

“FROM NOW AND AGAIN HE WOULD FALL BEHIND IN ONE OF THE
LANGUAGES...”

Parents’ Views on Their Finnish-English Bilingual Children’s Use of
Languages

Bachelor’s thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Kaksikielisyys on tänä päivänä yleinen ilmiö globalisaation sekä ihmisten lisääntyneen maantieteellisen liikkuvuuden myötä. Lisäksi yhä useammassa kodissa käytetään rinnakkain kahta kieltä, ja täten lapset kuulevat arjessaan useampaa kieltä syntymästään saakka. Tällaisilla lapsilla on käytössään yhden äidinkielen sijasta kaksi samanaikaisesti opittua kieltä.</p> <p>Tässä kandidaatintutkielmassa tutkittiin kaksikielisten lasten kieltenkäyttöä heidän vanhempiensa näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksen otanta koostui neljästä Suomessa asuvasta perheestä, joiden kotikielinä olivat suomi sekä englanti. Tutkimuksessa pyrittiin selvittämään, millaisissa tilanteissa lapset käyttävät kutakin kieltä, ja missä määrin kielten välistä koodinvaihtoa (code-switching) esiintyy. Lisäksi haluttiin selvittää, suosivatko lapset jompaakumpaa kieltä, tai onko jompikumpi kieli toista vahvempi. Tutkimuksessa käytetty aineisto oli luonteeltaan laadullista, ja se kerättiin haastattelemalla lasten vanhempia.</p> <p>Keskeisimpien tulosten mukaan lasten kielivalintoja ohjasi yleisimmin heidän vanhempiensa läsnäolo, mutta myös tietyt sanat tai sanaparit saattoivat olla sidottuja tiettyyn kieleen seurasta tai tilanteesta riippumatta. Suurimmalle osalle lapsista oli tyypillistä suosia puhuessaan joko suomen tai englannin kieltä, mutta sekä yksilö- että perhekohtaisia eroavaisuuksia esiintyi runsaasti. Perheiden kokemukset koodinvaihdon yleisyydestä erosivat myös toisistaan, mutta ilmiö oli tuttu kaikissa neljässä perheessä.</p> <p>Tutkimus mukaili aiempien tutkimusten tuloksia muun muassa vanhempien läsnäolon vaikutuksessa lasten kielivalintoihin liittyen sekä kaksikielisten lasten taipumuksessa kokea jompikumpi kieli toista vahvemmaksi. Lisäksi koodinvaihto näyttäytyy tutkimuksen tulosten valossa hyvin tavallisena ilmiönä kahta kieltä puhuvien lasten keskuudessa. Laajempia yleistyksiä ei kuitenkaan ole perusteltua tehdä tämän perusteella, sillä tutkimuksen otanta koostui vain neljästä perheestä.</p>	
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1 Introduction

Bilingualism is a phenomenon that has been fascinating researchers from different theoretical backgrounds for several decades. Globalization and the increased social and geographical mobility allow the number of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contacts between people to grow, resulting in bilingual individuals already outnumbering monolinguals on a global scale (Blanc and Hamers 2000: 1). This means that living in a multilingual environment and knowing more than one language has become a norm for an increasing number of people. Moreover, the current century has seen the all the more popular trend of people leaving their homelands and settling in foreign countries for example for working or interpersonal purposes. As a result, bilingual families and children growing up in bilingual homes are by no means a rarity in today's world, and this particular trend is expected to continue in the years to come.

Research on bilingualism has been conducted from various different perspectives over the years, covering for example psycholinguistic and social aspects of bilingualism. A significant part of research, however, has concentrated on bilingual adults or secondary bilinguals, the latter one referring to individuals that have learned two languages successively rather than acquiring them simultaneously during the early years of childhood. Thus, there is only little data available regarding bilingual children that have been receiving input in two languages since birth, and the dynamics of their speech are still relatively unknown. Additionally, the children's communication away from the sphere of influence of their parents, for example when the siblings are playing together, has received particularly little attention (Barron-Hauwaert 2011: 1).

Considering the gap in previous research, the present study will focus on children growing up in Finnish-English bilingual homes and address the dynamics of their language use in their everyday lives. The general aim of the study is to examine the children's language choices and their habits related to code-switching in order to understand their ways of using the two languages. Moreover, the focus is on parents' thoughts and notions regarding their children's language use, resulting in all the findings being based on the parents' experiences. The reason for choosing this particular perspective was that interviewing the parents instead of children allowed more detailed data collection as well as an in-depth approach to the topic in general.

Furthermore, parents' notions related to their bilingual children's use of languages have not been comprehensively studied before.

In the next chapter I am going to provide the theoretical framework for the present paper. I will start with definitions regarding bilinguals and bilingualism, after which I will continue to discuss language strategies applied in bilingual families. Finally, I will address bilingual children, particularly concentrating on their language development and the occurrence of code-switching in their speech.

2 Research Context

The present study examines children growing in bilingual homes, and therefore operates in the field of bilingualism. It is a relatively new field of study, as until recently bilingualism was not considered an independent field of inquiry, but part of other disciplinary studies such as sociology or anthropology (Walters 2004: 1). Moreover, the concept of bilingualism is sometimes used as a shorthand term to cover not only cases where two languages are included, but cases of multilingualism as well (Baetens Beardsmore 1986: 3). However, in the present study I am going to use the term bilingual in the literal sense to refer to people that use two languages on a regular basis.

2.1 Bilingualism

As the aim of my study is to examine Finnish-English bilingual children's use of languages from their parents' point of view, the term bilingualism is one of the central concepts in this paper. Therefore, it is important to define what is meant by bilingualism and bilingual people, and which definition I am going to refer to myself. The concept of bilingualism is commonly used in today's world, yet it is difficult to thoroughly define what it means. There are numerous different definitions for the term, depending on for example the theoretical frame the study draws on. In this section I am going to discuss some of these definitions.

Trying to define what bilingualism is in terms of language fluency is problematic, since it raises the question of how bilingual one must be in order to be considered bilingual, in other words, how fluent one must be in each language (Baetens Beardsmore 1986: 6). Lyon (1996: 47) introduces the same question by stating that the term bilingual does not define the balance

between the languages in the sense of knowledge. As a result of the unambiguous definition of the term, perhaps the most traditional way of seeing bilingualism, especially in everyday language, is defining it as ‘the native-like control of two languages’ (Bloomfield 1935, cited in Blanc and Hamers 2000: 6). According to previous research, however, it is relatively rare for bilinguals to achieve equal proficiency in both languages as the extent of exposure to both languages is rarely fully balanced, and the needs and uses of each language tend to be unique (Grosjean 2008: 14 and Nguyen 2015: 8).

Considering the issue of language fluency mentioned above, another widely used definition of bilingualism states that people who use two languages in their everyday lives can be considered bilinguals (Grosjean 2010: 4). In turn, Caldwell (2010: 1) offers an even broader definition in his study by arguing that a person who can communicate in two languages either through speaking or through listening could be called bilingual. In addition, Caldwell (2010: 1) mentions the recently made difference between *bimodal* and *unimodal* bilinguals: the former term refers to people that know a spoken and a signed language, whereas the latter one covers people that use two spoken languages fluently.

However, there are also other ways of understanding the nature of bilingualism. Grosjean (2008: 10-14) presents two different views in his study: a *monolingual view*, which has been prevalent among researchers, argues that a bilingual person has control over two entirely separate language competencies, and could thus be described as being ‘two monolinguals in one person.’ On the other hand, according to a *wholistic view*, a bilingual person is not the sum of two monolinguals. Instead, the interaction of the two languages has provided the bilingual person with a unique kind of linguistic configuration.

Moreover, bilingual people can be divided into *primary bilinguals*, who have acquired two languages simultaneously without systematic instruction and to *secondary bilinguals*, who have learned two languages successively and with the help of instruction (Baetens Beardsmore 1986: 8). Saunders (1983: 29), in turn, discusses primary bilinguals using the alternative concept of *infant bilingualism*. As to the present study, the focus will be on primary/infant bilinguals, who have been receiving input in both English and Finnish since birth.

2.2 Bilingual Families

In this chapter I will move on to discuss bilingual families and their motives and strategies for establishing bilingualism in the family. The way of defining the concept of *family* varies between cultures, yet in the present study it is used to refer to a married or cohabiting couple living together with children, or one of the parents living together with his or her children (Statistics Finland 2012). Barron-Hauwaert (2010: 4) argues that if two or more languages are regularly spoken in the family, it can be called bilingual. According to the study, however, the term *bilingual family* includes several kinds of variations, for example two parents speaking different languages, a family living in a second-language environment or a family living in a country where two different languages are spoken. With regard to the present study, all the participating families consist of parents speaking different languages to their children.

Parents that have the opportunity to choose whether they are going to raise their children bilingually or not have different kinds of motives behind their choices. One of the most typical reasons for wishing to raise children bilingually is the need to maintain family ties as well as share cultural knowledge (Raguenaud 2010: 13). Moreover, if the native language of the parents is different from that of the rest of the society, the parents may want to preserve that language as an effective means of communication inside the family (Saunders 1983: 28). However, some parents in the position mentioned above choose not to speak their native language to their children, as they feel uncomfortable using a language other than the one that is predominantly spoken in the country they live in (Hayes, Parker and Steiner 2009: 31).

Each family has specific circumstances of their own that set the frame for the way the languages are used (Saunders 1983: 42). Therefore, parents that have chosen to speak two languages regularly in their everyday lives have different strategies for maintaining bilingualism in the family. One of the most well-known situations is *the one-parent-one-language* strategy, where the children associate each language with a specific person as each one of the parents speaks their own native language to the children (Barron-Hauwaert 2004: 1). All the more, Barron-Hauwaert (2010: 185-188) presents two other ways of establishing bilingualism in the family: *the minority-language-at-home* formula and the strategy of *mixing*. The former one covers cases where families speak a minority language at home while the predominant language of the country is used outside the home environment, whereas the latter one means that parents consciously speak a mix of two languages to their offspring.

2.3 Bilingual Children

More and more children are being raised in bilingual homes in today's world (Core, Hoff, Place, Rumiche, Señor and Parra 2010: 1). Consequently, my focus in the present study is on children that come from homes where two languages are regularly used in the sense of *one-parent-one-language strategy* (Barron-Hauwaert 2004: 1). Children in the position mentioned above usually manage to acquire the two languages within the scope of a few years, which continues to fascinate specialists around the world (Matthews and Yip 2007: 5). As mentioned in Section 2.1, however, it is relatively rare for bilingual children to reach fully equal proficiency in both languages (Nguyen 2015: 8 and Grosjean 2008: 14). As to the present paper, it is not possible to cover all the areas related to bilingual children, yet there are two aspects that I am going to discuss in more detail here: language development and code-switching.

2.3.1 Language Development

Each bilingual child is a unique language learner with a developmental profile of their own, yet the process through which they learn to master two languages shows some common features (Matthews and Yip 2007: 15). The most crucial factor leading to the process of learning a language is the *need* to be able to speak that specific language, which might be for example the need to communicate with one of the parents (Grosjean 2010: 172-183). As discussed in Section 2.1, bilingual speakers often have different needs for using each language: the languages might be used for instance in different domains of life (Grosjean 2008: 14). Consequently, if the need ceases to exist, the child is likely to stop using the language and eventually forget it (Grosjean 2010: 172).

The process of language development of a bilingual child has been divided into different stages by several researchers. According to Volterra and Taeschner's study (1978, cited in Blanc and Hamers 2000: 55), there are the following two stages: in the first stage the child possesses only one lexical system containing words from both languages. However, later the child starts to differentiate between the two systems that used to be merged into one. According to Grosjean's study (2010: 172-183), young children form a strong bond between a person and the language he or she speaks, using it as a means of differentiating between the language systems. Saunders (1988: 51-55), in turn, divides the process of language development into three stages, first of which is similar to that of Volterra and Taeschner's (1978, cited in Blanc and Hamers 2000: 55) theory: the child only has a single lexical system, which covers both languages.

During this stage, the child is usually able to name an object only in one language. The second stage begins at the time of the second birthday: the child has a vocabulary large enough to designate the same object in both languages, leading to the gradual realization of having two separate linguistic systems instead of one. As a result of this, it can be assumed that there is a language acquisition mechanism specialized for accommodating input from two different grammars simultaneously (Francis 2012: 10). Finally, in the third stage, the child is able to differentiate between the languages in terms of both vocabulary and syntax, and the interaction between the two languages has reduced to minimal (Saunders 1988: 56).

The belief that bilingualism can delay the general language acquisition of children results in many parents worrying about the rate of linguistic development of their children, yet previous research shows strong evidence of bilingual children reaching the main developmental milestones within the same age span as their monolingual peers (Grosjean 2010: 179). However, if bilingual children's skills in each of the two languages are assessed separately, they tend to lag behind monolinguals particularly in their weaker language, as most bilingual children do not receive equal amounts of input in both languages in their everyday lives (Core, Hoff, Place, Rumiche, Señor and Parra 2012: 24).

2.3.2 Code-Switching

Code-switching is a pragmatically or socially motivated aspect of bilingualism, often present in the lives of both bilingual children and adults (Grim 2008: 3). It can be defined as the phenomenon of using more than one language within the same conversation (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 1). Code-switching can also be seen as the capability of switching between languages as well as mixing them without reducing neither functional nor pragmatic clarity in speech (De Bot, Isurin and Winford 2009: 3). All the more, code-switching is typically thought to characterize the process of acquiring two languages simultaneously in early childhood (Grim 2008: 1). Barron-Hauwaert (2010: 68), in turn, specifies that after occurring as a stage prior to reaching fluency in two languages, code-switching might preserve its place in the family by serving as a means of bonding socially.

The process of code-switching can be used as a means of performing pragmatic functions, for instance to find "the correct" word or to fill in vocabulary gaps resulting from words in either language that are momentarily inaccessible for the speaker (Dewaele, Housen, Li and Grover

2003: 176). It can also be motivated for example by social, situational or topical factors (Genesee et al. 2004, Gumperz 1982, Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez 1972, McClure 1977 and Yumoto 1996; cited in Grim 2008: 1). Additionally, code-switching can take place on a single word basis or the speaker might switch to either language for a larger stretch (Dewaele et al. 2003: 176). In *Matrix Language Frame (MLF)* one language, in other words, the matrix language provides the morphosyntactic frame the other language adapts to and also determines the function words and morphemes available (Myers-Scotton 1993, cited in Stell and Yakpo 2015).

Code-switching can be stimulated for instance by setting or topic shifts, and it can be used to emphasize, protest or narrate (Genesee et al. 2004, Gumperz 1982, Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez 1972, McClure 1977 and Yumoto 1996; cited in Grim 2008: 1). In other words, code-switching can be used as a means of communicating something more than the bare meaning of the words used (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 5). Clyne (1967, 1980, 2003 cited in Dijkstra, Kootstra and Van Hell 2012: 6) argues that one of the lexical factors affecting code-switching are *cognate words*, which are translation equivalents that share lexical form between languages, for example the Dutch-English word pair *boek-book*. According to the study, using cognate words in speech leads to the increase of cross-language activation in the bilingual mind, which might, in turn, result in code-switching. Moreover, word pairs that share similar semantic features yet are not translation equivalents seem to activate each other as well, for instance English ‘*fence*’ and French ‘*haie*’ (De Bot et al. 2009: 93). Finally, one of the main reasons for code-switching to occur is as simple as laziness: it is the easiest way of maintaining conversation when participants cannot be bothered to search for the right word in the other language (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 15).

3 The present study

The present paper addresses bilingual children’s language use from their parents’ perspective. As discussed in Chapter 2, children growing up in bilingual homes are not a rarity in today’s world. These children receive input in two languages throughout their childhood, and develop different strategies for using the languages. Considering the core findings of previous research discussed in Chapter 2, the aim of the present study is to find out how the children in the participating families use Finnish and English in their everyday lives, and whether they tend to

prefer one language over the other. I also wish to examine the appearance of code-switching, as according to Grim (2008: 3) it is a common phenomenon among bilingual speakers. All the more, most of the previous research has not addressed parents' views on their children's communication, which the present paper concentrates on.

3.1 Research aim and questions

The aim of the present study is to examine Finnish-English bilingual children's use of languages *from the point of view of their parents*. In other words, the main objective is to explore the parents' notions regarding their children's language use and choices. In order to find out how Finnish and English are being used by the children in the participating families, I settled three research questions for this study, which are the following:

1. According to the parents, in which situations do their children use Finnish, and in which situations English?

The aim is to study children that have been receiving input in Finnish and English since birth, and thus have two languages to choose from in their daily activities. Therefore, I hope to learn how the parents see their children's language choices, in short, which of the two languages the children decide to use in different kinds of situations. All the more, I hope to examine the factors that determine the language choices.

2. Parents' notions on code-switching: does it occur in their children's speech, and in what kinds of situations?

Since code-switching is common among bilingual speakers and often described as a stage that children go through when acquiring two languages simultaneously (Grim 2008: 1), I wish to find out to what extent it occurs in the children's speech in the participating families. Additionally, I would like to find out what kinds of situations seem to trigger it.

3. According to the parents' experiences, do their children seem to prefer one language over the other or show greater proficiency in either language?

Finally, through this question my aim is to learn if the children are more comfortable using one language than the other. The vast majority of adult bilingual speakers are not equally proficient in both languages (Nguyen 2015: 8), and thus I wish to find out whether tendencies of choosing one language over the other already occur in childhood.

3.2 Data and Methods

As parents' notions and experiences regarding their children's everyday lives were considered the most suitable form of data for the present study, interviewing one of the parents from four Finnish-English bilingual families was chosen as the method for gathering the qualitative data. Moreover, it seemed more reasonable to conduct interviews than questionnaires, since the aim was to collect the parents' personal experiences and thoughts accompanied by concrete examples.

All the families taking part in the study were contacted via Facebook groups or email. Three of the interviews were conducted face-to-face in May 2018, whereas the fourth one was conducted via Skype in June 2018. The number of children in each family along with their ages are listed in *Table 1* below. Only one parent from each family was present in three of the interviews, whereas both parents were present in one. The interviews lasted approximately twenty-five minutes each, and the language used in two of them was Finnish, whereas the other two were in English. As the interview questions were originally in English, they were translated into Finnish later on. Both the English and the Finnish versions of the interview questions can be found in the appendices.

Table 1. Participating families

Families	Number of children in the family	Children's ages
F1	2	3 & 1
F2	1	4
F3	2	6 & 3
F4	3	9, 7 & 2

Interviews conducted for the study were semi-structured in order to enable follow-up questions as well as provide the interviewees with the possibility of shaping the structure of the interview by introducing topics and matters they personally find significant, as semi-structured interviews are characterized by flexibility in the interview situation (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2008: 47). In short, the main questions for the interview were planned beforehand, yet the order of the questions was only considered directional, and the possibilities of follow-up questions and additional topics were taken into account. In order to enable transcription and analysis of the data the interviews were voice recorded with the participants' consent.

Finally, the data was transcribed and analysed qualitatively applying the methods of content analysis, the aim of which is to describe the meaning of the material by classifying it as instances of different categories (Schreier 2012: 1-3). Therefore, the analysis of the data included for instance recognizing frequently occurring themes and comparing the interviews from the point of view of the research questions. Content analysis was chosen as the method due to the focus of the study being on the meaning of the data rather than conversational patterns. Since the data only covered four interviews, the aim of the study is not to make generalizations based on the findings.

4 Results and Discussion

In this chapter I am going to present and discuss the results of the study on the basis of the interviews conducted with the parents. Therefore, all the findings presented here are based on the parents' thoughts and views. First the focus will be on the situational variation regarding the children's language choices in the participating families. After that I will move on to concentrate on the results concerning code-switching and its occurrence in different situations. Finally, I will be presenting and discussing my findings on the children's overall language preferences between English and Finnish.

4.1 Children's general choice of language

The parents from the four families were asked to describe the ways in which their children use the two languages, and most importantly, what seems to determine their choice of language in different situations in their everyday lives. All the parents used *the one-parent-one-language* strategy while communicating with their children, resulting in both languages being actively

present in the home environment. Therefore, the most prevalent factor affecting the children's choice of language turned out to be the person the children are talking to or spending time with at a given moment. However, in the case of one family each language seemed to be associated with particular words rather than certain people at this point. Next I will focus on the differences between the children in different families in more detail.

As shortly mentioned above, the children in F2 (aged 4), F3 (aged 6 & 3) and F4 (aged 9, 7 & 2) typically base their choice of language on the person with whom they are communicating with in a given situation. When the children are in the company of a Finnish speaking family member, they automatically choose to use Finnish, whereas while being with an English speaking family member, they switch to English immediately. Parents from all the three families mentioned their children being remarkably sensitive to the native languages of all the people around them, and therefore competent at knowing which language is "the correct one" to use in diverse situations, for example when spending time with their grandparents or other relatives. All the more, children in F4 were reported getting upset if they hear one of their parents occasionally switching to "the wrong" language. This indicates that they strongly associate each language with a specific person, which is a phenomenon suggested by Barron-Hauwaert (2004: 1). Nonetheless, children from F2 and F4 were sometimes reported starting a conversation in an incompatible language, mostly while being veritably excited about something.

However, in case of F1, a different kind of pattern regarding the children's (aged 3 & 1) language choices emerged, as the children in this family do not associate each language with a different person as explicitly as the children from other families. Instead, particular words and word clusters seem to be tied either to Finnish or to English in the children's speech regardless of whom they are talking to. According to the mother, for instance the English word *ham* is used in the middle of Finnish sentences by the children and the parents, as the children are not yet familiar with the Finnish equivalent *kincku*, or at least do not use it themselves, which could be explained by their very young age. In addition, English word combinations such as *bye-bye* and *night-night* are regularly used in the middle of Finnish conversations, which suggests that the strategy of mixing is used in the family (Barron-Hauwaert 2010: 185-188).

Furthermore, language use in situations where the children are addressing both parents simultaneously varied between the participating families. In the case of F1, the children choose

to deal with such situations by using Finnish, as both their parents understand it despite it being the native language only for the mother. As to F2 and F4, the children apply the strategy of switching when addressing both parents cotemporally. For example, the four-year-old child in F2 asks for his parents' simultaneous attention by going *daddy and äiti*, addressing each parent in their native language as suggested by Barron-Hauwaert (2004: 1). In turn, children in F3 (aged 6 & 3) usually choose to use English in this kinds of situations, yet sometimes settle upon using the strategy of switching as well.

While playing on their own and talking to themselves, children in F1 and F3 use Finnish. Nonetheless, the older child in F1 has lately started for example counting numbers in English every once in a while when playing alone. It was mentioned by the mother that this habit is most likely explained by the increased time spent learning English numbers by reading English books together. As a result, the child currently associates the activity of counting with English language. In turn, children in F2 and F4 can be heard using both languages when playing by themselves. The child in F2 was reported often speaking both English and Finnish within the same playing session, but usually using either language for a while before switching. For the part of F4, English was reported to be the one heard a bit more often in this context,

All the more, families 1, 3 and 4 have more than one child, and thus the parents from these families were also asked about their children's language choices when the siblings are communicating with each other. In F1, the language used between the siblings is more or less always Finnish. In the case of F3, Finnish was the most prevalent one as well even though the younger child was mentioned sometimes using English when talking to her sister. In turn, children in F4 prefer to use English with one another, yet when in the company of their Finnish-speaking friends they usually choose to speak Finnish with each other as well.

All in all, the most prevalent factor determining the children's situational choice of language in F2, F3 and F4 was the native language of the person with whom they were talking in a given situation, as presented by Barron-Hauwaert's (2004: 1) *one-parent-one-language strategy*. Nonetheless, children in F1 preferred to speak Finnish regardless of whom they were talking to, yet regularly used English in particular words or word pairs. This indicates that they did not associate each language with a different person the same way as the children in the other three families did. Moreover, even though the children in this family mostly spoke Finnish at this point, some words were easier for them to recall in English instead.

4.2 Appearance of code-switching

Another main theme of the interviews were the different aspects of code-switching and the situations in which they usually occur. According to the parents, code-switching was used to varying degrees in every participating family, yet differences were reported both between children in different families and between siblings within a family. In some of the cases the amount of code-switching had clearly decreased after the children acquired both languages, indicating that it had mostly contributed to the process of language acquisition (Grim 2008: 1). However, in the rest of the cases code-switching seemed to preserve its role in the children's communication also later in their lives, as mentioned in section 2.3.2.

4.2.1 Switching languages on a single word level

As discussed in section 2.3.2, code-switching as a concept is wide and covers different forms of switching between the languages. For example, it can take place through isolated words that are uttered in a different language than the rest of the sentence (Dewaele et al. 2003:176). Children in F1 (aged 3 & 1) regularly mix Finnish and English within a sentence by throwing English words in the middle of Finnish sentences, as their general choice of language seems to be linked to particular words and word combinations. For example, the word “*ham*”, which was presented in the previous section, and the word *park* commonly occur among Finnish sentences in the children's speech. Moreover, sentences such as *katso, tuolla on moon* have been uttered by the older child in the family, which suggests that practices of code-switching are applied in order to fill in vocabulary gaps as Dewaele et al. (2003: 176) argue in their study.

Parents' views on this kind of code-switching in F3 share common features with those presented above. In this family, the older child (aged 6) mixes Finnish and English within a sentence mainly in situations where she cannot recall a certain word in either language, and thus replaces it with a counterpart from the other one (Dewaele et al 2003: 176). This is usually the case with more specific words that are difficult for the child to remember, yet sometimes commonly used words might be replaced as well. However, this kind of mixing is happening to a lesser extent, as the child currently prefers asking the parents about the forgotten word immediately. The younger child (aged 3), in turn, has not yet been notably applying practises of code-switching, most likely due to her very young age.

In F2, in turn, the habit of mixing languages within a sentence was only present at the time the child (aged 4) was learning to speak, which is something that Grim (2008: 1) found typical in his study. After starting to master both languages, he has no longer been using “Finglish” in that sense. F4 shares a very similar experience with their oldest son (aged 9), as he has been mixing the languages only a couple of times throughout his life. The only example coming to the fore in the interview was the Finnish word *rekka* which he used to throw in the middle of English sentences around the age of three, most likely in order to fill in a vocabulary gap as discussed in section 2.3.2. According to the father, the son has always been very particular and even “conservative” regarding his language use, and thus has not been keen on code-switching. Instead, he was reported usually speaking around the missing word, trying to make his parents say it for him.

As to the younger son (aged 7) in F4, the situation seems different. In his father’s view, he uses the languages in a more unrestricted manner than his brother, regularly including both Finnish and English within a sentence. This takes place particularly when he cannot be bothered to search for a certain word in either language even if he would eventually recall it, which relates to Gardner-Chloros’ (2009: 15) *easiest way of maintaining conversation*. In short, the 7-year-old in F4 uses the language in which a certain word is “more ready” in his mind, as recalling the word in the other language would require him more effort. Furthermore, this kind of practice can be seen as a means of dealing with momentarily vocabulary gaps (Dewaele et al. 2003: 176), not only as a way of minimizing the conversational effort.

The kind of code-switching that takes place through isolated words in the middle of a sentence is called *code-switching on a single word basis* (Dewaele et al. 2003:176). As presented above, it was a common phenomenon across the participating families. Code-switching of this kind is typically used in order to fill in momentary vocabulary gaps, which also was the case among the children in F1, F3 and F4 in the present study. Furthermore, code-switching through isolated words is considered particularly common at the time the child is learning to master two languages in the early years of childhood, linking it to the language acquisition process (Grim 2008: 1). Parents in F2 and F3 in particular reported characteristics related to this, as the amount of code-switching had clearly declined after their children had passed the phase of early language acquisition.

4.2.2 Blending words and grammatical structures

Regarding the area of code-switching and different aspects associated with it, parents were asked whether their children tend to blend words or grammatical structures between Finnish and English, for example by creating words of their own that share features of both languages. Parents in F1 mention their children (aged 3 & 1) blending some grammatical structures of the two languages by adding Finnish inflections in the end of English words, for example *saanko minä hammiä*, which was a sentence uttered by the older one of the children. In this sentence, the word *ham* has been inflected with the Finnish partitive case ending. Other kinds of word blending strategies have not yet been practiced by the children in this family.

As to F3, similar kinds of patterns regarding blending have been occurring, as Finnish inflections are applied to English words in this family as well. One example of this was the sentence *I wanna go outkin*, in which the English word *out* has been inflected with the Finnish ending *-kin*, as in *uloskin*. Moreover, the older child used to create nonsense words of her own that were a mix from both languages at the time she was a toddler, which again links it to the process of language acquisition (Grim 2008: 1).

In the case of F4 (children aged 9, 7 & 2), parents report their 7-year-old blending grammatical structures likewise, which is most noticeable when looking at the word placement in sentences produced by the child. Based on the interview, he tends to put his siblings' names in unidiomatic places in a sentence when addressing them in English, in other words, he has a habit of not putting the name first as one would normally do while speaking English. From the point of view of the father, this tendency might be a mix from Finnish, where the rules concerning word order are not as fixed. However, the two other children in the family were not reported doing this.

Unlike the three other families, the child in F2 (aged 4) was not only reported blending grammatical structures, but also entire words by creating nonsense words of his own while playing alone. According to the father, this is an imaginary language created by the child along with an imaginary world of his own, and the words uttered by him in this context are usually described as very coincidental, including for example large numbers of consonants and possibly features from both Finnish and English. In addition to this, the child has also been heard mixing some grammatical rules the same way as the children in the other families, yet it was difficult for the father to describe in more detail as he does not speak Finnish himself.

Across the families, cases where grammatical structures were blended in the form of using Finnish inflections in English words can be seen relating to Myers-Scotton's (cited in Gerald and Yakpo 2015) *Matrix Language Frame (MLF)*, since Finnish occurs as the language providing the morphosyntactic frame that English words adapt to. For example the sentence *Saanko minä hammiä*, shows how the English word *ham* has been inflected applying the Finnish partitive case ending. However, situations in which English would have served as the matrix language defining the frame for Finnish words were not reported by any of the parents. This might be due to grammatical differences between the languages, as Finnish modifies and inflects several parts of speech whereas English does not.

4.2.3 Switching languages in larger stretches

In addition to the single word level discussed in section 4.2.1, code-switching can take place in larger stretches, meaning that the speaker chooses to stick to either language for a longer time within a conversation. In F1, children (aged 3 & 1) were not reported doing exactly this, yet they often answer their English-speaking father in Finnish, which results in a change of language in the conversation too. Moreover, when the older child is asked to deliver a message between her parents, she often translates into Finnish whatever her father says to her in English, resulting in the mother hearing a Finnish version of the originally English note. In these kind of cases the language changes within a conversation, yet the children themselves do not use both languages and switch from one language to the other, as they simply refuse to answer in the language that was used by the parent.

As to F3, the children (aged 6 & 3) usually answer in the language a question has been asked, yet the older child was sometimes reported being selective regarding questions asked in English. For example, she might ignore an English question asked by her father by turning to her mother instead, giving her the answer in Finnish. This resembles the experiences of F1 described above, resulting in a change of language even though the child only uses either one of the languages, and thus does not actually switch between them. In turn, the younger child of the family was not reported doing this.

The four-year-old child in F2, on the contrary, does apply the strategy of using both languages and switching between them within a conversation in order to make both his parents listen to

him simultaneously, which indicates that social factors affect his practices of code-switching as mentioned by Genesee et al. 2004, Gumperz 1982, Gumperz and Hernandez-Chavez 1972 and McClure and Yumoto 1977 (cited in Grim 2008: 1). For instance, the child might explain something to his father in English, and then switch into Finnish for a relatively large stretch to make his mother interested as well. Based on the interview, this mostly happens when the child is highly excited about something and wants his parents to pay attention to it immediately. As to answering questions, the child always answers in the language the question was originally uttered, and no language switches were reported taking place in this context.

In F4, the children (aged 9, 7 & 2) are not typically heard changing the language within a conversation, yet when they are in the company of their friends that are also Finnish-English bilinguals the situation is different, and they might switch. In addition, while playing with their monolingual Finnish friends, they might use English with each other but then switch to Finnish when addressing a friend. With regard to questions, just like in F2, the children in this family use the original language in their answers, and no switches were reported occurring.

The kind of code-switching that takes place in large stretches as discussed above is referred to in the study conducted by Dewaele et al. (2003: 176). According to the study, bilingual speakers switch from *the matrix language* (the language providing the morphosyntactic frame) to the embedded language for a larger stretch, if the syntactic properties of the embedded language word do not match with the frame provided by the matrix language. The findings of the present study, however, do not show signs of this kind of behaviour as the children's language switching in larger stretches only seems motivated by social aspects as suggested by Grim (2004: 1). In other words, the children in the present study apply practices of this kind of switching for social purposes, for instance when asking for the simultaneous attention of both parents.

All in all, code-switching that occurs in large stretches did not occur as frequently in the children's speech as code-switching on a single word level (discussed in section 4.2.1). The latter one typically served as a means of coping with vocabulary gaps in the children's everyday communication, especially in situations where they could not be bothered to search for the correct word in either language (Gardner-Chloros 2009: 15). In turn, code-switching in larger stretches was mostly reported taking place occasionally, fuelled by social purposes.

4.3 Children's dominant language and overall language preference

The third subject of the interviews was the children's overall language preference, and whether they seemed more proficient in one language than the other. The parents were asked if their children prefer either language over the other, and whether there are differences between Finnish and English concerning the degree of proficiency, as both languages are rarely equally fluent (Nguyen 2015: 8 and Grosjean 2008: 14). With regard to this matter, the participating families differed a lot, and there was also notable variation between siblings within a family. *Table 2* below summarizes the language dominance of each child in the present study. Next I am going to discuss the differences between the families in more detail.

Table 2. Dominant languages

Families	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
F1	Finnish	Finnish	-
F2	Both equal	-	-
F3	Finnish	Both equal	-
F4	Both equal	English	Finnish

In F1 the children's (aged 3 & 1) preference for one language over the other was the most prevalent of all the four families, as even up to 80% of all the speech currently produced by the children was reported to be in Finnish. The dominance of Finnish in their life manifests itself for example in situations where they address their English-speaking father in Finnish and refuse to answer him in English. In addition, nearly all conversations initiated by the children themselves are in Finnish. All in all, Finnish seems to be the overall spoken language used by the children at this point, whereas English has a more passive role as a language heard on a daily basis at home but not yet actively used by the children. This kind of strong preference for either language could be explained by the extent of exposure to both languages not being balanced (Nguyen 2015: 8), as the children in F1 have been living in a Finnish-speaking environment since birth.

Moreover, the older one of the siblings in F1 goes to a Finnish daycare located nearby. In her mother's view, Finnish had been the more dominant language for her from the beginning.

However, going to a Finnish-speaking daycare might have further enhanced her Finnish acquisition by providing increased exposure to the language. As discussed in section 2.3.1, most bilinguals do not receive equal amounts of input in both languages, which affects their language preference (Core et al. 2012: 24). The younger child in the family has not yet been to kindergarten, but was reported starting in the same group with her sister the following autumn.

As to the child in F2 (aged 4), no significant difference regarding the extent to which Finnish and English are used was reported. The child uses both languages approximately equally at this point and switches between them with no difficulties. Moreover, his choice of language is strongly linked to the person with whom he is spending time in a given situation, and he normally adjusts his language choices based on this. It was mentioned, however, that from now and again he would fall behind in either language, yet usually catches up relatively quickly. This phenomenon was reported happening both ways as the child is sometimes falling behind in Finnish and sometimes in English, yet at the time the interview was conducted the child's language use was described as fairly balanced. Considering Grosjean's (2008: 14) study, it could be assumed that in F2 the child's needs for using each language are in balance, as both languages are being used approximately to the same extent.

Consequently, in F2 there is no explicit correlation between the dominant language and the choice of daycare. The child currently participates in Finnish daycare yet does not show continuous preference for either language, suggesting an overall balance between the extent of exposure to both languages (Nguyen 2015: 8). Moreover, the child was reported catching up quickly after temporarily falling behind in either language, which also indicates that the environment in which he lives is relatively balanced in terms of language use. The kindergarten was chosen due to the parents' assumption that a daycare supporting Finnish acquisition would be more useful for the child, as proper Finnish skills are crucial while living in Finland. In turn, the required English input could be provided by the father.

As to F3, the children (aged 6 & 3) in the family seem to establish different patterns regarding the preferred language. The older child shows a preference for Finnish in her speech as she generally uses it to a greater extent, and as mentioned earlier might ignore questions or statements uttered to her in English. Based on the interview, she also refused to speak English until the age of two, even though she was able to fully understand it. As a result of this, she only communicated in Finnish as a toddler, using it even with her English-speaking father. Later

on, learning to read in Finnish has been easier for her than reading in English, and she is reported preferring Finnish books these days. As to her younger sister's language use, in turn, English and Finnish have been approximately equal from the very beginning, and no apparent distinction between them can be made.

Furthermore, the older child in F3 first went to a Finnish daycare at the age of one and a half, staying there approximately for a year until her sister was born. A couple of years later, however, both the children started in an English-speaking daycare together. At this time, the older one was four years old whereas the younger one had reached the age of two. Based on the interview, the ages at which the children started in the English daycare were one of the factors contributing to the differences regarding their linguistic preferences. The younger child was learning to speak at the time, and the increased exposure to English resulted in both languages developing to be approximately equal. In turn, her older sister had been receiving more Finnish input as a toddler, which in line with her later preference for Finnish.

In F4, differences between the children (aged 9, 7 & 2) were reported likewise. The oldest child was said to be equally proficient in both languages, using them approximately to the same extent and being able to read in both of them without difficulties. Thus, in his case both English and Finnish seem equally dominant, even though when talking about his particular areas of interest, for example animals, he might have to search for the English words. As to his younger brother, there is a more noticeable difference between the use of the languages. In his father's view, English is the stronger language for him, as he regularly throws in English words even when speaking Finnish and being in the company of Finnish-speaking people. According to the father, part of it is that he does not know certain words, and therefore uses English in order to deal with vocabulary gaps (Dewaele et al. 2003: 176). Additionally, part of it is that he cannot be bothered to search for the words in Finnish and does not want to waste time. This indicates that the English counterparts are more easily accessible to him, which is something that Gardner-Chloros (2009: 15) found out in her study.

In the case of the youngest child in F4 (aged 2), who is currently learning to speak and knows a couple of dozen words, Finnish seems to be the more dominant language at this point. It was mentioned that she has several word pairs from both languages in her vocabulary, for example *hey* along with its Finnish counterpart *moi*, yet altogether she is currently producing more

Finnish than English words, which also could be explained by Finnish being constantly spoken in the surrounding environment.

Overall, the case of F4 shows some similar features with that of F3. The oldest child went to a Finnish kindergarten, yet recently attended first and second grade at school in English. Nonetheless, his exposure to Finnish during his early years in kindergarten is likely to have balanced his language acquisition, resulting in both languages developing to be equally strong. His younger brother, in turn, has been to kindergarten in English, which enhanced his English acquisition and enabled it to become the more dominant language for him. Additionally, he is now starting the first grade in an international school, which is likely to further support his English skills.

In summary, most of the children participating in the present study preferred one language over the other and showed greater proficiency in either Finnish or English, which supports Nguyen's (2015: 8) and Grosjean's (2008: 14) arguments of bilingual individuals rarely being equally proficient in both languages. All the more, the findings presented above indicate a connection between the children's language dominance and the language used in their daycare. One likely factor to explain this is the extent of exposure (Nguyen 2015: 8 and Core et al. 2012: 24), as daycare significantly contributes to the language exposure the children receive in each language.

Furthermore, linguistic input provided by the general environment was also reported affecting the children's language acquisition and language dominance. In particular, families 2 and 4 reported their children's English skills taking remarkable steps forward when spending holidays in English-speaking countries, which also reflects the significance of the language exposure provided by the environment (Nguyen 2015: 8 and Core et al. 2012: 24).

5 Conclusion

Plenty of research has been conducted in the area of bilingualism during the past decades, yet it has often concentrated on secondary bilinguals and bilingual adults instead of primary bilingual children. Thus, the central aim of the present paper was to shed light on how primary bilingual children that have been exposed to Finnish and English since birth use the two languages and switch between them in their everyday lives. The findings of the study indicate

that the children's use of languages shares common features across the family borders, yet there are also notable differences regarding the more dominant language and the ways of switching between the languages.

All the participating families applied Barron-Hauwaert's (2004: 1) *one-parent-one-language strategy* in order to establish and maintain bilingualism in the family, resulting in most of the children associating each parent with one language and thus switching between the languages depending on the parents' presence. In some cases, however, the children's language choices were at this point tied to particular words and word clusters instead. All the more, differences in language use between the families particularly occurred in situations where siblings communicated with each other without their parents being present, and in situations where the children addressed both their parents simultaneously.

The phenomenon of code-switching was to some extent familiar in all the participating families, which supports the argument of code-switching being characteristic of the process of acquiring two languages in early childhood (Grim 2008: 1). Overall, the present paper indicates different forms of code-switching being a common aspect in bilingual children's communication. However, notable differences occurred even between siblings within a family, indicating that personality traits of each child also have an effect on the characteristics of their language use. With regard to dominant language and language preference, the results varied significantly between the families. Nonetheless, it was common for most of the children to show greater proficiency in either language, suggesting that the level of "fully balanced" bilingualism is rarely reached as Nguyen (2015: 8) argues.

The present study provides new insights on parents' views concerning their children's bilingual language use. However, the data collection was limited to four families, and thus the findings of the study should not be generalized. Wider research in this area could be conducted in order to provide information based on which also generalizations could be made. Further research on bilingual children could include e.g. language development and advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism, which could not be covered within the scope of the present paper.

Finally, bilingual children remain a timely area of research, as the trend of globalization is expected to continue in the future, bringing together people from different cultural and linguistic

backgrounds. Considering this, it is important to understand primary bilingual children's use of languages and the impacts of bilingualism on their communication.

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Appendix 1: Interview questions in English

Section 1 – General information

1. How many children do you have?
2. How old are they?
3. What languages are used in the family?
4. Was it clear from the beginning that you would raise your children to be bilingual?
5. If the children are or have been in kindergarten, was it in English or in Finnish? Why that language?
6. What language do you speak with the children's mother/father?

Section 2 – Language choice

1. How would you describe or characterize your children's use of languages?
2. In your view, what determines their language choice?
3. In what kind of situations do they use English/Finnish? Is there a difference in this regard between the children?
4. Which language do the siblings use with each other? Does it change depending on the context?
5. Do the children seem to prefer one language over the other / do they seem more proficient in either language? How does it show?
6. If the children are thinking aloud or talking to themselves, which language do they use? Does the presence of either parent in the same room affect the language choice, even though he/she is not talking to the child?
7. If the children are addressing both parents simultaneously, which language is used?
8. Do the children prefer to use either language when expressing their emotions, e.g. when they are very happy or very sad?
9. Which language do they use when they react spontaneously to something, e.g. when they are surprised or frightened?

Section 3 – Code-switching & language mixing

1. Do the children switch between the two languages within *a conversation*? Examples?
2. Do the children ever use both languages within *a sentence*? In what kinds of situation does this happen?
3. Do the children answer in the same language a question has been asked, or might they use the other language? Any examples?
4. If the children cannot come up with a word in either language, do they use the other language to fill in the vocabulary gap?

5. Do they blend / have they blended English and Finnish words? (Creating words of their own that are a mixture of both languages.) What kind of words?
6. Do the children ever mix the grammatical rules of the two languages, e.g. by using English word order when speaking Finnish or by showing other English elements in their Finnish, or the other way round?
7. Do they adapt expressions or idioms from one language to the other?
8. Do certain topics or words seem to trigger a change of language in conversations?

Section 4 – Pros & cons of bilingualism

1. How do you see the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism with regard to your children?
2. How do you think it will influence their life as adults?
3. Anything else you would like to mention?

Appendix 2: Interview questions in Finnish

Osa 1 – Yleistiedot

1. Kuinka monta lasta sinulla/teillä on?
2. Minkä ikäisiä lapset ovat?
3. Mitä kieliä perheessänne käytetään?
4. Oliko päätös kasvattaa lapset kaksikielisesti alusta saakka selkeä?
5. Ovatko lapset olleet päivähoidossa? Oliko/onko päiväkotikieli suomen- vai englanninkielinen?
6. Mitä kieltä käytät toisen vanhemman kanssa?

Osa 2 – Kielelliset valinnat

1. Kuinka kuvailisit lastesi kielenkäyttöä?
2. Mikä mielestäsi määrittää heidän kielivalintansa?
3. Missä tilanteissa he käyttävät suomea ja missä englantia? Esimerkkejä? onko lasten välillä eroja?
4. Mitä kieltä sisarukset käyttävät keskenään? Onko tilanneyhteydellä vaikutusta?
5. Suosivatko lapset jompaakumpaa kieltä, tai onko jompikumpi kieli toista vahvempi? Miten tämä näkyy?
6. Jos lapset juttelevat itsekseen tai ajattelevat ääneen, kumpaa kieltä he käyttävät? Vaikuttaako jommankumman läsnäolo kielivalintaan, vaikei vanhempi puhuisi lapselle ko. tilanteessa? Esimerkkejä?
7. Jos lapset puhuttelevat molempia vanhempia yhtä aikaa / osoittavat sanansa kummallekin vanhemmalle, mitä kieltä he käyttävät?
8. Ilmaisevatko lapset mieluummin tunteitaan jommallakummalla kielellä, esimerkiksi ollessaan hyvin iloisia tai surullisia? Esimerkkejä?
9. Kumpaa kieltä lapset käyttävät spontaaneissa reaktioissa, esimerkiksi säikähtäessään?

Osa 3 – Koodinvaihto & kielten sekoittaminen

1. Vaihtelevatko lapset kielten välillä saman keskustelun aikana? Esimerkkejä?
2. Entä vaihtelevatko he kielten välillä tai käyttävätkö molempia kieliä samassa lauseessa? esimerkkejä?
3. Vastaavatko lapset samalla kielellä, jolla kysymys on esitetty, vai saattavatko vaihtaa kieltä?
4. Jos lapset eivät muista jotakin sanaa jommallakummalla kielellä, käyttävätkö he toista kieltä apuna?
5. Sekoittavatko/yhdistävätkö he suomen- ja englanninkielisiä sanoja? Toisin sanoen, luovatko omia sanoja, jotka ovat sekoituksia molemmista kielistä? Millaisia?

6. Sekoittavatko lapset koskaan suomen ja englannin kielioppisääntöjä? (Esim. soveltamalla englannin kielen sanajärjestystä puhuessaan suomea tai toisin päin?)
7. Siirtävätkö he sanontoja tai ilmauksia kielestä toiseen?
8. Aiheuttavatko tietyt sanat tai aiheet kielenvaihdoksen keskustelujen yhteydessä?

Osa 4 – Kaksikielisyyden hyvät ja huonot puolet

1. Millaisina näet kaksikielisyyden hyödyt ja haitat lapsiesi kohdalla?
2. Kuinka uskot kaksikielisyyden vaikuttavan heidän elämäänsä aikuisina?
3. Onko vielä jotakin, mitä haluaisit mainita?