

EDUCATION OF A CHILD IN AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE FAMILY

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Child's education and its implementation may become a very sensitive issue in a family where both parents are of a different cultural background. As the number of multilingual families has been increasing all over the world, including Lithuania, it is important to find out how multilingual parents deal with child's education within a family from different perspectives. Only few researches of Lithuanian scientists concentrate on this phenomenon however in the context of emigration. Thus the article is important because of the analysis of the characteristics of children's education in ethnically diverse families that live in Lithuania. In this article the term ethnically diverse family is used when considering the parents that are of a different nationality and more than one language is used within a family. The main issue of the article is what characteristics of child's education in an ethnically diverse family can be distinguished from linguistic, social, cultural and value education perspectives? What theoretical-empirical model can be applied for child's education in an ethnically diverse family? The object of the article is child's education in an ethnically diverse family from parents' point of view. The aim of the research is to examine the characteristics of child's education in an ethnically diverse family. Having analyzed questionnaires, distributed to each parent, and qualitative data, gathered from semi-structured interviews, it was revealed that all families apply a strategy of trilingualism and it can be already seen in 1 year old child's behavior. In order to develop child's multilingualism parents mostly read books or play songs on CD in different languages. Child's social education takes place within family, in Lithuanian kindergarten, when seeing other families, mostly Lithuanian, constantly communicating with relatives who live abroad by using technologies and regularly visiting the country of foreign-born parent. Children are introduced to both cultures mostly through food variety in daily life and events as well as by incorporating various traditions in calendar celebrations. The values that unite family have an effect on child's education. Parents in an ethnically diverse family transfer intercultural values, such as respect, tolerance, openness, flexibility, to children. Although parents encounter issues such as child's identity problem, they are much more focused on the advantages: openness, multilingualism (related to more possibilities in life), flexibility, broader world-view, cultural richness, personal maturity and curiosity.

Keywords: education, cultural values, multilingualism, trilingualism, ethnically diverse family.

INTRODUCTION

It is known that migration of people began thousands of years ago. In recent decades the impact of globalization, communication and transportation has been spreading throughout the whole world. The disjunction between different cultures starts disappearing and the number of

bilingual (when two languages are used in a family) and multilingual (when two or more languages are used in a family) families increases every year in Lithuania and other countries.

Statistics shows the increase of ethnically diverse families: 2.2 million couples get married every year in European Union, 16% of them are

ethnically diverse. In such families cultural differences become very distinct. Statistics of Lithuania also reveals the growth of ethnically diverse families: 9 years ago 2 400 Lithuanians got married to foreigners, 3 100 of them got married in 2010 year, 3 300 (16%) Lithuanians got married to foreigners 3 years ago.

The attitude towards ethnically diverse family was negative in the 20th century in Lithuania. It was caused by the occupation of Lithuania and Global Wars. Research of ethnically diverse families conducted in the middle of the 20th century (according to Darcy, Smith, Carrow, McDermott, Fukunaga) revealed the domination of one of the parents cultural values and the neglect of other parent's values: "*Mixed marriages lead into death*" (Girnius, 1969, p. 49). During the last decades of the 20th century more and more advantages of child's education in ethnically diverse family were revealed. Thus the attitude towards such families started to change. Unfortunately, even nowadays many people are intolerant to other cultures, afraid of cultural interactions in order to prevent their own culture. Only few Lithuanian researchers (Norvilas, 1981; Aleksandravičius and Kuzmickaitė, 2008; Jasilionienė, 2010; Mazolevskienė, 2010; Bobinienė, 2012) have examined child's education in ethnically diverse and transnational families from various perspectives.

The aspect of multilingualism has been studied mostly during the last few decade (Innis, 1973; Harding & Riley, 1997; Grosjean, 1999; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2001; Baker, 2006; King, Mackey, 2007; Auer, Wei, 2009), other aspects of child's education in an ethnically diverse family have been conducted not so often (Innis (1973), Grosjean (1983), Locke (1992), Greenfield & Cocking (1994), Cummins (2000), Adler (2002), Tamis-Lemonda (2004), Leeds-Hurwitz (2005), Hong, Wan, No & Chiu (2006), Crippen & Brew (2007), Romano (2008), Choudry (2010).

Values play a very important role in ethnically diverse families. The cultural heritage can be transmitted through traditions, religion, languages, communication with the people outside the family and a very important aspect – children's education. When two different cultures overlap, it can cause many conflicts. That is why parents have to decide what languages have to be chosen and how they will be used, what edutainment devices will be picked in order to educate children, what values and cultures to engraft, and how to construct and build child's multicultural identity.

Thus this article is important because of the analysis of the characteristics of children's education in ethnically diverse families that live in Lithuania.

The term ethnically diverse family is used when considering the parents that are of a different nationality and more than one language is used within a family.

Having analyzed the corresponding literature on this topic, the **scientific research problem** was formulated: what characteristics of child's education in an ethnically diverse family can be distinguished from linguistic, social, cultural and value education perspectives? What theoretical-empirical model can be applied for child's education in an ethnically diverse family?

The object of the research is child's education in an ethnically diverse family from parents' point of view.

The aim of the research is to examine the characteristics of child's education in an ethnically diverse family.

In order to achieve the aim of the research, the following **objectives** have been set:

1. To present linguistic and social education features of a child raised in an ethnically diverse family.
2. To analyze the importance of parents' cultures and values from child's education perspective.
3. To examine the issues that parents who raise multilingual children, encounter and distinguish parents' attitude towards the advantages of children who are raised in an ethnically diverse family.

Methodology of the research is based on the following theoretical frames:

- Don C. Locke (1992) – a model of multicultural understanding. The cultural components (acculturation, concept of poverty, history of oppression, language and the arts, racism and prejudice, socio-political factors, child rearing practices, religious practices, family structure, cultural values and attitudes) that make an effect on the identity of an individual, family and community are distinguished in this model.
- W. Leeds-Hurwitz (2005) theory, that connections between culture/communication, process/product, conflict/consensus, details/whole, individual/

society, tradition/creativity, social interaction/ media, private/public, sacred/secular have an influence on child's education in an ethnically diverse family.

The following **research methods** have been applied to achieve these objectives: *theoretical analysis* of scientific literature, *survey methods*, *organizing questionnaires*, and *semi-structured interviews* with parents of children who are raised in ethnically diverse families, *qualitative data analysis*.

The participants of the research: parents (N=9), who raise their children in an ethnically diverse families (N=5).

RESEARCH ON CHILD'S EDUCATION IN AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE FAMILY: THE PROCEDURES, METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

There were five ethnically diverse families participated in the research:

- one of the parent's native language is Lithuanian;
- live in Lithuania at least since the first child was born;
- have children 0-6 years old;
- use three languages within a family.

The target group was parents whose native language differs, that come from different cultural backgrounds, areas and who raise children aged 0-6 years old. Questionnaires were sent to every parent to get key information concerning person's age, gender, nationality, number of languages a person can communicate in and the circumstances the languages were learnt.

The main method was the semi standardized interview that was carried out either in English or in Lithuanian with one or both parents. The questions for the semi standardized interview were prepared in advance and written both in Lithuanian and English. During every interview more questions were given to get specific information or to clarify it. The interviewer was guiding interviewees but also let them to discuss freely. 5 families participated in interviews (5 interviews were conducted in total): 3 families were represented by both parents and 2 families by one parent. In total 8 parents.

To stay neutral the names of interviewees were not used or changed to numbers (number stands for a particular family) and letters ("a" stands for a woman and "b" for a man). The length of the interview was from 60 to 95 minutes.

Parents were given questions, concerning personal information, language education of the children in the family environment, children's education and linguistic behavior outside the family, issues they come across and advantages of children who are raised in multilingual family.

After interviewing parents, all the recorded data was transcribed the way it was recorded. Content analysis was used studying each family case.

ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF PARENTS

The dominant age group of research participants was between 31-40 years old: 7 out of 10 parents (see figure 1).

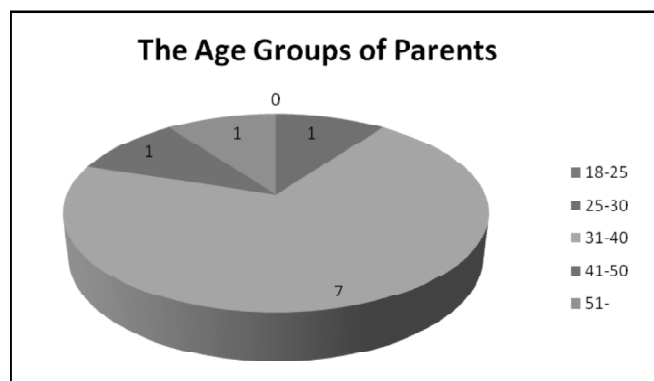


Figure 1: Participants' age groups (N)

One of the parents of each family is Lithuanian and another parent is of a different nationality (see figure 2).

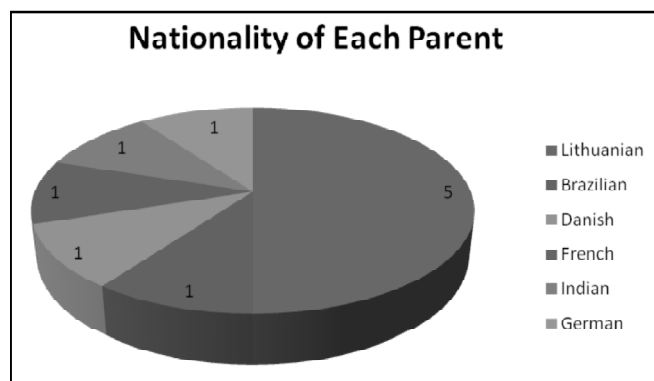


Figure 2: Participants' nationality (N)

Speaking about the research participants' education, it is worth to mention that 9 out of 10 parents received at least Bachelor Degree in Higher Education: one parent, who comes originally from India, has graduated from the Lower Secondary

School; 3 parents graduated in the field of philology and one of them has a teacher qualification as well; others (6 parents) finished their studies in another field and 4 of them have achieved the qualification of a teacher (1 table).

Table 1
Parents' obtained education

Parents	Field of Philology		Qualification of a teacher	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1 Parent 1a		x		x
2 Parent 1b		x	x	
3 Parent 2a	x			x
4 Parent 2b		x	x	
5 Parent 3a		x	x	
6 Parent 4a	x			x
7 Parent 4b		x		x
8 Parent 5a	x		x	
9 Parent 5b		x	x	

There is one case, where both parents are not officially qualified as teachers but their jobs have been related to teaching. 9 out of 10 parents were raised in monolingual families. The Danish father was raised in multilingual family.

The number of foreign languages parents can speak at various levels (basics to proficiency) differs. Most of them can speak 2, 3 or 4 languages (4 parents – 2 languages, 4 parents – 3 languages), 2 parents can speak more than 4 languages. An interesting fact is that a parent who can speak 6 languages and understands, but does not speak Lithuanian, comes from multilingual environment himself. Whereas there is one parent who was raised in a monolingual family, learnt two more languages outside home before starting school, and stayed for 4 years in foreign countries, thus can speak 5 languages and understand 3 more languages (see figure 3).

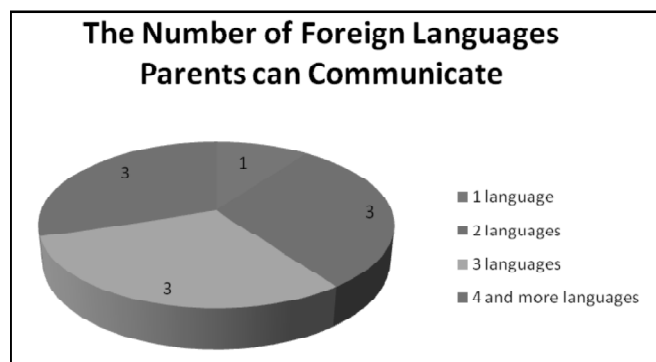


Figure 3: Parents' linguistic capabilities (N)

In the beginning of the relationship all the couples were communicating in a foreign language because of a lack of knowledge in partner's native language. All the families use three languages at home (2 table).

Table 2
Number of languages within each participant's family

Families	Mother's language	Father's language	Language used between parents	Good understanding of spouse's native language	
				Wife	Husband
1a-1b	Lithuanian	Brazilian	English	No	Yes
2a-2b	Lithuanian	Danish	English	No	No
3a-3b	Lithuanian	Hindi	English	No	No
4a-4b	Lithuanian	French	German	Yes	Yes
5a-5b	Lithuanian	German	English	No	No

* The names of interviewees were not used or changed to numbers (number stands for a particular family) and letters ("a" stands for a woman and "b" for a man).

Most of the parents communicate to one another in English. However parents from only one family have a good understanding of each other's native language. All the families raise 1 to 2 children, whose age is 7 months to 6 years old.

THE ASPECT OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHO ARE RAISED IN AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE FAMILY

The data of the research revealed that:

- The strategy of trilingualism (when communicating in three languages at home) was chosen before children were born. The main characteristics of the strategy is the use of "one person – one language" method when talking to a child and communication in a foreign language between parents. Thus the main reasons when choosing language learning strategy are following:
 - (a) linguistic situation of a family: lack of knowledge in spouse's native language;
 - (b) positive attitude towards multilingualism;
 - (c) a wish to transmit each parent's native language and cultural heritage to a child;
 - (d) positive experience of their own, friends and relatives.
- Parents, that graduated in the field of philology, has a teacher qualification, read books about

multilingual cases or attended special courses on multilingual issues, are very consistent with the strategy (when parents communicate to: a) each other and b) the children). Those parents, who are bad at Lithuanian language and seek to get a job as fast as possible, switches between languages often and experiences issues in the application and implementation of the chosen strategy.

- In order to maintain children's interaction with several cultures and help them to develop good linguistic skills in all used languages within a family, the main edutainment devices are books and songs.
- It was revealed by analyzing each family case, except the family where a child is 7 months old, that all children over 1 year old show their understanding by reacting to given instructions in both languages already: a) children, who are around 18 months old, show their understanding by reacting to given instructions in both languages already; b) children, who are older than two, are able to give answers in both languages, translate phrases or sentences; c) the child, who is 6 years old and is a quadrilingual, communicates to each parent in their native language (Lithuanian and German), shows her understanding of English, and is a passive speaker of Russian.

Speaking about the *aspect of social education of children* who are raised in an ethnically diverse family, the data of the research showed that these children are mostly affected by Lithuanian environment because all of them attend or will be attending Lithuanian kindergarten. Most families communicate with Lithuanian monolingual families. All the families speak to their relatives that live far away, regularly by using various technologies and by visiting them from time to time.

THE ASPECT OF CULTURAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHO ARE RAISED IN AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE FAMILY

It was revealed that:

- Despite reading books and singing songs in different languages, children are exposed to their parents' cultures through family celebrations and food culture: a) if calendar celebrations are important of both parents within an ethnically diverse family, national celebrations are more of a personal celebration and is important only to some parents; b)

differences in food culture are obvious in all the families. Food culture, that has been transmitted from a spouse, that comes from different culture, plays a very important role within an ethnically diverse family. Also traditional meals of both cultures, especially not Lithuanian, becomes a very important part of many celebrations, meetings, daily life of a family.

- The minority of ethnically diverse families attend famous historical places or museums in order to transmit cultural historical heritage to their children. However various that presents both parents' cultures, are a part of their home. Thus the introduction of children with the importance of famous historical places and events, also as national celebrations, are considered as the function of kindergarten.
- All the parents wish that their children would understand themselves as the part of both cultures. However, 2 out of 5 families the transmission of the culture is considered as each parent's separate responsibility, without coworking. Thus it might be assumed that a child will understand himself as a monocultural because of the strong influence of the local environment. In other families parents cowork and consider the transmission of both cultures to the children as their both responsibility. It might be assumed that these children will identify themselves as multicultural.
- Many families are united by the same so called intercultural values that have been transmitted to the children. This unity is mostly caused by the same religion. However religion is mostly understood as cultural heritage thus religious values are not being transmitted in most cases. Most families are united by positive attitude towards other cultures, thus children get acainted with intercultural values.

SOME OF THE ISSUES AND ADVANTAGES OF RAISING MULTILINGUAL CHILDREN

Scientists (Crohn, 1995; Romano, 2008 et al.) claim that children's education in an ethnically diverse family is one of the areas where conflicts may appear, especially if parents have never discussed about family's values and cultural differences. Parents point out issues concerning child's language delay and the last, but not least concern is about children's identity. Also they distinguish another problem concerning low knowledge of spouse's native language.

Despite the issues parents encounter, all of them think that there are much more advantages of being raised multilingual: openness, multilingualism (related to more possibilities and career), flexibility, broader world-view, cultural richness, personal maturity, curiosity, intelligence, tolerance.

Thus, the research data make it possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. Most families are consistent when applying and implementing the strategy of trilingualism and it can be already seen in 1 year old child's linguistic behaviour. Children attend or will attend Lithuanian kindergarten and communicates with not Lithuanian relatives by using various technologies and visiting them regularly.
2. Most parents try to cowork hard when trying to transmit both cultures to their children by reading books, singing songs in different languages, celebrating different calendar celebrations of both cultures, preparing various meals. However national education is considered to be more of a kindergarten's function. Families are united by intercultural values that are transmitted to the children.
3. The analysis of the research reveals, that the child's, who is raised in an ethnically diverse family, education is closest to Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz theory, that connections between culture/communication, process/product, conflict/consensus, details/whole, individual/society, tradition/creativity, social interaction/ media, private/public, sacred/secular, meaning construction have an influence on child's education in an ethnically diverse family.

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