DOI: 10.11649/sm.3543

Slavia Meridionalis 25, 2025

Article No.: 3543

Citation:
Borowiak, P. (2025). Polish-Bulgarian families and bilingual upbringing: Linguistic context [Book review]. *Slavia Meridionalis*, *25*, Article 3543. https://doi.org/10.11649/sm.3543

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Polish-Bulgarian Families and Bilingual Upbringing: Linguistic Context

(Yordanka Ilieva-Cygan, *Wychowanie dwujęzyczne w rodzinie polsko-bułgarskiej*, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2024, 401 pages)

Bilingual upbringing is extremely difficult from the point of view of both practice and science. Above all, however, it is time-consuming and requires extraordinary sensitivity, intuition, and considerable knowledge in the fields of pedagogy and linguistics, as well as a great deal of patience from the carer and/or researcher.

In practice, bilingual upbringing can take two forms: bilingual upbringing in a multilingual family or environment, on which Yordanka Ilieva-Cygan (the Author of the reviewed book) mostly focuses, and bilingual upbringing with the use of formal language instruction in a classroom situation (or lesson-like situations in kindergarten or school), which also indirectly influenced the research conducted by Yordanka Ilieva-Cygan (Racławska-Daniluk, 2011, p. 15).

This work was supported by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Competing interests: no competing interests have been declared.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

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Yordanka Ilieva-Cygan's book, *Wychowanie dwujęzyczne w rodzinie polsko-bułgarskiej* [Bilingual Upbringing in a Polish–Bulgarian Family], was published in the last days of 2024 by Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa and concentrates on the challenges of upbringing in bilingual conditions, the development of children at specific ages, the mutual influence of languages within one group, and the related interferences. The research perspective adopted by the Author combines structuralist and psycholinguistic linguistic methods.

The monograph is a little over 400 pages long and consists of a foreword by Stanisław Dubisz, an introduction, and four extensive chapters: I. Bilingualism and the development of a bilingual child; II. Languages in contact; III. Respondents' idiolects – quantitative analysis of the material; IV. Respondents' idiolects – qualitative analysis of the material. The remaining components of the publication are the Summary, Bibliography, List of Abbreviations, List of Charts, Appendix 1. Classification of the material, Appendix 2. Recording of the material, and an Abstract (in English) and Resume (in Bulgarian).

In the introduction, the Author comprehensively explains all the reasons that influenced the choice of the topic. Ilieva-Cygan notes that "family bilingualism is a relatively new paradigm in the theory of bilingualism. There is little research on bilingualism in children from mixed Polish–Bulgarian families; there is indeed no in-depth analysis or language competence" (Ilieva-Cygan, 2024, p. 14). I agree with this statement, and I am well aware that the research that the Author has undertaken is definitely needed, especially in the scope of contact between a language of the West Slavic group and a language of the South Slavic group. There have been few such contrastive studies conducted in the same manner chosen by the Author of the work. In fact, when it comes to Polish and Bulgarian linguistics, there have been none at all. In the introduction, the Author exhaustively describes the work structure and research methods, presenting in an orderly manner the methodologies developed by Ida Kurcz (2000, p. 73) and Stanisław Dubisz (1997, p. 324), among others. She also describes the state of the research, thus including all the relevant elements at the beginning, which creates a clear introduction to the subject of the book. The last part of the introduction provides a bibliographic review, including diploma theses related to the linguistic and cultural situation of Bulgarians living in Poland, because actually only such works can be found, e.g., the works of Petar Sotirov (2011) or Urszula Kaczmarek (2002). However, these are not studies that can strictly fit into the trend taken up by the Author. I also agree with Ilieva-Cygan that "in Poland, there is no in-depth research

on the linguistic situation of Bulgarians, particularly the linguistic situation of children from mixed Polish–Bulgarian families" (Ilieva-Cygan, 2024, p. 14). Moreover, there is also no such research in the Bulgarian academic field, as the Author also mentions in the introduction (Ilieva-Cygan, 2024, p. 16).

The first chapter of the monograph clearly and concisely describes bilingualism, focusing on defining this phenomenon, but also on discussing the types of bilingualism and developmental issues concerning a bilingual child, supporting relevant passages with theories on children's language development, as well as strategies for raising a bilingual child. Here, the Author also establishes, following E. Lipińska (2003, p. 115), the terms that are used across the work, such as *native/first/source/foreign/second/target language*, explaining their meanings. This is particularly important because in literature on the subject these terms are still used in various contexts, often synonymously.

In the second chapter of the book, "Languages in contact", the Author reviews concepts which are part of the research trend on languages in contact: *transfer, interference, borrowing, integration, calques, code-switching* and *interlanguage*. Considering the fundamental fact that differentiates the languages under study, i.e., the strong syntheticity of the Polish language and the analyticality of the Bulgarian language – also taking into account that the Bulgarian language belongs to the Balkan linguistic group – this chapter is extremely justified as it sets up the theoretical foundations of the work. This part of the monograph contains a number of theories concerning the above-mentioned terms, referring to the scientific formulations of prominent researchers examining language interference, errors, issues related to language competence, and other phenomena that are important for the functioning and analysis of language contacts, as well as language acquisition.

The third chapter, "Quantitative material analysis", is an introduction to the next part of the work, "Qualitative analysis". The Author presents and discusses the pattern of the recorded statements that became the material basis for the research. The section entitled "A few words about the material" indicates that the collected linguistic material covers the years 2014–2020, with the highest number of exemplifications recorded in 2019–2020. It is very good that the Author also draws attention to the issues of transcription as these are extremely important in the context of the discussed and examined material. These issues remain unregulated and, even more problematically, are applied inconsistently by different authors and translators – whether Bulgarian, Slavic, or Polish language scholars. The Author, rightly, refers to the study by Ignacy Doliński (n.d.).

In addition, in this chapter Ilieva-Cygan identifies and reviews selected definitions of the term 'idiolect' and compares the idiolects of the subjects, contrasting them with strategies for bilingual upbringing of children and presenting the characteristics of the research group. Here, the Author of the book also draws attention to various nuances related to the bilingualism of the studied group of children. She notices, among other things, something that is extremely important for the reliability of the study: "the speech development of all four subjects was comparable and within the norm: each of them began to pronounce their first words at the same time, i.e. between 9 and 12 months of age" (Ilieva-Cygan, 2024, p. 33). The last part of this chapter presents a comparison of data on children's idiolects, broken down by the number of errors that occur. Ilieva-Cygan provides the number of errors in a given year in clear and colourful charts, thus definitely affecting the further reading experience positively. She also presents selected studies on describing the systems of the Bulgarian and Polish languages, as well as a table with a comparative summary of children's idiolects, broken down into phonetics, inflection, syntax, word formation, and lexis, which explicitly shows the variations in the types of mistakes made by all the subjects in the study group.

The fourth chapter, which is an extensive qualitative analysis of the material within a grammatical framework – from phonetics through inflection, syntax, word formation, and ending with lexis – constitutes a solid study based on extremely interesting linguistic material. Ilieva-Cygan identifies irregularities resulting from extralinguistic and intralinguistic interference within individual components of grammar, thus providing a complete overview of the mistakes made by children raised bilingually in Polish–Bulgarian families. The Author takes into account all the mistakes made and organises them into correctly composed subsections, thereby offering an extremely clear insight and producing good results. In addition, she also highlights the similarities in the developmental tendencies of the Polish and Bulgarian languages, referring to the research of S. Dubisz and D. Błagoeva (Благоева, 2013) on the democratisation, homogenisation, internationalisation, and colloquialisation of language – tendencies that are also evident in the research conducted by the Author of the monograph.

The chapters are concluded with a summary, which clearly articulates the fulfilled purpose of the dissertation, namely comparison of the idiolects of bilingual children from mixed families and the identification and naming of irregularities in their Bulgarian speech. The material reveals both explicit and

implicit errors, with the former (non-linguistic) errors evidently dominating. From the Bulgarian language, 2,450 deviations are obtained and characterised (457 phonetic, 443 inflectional, 594 syntactic, 59 word-formation and 897 lexical). The research results confirm the assumption that the greatest contrast between Polish and Bulgarian can be observed at the level of inflection and syntax. The Author also gives the percentage of mistakes made based on the example of each of the research groups, demonstrating, inter alia, the relationship with birth or gender, but also with other factors, as discussed in the summary (language skills, musical ear, memory, environmental conditions, and others).

The remaining pages contain a Bibliography listing 81 texts in Polish, 6 in English and 16 in Bulgarian. It seems that the bibliography may be too short; however, considering the lack of glottodidactic studies in Bulgarian and the practical nature of the work, the catalogue is sufficient. Other pages contain editorial additions.

On pages 211 to 395, there are two appendices: one concerning the classification of the linguistic material and the other concerning its recording. In Appendix 1, the list of material is presented in a clear table where each child is assigned a different colour, then the age and year of the excerpt are noted, together with any irregularities and their source. All units are legibly recorded with the use of bold print and bullet points to help the reader navigate this extensive material. All analyses are carried out correctly and a very good knowledge of both languages (Bulgarian and Polish) is evident at this stage. In Appendix 2, the Author shows all statements in a table, including their simplified Polish transcription and translation into Polish in subsequent columns. This solution and layout make it possible to finally organise the material and visualise its enormity. The transcription is correct and carried out consistently, while the translation into Polish also arouses admiration.

I am fully aware of the difficulty of working with bilingual material, especially when the languages belong to the same group. The interferences are self-evident, yet the book, written in Polish by a Bulgarian, proves the researcher's maturity, proficiency and competence in linguistics, language, and broader humanities. As stated by A. Mężyk and D. Lipiec: "[…] the scope of parents' knowledge about the strategies and principles of bilingual upbringing is not broad. Parents with a linguistic or pedagogical background show the highest awareness. Bilingual upbringing is often intuitive and not based on any rules" (Mężyk & Lipiec, 2017, p. 50). Thus, it can be concluded that the Author of the reviewed book (most likely the mother of bilingual children) is well versed in bilingual upbringing

strategies, and the book she has written is definitely a pioneering work within Slavic studies. In order to write it, not only specialised knowledge was needed, but also the aforementioned attention and sensitivity to the languages in question, on the basis of which the research was carried out.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Ilieva-Cygan's monograph opens up a new area of research at the intersection of social sciences and linguistics. The book is a valuable compendium with unique examples on an immeasurable scale. The path marked out by the author can be a guide for Slavicists and researchers of all languages who find themselves (professionally or privately) in bilingual groups. The monograph makes a significant contribution to research on bilingualism in blended families and documentation and analysis of children's linguistic development. In a broader context, it is important for social and international, especially Polish–Bulgarian, integration.

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Słowa kluczowe: recenzja; język bułgarski; język polski; wychowanie dwujęzyczne; bilingwizm

Polish–Bulgarian families and bilingual upbringing: Linguistic context

This article is a review of the Study titled *Wychowanie dwujęzyczne w rodzinie polsko-bułgarskiej* [Polish–Bulgarian Families and Bilingual Upbringing. Linguistic Context], authored by Yordanka Ilieva-Cygan (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2024, pp. 401).

Keywords: review; Bulgarian language; Polish language; bilingual upbringing; bilingualism

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linguistic communication and its relationship with onomastics, marketing and graphic design, the linguistic landscape.

Publication History: Received: 2025-04-29; Accepted: 2025-05-19; Published: 2025-11-28