

Bilingual couples in Poland

Summary

For nearly 30 years since the political transformation the proportion of bilingual couples in Polish society has risen to the scale of an appreciable phenomenon. Poland's accession to the structures of the EU and the NATO has naturally increased the proportion of such couples. Hence, the primary motivation to undertake this research was to gain a deeper insight and understanding of this relatively new phenomenon in Poland. Bilingual couples may be regarded as worth researching for several reasons, as they are distinguished by various levels of linguistic and social assimilation and reveal greater metalinguistic awareness than monolingual couples. In addition, language issues play an important role among bilingual pairs, as they help maintain the bonds in the relationship, give shape to the communication with one's partner and influence decisions concerning the upbringing of bilingual children.

The main objective of this monograph is to find answers to questions regarding the languages and patterns of communication among bilingual couples who live in Poland. The research aims to offer unique insights into these couples' linguistic experiences and knowledge by exploring their private language policies. These policies bring to light the couples' language ideologies, language choices and attitudes which in turn have an influence on the effectiveness of communication in a dyadic language contact. Those linguistic aspects of life experienced by bilingual couples yield a significant outcome in the form of their specific profile, and the diagnosis of the needs and demands related to the private language policy in the family and the assumed responsibility in this respect. Private language policies have a key impact on the actual development of mutual communication, including the sense of ethnicity and identity among mixed couples in Polish society.

The monograph consists of three complementary parts, in total ten chapters. Part One puts the private language contact of bilingual couples in a theoretical perspective. It contains a review of the literature on bilingual couples and discusses the models of multilingualism and the interrelation between language and identity. Part Two introduces the methodology of qualitative research, which highlights the complexity of the sociolinguistic situations of bilingual couples by including respondents' comments in the form of accounts of their individual life stories, observations and reflections related to

language. Part Three features an analysis and interpretation of the data collected from 24 in-depth interviews with bilingual couples. Within the theoretical framework the corpus of collected texts was categorized and thematically coded. The data include the couples' linguistic experiences, language repertoires, language choices, and identity as a couple, as well as their opinions and attitudes toward specific languages, which inform the complex processes of private language contact between two close persons. The research conclusions review briefly the results from the analysis and integrate them with the current state related to the scope of the research subject. The results sum up the features of this specific research sample and put forward a profile of bilingual couples in Poland. The monograph has an English-Polish glossary of terms connected with multilingualism and sociolinguistics. There are also informative appendices to the research conducted.

This is a monograph that features the first ever qualitative research on bilingual couples in Poland and thus the hope is that it will not only boost the dissemination of the subject of adult bilinguals in linguistics, but may also stand a good chance of being used primarily by anyone who corresponds to the respondents' profile to understand and successfully cope with the challenge of life in a bilingual relationship without any formal support from the society in which they function. This, in turn, may have a crucial impact on deepening the knowledge of one's self in the process of socialization into another language and culture among adult bilinguals.