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# The complexity of self-definition for people living with two languages and two cultures

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**Abstract**

Most European countries have a strong "one language, one nation" ideology, even though they all have national minorities in their territories. However, recently, as a result of international migration, the identity of nation states of the EU has changed. Major changes occurred mainly in the ethnic composition of countries; and in the urban environment, where there is a growth of mixed population, bilingualism and biculturalism are becoming the norm. The use of two or more languages also entails the integration of two or more cultures, which changes the original nation state identity.

The question of identity can be very complex in bilingual and bicultural situations. Each person has the right to decide whether their self-definition is determined by their *ethnos* (i.e. the family ties, friends, emotional attitude, language, culture, literature, homeland, etc.) or the *demos* (i.e. practicing democratic, civil rights, getting on in the society, etc.). The decision is even harder when it comes to bilingual individuals that come from mixed marriages. This paper analyzes that situation from the aspect of bilingual and bicultural individuals. It highlights the importance of the factors that may contribute to the self-definition of individuals and without which the host society cannot offer comfort to immigrants. Individual satisfaction is indispensable for integration at societal and political levels.

*Keywords:* bilingualism, biculturalism, identity, code-switching, code-mixing, minorities, immigrants, integration

## Introduction

In Europe, most of the old nation states have become countries where, besides the majority population, there are also regional or immigrant (recently migrant) communities (Extra–Gorter, 2008). According to Oakes (2001), there was a major change in the relationship

of language and national identity in the 20th century. In the Member States of the European Union, international migration caused a change in the traditional identity of nation states for demographic reasons (primarily in the urban environment).

Two political approaches compete with each other: those dreaming of a unified Europe that supports diversity and inclusion and intend to establish the united states of Europe pushing national identity and characteristics into the background are opposed by the increasingly introverted tendency supported by those who wish to preserve the nation states, keep the national cultures, traditions and habits and emphasize the national characteristics. The contradiction of extroversion and introversion causes numerous tensions, which may reach a dramatic scale when it concerns human lives. Despite the best intentions of both parties, serious conflicts may develop in which individuals may be hurt. These days the "migrant issue" is an obvious example for that. Hungary intends to maintain its nation state status: the official communication conveys a message to the citizens that Hungary belongs to the Hungarians, the country is populated by Hungarians and the Hungarian culture is nourished here. In this communication, giant posters and road advertisements are used, which may have a rather adverse effect on foreign visitors and those who intend to integrate in Hungary.

This situation was triggered by the flow of migrants. The migrants arrive in Europe in response and as they are encouraged by a more inclusive policy. Originally they came across Hungary but later avoided us. Among the migrants, many try to escape war zones, while others leave their home country hoping for a better life and intending to settle down in an economically more advanced country. None of these reasons is unknown to Hungarians because besides frequent emigration of individuals, Hungarians or people of Hungarian origin live in a large number of countries of the world as a consequence of multiple waves of emigration that occurred during history (either because of wars or for economic reasons).

Owing to expanding co-operation and integration at European level, the concept of European identity emerged in Europe, reflecting the preservation of European values and attachment to the European culture. Globally, the accelerated flow of information and constantly developing communication technology have made the world "smaller" and "more interactive". Real-time information is available for everyone about the options relevant for them from mass communication tools and social media pages. Openness also increases the risks of abuse, as information and options can also be used for malevolent purposes. There has been a rise in the number of terrorist actions across the world, which call for strict measures in order to eliminate the threat. However, that fact cannot be used as an argument when honest people intending to settle down for human reasons are rejected by or expelled from a country.

Internationalization is an objective in the Hungarian higher education. The EU supports student exchange programmes across Europe and the Hungarian state also assists young people intending to study in the Hungarian higher education system with a scholarship designed for foreign citizens (Stipendium Hungaricum). There are more and more multinational companies in Hungary employing a large number of people who live in Hungary but do not speak Hungarian yet wish to integrate to a certain extent. Obviously, such people live in Hungary temporarily, but during the time spent here they discover the Hungarian culture, obtain Hungarian friends, learn the Hungarian language, yet come across posters that contradict to their everyday experience. People coming from different cultures and speaking different languages can work together peacefully, in friendship in small commu-

nities. They respect and like each other and even when it is not the case, it is generally not because of the difference in origin but the human characteristics that also create conflicts between those who speak the same language and come from the same culture.

Globalization has an impact on multilingual Europe at two levels: convergence and divergence can be observed simultaneously. As the English language spreads as a *lingua franca,* it entails international convergence. These days there is no point in the world where one could not use English as the lingua franca. In Europe, the purpose of multilingual education is to teach not only the majority and minority languages but also English as a third language ("glocalization") (Cenoz–Genesee, 1998; Cenoz–Jessner, 2000; House, 2008). At the same time, divergence may be observed at national level – more and more minority languages are being revived (Catalan, Welsh, Basque, Frisian, Romansh, etc.). Bilingualism and multilingualism are increasingly accepted across the world, as people living in bi- or multilingual environments adapt to the circumstances and use both the languages of their states and the languages of their minorities every day.

Convergence and divergence can also be captured in social psychological aspects. Convergence is the historic route of communicative accommodation theory (CAT) (Sachdev–Giles, 2006). Communication partners have an urge to adjust their languages, their paralinguistic and non-verbal tools to one another to create a mutual feeling of solidarity. This phenomenon is especially important in a bilingual situation. Efforts towards social integration and linguistic and cultural definition always induce positive emotions in the receiving party. On the contrary, divergence emphasizes linguistic and cultural differences. Bilingual people use the convergence and divergence strategies in their everyday lives at various social platforms.

In summary, we can conclude that a paradox situation is evolving in the diversity of languages and cultures

- at European level: linguistic diversity is welcomed;
- at national level: linguistic diversity is a threat to national identity and may become an obstacle of integration at the individual level;
- at individual level: it may cause numerous conflicts in a bilingual environment.

In general, identity is examined from two approaches: *demos* and *ethnos* (Smith, 1986). Demos is the public life aspect that reflects the individual's self-definition at the level of the state and society and shows the culture and the language in relation to which the individual can exercise their democratic citizen rights and the conditions that are favourable for them in education and in making progress. Ethnos is self-identification in the private sphere. It expresses the emotional approach of the individual to the language, culture, literature, etc. and their attachment to their home country and relatives. In a monolingual environment, the two spheres usually coincide and therefore self-definition is not a problem for the individual.

In recent times, we have witnessed major changes in the ethnic composition of the population of individual countries (as a result of the enlargement of the European Union or the wave of migrants), and more and more situations develop in which people become bilingual. Specifically because of the reasons outlined above, this bilingualism may also entail self-definition problems, as each individual must weigh the importance of demos and ethnos for themselves. They must decide whether to define themselves with the social or private sphere. This identity also expresses their attachment to culture.

## Bilingualism and biculturalism

According to the currently most widely accepted definition of bilingualism, a person is bilingual if they use both languages according to their needs in their everyday lives (Grosjean, 1982). A bilingual person may not be expected to speak both languages at the same level; the holistic approach looks at the individual and their needs. What matters is that the individual is able to communicate with the right people in the right language on the right topics and in the right situations. A bilingual individual is not the sum of two monolinguals but they use the two languages according to their needs. They can discuss certain topics in one and others in the other language.

That complementary principle also applies to cultures associated with languages. Some monolingual people live in two cultures: in general, Jewish communities speak the majority language but follow both the majority and the Jewish culture in terms of their habits and traditions at any point of the world. There are some bilingual communities who nourish the traditions of only one culture. Children born in mixed marriages are good examples, for whom the culture associated with the majority language is dominant. Some children coming from such families are not even aware of the other culture and are not affected by it. It depends on whether the parent not speaking the majority language considers it important to introduce their children to the other culture. There are also bilingual individuals who follow the culture of both languages, though not to the same extent. Consequently, biculturalism is like bilingualism. There is no need to be perfectly aware of the two cultures, it is enough if the individual understands and follows segments of the two cultures that appeal to them.

Many believe that language is the primary factor in defining identity. Others argue that it is the culture and not the language that is the dominant factor in self-definition. This latter approach is closer to our definition because bilingualism is a permanently changing state. For bilingual individuals, the previously dominant language may turn into the weaker language frequently because the conditions change. The same can also apply to culture but identification with a culture depends on the individual's decision, while language rather depends on the circumstances. Culture may be the dominant factor in developing identity. This is why we are aware of Hungarians for whom the dominant language is a foreign language and not Hungarian, yet they declare themselves Hungarians and form Hungarian communities in emigration. Their children attend schools where education is provided in the majority language and, though they establish weekend schools teaching in Hungarian, the main activity or objective remains to preserve their Hungarian culture.

What is the meaning of biculturalism then? We all simultaneously belong to more than one cultures. The main culture includes national, language, social, religious, etc. characteristics, while sub-culture includes occupation, sports, hobbies, etc. (Grosjean, 2008). Main cultures mutually preclude each other, while sub-cultures are complementary and can effectively exist side by side. However, many people take part in the activities of two or more main cultures to a different extent (e.g., the Chinese in the UK, Hungary, etc.). These people adapt to both cultures, sets of values and to both languages in their behaviour depending on whom they are talking to. They mix and combine the characteristics of the two cultures. Consequently, it is often difficult to define their cultural origin and therefore they cannot fully represent any culture at all. The recognition of biculturalism, i.e., bicultural identity, occurs rarely. The recognition of bilingualism with the denial of biculturalism and dual

identity occurs more frequently. The idea that both cultures should be perfectly known is wrong (cf. the maximalist approach to bilingualism: Grosjean, 1989). An individual may become bicultural in a minority area or in a migrant family, where the parents and grandparents feel responsible for passing their home culture on to the second and third generations. The two cultures are important to an individual at different levels, which lead to cultural dominance. Balanced bicultural individuals are as rare as balanced bilingual individuals.

## Bilingualism and biculturalism from the monolingual and monocultural view

Europe is still dominated by the monolingual view, according to which, normally an individual belongs to a nation, speaks the language of that nation and is attached to the culture of that nation. This is the inheritance of the nation states. However, as a result of the reasons outlined above, the demographic conditions have changed in Europe and Hungary's accession to the European Union launched some migration of nations not only in Europe but also in Hungary. A number of individuals live and work in Hungary whose first language is not Hungarian and a number of Hungarians live in different countries where they do not use their native language to communicate in their everyday lives and where they do not exercise their citizen rights or intimate relationships in their first (native) language. In such cases the self-definition of individuals may change, what is more, they can even develop a double identity. It is incomprehensible from the monolingual and monocultural views, so in many cases such people are stigmatized.

Another fault of the monolingual view is that just because bilingual individuals live their everyday lives with two languages, monolinguals do not consider them authentic in terms of self-definition. It is a sad fact that Hungarians living in a diaspore in Romania and using both Hungarian and Romanian in their everyday lives are looked down on, and they are not considered Hungarian irrespective whether or not the individuals have a Hungarian identity. Such people are not even considered "true" Hungarians and are many times referred to as Romanians, although in their environment they can only make progress with the Romanian language regardless of the fact that they define themselves as Hungarians at the level of ethnos. The best solution therefore may still be if each individual can decide on their identity and the others respect that decision.

The maximalist view of monolinguals demands from bilingual and multilingual individuals to speak all their languages "perfectly", as "natives". This obsolete view was represented by Bloomfield (1933) and it spread all over Europe and even the world. Notwithstanding the fact that even monolingual individuals are not aware of all varieties of their native language (and they do not require it from themselves), bilingual and multilingual individuals cannot speak their languages perfectly because they do not have a need to do so. According to the functional approach of bilingualism, a bilingual individual uses their languages to suit their individual needs.

The perfect command of a language puts grammatical competence to the foreground, or at least bilinguals can be rather critical about their grammatical performance. They spot grammatical errors immediately, which confirms for them that the bilingual individual is not really bilingual but is rather a "semilingual" and cannot speak "properly" in any language.

The quality of speech production of bilinguals is affected by numerous factors, which monolinguals do not take into account. Bi- and multilingual individuals store two or more languages in their minds, and the languages are in constant interaction with each other. In many cases it helps them in communication, but at other times it may cause disturbance. Between the two extremes, which do not result in any errors, there are interim stages when only some weird expressions or unusual terms may come up, but they are comprehensible to monolingual listeners even though they would never use the same linguistic expression themselves. The two languages are permanently active in the brain but the degree of their activity depends on the linguistic repertoire of the partner in speech, the topic or the situation.

If a bilingual individual talks to a monolingual person, the bilingual will keep their languages under strong control trying to use the language also spoken by the partner in the conversation more actively and to deactivate as much as possible the language not understood or spoken by the partner. The success of these attempts is affected by many factors, including the psychological state and the level of fatigue of the individual. However, when the parties in a conversation share each other's languages, i.e., they both speak the same two languages and are aware that the same situation applies to their partner, this strong language control disappears and both of their languages become equally active. In these cases, there could be code-switching and code-mixing, which is absolutely natural in the communication of bilingual individuals, but is rather strange to monolinguals. When a monolingual individual witnesses such a conversation, they can easily reach the wrong conclusion that the parties having the conversation are rather semilingual than bilingual.

## Code-switching, code-mixing

Code-switching is one of the indicators of pragmatic competence. Code-switching, i.e., the alternating use of two languages in a conversation, can be interpreted in a way that there is a good reason why the speaker switches from one language to another. There may be a number of reasons that compel bilingual individuals to do so: the topic, the parties to the conversation, the location, emphasis, quotation, etc. Code-switching is one of the options that bilinguals can use to clarify their thoughts to be communicated.

Furthermore, code-switching is a type of contextualization strategy, a metapragmatic indication (Auer, 1999), which unifies the parties to the conversation specifically due to their bilingualism. Most of the switches takes place on the main syntactic and prosodic borders (at phrasal and sentence levels). The ability of code-switching is not limited to balanced bilingual individuals; on the contrary: bilinguals who have rather limited abilities in one language can also use code-switching. The switch is often preceded by prosodic signs (stress, pause, hesitation) and discourse markers, indicating the pragmatic force.

Code-mixing is a frequent switch of languages within one interaction, as a result of which even the base language of the conversation cannot be determined. Code-mixing requires higher bilingual proficiency (Backus, 1996; Bentahila–Davies, 1995). Owing to the higher proficiency level achieved in the languages while the individual is becoming bilingual, the tendency is always from code-switching to code-mixing and never in the reverse direction. Code-switching may be repeated during an interaction, but it always has

a pragmatic reason. If no pragmatic reason can be detected, the switch loses its pragmatic force and can be referred to as code-mixing rather than code-switching.

Below I present examples that prove lexical code-switching from an interview of an American-Hungarian bilingual individual (1–5). Language is switched at the lexical level without any semantic or pragmatic explanation because the equivalent words and expressions exist in the Hungarian language as well. Presumably the switch is made at the conceptual level because the speaker refers to the American culture and creates an American context for the topic, which triggers the congruent component(s) of the embedded English language:

1. "my mother is a great *designer*";
2. "there was a *winter break*, and a *spring break*";
3. "we were the *ship mop*";
4. "well *reading, English, history, science,* and we also selected *P.E., Spanish, music, arts*";
5. "Naturally, always think of it as *4th of July*".

In the following examples (6–11) the reason for code-switching is the incongruency of the semantic and pragmatic features of the lexical items of the concept in the two languages. In all examples the speaker clarifies what they want to say by switching to the other language. In some of the examples, some hesitation can also be observed before the code-switching (e.g., *well, so, such*, etc.):

6. "art class, i.e., we produced something during the *art class*";
7. "*Community College*, i.e., it is not a large university or college";
8. "my mother took me to such an *egg hunt,* and to similar events";
9. "well, *high school,* because it does not exist there, it is known as *high school* there";
10. "I bought this flour for the *pancake*";
11. "I sent my *résumé, CV,* and I met the *general manager*".

When there is no lexical equivalent of the target notion in the main language of the conversation, code-switching is the simplest solution (examples 12–18).

12. "I think *brownies*";
13. "*Streuselkuchen* – it is a fruity pastry, with fine sweet pastry spread on top, known as *Streusel*, hence the name of the pastry";
14. "they add such a *fudge,* such *chocolate fudge*";
15. "there is a two-year diploma, called *Associate's Degree";*
16. "a good *ranch* with horses is guaranteed only in Canada";
17. "*Kaffezeit* is at four o'clock; *Kaffee und Kuchen*";
18. "there were so-called *Blackpool lights*".

In examples 19–24, there is no more code-switching but rather code-mixing at the lexical level. There is no indication of any difficulty in finding the words in the continuous flow of statements, i.e., nothing interrupts the planning phase. The appearance of the other language cannot even be triggered by a cultural effect.

19. "who was *visiting scholar* from Cambridge";
20. "there was a large *turnover*";

21. “say it is *natural*, but it is not allowed”;
22. “when it happens, I am sent for *lay-off*”;
23. “I am *heterosexual*”;
24. “not so much an *attitude*”.

The switch can also take place on the border of phrases (see examples 25–30):

25. “they know everything *before the court trial*”;
26. “It is very difficult in the US, *‘cause everything is set*”;
27. “He could only feel around because it was a *pitch black inside tunnel*”;
28. “I thought that it was a *once in a lifetime experience*”;
29. “There are some regional, i.e., they are *regions, the Atlantic Division and Pacific Division and Central Division*”;
30. “Um, such, such an ghost story, so a *history of ideas*”.

Such blocks in general refer to a sudden confusion in the speech production planning phase, which may be caused by a number of reasons. Such disfluencies may take the form of silent or filled pauses, restarted statements, repetitions (see Gósy, 2002), and I also include the discourse markers in the same category (see Dér, 2005; 2010). Although Myers-Scotton and Jake (1995) believe that the discourse markets should be considered meaningful words, the discourse markers occurring in my data are words used as fillings, which have already lost their semantic content due to the frequent use. Their usage clearly indicates that the speaker needs some time to form their statements correctly semantically and grammatically. The use of discourse markers often indicates a coming switch between languages, it reveals verbalization or transformational difficulties.

In the Hungarian language the most frequently used discourse markers are *ilyen* (such), *tehát* (so), *szóval* (well) and recently *tudod* (you know). Almost the same discourse markers exist in the English texts as well: *so, like, you know*. Speech disfluencies and discourse markers often occur concurrently.

In examples 39-46, code-switching is preceded by a Hungarian discourse marker in the Hungarian context. In all cases, the persons making the statements cannot find the proper words because they cannot find the right congruent concept (e.g., *interior decorator*) or because in the Hungarian lexicon the matching word or expression does not exist *(chocolate fudge, Easter-basket, college)*, or because they do not feel that the Hungarian equivalent of the used word is congruent enough *(British, shy)*.

39. “his wife is like *an interior decorator*, I cannot say better”;
40. “I think it was such *a British thing*”;
41. “there is such *an Easter-basket*”;
42. “such *chocolate fudge*”;
43. “so quiet, so *shy*, reserved”;
44. “polyes…, not polyester, but cotton, *cotton*, so *kind*, and so *warm*”;
45. “there were the so-called *gangs*”;
46. “three is a so-called *college*, dormitory within the University of London”.

## Self-assessment of bilinguals

The majority of bi- and multilinguals have a positive attitude towards their ability to communicate in multiple languages and to be able to use their languages in their everyday lives. Many emphasize the various advantages of that ability. Grosjean (1982: 271.) has collected a few examples: *"I can speak Burmese to my friends if I don't want people around me to understand what we are talking about." Or: "It extends your horizon. It means that you live in two worlds and not in just one (friends, cultural aspects, job opportunities, etc.)."*

Some consider it an advantage because wherever they go there are no language barriers, they can communicate with people coming from different cultures, can experience other cultures, read literature in the original and become tolerant and open. A German-French-English trilingual individual says the following: *"My triilingualism helped me a great deal. In my job the languages helped me get promotion, my language skills have developed a great deal, I am more open to minorities and I understand their language problems well. The fact that I am trilingual helped me understand others and help them."*

Others are disturbed by the difference between the proficiency levels of their languages; they look at themselves with the maximalist view and demand identical and perfect knowledge of the two languages from themselves. As it is not possible due to their natural environment, many do not declare themselves bilingual. They are embarrassed about their code-switches and code-mixes, which are absolutely natural phenomena in the communication of bilingual and multilingual individuals.

Generally they do not like interpreting or translating because it is not what makes them bilingual. They are bilingual because of their capability of the alternating use of their languages in their everyday lives according to their needs. At the same time, monolingual people expect intermediary skills from them, but not all bilingual individuals can comply with that expectation. Bilinguals learn their two languages to suit their needs, while translators and interpreters are trained for specific tasks.

Among the expressions of both positive and negative feelings, we find examples related to biculturalism as well.

Many feel that they behave differently when they use their two languages, but it is due rather to the context, the style and their adaptation to their partner in conversation, i.e., to CAT (communicative accommodation theory) than to the languages. Sachdev and Giles (2006) explain that the convergence recently observed in Europe is historically based on the theory that communication partners try to adapt to each other with linguistic, paralinguistic and non-verbal signs as well to make their partner feel their solidarity (e.g. by communicating more softly with a Russian, in a more business-like manner with an English person; an Arabic-French bilingual male communicates with Arabic women authoritatively and talks to French ladies in an easy manner). This type of conduct is extremely important in bilingual situations.

In a TAT *(thematic apperception test)* (Ervin, 1964), in which a story must be created from a picture, an English-French bilingual made two different stories based on the picture: in the French version, the woman believes that her husband is cheating on her and pleads with him not to leave. In the English version, the husband is preparing for a job interview, and the wife encourages him trying to convince him that their life will be much better if he succeeds.

In a different test, the participants had to complete sentences (Ervin–Tripp, 1968). Let us take a look at the answers of a Japanese-English bilingual individual in the two languages.

- *If my dreams do not match those of the family…* (Japanese: *I will be sad;* English: *I will do what I want).*
- *Probably I will be…* (Japanese: *a housewife,* English: *a teacher)*.
- *True friends must…* (Japanese: *help each other*, English: *be honest with each other*.)

The above example may prove the wrong assumption for a layman that bilinguals have a split personality or are schizophrenic. According to Adler (1977), everything that is expressed by language (history, culture, geography) exists twice in a bilingual individual. A child becomes schizophrenic if they can explain their emotions in two ways. Adler refers to an English-Afrikaans bilingual individual who is mad in one language and normal in the other. Adler has another deterring example of a bilingual individual who has hallucinations in one language but none in the other.

Haugen (1961) and Grosjean (1982) explain that the different mental states could be caused not by the bilinguality of the person but rather by the person's status in the society or their personal features. Monolingual individuals may be schizophrenic just as bilinguals. So the above example does not prove anything apart from the fact that different cultures belong to different languages and that bilinguals express the attitude accepted and generally used in a particular culture in the used language. This also reflects the impact of CAT (communicative accommodation theory).

## Myths about the advantages and disadvantages of bilingualism

Although many admired the people speaking two or more languages, bilingualism was not always thought to be something positive. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was considered harmful and people believed that infant bilingualism impeded the cognitive development of the child because it imposed such a cognitive and mental burden on the individual that the natural language development slowed down and resulted in a lower IQ level. They used methodologically wrong tests to prove that bilingualism had to be avoided, as it may also cause personality disorders. To prove the harmful effect, they used tests developed for English monolingual middle class children to examine the English language competence of Welsh-English bilingual working class children. Naturally, the results of the bilingual children were much weaker than those of the monolingual children. This method was not fair because it predicted the researchers intention: to put bilinguals into a disadvantaged situation.

It is not accidental that many bilingualism researchers led by Grosjean are against using tests designed by monolinguals to examine bilingual children (Grosjean–Li, 2013; Grosjean, 1998). Using an analogue example taken by Grosjean from sports: the performance of a high-hurdler cannot be compared to the performance of a short-distance runner or a high jumper. The latter two practice only one skill, respectively, at an extremely high level, while a high-hurdler combines two skills while doing a branch of sports of specific configuration. Similarly: a bilingual individual has a very special language configuration, combining the elements of both languages at a level at which they need them. In Hungary, e.g., the pre-school tests prior to school administered by speech therapists were also designed

for monolingual children and all bilingual children are also tested with these very tools. There is clearly a need for a measuring tool designed for bilinguals in order to prevent any distortion in the assessment of bilingual children starting school.

In the 20th century, researchers reached the point of emphasising the advantages of bilingualism, also based on tests conducted with doubtful methods. At that time the tests were carried out on selected children of intellectual parents, who were attending elite schools. Those tests revealed that bilingualism was not disadvantageous but, on the contrary, clearly advantageous because learning two languages does not represent such a cognitive burden that children would not cope with it; in fact, it enhances metalinguistic awareness, improves the abstracting ability, enhances tolerance and the acceptance of difference.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Bialystok conducted a number of research projects (2001; 2004 and 2007) and, with her co-author, a meta-analysis (Bialystok–Barac, 2013), arguing that the positive effects of bilingualism can be felt not only in childhood but also at an older age. Bilingual individuals are less prone to dementia (as also confirmed by Freedman et al., 2014) and Alzheimer disease (Bialystok et al., 2007). Children learning multiple languages at an early age develop various strategies that stimulate brain activity, and it has an impact not only on acquiring a new language but also on any other learning and brain activity (Marian–Shook, 2012). According to a different research (Adesope et al., 2010), bilinguals are better than monolinguals in metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness.

There are also neurophysiological research projects focusing on bilingualism. One of the most surprising results is that the grey matter density is much greater in bilingual than in monolingual individuals (Mechelli et al., 2004), and there is also a positive correlation between grey matter density and language proficiency level, while there is a negative correlation between grey matter density and age of second language acquisition. This means that irrespective of the age when an individual starts learning a second language, it has a positive effect on the brain, yet it is best to start it before the age of five. Grey matter is responsible for any kind of learning process and therefore those who learn languages will not only be able to learn a new language more easily, but they will also learn anything else with less effort.

There are also some critical voices about this great optimism. De Bot (2015) suggests that the reason why bilingualism seems so advantageous is that international journals tend to publish articles in which authors present positive results, and the studies that do not confirm the advantages of bilingualism because the researchers could not come up with any result in that regard are not published at all or only in a very small number. The reference index is also significantly greater for articles that present successful research projects. In the end, De Bot also comes to the conclusion that bilingualism is clearly advantageous both socially and psychologically, at the same time, other factors that grant special abilities to bilingual individuals in combination with their bilingual competence (e.g., encouraging environment, music, high-level education, etc.) still require further examination.

## Bilingualism and biculturalism in minorities and among immigrants

There are a number of ways in which an individual can become bilingual – some of those guarantee the learning of two cultures, yet others do not facilitate cultural immersion at all or only with difficulty.

## Linguistic minorities

In a supportive environment, bilingualism is obvious for a family living in a linguistic minority because they try to preserve their minority language at the ethnos level, yet they must also speak the majority language at the demos level if they wish to perform well in the society. For linguistic minorities the minority culture is also extremely important but they cannot separate themselves from the major culture either as they are part of it. Each individual living in a minority must decide for themselves which language and which culture will be dominant for them. However, in general, people living in linguistic minorities tend to declare that they belong to the minority culture even though the majority language is dominant for them. Such families speak the minority language at home and the majority language in the society. For children growing in such families the language input will be mixed because the minority language used by the parents at home contains a lot of majority language elements and they build friendship in the street, on the playground and in children's institutions with others speaking the majority language, thus they learn both languages and often switch codes just like their parents.

For linguistic minorities it may be difficult to preserve their minority language if it has no prestige in the society and the state does not support them. International linguistic rights documents (including the *Hague Recommendations*) demand from the states that they grant the fundamental human rights to linguistic minorities living in their territory to use their own language and, what is especially important, to provide them the right to start school education in their first, minority language. If this right is granted, it is easier to preserve the minority language. However, there are also examples that despite the fact that education in their native language is available, parents decide to enrol their children in a majority language school either because they expect higher-quality education or they hope for better opportunities to make progress there. In that case, the majority language becomes dominant, but the individual's identity may still be attached to the minority culture. A process of losing the language may start but it does not shake the identity of the individual.

Minorities are in a more difficult situation when they do not receive support from the majority society and when there are no institutions offering education in the minority language, especially when the minority language (and group) is stigmatized in the society. If that happens, the process of losing the language is more intensive and the linguistic assimilation of minorities occurs sooner. Under such circumstances, cultural assimilation also occurs sooner and the individual's identity may change.

## Bilingualism of immigrant people

For families who arrive in a new country with the intention of settling down, the motivation to learn the majority language is very strong. Emigration may be driven by a number of reasons, including political and economic ones, which will not be discussed in this paper. Regardless the cause of emigration, those who decide to continue their lives in a different country and in a different culture often risk their own lives before they achieve their goals. They hope for a better life and do not wish to lose their identity.

Their bilingualism is composed of the use of two languages in their everyday life: their first language at home, among the family and the majority language in the society. It is a frequent pattern observed in such families that the language shift takes place within three generations. The immigrants arrive in the target country mostly as monolinguals, where they learn the language of their environment. Their children use the first language of the parents at an early age, but as soon as they start attending an institution (kindergarten or school), they tend to use the language of their immediate environment more frequently and the less time they spend at home, the stronger the second language becomes, and by the time they reach adulthood, the majority language will be dominant for them. Consequently, the second generation is bilingual and in general it depends on the language of the spouse whether the third generation will be majority language dominant bilingual or monolingual speaking only the language of the immediate environment.

The first generation usually tries to preserve its first language and also tries to encourage their children to speak it. Below there are a few quotations from the memories of children of immigrant parents (collected by the author, presented fully matching the text).

*"The truth is that I was able to develop my Hungarian only here. At home I spoke Hungarian only to my parents and mostly to adults, and as I spent my time with adults rarely, and with friends much more often, we tended to speak English and very little in Hungarian. I still learnt it because my father talked to me a lot, for which I respect him greatly. He often made us read books in Hungarian and we had to write a diary for him in Hungarian, where he always checked and corrected the grammatical errors."* (English-Hungarian bilingual individual living in Hungary at the time of the interview.)

The excerpts from an interview below also confirm that the parents try to preserve the first language, but for the members of the second generation it is more natural to speak the majority language among themselves. Parents wish to pass on not only the language but also the culture to the second generation.

*"A: So our parents were Hungarians, but we were born in this country. The mothers met and exchanged gossip, while we danced or, when it happened at school, entertained ourselves.*

*Q: Well, you must have had a rather good community life.*

*A: Yes, um. However, we spoke more English to each other, so it is good that the program was in Hungarian, but...*

*Q: Was it easier?*

*A: Yes, of course.*

*Q: And the masses you attended were also in Hungarian?*

*A: Of course, yes, yes.*

*K: What about the family, your brother, did you speak in Hungarian to each other?*

*A: No, well, um. What? No, English. Well, the situation was and is that my parents spoke to us and to each other in Hungarian and he, i.e., my brother and I, spoke English between ourselves and also to our parents. My mother would ask in Hungarian: »Where are you, Zsuzsika?« and I replied in English, »I'm upstairs.« Well, this was it…*

*Q: So this was it. So your mother asked a question in Hungarian and you responded in English?*

*A: Yes.*

*Q: And did you deliberately do that after a while, or this is what you got used to?*
*A: No, it was so nat… simpler that way. What was deliberate was the instruction from our parents to speak in Hungarian, to which we responded.*
*Q: So you switched to Hungarian.*
*A: Yes, but it was instructed, i.e., it was a forced situation.*
*Q: And have you always spoken to your brother in English ever since you were small children?*
*A: I cannot speak to my brother in Hungarian. So the situation that now we should sit down because there are Hungarians here and we must speak Hungarian is very strange.*
*Q: And what about family events, birthdays and Christmases? What did you do then? How did you celebrate?*
*A: What do you mean?*
*Q: Which traditions and customs did you keep? The Hungarian or the Canadian ones?*
*A: No, the Hungarian ones. Yes, it was not Santa Claus who came to us but Jesus, Little Jesus visited us at Christmas. Yes, we kept the Hungarian, the Hungarian customs.*
*Q: And you had Father Christmas on the 6th of December?*
*A: Yes.*
*Q: Or Santa Claus?*
*A: Yes, yes.*
*Q: And at Christmas, you were visited by Little Jesus; and at other times? I don't know what traditions are there in Canada. Did you celebrate any of the Canadian holidays?*
*A: Well, there is Thanksgiving, which is a holiday, so you don't have to work, or you don't need to go to school, and of course we adopted it and we had turkey then. And so on, well, yes, after all, yes. Yes, we also adopted them.*
*Q: And others, like Halloween and similar?*
*A: Well, yes, Halloween as well. In the end it is not a family celebration at all.*
*Q: No, it is for children.*
*A: Of course, what is different at school..., at school we spoke English, and therefore adopted the customs.*
*Q: Well, yes, that culture.*
*A: Well, yes, people adopt it or I don't know how it is.*
*Q: What about birthdays and namedays?*
*A: There were no namedays, they were left out, but there are birthdays there, with a birthday party and...*
*Q: Cake and other things?*
*A: Yeah.*
*Q: The same? And do you celebrate Christmas in the same way, in the evening of the 24th?*
*A: Yes, so we follow the Hungarian customs, but how exactly? I am tired. I don't remember. Oh, yes, Christmas Eve, the 24th, yes, so it is not...*
*Q: You have a Christmas tree which you decorate?*
*A: Yes, yes.*

*Q: And what language do you speak in the meantime? And what songs did you sing during those celebrations?*
*A: We used the Hungarian language; we know these songs only in Hungarian, but OK, some of them also in English, as you learn a few at school.*
*Q: But not at home?*
*A: No, no, not at home. My parents, they do not know these songs in English.*
*Q: Do they not even want to? Did they not adopt these things?*
*A: No, but what for?"*

An Urdu-English bilingual individual of Pakistani origin, who grew up in England, remembers his childhood as follows: *"It was what every conversation amongst adults seemed to eventually settle on: how to try and protect the children from temptations and reinforce their Pakistani identity."* (Manzoor, 2007).

It is not easy for the second generation to maintain the first language and culture. Temptation is great, the second language is more attractive, because everyone speaks it in the society and the parents also use it. So it is simpler, more economic and more rewarding for the new generation to use it for communication. They have different objectives and wish to integrate sooner and better, for which the language (and culture) of the society is indispensable.

*"My parents had assumed that once I graduated I would return to Luton with a degree and a job, but despite my lack of career and cash I was still not willing to come home. In Manchester I was free; I could stay out late, play music as loud as I wished, wear black leather trousers and red velvet shirts and shake my dreadlocks to Lenny Kravitz. Once a month I would make the three-and-a-half-hour train journey back to Luton to see the family but only out of a sense of obligation. ... When I walked through the front door of my parents' home in my blue corduroy jacket with a 'Born to Run' enamel badge pinned on its lapel and my rucksack on my back, my headphones still plugged in my ears, I could sense my father's confusion. I knew he was thinking, 'What are you doing with yourself?' and the worst part about it was that I could never explain it to him. When I rang my father to tell him I had secured my first writing commission he was silent for a few seconds. 'How much will they pay you?' he finally asked in Urdu. I never spoke in English to my parents."* (Manzoor, 2007: 2.)

In many cases their identity is the result of rebellion against the parents' generation: children do not want to keep the old habits, they wish to integrate into the majority society, obtain friends and open to the world.

*"I defined myself in opposition to my father. All that he believed, the values, the ambitions he cherished I rejected as embarrassing and outdated. When he said he was Pakistani, I declared I was British; he was Muslim, I was confused..."* (Manzoor, 2007: 6.).

Young people intending to integrate are often ashamed of being different, which in general also marks the start of the process of losing the language and, in many cases, also the identity. The following excerpt was presented by a person of Hungarian parents, born in the United States. They spoke Hungarian at home until the child started attending school. When friends visited them at home, the child asked the parents not to speak in Hungarian in front of the American friends so that they do not notice that they were different from other Americans. The younger brother can hardly speak Hungarian because the two siblings

always spoke in English between themselves even at home. Nonetheless, the parents tried to do everything to pass on both the language and the culture. That is how the interviewee remembers a story from his teen ages:

*"...my parents once wanted us to attend a Hungarian school. We went, and on the first day my younger brother and I went into a room where we found Hungarians who were dancing in um, old clothes, Hungarian clothes, you know, very old, and such a Hungarian dance, and my younger brother and I both decided that it would not happen. No – I said to my father and mother, you think that I would attend that school?* [...] *I seriously told them that I would not go to that school even for a minute. So, let's go back to my other old school and we should leave the Hungarian school alone, you know. Such Hungarians, who dance, I do not wish to know anything about them, you know?"* (an American-Hungarian bilingual)

As soon as the rebellion age is over, the descendants also see their parents, the culture and language of their parents differently and they show some remorse. *"When I was younger I didn't want to know who my father was because I believed my father had nothing to do with me. How wrong can a son be?"* (Manzoor, 2007: 6). Curiosity arises and they wish to learn and understand the language and culture of their parents. The young American-Hungarian bilingual man quoted above moved to Hungary at the age of 26 and actively uses both languages at an American company, where he works. A young man born in England moved to Hungary at the age of 23.

*"Well, the truth is that I felt very different. The fact that the school was very international and, as I said, there were many Polish, Pakistani and American students. So the class was very mixed but I never considered myself truly British. I knew that I had a different name and I spoke a strange language that nobody else understood at the school. As we spoke Hungarian with my parents at home and ate Hungarian dishes, well, I felt Hungarian but did I think about what Hungary was like?"* (a Hungarian-English bilingual)

However, the previous definite Hungarian identity was shaken after moving to Hungary due to the Hungarian monolingual society. Thinking about identity, this young man explained that the behaviour of the society towards him made him uncertain about his identity. To the question whether he considered himself English or Hungarian, he responded as follows:

*"Neither Hungarian, nor English, and this is what makes it difficult. I feel good in England, I have no problem with any practical issue and I can express myself there. I speak the language well, as I lived in England for more than twenty years* […] *but there is still something that makes me feel different. I have never had a huge desire to be British, to be fully British and to become English. So this is one aspect. The other is that I am now in Hungary, with a Hungarian passport and Hungarian salary, but it is still impossible for me to behave without being noticed or known by someone that it is not the case. It is obvious that I am not an average Hungarian with 100% Hungarian attitude or identity or behaviour."* (a Hungarian-English bilingual).

The ethnos and demos level definitions confronting in an individual are illustrated well in this story. English helps much more this individual in practical issues because he has lived the majority of his life in England so far and he understands more about the progress of things, resolving problems and managing matters. However, the emotional links and intimate sphere connects him to the Hungarian language and culture because that was his family language and that is what he used with people who were closest to him. Having switched homes, he understands that the language he used in a small community does not

allow him to become a member of the society to the same extent as to those who have always been living under such circumstances and speaking this language at every level. That is why he cannot feel comfortable. Maybe it is one of the reasons why a number of bilingual individuals do not even care about the issue of identity and declare themselves European or cosmopolitan instead.

## Factors affecting identity

### Language

The international linguistic rights documents do not recognize the importance of the use of the native language without a good reason. If an ethnic group in minority cannot exercise their linguistic rights and are constantly affected by the impacts of the majority language, the first language will soon deteriorate and the process will end in the loss of the language. If the first language signs disappear in the streets and public areas, individuals will more and more frequently use the majority language definitions: this is where the process of language shift starts. This is why it is important to fight for maintaining bilingual signs in bilingual areas.

The Hungarian language is the primary component of identity for Hungarians living across the borderline of Hungary. Although the linguistic rights of minorities are expressed to a certain degree in the language acts of the countries, in reality there is still much to be done in that field. Looking at the linguistic landscapes of Transcarpathia, Upper Hungary, Voivodina and Transylvania, it is obvious that even if bilingual signs exist in many areas, they usually show the disadvantaged situation of Hungarians (Híres-László–Márku 2015). Csernicskó and Fedinec (2015: 234.) refer to Brubakerre and colleagues (2011: 261.), and contemplate that *"the nation holds the statehood, they are at home and everyone else is only a guest. There is only one step from this view to the theory according to which in a state, only the language of the dominant group can be the only official language of the state. This is how language transforms from the tool of communication and identity into a political and national symbol."*

Many believe that language is of primary importance in preserving identity. When the possibilities to use a language reduce, the level of skills of those speaking that language will also be reduced, which leads to the direct consequence that people reduced personalities when they have to express themselves in the particular language. That is why they choose to use the other language and the end of the long process is language loss and often an identity loss as well.

Within families, individuals often become bilingual because the native language of their spouse is different. Depending on the frequency of language use, the native language of one party will also be pushed into the background in this situation and, again, the process of language loss begins. The particular party may experience it as a bad thing, because the confidence given by the language begins to disappear and they also feel that they are losing their identity. The book *Bilingual Couples Talk* (Piller, 2002) proves how hot this issue is. In the book, marital partners are encouraged for convergence with advice that they

should concentrate on similarities, emphasize cultural closeness rather than distance, push their national identities into the background and put the stress on their common identity.

A Finnish-German bilingual individual had the following response to the question whether there is any correlation between language and identity: *"Language and identity? The two are very closely related. I am a different person when I speak Finnish, German and English."* A German-Hungarian bilingual individual expresses similar things. *"When I speak German, I feel I am myself, when I speak Hungarian, I feel different. It is like putting on a coat, which does not feel natural. It is alien."*

The reduced language skills sooner or later lead sensitive bilingual individuals to a conclusion that they have a reduced personality. Here are a few examples:

- *"When I speak Finnish, I can be rather entertaining and sarcastic. I can't do the same in German."*
- *"I am especially bad at ironic texts, but occasionally even direct speech is adversely affected by my language problems."*
- *"I feel that I cannot be as accurate as I want to be."*
- *"I must admit that I have a minority complex when I speak German. I am less certain and I take everything as an insult. I never feel zero or an idiot because of my Finnish boss, but I ALWAYS feel that because of my German one."* (Emphasized by the interviewee.)
- *"I have a grey personality when I speak my other language. At least at the emotional level I feel a completely different person. I am not a full person when I speak my second language. Even my tone is different (the Finnish is deeper and more convincing)."*
- *"...I felt like a deaf and dumb."*
- *"...It feels like being in a glass bubble. Around me people were moving their lips and I understood nothing."*

The recognition of language attrition further deteriorates the chances of double identity.

*"There was a time when I constantly switched codes. As years went by in my bilingual home, this problem was resolved and these days I switch only rarely. I feel that my native language is losing colour and I constantly admire the language of monolingual Finns, the large amount of idioms which have already been lost from my language repertoire."* (Finnish-German bilingual)

*"Your native language competence will suffer if you spend a few years outside your home country. Your knowledge about culture and society will diminish, you will not understand the new idioms and there will be words that you do not know. Naturally, you cannot develop your language skills because you do not have an opportunity to do so."* (Finnish-German bilingual)

## Culture

Bilingualism and biculturalism do not always go together and in most cases culture determines identity. The Armenians in Hungary have assimilated and use the Hungarian language but have preserved their culture next to the Hungarian culture and declare them-

selves as people with a double identity. In the UK and the United States, the same language is spoken (although in different varieties) but the people live in totally different cultures and therefore declare themselves English or American. In Kenya, the majority of people are at least trilingual: they speak Swahili, English and a tribal language but they have one culture. In general, the Jews have preserved their original culture wherever they live but in many cases they have remained monolingual and speak the language of the society, yet with a double identity.

Politics has a great role in whether people belonging to a minority group in the territory of a state declare their self-definition or not. Hungary has always been a multinational country but the 20th century brought major changes in the situation of nationalities. The census results reveal the following data about the officially recognized 13 minorities (Table 1) living in the territory of Hungary.

Table 1

*Size of the 13 national minorities in Hungary based on their declared nationalities and native languages*

| | **Number of individuals belonging to national minorities** | | | | **Number of individuals recognising the minority language as their native language** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1980** | **1990** | **2001** | **2011** | **1980** | **1990** | **2001** | **2011** |
| Bulgarian | – | – | 1.358 | 3.556 | – | 1.370 | 1.299 | 2.899 |
| Roma | 6.404 | 142.683 | 190.046 | 308.957 | 27.915 | 48.072 | 48.685 | 54.339 |
| Greek | – | – | 2.509 | 3.916 | – | 1.640 | 1.921 | 1.872 |
| Croatian | 13.895 | 13.570 | 15.620 | 23.561 | 20.484 | 17.577 | 14.345 | 13.716 |
| Polish | – | – | 2.962 | 5.730 | – | 3.788 | 2.580 | 3.049 |
| German | 11.310 | 30.824 | 62.233 | 131.951 | 31.231 | 37.511 | 33.792 | 38.248 |
| Armenian | – | – | 620 | 3.293 | – | 37 | 294 | 444 |
| Romanian | 8.874 | 10.740 | 7.995 | 26.345 | 10.141 | 8.730 | 8.482 | 13.886 |
| Ruthyn | – | – | 1.098 | 3.323 | – | – | 1.113 | 999 |
| Serbian | 2.805 | 2.905 | 3.816 | 7.210 | 3.426 | 2.953 | 3.388 | 3.708 |
| Slovak | 9.101 | 10.459 | 17.693 | 29.647 | 16.054 | 12.745 | 11.817 | 9.888 |
| Slovenian | 1.731 | 1.930 | 3.040 | 2.385 | 3.142 | 2.627 | 3.187 | 1.723 |
| Ukrainian | – | – | 5.070 | 5.633 | – | 674 | 4.885 | 3.384 |
| total | 54.120 | 213.111 | 314.060 | 555.507 | 112.393 | 137.724 | 135.788 | 148.155 |

*Source:* KSH (HCSO)

The data reveal that there are almost four times as many people who have a minority self-definition (555,507) than those who declare a minority language as their native language (148,155). It suggests that they are assimilating in language but the cultural values are important for them and therefore most of them are monolingual but bicultural. I have emphasized three minorities whose data reflected spectacular changes between 1980 and 2011. In 1980, in total 6,404 individuals declared themselves as Roma compared to 308,957 in 2011. As a

result of the supportive minority policy of the governments, there was an even and positive increase in the declaration of nationality. Although the number of those declaring one of the versions of the Romany language as their first language also grew, that increase was much lower than the declarations on national identity. A similar change can be observed in relation to the German minority as well. There is a more than tenfold increase in their identity, while the number of people speaking German as the first language has practically not changed. For the Slovaks, the number of nationality declarations has trebled, but the number of those who use Slovak as their native language has reduced significantly.

It is a question how reliable the census data are because while in 2001, 570,537 individuals did not wish to declare their nationalities, this figure reached 1,455,883 in 2011. The same applies to those who declared a minority language as a first language. In 2001, in total 541,108 people did not make such a declaration followed by 1,443,540 in 2011. Between 2001 and 2011, the ratio of those declaring themselves Hungarian fell from 92% to 84%. The underlying reasons require further research but it may be assumed that this fact has something to do with the increased number of those who do not declare their national identity. Another possible hypothesis is that European identity gradually overrides the national identity. One more assumption is that for bilingual and multilingual individuals identity is a difficult notion because they are part of multiple cultures and they do not even deal with the issue of self-definition.

## Conclusions

It follows from the above that the self-definition of an individual is influenced much more by the culture than by the language. The decision of a bilingual individual on their own identity depends on relatives, culture, language, physical appearance, education, social acceptance, etc. A bilingual individual can belong either to one or to another culture, to both or to neither. In an ideal situation, they should naturally belong to both, otherwise they can easily fall victim of exclusion.

Inclusive policy makes life easier for both the majority and the minority because it emphasizes common human values rather than focusing on differences. Linguistic and cultural diversity is beneficial for everyone. At the same time, excluding policy creates tension and aggression, which no one needs. The statement of the above quoted Urdu-English bilingual individual, who grew up in England, is thought-provoking:

*"If I could have summoned a genie who could have rubbed my brownness off... as it was impossible, I settled on being invisible. That was how I felt being Pakistani during the eighties: I wanted to be invisible and anonymous so that no one could point at me and say: 'You are different and you don't belong.' This country doesn't seem to accept me as one of its own, and yet where else did I have that I could call home?"* (Manzoor, 2007: 255.)

Bilingualism is becoming more and more accepted all over the world. According to a recent survey, in Australia, for example, the number of English monolingual students is falling at universities, and the prestige of bilinguals (immigrants) is growing. In Germany, German-English, German-French or German-Spanish (elite) bilingualism is considered a positive phenomenon. However, Turkish-German, Greek-German, etc. bilingualism is a stigma. Similarly, Slovak-Hungarian, Serb-Hungarian bilingualism is stigmatized; in some

extreme cases it triggers aggression in the majority state. In this latter example, the reason for the stigma is biculturalism and not bilingualism. These phenomena prove the inflexibility and discriminative attitude of the host states. Unfortunately, negative events further contribute to the loss of identity of individuals forced to become members of minorities through no fault of their own. Politicians should consider this and the individual states should revise their language and minority policy accordingly.

Double identity cannot be condemned – all it means that an individual is simultaneously part of two cultures, they can perform in different situations and do not consider either culture superior to the other.

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