams with excellence in 2018. She is a high-performing student at the Faculty of Architecture, Budapest Technical University, where she started her studies in 2018. In 2021 she won first place at the scientific student research conference where the board highlighted the literary value of the textual part of her work.

## **Theoretical Background**

Due to the cross-disciplinary background of my research a multidimensional approach to inquiry was applied bringing together perspectives on SLA from the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and social psychology. These three dimensions emerged as central to understanding the individual variation in language performance and are closely related because in-depth exploration of individual linguistic progress is inseparable from the socio-cultural context in which a particular individual is immersed. The theoretical frame of my linguistic investigation is pragmatics since it focuses on the social aspect of language use and the linguistic behaviour of language users. The pragmatic and discourse analytic approach (Grice, 1975; Lazaraton, 2002; Shiffrin, 1994; Searle, 1969) proved to be the relevant theoretical background for analysing my participant's code-switching practice and interpretations as tightly interwoven with and based on the context-embedded situative meanings. The social psychological and individual difference research dimension also emerged as essential to understand and explore Sarah's perceptions, motivation, attitudes and identity in her developing bilingualism. More specifically, I considered the strands of cross-disciplinary research which focus on the strategic use of L2 in naturally occurring discourse (Pavlenko, 2006) and the strands which deal with the conception of bilingual identities (Duff, 2012; Norton, 2000).

## **The Pragmatic Function**

Since I am concerned with the pragmatic function of code-switches, I base my discussion on two Gricean assumptions: (1) communication is a joint activity of the speaker and hearer, which involves the exchange of communicative intentions; (2) a single utterance can convey a range of meanings depending on to whom it is directed and in what context (Grice, 1975, p. 50). I refer to code-switches as a specific skill relating to the bilingual's pragmatic competence, the ability to select language according to the interlocutor, the context, and the topic of conversation (Meisel, 1994,). The analysed L1-L2 and L2-L1 code-switches, and metalinguistic comments can be described as speech acts to emphasize that some utterances are more than simple statements of saying something. They do not only describe or report something but can be considered as a part of doing something (Austin, 1962). Sarah's metalinguistic comments are interpreted as explicit and implicit references to cultural identity, evaluation, and interpretation of bilingualism (Duff, 2002, p.290). The Speech act theory concerned with the function of language focuses on the communicative intentions (the illocutionary force) of an utterance.

Speech acts exemplify that a linguistic utterance, besides its conventional or context-free meaning, as soon as embedded in a concrete situation, will get a context-based or situation-related meaning (Searle, 1969).

The sociocultural-interactional approach offers an alternative way to think about pragmatics regarding intention as a post-factum construct that is achieved jointly through the dynamic constructing of pragmatic meaning with the interlocutor. In developing bilingualism, the lack of full control over L2 language skills may lead to a more conscious approach to what is said, and how it is said. The fact that language is created spontaneously by individuals in the course of interaction affects the way speaker production and hearer comprehension are interpreted. Language behaviour enhanced with a conscious, often monitored language use contributes to making the interlocutor more cooperative in discourse (Kecskés, 2016, p.4).

### **Strategic Language Use**

Before describing the different communicative intentions in Sarah's language use, I needed to consider the construct of strategy. Cohen (1998) emphasizes that multilinguals exhibit a refined use of strategies for the simple reason that they include the selection of language as a strategy. The element of choice provides a complementary strategic tool in multilinguals' linguistic repertoire. Oxford (1990), Bialystok (1991), Cohen (1998) and Dörnyei (2005) define intentionality as another prerequisite of strategic language use. In his critical overview of the literature on strategy Dörnyei (2005) claims that temporality is a relevant criterion for distinguishing learning and communication strategies. Learning strategies can be described as an attempt to ground long-term competence effective for a longer period whereas communication strategies are employed to solve a momentary communication problem. Affective strategies as a subset of indirect language learning and language use strategies in Oxford's (1990) and Cohen's (1998) taxonomies are employed to regulate and gain control over emotions, attitudes, and motivation about learning.

Researchers (Bonacina-Pugh, 2021; Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Garcia, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; MacSwan, 2017, 2022; Wei and Lin, 2019) use the term *translanguaging* coined by Williams (Williams, 1994, as cited in Creese & Blackledge, 2015) to refer to multilinguals' systematic technique utilized in coping with communication difficulties stemming from second language knowledge imprecision. In their conceptualization, the systematic and functional use of two languages moving between and beyond language boundaries offers a unique linguistic repertoire to communicate effectively. Goodman and Tastanbek (2021, p.11) conclude that in the conceptual framework of translanguaging what previously was called alternation, mixing, switching and fusion of codes is better described as fluid and dynamic languaging practices that transcend language boundaries. Translanguaging and code-switching researchers (Bonacina-Pugh, 2021; García & Wei, 2014; Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021; MacSwan, 2017, 2022) argue that translanguaging as a theory and a pedagogical approach puts greater emphasis on the fluid use of languages for meaning making and identity formation. The cited researchers identify the conceptual differences and overlaps of the terms code-switching and translanguaging and emphasize that the two terms cannot be conflated, as they are based on a different conceptualization of the bilingual mind. The debates about the meaning and applicability of these two terms are still ongoing but conceptualizing translanguaging as dynamic language use seems to justify a shift from codeswitching to translanguaging (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021, p.12).

This approach suggests that learners have options, a range of tactics from which they can choose to enhance the effectiveness of learning and communication. Learners are motivated to find effective ways to reach a goal and their behaviour becomes strategic when it is particularly appropriate for the individual. To explore Sarah's operating communication strategies, I relied on her multiple discursive practices (García, 2009, p. 45) and metalinguistic comments as being observable manifestations of such strategic behaviour.

### **Bilingualism and Emotionality**

Many authors (Baker, 2006; Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2012; Chen et al., 2020; Cromdal, 2013; Gafaranga, 2012; Hamers, 2004; Nikolov, 1999; Pavlenko, 2006; Velasco, 2020) call attention to the dynamic nature of language learners and to the role of actual subjective experiences in the language learning process. Naturally occurring discourse, personal accounts on language choice and preference provide a fruitful arena for collecting and studying data on affective meanings of language shift and on identity formulation during the learning process. Pavlenko (2006) studying emotionality of language emphasizes that bilingual speakers' code-switching behaviour depicts a kind of divergence from the conventionalized language use, for the simple reason that they have two systems to satisfy their communicative needs. As a result of extensive research into the relationship between emotionality and language choice she categorizes the speakers' code-switches and interactions according to the communicative intentions they serve.

Her data illustrate that language choice is purposeful and code-switches are used to convey affective meanings. Bilinguals' and multilinguals' code-switching practices underscore that code-switching is not always attributed to the speaker's laziness, negligence, or insufficient language competence. They are not accidental slips of tongue, on the contrary, in most cases there is purpose or logic behind switching languages. Inter-group relations, the extent an individual and their environment value a specific language, momentary communication challenges and personal needs among others may also have a major effect on language choice.

## **Method**

### **Research Methodology**

Data analysis is interdisciplinary in nature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It falls within the scope and tradition of linguistic ethnography in the sense that it combines linguistic analysis with ethnographic insights obtained from retrospective interviews and participant observation. Linguistic ethnography is best suited to my purposes as it represents a broad view on language use and aims to provide information about my participant's actual experiences. My twofold epistemological position as a case study researcher and a mother facilitated my interpretive inquiry. My motherly role fostered a climate of mutual trust and enabled me to reflect on my approach as an ethnographer who participates in the participant's daily life. My consistent personal presence encouraged my participant to talk openly about her experience and contributed to having insights into her perceptions of the events. The fact that both data and analysis were created from shared experience and relationship provided favourable conditions to explore why and how things happened.

### **Setting and the Participant**

The present paper, a part of a longitudinal study, is aimed at understanding my participant's, Sarah's second language acquisition and focuses on her reliance on English as a second language in mediating communicative intent and negotiating self-perception between the ages

of three and eleven. Sarah, 23 years old at present, grew up in a Hungarian and English-speaking environment. She has acquired and used these two languages since her birth. Regarding English (L2) she has had limited community support to facilitate second language acquisition for the simple reason that her family is Hungarian and lives in Hungary. English was mediated by her parents, primarily by me, her mother, and other native and non-native speakers of English who belong to the family's extended social network to facilitate second language acquisition.

Viewing bilingualism through the lens of translanguaging we pulled down the wall between our two languages. At the same time, we assigned at least half an hour a day to English-speaking family discussions on personal accounts of school and work-related issues and experiences of the day to support and affirm her bilingual identity. English-related activities and joint-readings (family discussions, board games, bedtime stories, songs, recitation of song lyrics, checking siblings' homework) occupied a significant and usual part of our daily life and triggered extensive use of English in our spare time when we were together after school and work.

### **Data Collection**

Data for the research were drawn from multiple sources that were collected with the help of (1) participant observation and field notes, (2) the participant's own reflections; (3) semi-structured retrospective interviews conducted with the child, and (4) other documents such as the child's writings e.g., personal letters and drawings.

The selected discourse pieces are presented as excerpts and are numbered in an ongoing fashion. The child's age is added after each excerpt in brackets with the first number indicating the year followed by the month. Contextual information appears in double brackets. To meet the credibility requirements, I observed validation, accuracy, and credibility of the findings (Chaudron, 2000; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, Duff, 2007; Griffee, 2012) throughout the entire process of research. I applied different data sources, conducted prolonged engagement and persistent observations, used field notes and audiotaped interactions.

Data were collected in natural settings in the form of audio-recordings and field notes documenting the participant's natural speech and own spontaneous reflections using interview protocols and observational checklists. Instead of compiling a machine-readable corpus I used illustrative quotations and excerpts to make major emergent themes, patterns, and developmental stages obvious. Interactions were recorded monthly over an eight-year timespan at home and in some other informal settings where Sarah felt comfortable in the presence of her friends and family members. I frequently consulted with friends raising their children in multilingual communities and investigated scientific approaches to case studies. During the process of collecting data and authoring my longitudinal study as well as after its completion I consulted with colleagues and fellow researchers with relevant professional background. The whole study covered a period of eight years between the ages of three to eleven. Table 1. below shows a brief description of my longitudinal research.

**Table 1. The phases and the Foci of Analysis**

Phase	Research question	Data collection instrument	Method of analysis
Phase 1 - The integration of L2 in Sarah's discourse 2002-2010	(RQ1): How did Sarah integrate English into her discourse to convey her meaning?	1.Sarah's naturally occurring discourses 2.Sarah's writings (diary notes, letters) 3.My observation field notes and reflections	Discourse analysis Speech act analysis Qualitative content analysis
Phase 2 - The role of L2 in Sarah's identity formation 2004-2010	(RQ2): How did Sarah's English development shape her identity?	4.Sarah's real-time reflections 5.Sarah's metalinguistic comments	

### **Ethical Concerns**

To comply with the moral and ethical requirements of qualitative studies I opted for a flexible design, in which reflexivity and adaptability played a key role. The nature and aims of my research inevitably gave rise to ethical matters, which were considered in all phases of my research and carefully considered throughout the entire study. Ethical issues, such as my participant's formal consent, autonomy, respect, right to withdrawal and transparency were addressed elaborately. A primary concern while designing my research was balancing my motherly role and my research ambitions, guaranteeing that my research aims and methods under no circumstances exploited my child or the other participants who had been selected as the subjects of my research. My first impression was that this research may be unethical intruding into my participant's natural flow of life and privacy. My second concern was if it was ethically acceptable to disseminate the findings and pass them on to a third person. To disperse my doubts and justify my research I familiarized myself with the ethical principles relevant to research involving human subjects.

I maintained reflective and informative observation by eliciting my participant's accounts of feelings and interpretations throughout the process to make sure that the study did not have any invasive procedure. The ethical principle of autonomy was only partly observed given that at the outset Sarah's early age made it impossible to obtain her informed consent and give her the right to freely decide whether or not to participate in it. As she matured it was possible to attain her compliance with the autonomy principle by giving her detailed information about the circumstances of the study and by giving her the right to withdraw at any time (Duff, 2007, Griffie, 2012). I told her how data were collected and how the results would be published. In terms of respect, I tried to elaborate a systematic arrangement of conditions by providing a clear protocol for dealing with potential difficulties. In my attempt to obey the standard of transparency I took the reader's perspective to make sure that the study can be followed easily (Edwards & Stokoe, 2004, p.495) by ensuring that the data and any interpretations correspond to the requirements of internal and external validity (Duff, 2007), by avoiding overgeneralizations and over-interpreting beyond what the results can support. To reassert the need for and importance of ethical standards in ethnographically informed case studies I declare that I designed and obeyed a systematic ethical-ecological-methodological frame to explore Sarah's autonomous second language acquisition as an individual learner.

## **The Aim of the Present Paper**

The present paper aims at understanding Sarah's reliance on L2 in mediating her communicative intentions and emotional stances. I am mostly concerned with how Sarah's code-switches take shape depending on her situation and how pragmatic functions are realized in the dual linguistic system. I intend to exemplify that she used L2 as a complementary set of linguistic forms to differentiate meanings, to organize, regulate, and negotiate her own and the participants' conduct and language use. The presented excerpts also reflect her perceptions and attitudes to her L2 use and learning. I am mostly concerned with the pragmatic function of code-switches and intend to distinguish patterns in them according to the communicative intentions they serve. To explore Sarah's perceived identity, I present manifestations of her multiple personalities and identify important patterns in her identity transformations. In my category system I rely on the categorization and typology of scholarly research (Baker, 2006; Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2012; Cromdal, 2013; Gafaranga, 2012; Pavlenko, 2006).

The cited authors confirm that code-switches play an important role in defining group boundaries, establishing identity and power relations, signalling levels of intimacy and emotional charge and are strategic tools to convey a range of communicative intentions (Pavlenko, 2006). Code-switching is a marked choice understood as the speaker's strategic use of a new code to emphasize a message of a communicative act. Multilingual children operate code-switching for greater emphasis in their effort to reach a goal they do not achieve using only one language (Murphy, 2014). A code-switch can be used to emphasize one's power or authority, a desire to be accepted in a group, or simply represents family bonding. Code-switches used to ease tension and inject humour may signal a change of attitude or relationship, a desire to change the interlocutor's mood or to change the style of the conversation. Code-switches can signal social distance or expressions of solidarity, shared values, growing rapport and, on the contrary, exclude others from the conversation. Code-switches may reflect that L1 and L2 refer to different domains. For example, L1 can be the language of home and L2 is the language of school or vice versa (Baker, 2006). Code-switches can reflect language expertise, which is an issue for negotiations and can define local norms for conduct and language use (Cekaite and Björk-Willén, 2012).

## **Research Questions**

The present paper, in addition to my earlier works (Machata, 2011, 2013), is aimed at giving further underpinnings that English is an integrate part of Sarah's interpersonal communication and is a strategic tool to assess her L2 competence and negotiate her self-perception in bilingualism.

In my attempt to investigate Sarah's strategic language use the following research questions were addressed:

1. How did Sarah integrate English into her discourse to convey her meaning?
2. How did her English development shape her identity?

## **Results and Discussion**

The excerpts presented in the sub-sections of this paper are manifestations of translanguaging in the sense that they explore how my participant uses her bilingual resources (lexicon and strategies) as an asset (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; García & Wei, 2014; Wei & Lin, 2019).



The excerpts show the way an L2-related utterance is used to perform particular social actions to influence the way it is interpreted by the hearer. The analysed excerpts exemplify that Sarah draws on code-switching and reference to L2 to differentiate pragmatic functions and communicative intentions, to express emotions and perform particular social identity roles.

### **Patterns of Communicative Intentions**

When analysing Sarah's appeals to L2, language choice and preferences, patterns have been identified as they were displayed, mediated, and negotiated in naturally occurring interactional exchanges.

The excerpts representing Sarah's communicative intentions and affective meanings are organized in the following thematic categories:

1. Preserving the established language separation rules
2. Expressing emotional attachment
3. Disciplining the interlocutor
4. Considering language choice as an indicator of the interlocutor's mood

### **Preserving the Established Language Separation Rules**

The excerpts of this category give evidence of Sarah's constant self-regulation and self-identification in bilingualism to show that she had definite expectations and knowledge on who, where, when to speak Hungarian or English. Deviations from the locally established language share patterns gave her an opportunity to discuss and justify the relevance of the preferred language.

#### **Excerpt 1**

- 1 Sarah: Mummy, Brendon speaks English at nursery too.
- 2 Mother: His father is American, so they speak English at home, in the shop, everywhere. (3;5)

Sarah's astonishment at Brendon's using English in the kindergarten considered an unexpected domain for using that language is an instance of her conception of the labour division between her two languages. Brendon, Sarah's groupmate at nursery, is an American-Hungarian bilingual, whose first language is English. For her it was strange that someone uses English outside home without their mother's presence, since it was quite different from the household language use pattern in which she was socialized. She was satisfied with my explanation that the language use system we established in our family is only one in the multitude of language share patterns that bilingual families depict but the issue of language choice and preference remained a recurrent topic of our discourse.

### **Expressing Emotional Attachment**

Sarah's appeals to L2 offered versatile and sophisticated ways to generate effective emotional power in her interlocutor's mind and contributed to gauging the interlocutor's emotional state. The English-related episode below represented a unique atmosphere of privacy and family integrity where L2 marked and constituted intimacy. The use of L2 was a goal-oriented act to give more emphasis to what she said. The dual language context created special norms for interpreting specific discourse events and for displaying appropriate discourse behaviour.

## Excerpt 2

- 1 Mother: Please, don't ask me. Now I am not in the mood of playing.
- 2 Sarah: Mummy, I hate you!
- 3 Sarah: You know, it means I love you. De angolul úgy hangzik, mintha az 'utál' is szép lenne. [But in English it sounds as if utál (hate) were nice.] (4;5)

Having perceived my sorrow, Sarah was trying to cheer me up with an utterance in line 2 accompanied with gentle hugs and kisses. The English word *hate* was meant as a powerful tool to signal affection. It must be noted that Sarah's appeals to L2 in signalling emotionality was a typical phenomenon, which can be attributed to her impression that in certain situations English served as a part of acting in favour of some people, especially that of her mother. The verb *hate* accompanied with the above-described mimicry and accent was recurrently used to dissipate tension and signal her sympathy and overwhelming love towards her mother. Excerpt 2 is also an illustration of how Sarah displayed and interpreted the relevance of appropriate language use determined and regulated by the local norms. The euphemistic strategy realized in an L1-L2 code-switch (*utál*→*hate*), making a word sound more pleasant than it really was, empowered Sarah to generate effective emotional power in the listener's mind and intensified emotional bonding towards the interlocutor eliminating the offense and insult, which *utál* (hate) normally connoted. The word *hate* as opposed to its L1 counterpart was used to please her mother and replace a locally taboo Hungarian verb *utál* (hate) considered inappropriate for use in polite mother-daughter conversation. Sarah understood the negative connotation of the word, yet she did not feel the harshness due to the fact that in L2 her perception of such emotional expressions was different from what she felt in L1. The weaker L2 conveyed more intensive emotions, and she appealed to L2, because the simple use of the 'unexpected' language exerted a surprising effect. The illocutionary force (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) of the English speech-act *I hate you* generated the expected discourse behaviour, i.e., relief in the interlocutor. The purposeful code-switch satisfied Sarah's personal needs: it successfully dispersed negative emotions and coerced a positive change in the interlocutor's mood. Using L2 in this specific context is suggestive of the close rapport between us and a clear sign of her reliance on my acknowledging a shared sense of what is meant by what in our wording (Grice, 1975; Kecskés, 2016; Schiffrin, 1994).

## Disciplining the Interlocutor

Excerpt 3 exemplifies that L1 was used to influence the interlocutor and was a strategic tool to overcome an embarrassing situation. The interactional exchange presented in the excerpt reveals a case when Sarah's lexical mix-up because of the phenomenon of language interference generated a laughable matter among her siblings Nani and Dori.

## Excerpt 3

- 1 Sarah: I like pizza from \*don't Pepe!
- 2 Dori: Not dont Pepe, it is don Pepe! A don't az angolul van, Például: Don't touch it. [don't is in English. For example: Don't touch it.] ((Sisters giggle.))
- 3 Sarah: Akkor én most angolul mondtam. [Then now I said in English.]
- 4 Sarah: Nani, fejezd már be! Mindig nyihogsz. [Nani, finish it! You are always whining.]

- 5 Nani, Dori: Say 'nyihogsz' in English!
- 6 Sarah: Laugh. ((Turning down her voice.))
- 7 Dori: A laugh az nevet, nem nyihog! [Laugh is laugh not whine!]
- 8 Sarah: Más szót nem szoktam erre mondani. [I don't use another word for this.] De tudom, hogy te most nem nevetsz, hanem nyihogsz! [But I know that you are not laughing but whining.]
- 9 Dori: Bocs! Összekeverted, mert tudsz angolul! Büszke lehetsz magadra! [Sorry! You've mixed them up because you know English. You can be proud of yourself!] (5;1)

Lines 2 and 5 imply that Sarah's lexical mixing became an occasion for ridicule, which was marked with an unmodulated laugh on Nani's part. Sarah's outburst in Hungarian in line 8 seemed a good occasion to link a suitable register to her cutback commentary. Sarah perceived that her sisters could be more easily regulated in L1. L1 appeared to be an effective tool to develop a counter-discourse with the aim of escaping from her inequitable subject position and gave her an opportunity to voice her disapproval of her sister's disrespectful behaviour. The underlying assumption here is that appeal to L1 was motivated by the need to compensate for low language proficiency on Sarah's part. Lacking the appropriate word for vernacular discourse and stylistic shade in L2, she switched to Hungarian. It gave room to her true opinion and made discourse more authentic (Mirzaie & Parhizkar, 2021). The excerpt describes an insightful example of Sarah's identity perception in her developing bilingualism. Turning her voice down while uttering *laugh*, her English translation of *nyihog* (whine) in line 6 indexes her restricted register competence. In response to her sister's provocation in line 8 she admitted that she was aware of the inappropriateness of *laugh* in that context. Her counterattack as a reaction to Dori's comment in line 7 was deployed to mitigate her subordinate position of someone less knowledgeable and served as a critique of her elder sister's disrespectfulness. Line 9 suggests that the tactic worked, because Dori regretted laughing at her. To give further emphasis to her regret she apologized and made Sarah understand that her English knowledge was a real value, which she should be proud of.

### Considering Language Choice as An Indicator of the Interlocutor's Mood

Excerpts of this category are suggestive of how the interlocutor's language behaviour (choice and preference) modified and reconstructed Sarah's language appropriating process. Switching languages had a conciliating effect and enhanced rapport with the interlocutor by powerfully relying on and benefitting from shared personal styles and preferences. Excerpt 4 exemplifies that language choice served as an indicator of the interlocutor's mood and emotional state and depicted how this information was interpreted and turned to her own advantage.

#### Excerpt 4

- 1 Mother: Még mindig nem söpörted össze a szemetet!' [You haven't swept the floor!]
- 2 Sarah: Your voice is nicer in English and ugly when Hungarian.
- 3 Sarah: Tudom, amikor mérges vagy, meg sietsz, nem beszélsz angolul. [I know when you are angry and hurry you do not speak in English.] (9;2)

As a reaction to my reproach Sarah appealed to an unexpected code-switch to evoke a chilling effect on me as seen in line 2. By relying on her experiences in these situations, she knew that

her speaking in English would soften me and help me to calm down. The excerpt gives evidence that Sarah came to realize that my emotional states and my language use were interrelated. Her understanding of the interplay between my language choice and emotional state was reflected in her remarks in line 3. Her comment shows that she had identified patterns in the way I moved between English and Hungarian. Emotions and spontaneous utterances of high intensity were communicated in L1 rather than in L2 due to the fact that I was less capable of controlling my language use, whereas L2 was used in relaxed activities, favourable conditions when sufficient time and attention were devoted to her. Her statement in line 2 gives a summary of her observations: I sounded different when I spoke English. By this reference to the change in the tone of my voice she also implied that she preferred my L2 use and liked the mood and atmosphere L2 lent to my speech (Pawliszko, 2016). The interplay of actual experience and language preference in Sarah's language performance reflects Pavlenko's findings (2006) where multilingual speakers show different emotional attachment to their languages due to their different socialization patterns and personality traits (p.113).

### **Patterns of Self-Perception**

Depending on the situations she encountered Sarah developed versatile and sometimes contradictory identities and group affiliations. Due to the dialectic relationship between her and her social environment she found various motivations to evaluate her L2 competence and define her position in her immediate community.

The excerpts representing her identity transformations fall into the following categories:

1. Group belonging
2. Commenting on peer criticism
3. Handling deficiencies in L2
4. Finding ways to improve L2

### **Group Belonging**

Language-related exchanges of this category are manifestations of Sarah's sense of group belonging, her ways of regulating, identifying, and redefining herself in the cultural group depending on her personal needs and interests. Shifting to English within a discourse event was a regular practice for Sarah either voluntarily or as a response to others' requests. She fulfilled translation tasks with pleasure and enjoyed the additional challenge it imposed on her if it followed the household language use habits. The example below illustrates her sensitivity to her peers' communication needs and reveals her perception of her L2 competence.

### **Excerpt 5**

- 1 Sarah: Brendi, coke?
- 2 Brendi: I mustn't drink anything from the fridge. I'm ill with hörghurut [bronchitis].
- 3 Kata: Mit mondott? [What did she say?]
- 4 Sarah: Nem ihat hideget. Hörghurutja van. [He mustn't drink cold. He has bronchitis.]
- 5 Kata: Hogy van a hörghurut angolul? [How is hörghurut [bronchitis] in English?]
- 6 Sarah: Mi ezt mondjuk, Brendi is csak azt mondja, ill. [We say this, Brendi says only ill too.]

7 Kata: Jó, elhiszem. [Good, I believe it.] (5;5)

The dialogue between Brendi and Sarah in lines 1-4 reveals that Brendi was advised to avoid drinking anything cold while trying to get over his bronchitis. Brendi, Sarah's groupmate in the kindergarten, is a balanced bilingual with an American father and a Hungarian mother. Kata, Sarah's friend living next door, due to her lack of English knowledge asked Sarah to translate Brendi's words in line 3. Sarah fulfilled the task as seen in line 4 but Kata was not fully satisfied with Sarah's reply, so she requested an accurate English equivalent of the word *hörghurut* (bronchitis). Sarah not knowing the English counterpart answered as seen in line 6. Her remark implies that her lexical shortage did not cause trouble for her, and she did not attribute much interest in Kata's hair-splitting. To support her view, she argued that Brendi used the same word for that meaning. Given Brendi was viewed as an authority of L2 knowledge Sarah's argumentation seemed to be convincing because Kata did not question the credibility of Sarah's answer in line 7. Sarah's behaviour exhibited a dynamic sense of group-solidarity: she translated Brendi's English talk into Hungarian not wanting to exclude Kata, which is a clear sign of her sensitivity to her monolingual friends' needs. Directing attention to the similarities between Brendi's and her own family's language use strategy as in line 6, seemed to be a clever idea putting herself in a powerful in-the-know position (Norton, 2000) and made her a respectful and trustworthy member in the peer group. A sense of we-ness and group belonging she had developed with members of the target community raised her self-esteem (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2012; Cromdal, 2013; Gafaranga, 2012; Pavlenko, 2006; Norton, 2000; Ricento, 2005).

### Commenting on Peer Criticism

Orientations to peer-initiated criticism, discussions of peer pressure cases give a better understanding of Sarah's socializing into appropriate ways of regaining the right to use L2 and redefine power relations in the group of her monolingual peers. The excerpts of this category reveal her understanding of the relative nature of L2 competence. Sarah's and her peers' language use, the corrective actions, assessments, criticism they displayed in free play and conversation gave her strong motivation to negotiate language-related issues. These events and what she thought about these events stimulated her desire to reflect on her own L2 progress and encouraged her to reconstruct her mindset about language knowledge. The text below shows Sarah's utterances based on what Szandra, her friend reported.

### Excerpt 6

- 1 Szandra mondta, ha olyan jól tudsz angolul, miért nem tudsz egy csomó szót angolra lefordítani? [Szandra said, if you know English so well why you can't translate a lot of words into English?]
- 2 Azt is mondta, hogy az anyukánktól nem lehet megtanulni angolul, csak ha Angliában élünk. [She also said that one cannot learn English from their mother, only if they live in England.]
- 3 A nyelvtant meg főleg csak tanártól lehet megtanulni. [Especially grammar can be learnt only from a teacher.]
- 4 Pedig lehet, én is tőled tudok, meg a Kasia is az anyukájával tanul magyarul. [But it is possible, I also know it from you and Kasia learnt Hungarian from her mother.] (8;9)

In line 1 Szandra questioned the credibility of a language learning environment where Sarah's own mother taught her a foreign language only in home settings without an organized

framework. She argues that good knowledge of language requires native-like control with a rich lexicon and high grammatical competence as in lines 2 and 3. Her mentioning of grammar as the main priority implies that she considers it a focal element of language competence that should be controlled by an authorized person, preferably a teacher. Szandra's argumentation in excerpt 6 reveals the essence of her view: a bilingual is an indistinguishable competent speaker of the target language whose L2 proficiency and performance must be discussed and evaluated in relation to monolingual norms. Upon Szandra's provoking comment Sarah felt her retreat would have been a sign of adopting the position of a less knowledgeable person who accepted criticism without presenting counterevidence, so she decided to speak for herself and displayed unmitigated disagreement in line 4. She argued that learning a second language at home was equally credible and as real as teacher-controlled institutional learning. To signal her objection to Szandra's narrow-mindedness and teacher-like manner she drew on Kasia's example. The reference to her balanced bilingual friend Kasia meant presenting counterevidence against Szandra's biased view and a manifestation of Sarah's conceptualization of language proficiency at the same time. The excerpt demonstrates how language-related episodes in which peers displayed their orientations to language and language competence were initiated and discussed by Sarah.

### Handling Deficiencies in L2

Discussions of Sarah's feelings, doubts, and individual struggles to reach a respectful position of a sufficiently competent speaker of English frequently emerged in her talks. The impact of peer comments triggered the strongest motivation to discuss, assess and improve her L2 competence. Language-related episodes of peer criticism confirmed that L1 was used as a reference point to assess L2 proficiency and was an effective tool to help construct knowledge. Excerpt 7 represents a case when peer feedback created context for a discussion of Sarah's own personal perception of a situation when she felt like she didn't know English even though she knew she did. This specific event of peer pressure reveals that she consulted an expert (a native speaker of L2) to help her understand her feelings better and counterbalance an insult.

#### Excerpt 7

Sarah:

- 1 Nem tudtam, mi a melléknév angolul. [I didn't know what adjective is in English.]
- 2 A Rámi azt mondta: Nem is tudsz angolul! [Rámi said: You don't know English.]
- 3 Megkérdeztem a Brendi-t, és ő sem tudta. Sőt az anyukája meg is nézi a szótárban, ha nem tud valamit. [I asked Brendi, and he didn't know either. When his mother doesn't know something, she looks it up in the dictionary.]
- 4 Mondtam, csak azt tudom, amiről mindig beszélgetünk, te sose kéred, hogy fordítsak. Ilyen nyelvtanos dolgokat sose, de attól még tudok. [I said I know only what we always talk about. Such grammar things never, even so I know English.] (9;1)

Rámi's degrading remark labelling Sarah an incompetent speaker of English encouraged Sarah to reflect on her own L2 competence using her bilingual role model friend, Brendi's viewpoint as a reference. Coming to realize that Brendi, a native speaker of English was unfamiliar with the English equivalent of *melléknév* (adjective) too, seemed to restore her self-esteem. Brendi's mentioning of his mother's habit of consulting a dictionary to compensate for lexical gaps made it obvious that word-for-word translations could be challenging for even native speakers.

Brendi's attitude to learning presented counterevidence against Rámi's view, which resulted in a positive change of Sarah's mind and dispersed her *I am incompetent* pessimistic belief. Although only implied, Sarah did not appear to accept translation as an adequate standard and a valid measure of one's language competence. Brendi's unfamiliarity with the word in question supported her view. Sarah's comment in line 4 betrays that her use of English was restricted to mostly communicative and not to academic function. She pointed out that she had developed a proficient level regarding the vocabulary of everyday topics but lacked grammar terms in English because as a second language it did not fill the same role or function as her first language. This example also reflects Sarah's conception of language knowledge as well as her awareness of the interrelationship between language competence and language use. Her remark in line 4 is an implicit reference to her understanding of the relative and dynamic nature of language knowledge, meaning that language learners usually do not develop all skills and aspects of language equally. Certain skills and competences are better developed whereas others are less improved. Sarah's introspection illustrates that she was capable of repositioning herself as a self-confident user of L2 who became powerful enough to speak for herself.

### **Finding Ways to Improve Learning**

The episodes in this category are manifestations of Sarah's understanding of the importance of integrating non-school English practice as a complementary resource to enhance English learning in school classes. Excerpt 8 illustrates that the teacher's orientation to language learning gave her strong motivation to practise English at home to supplement school learning.

#### **Excerpt 8**

Sarah:

- 1 Éva néni kérte, beszélgessünk otthon is angolul. [Aunt Éva asked us to talk English at home too.]
- 2 Mondtam, mi szoktunk, meg amikor a Kasiák meg a Brendiék nálunk vannak. [I said we do and when Kasia's and Brendi's family are at our place.]
- 3 Mother: Legyél is nagyon büszke magadra! [Be very proud of yourself!] (9;5)

As a response to my daily inquiry about school events Sarah seemed to be reluctant to talk but when asked about English, she became enthusiastic. The excerpt is an instance of Sarah's echoing her teacher's words when encouraging her pupils to practise English at home with the aim of improving their knowledge. Sarah's utterances in lines 1-2 imply the teacher's advice exerted persuasive power on her and reflect her desire to meet her teacher's expectations. Line 1 suggests that she extensively relied on what her mother and teacher, her authorities of knowledge said. The view that school and home are contexts for and constituents of each other in language learning was welcomed and fully approved by Sarah. The teacher's idea to blend academic and communication-based methods in language learning gave Sarah motivation to maintain their home English practice. The acknowledgement of her language knowledge in line 3 gives evidence that her positive attitude to L2 was highly respected and well-appraised.

#### **Excerpt 9**

The excerpt below, which is an extract from one of Sarah's letters, is a coherent and vivid summary of Sarah's identity development in her bilingual childhood. It can be considered as a

verbal declaration of a dynamic, proactive, and reflexive L2 learner, who reflects on her own feelings about L2 learning.

Hello Mami! How are you? Because I am very well! But if you are not well then now you will got a good time. The tail (tale) is biginning. When I was bourn you spoken with me in English. My first world was: moon, car, koffie. I know these. But, that how was it, I don't know. Who knows it, it's you mami. When I have given my diaper, I don't said 'pelus', I sad 'diaper', because you spoken whit me always and only in English ENGLISH! Yes, I know that I say that 'I wont speak in English with you mami! But now I see that how mutch words I know and it's werry werry good. Oh! Sorry, not only words, but I know to make expressions. And all this things I know due you! Now I see! Grandma said, that when I was there, I always said those English words, and grandma said, that she doesn't understand nothing. This was when I don't went in the nursery, but I was with my grandma and granddad. Mami, I want a question from you. You will write this composition in that, I don't know, in your composition? Not my'n, but your composition. In your. Sure! He, he! That's why I lifing. I know that you remember werry much, because it was only November when I put a question: How is 'sure'? Write down. And now I know it. Ok! I want **ONLY THIS THINGS**, so you are not fritened, YES? It will go on! Only not this way. (10;7)

The excerpt demonstrates how Sarah's orientations to L2 use and identity were constructed and transformed over time. In the beginning there was a period when she developed deliberate rejection of using L2. Recalling an L2-related episode with her grandmother implies that the emerging communication breakdown between her grandmother and her did not seem to cause a problem. The scene was described as a memorable episode to emphasize that English words constituted an integral part of her lexicon from early childhood, and she used them in her speech directed to her grandmother even though her grandmother did not understand English.

After presenting her ambivalent feelings she ended up with the conclusion that her bilingual childhood made sense and turned out to be fully acceptable leaving the impression that her linguistic background formed a unique identity. In retrospect she admitted that it was a mistake to resist using L2. It was a transitional phenomenon and by about the age of eleven she was proud of her bilingual identity. She gave a clear expression of her gratitude and respect towards her mother who, as it turned out, acted not only as a caregiver but also as a language transmitter in the inner family sphere. The composition, a reference to my dissertation appeared to give an opportunity to publicly display her L2 progress and was an effective medium to express her pride and the overwhelming satisfaction she felt over being the focus of attention and that of the subject of scientific research. This moment gave further confirmation for what the present paper was meant to illustrate. Despite all imbalances discussed in Sarah's accounts she was able to achieve a bilingual identity without feeling confused. She adapted herself to the bilingual background and by the age of eleven she could get on with her daily bilingual life without much trouble. She developed a positive attitude and emotional attachment towards her second language and was able to overcome her transitory aversion and negative feelings. The last three sentences of the excerpt reflect her commitment and enthusiasm and sound like a promise: she was determined to make further changes and adjustments in her behaviour to enhance her L2 learning. The utterance I want only this things in block capitals is a clear expression of Sarah's approval of the family established bilingualism and a manifestation of her cooperation effort.



## Conclusion

To answer the first research question, I relied on Sarah's communicative intentions underlying her code-switches and metalinguistic comments. The retrieved data show how Sarah benefitted from the extra potential provided by the dual linguistic system. Integrating L2 in her speech proved to be an effective strategic tool to influence her interlocutor's, especially her mother's behaviour and offered an opportunity to win their attention and appreciation.

The data are suggestive of Sarah's appeal to L2 with the purpose of indexing a variety of emotional meanings and communicative intentions in the form of emotive speech acts. Code-switching was a clear sign of operating affective communication strategies to regulate and gain control over emotions, attitudes, and motivation regarding learning (Cohen, 1998; Oxford, 1990, p.135). Code-switches were used to express things like, endearment, apology, identifying the interlocutor's mood, redirecting the conversation, defining group-boundaries, tricking and preserving alliance and privacy. The analysed discourse pieces illuminate how she sought and found opportunities to use L2, and how she got encouragement, reward, and recognition from involving L2 in her daily communication. Sarah adopted L2 to express affection despite her lower competence in that language. Integrating L2 enhanced the pragmatic effect of her utterances and added to making her message stylistically more effective. Bilingualism created a unique context and interesting moments to express a variety of communicative intentions and emotional stances in Sarah's talk, which corroborates with Pavlenko's (2006) and Pawliszko's (2016) findings.

The locally established norms of conduct and language separation rules exerted powerful impact on her language behaviour and language alternation habit. Her language choice was a sign of her sensitivity to the linguistic preferences of her interlocutors (Murphy, 2014, p.42). The use of L2 was inseparable from the social context and from the way she perceived that social context. Hamers (2004) refers to this interplay between the language user and the social environment with the term feedback mechanism in her dynamic model of bilingual language acquisition. The indicator of Sarah's pragmatic competence is that she had definite expectations and knowledge on who, where or when to speak each language. Her code-switching behaviour shows that she developed a positive attachment to L2. She prided herself in her English language skills and expected emotional gain and returns from using it. Achieving any communication goal encouraged her to make further use of L2. I came to realize that bilingualism had a far-reaching effect on narrow family relationships and strengthened mother-child bonding. Integrating English in daily family communication formulated a kind of alliance between the family members perceiving English as a contributor to intimacy and family integrity.

As for the second research question, the findings confirmed that Sarah's identity development shows a diverse and contradictory picture with lots of fluctuations, interspersed with imbalances caused by her varied perceptions of herself. The analysed discourses to explore Sarah's identity development illuminate that the way she felt about herself and her progress in L2 was a true reflection of her fluid and heterogeneous identity (Cekaite & Björk-Willén, 2012; Duff, 2012; Norton, 2000, Pavlenko, 2006). The various feedback she received from her social environment influenced her self-concept in general, but peers exerted the strongest impact on her, which is a consistent phenomenon seen in scholarly findings (Cromdal 2013; Gafaranga, 2012). Sarah's accounts of her self-perception reveal that she benefitted from the dual linguistic environment.

Her English satisfied her own personal ambitions, attracted the interlocutor's attention, and offered additional opportunities to earn respect and appreciation.

The dual language context generated language-related instances targeting, assessing, and criticizing her own language use and that of the others'. Free bilingual discussions served as social sites for regulating one another's conduct and entitlement to use English. In response to peer pressure and criticism she monitored, evaluated her own learning process, and consulted more competent language users or other authorities of knowledge to legitimize her position as an L2 speaker and find justification. She described her bilingualism as extra knowledge, as something 'cool', and perceived herself as being a successful bilingual learner (Nikolov, 2000, p. 37) despite her transitional unwillingness to use English. Sarah tended to make her use of L2 conform to the monolingual-monocultural standards of her wider community (peers, out-group members, i.e., people not initiated in the family established language environment). Her accounts give the impression that developing her bilingual identity was not easy. Her changing attitude towards her second language demonstrated in the excerpts give evidence of her struggling personality. The dual linguistic context presented issues that called for addressing, discussing, reorganizing, and transforming her views of language and her self-concept as a language learner.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Although my study focusing only on one person does not provide sufficient data for generalizing, the outcomes of my research bear importance. My observations at the individual level provide useful data about individual features in the process of SLA, which constitute a valuable contribution to individual differences research. The study explores a particular case of second language acquisition in a non-native environment, which has been an under researched area, and a less focused aspect of the field. Although the applied data collection instruments contribute to the multiple insights we can derive from the analysis, further research is needed to find out to what extent the findings are relevant for other young learners in a similar context. The discussion of young learners' L2 use as well as the investigation of some newly emergent aspects of SLA, for example, the learner's willingness to speak in the L2 in a quasi-monolingual environment and the impact of the public view on establishing and sustaining family-oriented bilingualism with non-native control warrant further explorations. Qualitative and mixed-method analyses of lexical items indexing emotions in the individual learner's discourse, investigations of the positive-negative connotation of bilingualism drawn from the analysed dataset could be transformed into the topic of a successive study.

### **About the Author**

**Marianna Machata** received her MA degree in English and Russian Language Teaching from the University of Szeged University, Hungary. In her earlier career she worked as a teacher of English and Russian at the University of Óbuda, Székesfehérvár, Hungary and she taught English and TOEFL preparatory courses in Oman at the University of Nizwa. She is a PhD candidate in Doctoral Programme in English Applied Linguistics and TEFL/TESOL at the University of Pécs, Hungary. Her research interests include early learning and teaching of modern languages, language learning strategies and translanguaging. At present she works at The European Language Certificates office in Budapest, Hungary. ORCID ID: 0009-0001-2171-9976

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Marianne Nikolov, my thesis advisor, for her continuous support of my research project. I am grateful for the anonymous reviewers' valuable comments on previous drafts of my paper.

## To Cite this Article

Machata, M. (2023). A case study of a Hungarian-English bilingual girl's code-switching practices between the ages of three and eleven. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 27 (2). <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27106a11>

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2019.1635032>

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