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PART 02

KAZGUU LIBERAL ARTS DIGEST

RESEARCH
PAPERS



EXPERIENCES OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTILINGUAL UPBRINGING IN KAZAKHSTAN

TOKZHAN YESSENGALI

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Multilingual households exist and their experiences in family language environment and raising children is different from linguistic environment of monolingual households. According to Ily Hollebeke, Esli Struys & Orhan Agirdag (2020) linguistic focus of bilingual households shifted to multilingual practices. According to the articles of this researchers it can be stated that there is no problem with people being raised in multilingual families (was not found yet), but there is a problem that their experiences were not investigated nor documented for decades. Additionally, Elizabeth Lanza (2021) asserted multilingualism has become popular topic to investigate. In other words, raising children that acquire few languages simultaneously is currently being researched by different researchers. According to some of them multilingual family policy is not advised during child-rearing practices and these concerns cause hesitation in multilingual families. Multilingualism as a phenomenon is a skill that could be investigated due to rising number of multilingual families in Kazakhstan.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Hence, main research question of this paper is: "What are the experiences of individuals with multilingual upbringing in Kazakhstan?", the goal of this study is to investigate experiences of individuals from families with multilingual background in Kazakhstan, explore its influence on certain realms of their life and to get to know how individuals from multilingual households

were raised with multilingual family policy. Following questions were used as subsidiary ones to depict experience of the individuals from multilingual households more precisely:

1. How multilingualism interfered with their social life?
2. How multilingualism and family relations interfere?
3. How may multilingualism and perception of identity interfere?

KEY TERMS

Several concepts related to languages and linguistics were used as a frame to explore experiences of individuals from multilingual upbringings in Kazakhstan:

- 1) Multilingualism- ability to speak more than to languages fluently (sometimes on a native like level)
- 2) Multilingual upbringing- guardians and parents speak and use multiple languages during upbringings of the child.
- 3) Family language policy- certain rules, preferences (usually built by the oldest generation of the household) when it comes to languages: preferring native language, rejecting translanguaging, etc. The reaction of breaking the rules is also a part of family language policy.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This work consists of 6 chapters. Introduction gives general view into the research: problem purpose of the paper, alongside with questions of the research. Following chapter, Literature Review, discusses existing theory and research related to

multilingual upbringing. Methodology further explains how participants were selected, how certain research design and instruments were chosen, etc. Findings of the study are depicted in Findings chapter and analysis of the findings are in the discussion part of the paper. The last part is the conclusion: overall view of the whole paper and gives recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

BACKGROUND

Factors such as interest in multiple languages and increase in migration is encouraging growth in number of family dynamics where multiple languages are enforced by parent and/or environment (Van Oss, et al., 2021). Multilingual families are likely to climb in numbers due to various reasons as otherwise stated. Thus, possible growth leads to necessary decision of multilingual families: what languages are going to be spoken in the family and how they are going to be spoken. Decision on regards of linguistic use of languages when it comes to child-rearing practices shapes family language practice by enforcing certain patterns and in-family language related rules. Having several languages used in family essentially leads to family language policy. Family language policy is an ideology of the family related to languages: how often to use certain language, is it fine to mix the languages/ which language is favored in family, etc.? Family language policy is vital part of the language experience in multilingual families and thus, crucial factor in experiences of individuals with multilingual upbringing. Influence of multilingualism also shapes overall encounter of multilinguals.

EXPERIENCE

Multilingual experiences within a family cannot be depicted in few sentences or few arguments. Due to complex relationships

of individuals with one language only, relationships of various languages within a family (multiple people) are harder to describe. However, there are attempts in sociological sciences to find certain patterns in different multilingual families. There are theories and certain terms linked to multilingualism in household. For instance, the language experience of members from multilingual background may be labeled as multilingual repertoire according to Lanza (2021). Multilingual experience with languages leads to ideas such as family language policy is directly influenced by family dynamics and that family is a natural setting for language development have been supported in two articles by Srhir (2020) and Lanza (2021) used in this literature review. Asserted by these authors language family police is language essence and basis for multilingual families. Family plays central role in multilingual experience because members are the individuals that build family language policy (by enforcing certain rules or even disobeying them), use languages in a way that is understandable for family members as otherwise stated.

According to Hua and Wei (2016) multilinguals have not been the object of the interest despite sparking interest in certain societies, however growing interest in multilingual families functionality has been also noted. Growing interest may be explained by the fact that there are more bilingual/multilingual families (reasons were introduced in “Background” part of the literature review).

Hua and Wei (2016) declared that experiences of multilinguals differ from case to case because each family has a different reason of multiple languages being used: immigration, transnational marriage is also factor that contributes to such phenomena (Gomes, 2020). In other words, each family has unique reasoning, background, family language policy and these factors shape language experience of multilingual individuals. Similar point was discussed by Shrir (2020). However,

author added the notion of that original/native language is usually preferred to be used in family environment. This ideology leads to bond of family members related to capitalization of mother tongue. Kozminska & Zhu (2021) and Gomes (2020) have introduced influences in multilingual family. Effect of the language on identity in multilingual families is mentioned in the paper by Gomes (2020). Perspective of Gomes (2020) is discussed in concluding part of the narrative research. According to the paper parent-child interactions heavily influence not only emerging identity, but also their national and linguistic selves. Second article noted that Polish family in Britain have declared that they were relatively satisfied with their language policy (English and Polish) and noted that their language related ideology/strategy was not influenced by any political by events in society (Kozminska, Zhu, 2021). In paper of Kozminska, Zhu (2021) the example how family language policy is mainly influenced by family itself and influences members was given as otherwise stated. However, self-efficacy of the multilingual family member is not directly influenced by family languages (Van Oss, et al., 2021). Family language policy that ensures to use all the languages is sometimes advised by linguists. However, the fact that those professionals may have their own bias when it comes to multilingual upbringing must be taken into consideration. Bias of advocates of multilingual training has been proven statistically by Van Oss, et al. (2021).

GAP IN THE LITERATURE

Multilingualism as a phenomenon has been a focus of linguistic researchers for a short time and hence there are gaps in studies of it as it was mentioned in the “Background” of this chapter. The first noticeable gap is that researchers tend to focus on: the process of multilingualism during child-rearing practice and in family only, and experience outside the family is not usually the focus of the research, even though multilingual is a peculiar skill that may somehow interfere

with life outside the family. This research will investigate experiences of multilinguals who are already young adults or at least undergraduate students to see the result of their multilingualism they have had already in the family and outside.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTION & PURPOSE

The aim of this chapter is to explain research design and instruments applied to this research. I was interested in the experiences of individuals from multilingual families because there is a concern that using multiple languages simultaneously during child-rearing practice may not be beneficial for and even have certain drawbacks on individuals. Main objective of this study was to explore experiences of individuals with multilingual upbringings by answering following questions:

1. What are the experiences of people in multilingual families?
2. How multilingualism interferes with their social life?
3. How multilingualism and family relations interfere?
4. How did multilingualism and perception of identity may interfere?

This chapter of the research will also explain why qualitative phenomenological method was chosen as a method design, instruments that will be used during data collection, how participants were selected, how collected data will be analyze. As asserted by Creswell and Poth (2016) qualitative case study is usually used to explore unheard experiences of people, since multilingual families were not always considered when talking about language settings, their experiences are unheard. Hence, qualitative research method is used in this research due to fact the main objective is to discover unheard encounters of people raised in multilingual family environment.

SAMPLING AND PARTICIPANTS

Since main purpose of this paper is to examine experiences of people who were raised in multilingual environment, target participants are individuals with multilingual family language policy. Participants were found using convenient sampling because it was of the fact that majority of the families in Kazakhstan are bilingual and author of this study had troubles finding participants and even then, convincing those not-yet-participants to become participants of this study. I found participants mostly due to the fact I have common friends with them.

Being raised in an environment where more than two languages are spoken was the essential criterion when selecting participants. Age aspect was minor and additional aspect, so that I personally would be able to communicate with them deliberately as possible and to avoid huge age gap between interviewee and interviewer that may have led to certain awkwardness or even bias from participants and even author of this chapter. See Table 1, for specific details about participants.

DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative method allows researcher to collect data in a various way and the most popular ones are interview and observation. Observation was excluded in collecting preliminary data since all the needed information could be found in interviews and focus of the research: “Experiences of individuals with multilingual upbringings”. Naturally, observation should have been held in someone’s natural family setting. Interview was selected as primary collection tool to answer subsidiary questions of the research because according to Creswell and Poth (2016) interviews are understandable sub-questions that are easy to understand from the perspective of the respondent.

All the interviews were conducted online via audio-messages of “WhatsApp” social network. As semi-structured interviews help

with making interviews flexible. Questions were altered, added and/or excluded during the interview depending on the respondents’ answers. Terminological phrase “Family language policy”, an essential backbone of this research, was not used during interview due to its origin that may not be familiar to respondents, instead there were adapted phrases that can be used instead of the phrase.

DATA MANAGEMENT

All the data collected was destroyed after transcription and coding of the interviews. Security of the data during research was provided by smartphone of the researcher, I, that requires facial identification of the owner to give access to all the information on the device.

DATA ANALYSIS

Collected data were analyzed manually through coding. Each audio-message (response of the respondent) was transcribed individually by me, and then axial coding was used to find common themes in all three interviews.

LIMITATIONS

Main limitations of this paper were short amount of time and small number of participants. Paper was written during one semester, and it is not enough to investigate the experience of the individual in a half an hour interview via social networks, also I was able to find and convince only three individuals from multilingual family.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this section of this chapter, I am going to discuss ethical issues and measures taken into consideration to minimize risks that may endanger participants. My responsibility in this research when it comes to participants is to prioritize the security of my participants, of their identities, and data.

Participants were considered as equal, and their data will be protected from leakage. Mentioned steps were conducted according to Creswell and Poth (2016).

Each participant gave permission to record and store their responses before the process and consented to participate in the research. In the beginning of each interview, each participant was informed about their rights as a participant and most importantly that they were allowed to withdraw from research at any given moment without giving reasons,

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

CHAPTER 4.1. FINDINGS

IN FAMILY

When exploring language environment in multilingual families, 3 out of 3 participants of this study described positiveness of the language environment and some even asserted that there is no strictness or any prejudices against learning additional languages. However, according to interviewees, parents in all families declare the preference of a native language (Kazakh) over other languages and usually show dissatisfaction when anyone (mostly children) mix languages, usually Kazakh is mixed with Russian. One of the themes that occurred during the interviews is that all three participants had one certain rule in their families, according to which they are supposed to finish the sentence with the language they started it. Despite certain loose rules, majority of the participants asserted comfort in family language environment: "I would say comfortable, comfortable use any language, well, at least, it is for me" (Participant 3), and only one participant declared certain level of inner discomfort when being scolded for translanguaging. However, according to that participant language environment in their family is still positive:

...I would say this is the best way of going

through this kind of situation because everyone makes mistakes, and my dad also understands me because I'm just learning, and this is the home environment when we can make mistakes, but we should not repeat that whenever we go out of the comfort zone (Participant 2).

However, interesting theme that occurred is that all three participants mostly speak and/or are comfortable to use Russian, despite loose requirement of parents to mostly speak their native language (Kazakh).

OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

Adapting to the environment outside the family, according to the respondents, was mainly positive.

Multilingualism of the participants and their experience in building friendships was mainly positive: 2 participants shared experiences where they were able to build relationships with other people with the help of their multilingualism and vice versa. Being raised in a family where multiple languages are spoken positively interfered in life of 2 participants as otherwise stated. Moreover, Participant 1 added that their multilingualism was enhanced by friendships built in Kazakhstan. However, the fact that multilingualism mostly did not influence any friendship in a positive aspect and even gave them certain discomfort in relationships was briefly mentioned by Participant 3. The fact that discomfort was caused by the fact that in those certain friendships other individuals spoke one language was mentioned by the participant.

In education, participants declared similar positive attitude towards interference of education and multilingualism and Participant 3 even highlight how their skill was useful when studying abroad.

PERCEPTION OF IDENTITY AND MULTILINGUALISM

Peculiar theme that occurred during

interviews when interviewees were asked about multilingualism in themselves. 2 out of 3 participants declared changes in personalities when switching languages and even the fact that each language obtained certain role was mentioned. Participant 3 claimed: "Well, to be honest my identity is based on all the languages that I speak...". All in all, three participants have similar and different experiences when it comes to self-perception regarding to multilingualism. They have declared different internal shifts when speaking different languages, however the fact that there is a change for all participants when changing languages must be considered.

The perception of languages and multilingualism as a skill was rated highly by respondents. Participant 1 even stated that multilingualism is an essential skill to teach during child-rearing practice. Only one participant did not give the highest rating and feedback to their multilingual experience due to the fact they do not deem themselves fluent enough in their native language. In other words, all the participants are considerably satisfied by their multilingual experience in Kazakhstani society.

CONTRADICTION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

Previously it has been found that elderly generation of multilingual families enjoy the fact when younger generation (children) study new languages, also it was found out that parents mostly prefer native language over languages, Parents and guardian do enjoy when their children learn new foreign languages, but in practice, they prefer native language in vernacular, participant 2: "...she really doesn't care about mixing languages because she does it too but my dad is a little strict in this regard" and in the same interview: "...he tried to integrate his multilingualism...". This minor contradiction in family language policy of multilinguals could be explained by language situation in Kazakhstan: government has been

enforcing native language since the independence of the country was declared in 1991 and has been trying to enforce three language(multilingual) policy in school curriculum simultaneously

CHAPTER 4.2. DISCUSSION

IN FAMILY

Positive language environment stated by participants may be explained by Srhir (2020) and Lanza (2021). According to their articles and literature review of this paper family dynamics plays direct role in shaping family language policy. Even minor contradiction in family language policy and theory did not have negative influence on perception of family environment of the respondents: parents enjoyed the idea of learning new languages, but preferred native language use. Having non-strict and friendly dynamic have directly influenced the way languages are spoken in the family. Certain preference over a native language in all three respondents' families was discussed in literature review of this paper. Srhir (2020) explains that preferring native language when building language policy of the family leads to bond. This bond and its need may be more comprehensible when Kazakhstani language environment is taken into consideration. Kazakhstan was under the ruling of Russian Empire and part of the USSR for centuries and after gaining desired independence, native language has been not only popularized by government, but also certain preference of Kazakh has been voiced by the society itself. Nevertheless, all participants mostly speak Russian, again, because of the centuries of being under the ruling of Russian speaking governing.

PERCEPTION OF IDENTITY

As it was asserted in Findings section of this paper, one of the participants claimed to build their personality around all the languages they speak. This type of inner

perception changes when switching languages was discussed by certain researchers. In the research by Dewaele and Nakano (2013) speculation about the way person accepts the language has direct influence on how they feel when they start using the language was confirmed. As otherwise stated, this type of inner shift is directly caused by perception of the speaker on the languages they are shifting in between. Additionally, the fact that this type of changes is more noticeable to multilinguals rather than bilinguals was mentioned by Dewaele and Nakano (2013) too.

OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

According to experiences of interviewees maintaining friendship as a person with multilingual upbringing may be enhanced by their linguistic skills or vice versa, multilingual skills may have negative influence on the friendship. Mainly positive influence of the participants may be explained by languages that they speak, they were spoken in social circle that they interfered with. All participants speak Kazakh and Russian as basis and languages such as Turkish and English are already widely spoken and popularized languages in Kazakhstan. Thus, all the languages they acquired with the help of the family was relevant for their experience of socializing into the environment.

GENERAL EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION WITH MULTILINGUALISM

According to Zhu Hua and Li Wei (2016) each multilingual experience differs from each other due to differences in the history that led to the family speaking multiple languages when raising children. All three participants have different causes by their linguistic skill; however, they can be united by the fact all of them are deeply satisfied with their multilingual experience. General linguistic atmosphere clarifies positive

experience of the respondent: Kazakhstan is heavily bilingual-populated society and there are a lot of special lyceums, schools that even educate in three languages (BIL, NIS, etc.). This type of indirect positive enforcement by society and in society directly led to positive experience of multilingual individuals that took part in this research.

Literature review of this paper indirectly explains how multilingual upbringing may lead to struggles, however respondents of this research stated mainly positive experience. This drastic difference from literature and real-life experience is certainly caused by the fact that this research was conducted in Kazakhstan where majority of the population is already bilingual, hence speaking two languages on a native level is not unusual, speaking more than two languages is not deemed as a peculiar skill.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of individuals raised by multilingual parents and/or guardians. Evidence shows that experiences of individuals from multilingual families is positive in overall: positive family environment with non-strict family language policy, mostly positive interference of multilingualism and socializing. Also, it was discovered that individuals felt peculiar changes in themselves when switching languages and certain ones even claimed they have different used for each of their language.

IMPORTANCE

The importance of this study is to recognize the experiences of people from multilingual households in sociolinguistics. The way these people interact with their family and with society differs from people who share all the languages spoken in family with a society they dwell in. By conducting this research, positive environment that could be discovered in almost unstudied area

of multilingualism in sociolinguistics of Kazakhstan was indicated.

LIMITATIONS

This section of the paper indicates factors that limited the research. Further research should be conducted as narrative research to gain knowledge from the perspectives of guardians and parents because this research focused on the youngest generation of the family (children). Perspective of a guardian and/or a parent may give another perspective of experience from multilingual parent, contradiction in the findings may be explained, when parents that enforce family language policies will be interviewed. and looking into the difference between location should be taken into consideration because as mentioned in "Finding and Discussion" chapter, multilingualism as a skill is accepted as a positive trait and this perception of society has strong correlation with experiences of multilinguals. In other words, research was limited by the country where research took place and by the fact that only one perspective was taken into consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATION

Due to mostly positive experiences of participants, non-strict enforcement of multilingual environment is recommended. There are not a lot of recommendations that can be discusses due to phenomenological nature of the research, and as a researcher, I cannot recommend multilingual families, however, changes in the doubtful attitude of linguists towards multilingual families may be suggested.

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