

ABSTRACT

In recent years, Polish society has experienced significant changes related to migration movements, with a noticeable increase in the number of migrants settling in the country for various reasons. Along with the growing number of learners of Polish as a second language, there has also been an increase in the number of children with migration experiences who have started school education in Polish without prior preparation. The issue of effectively teaching Polish to children is a relatively new and not yet thoroughly researched area of Polish language didactics. The question of how to effectively teach Polish and establish appropriate standards for designing this process remains relevant and significant. This issue is important not only from a linguistic and didactic perspective but also from a social one. Effective teaching of Polish as a second language prevents the marginalisation of these children, educational failures, and lack of integration into Polish society.

This dissertation focuses on the acquisition of Polish as a second language by Ukrainian children of early school age. Given the specific characteristics of the subjects—students in grades I-III of primary school, bilingual children, children with migration experience learning Polish as a second language, originating from Ukraine—the research was based on theories and studies in three areas: bilingualism, acquisition of a foreign/second language, and studies of language errors in a glottodidactic perspective, with particular emphasis on errors made by Ukrainians.

Based on the review of the relevant literature, definitions and classifications of bilingualism were analyzed, along with studies on the processing two languages and the cognitive consequences of bilingualism. The linguistic development of bilingual children was also considered, focusing on key stages of language acquisition, code-switching (code-mixing) phenomena, and interlingual transfer. Additionally, a review of studies on the development of phonetics and phonology, lexicon, and morphosyntax in bilingual children was conducted.

The literature review on foreign/second language acquisition resulted in the presentation of key hypotheses and theories related to this process. A more detailed analysis included a review of models and studies on the acquisition of specific linguistic subsystems. In this context, the studies referred to various languages and focused, among other aspects, on the rate of acquisition of specific structures, the influence of the first language

on the development of competence in the second language, and the comparison of acquisition processes in adults and children.

An analysis of another area of research discourse relevant to this study allowed for the presentation of the definition of language errors, typologies of language errors, and the specification of how errors are understood in the context of this research. References were also made to studies on language transfer as a phenomenon influencing, among other things, the emergence of errors in learners of a foreign/second language. Further literature analysis focused on glottodidactic research concerning the analysis of errors in Polish among individuals from Ukraine.

Based on previous studies, inflectional, syntactic, and lexical errors made by individuals of Ukrainian origin were presented, along with the classification of these errors used in previously published research. This review demonstrated that most studies have focused on adults. Therefore, the analysis of the relevant literature not only provided better contextualization for the present study but also revealed a gap in Polish glottodidactic research concerning individuals from Ukraine—namely, the lack of analyses related to the language competencies of children and their participation in such studies.

The aim of the study was to investigate the development of selected linguistic competencies in Polish as a second language and, based on the diagnosis, to develop strategies and methodological solutions to support this process. The research concentrated on four key questions:

1. What is the level of lexical competence of the examined children in Polish as a second language (comprehension and production, based on the TRJ test)?
2. What is the level of grammatical competence of the examined children (based on the TRJ test)?
3. What morphological errors can be observed in the spontaneous utterances of the examined children in Polish (based on the SNOW tools)?
4. What is the level of discourse competence of the examined children in understanding spoken texts (based on the TRJ test)?

The study was conducted in May, June, September, and October 2021 in four primary schools in Kraków. It was of a qualitative nature. A multiple case study was chosen as the research method, and the following research tools were used: the Language Development Test (TRJ) (Smoczyńska et al., 2015a) and the Standardized Tools for Speech Assessment (SNOW) (Smoczyńska et al., 2015b). The study involved fourteen children aged between 6 years and 11 months and 10 years, who had been living in Poland for varying periods, ranging from 1 to 34 months. The research was designed to focus on an in-depth investigation, hence the choice of method and tools. Additionally, a speech therapy assessment was conducted in the children's first language (Ukrainian and/or Russian), as well as a survey for parents. The first-language assessment was conducted before the main study, which was carried out in Polish using

the aforementioned tools. Its purpose was to determine the children's linguistic resources, including identifying the languages they spoke and whether they experienced any language development difficulties or disorders. This information allowed for the creation of a coherent research group. The aim of this preliminary diagnosis was to establish the linguistic profile and potential of the studied children. The assessment in Ukrainian/Russian also provided an opportunity to familiarize the children with the research setting before the main study, which could have positively influenced their engagement during the core research phase. The planned and implemented parental survey provided information on the languages spoken by the children and their guardians, their place of origin, and the child's exact age.

The results gathered during the Polish-language diagnosis were analyzed separately for each case due to the qualitative nature of the study. However, certain tendencies and correlations observed within the study group can be identified. The findings indicate that the participants' comprehension and production of words were at a similar level, and that most children scored low, suggesting that their vocabulary knowledge was not at the level of native speakers. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that when responses in Ukrainian/Russian were taken into account, most children would have achieved a typical score. This, in turn, indicates that the children possess age-appropriate conceptual knowledge but, due to their proficiency in Polish, are unable to understand or name actions and objects using low-frequency vocabulary. The children performed better in the subtests assessing sentence repetition and comprehension. More typical scores were observed, as well as a certain correlation between the length

of stay in Poland (time of language acquisition) and the test results. The analyzed data suggest that approximately 1.5 years is required for the children to achieve comprehension and sentence production results comparable to the normative scores of native speakers. The study also examined the degree of mastery of Polish inflection by the children. In the "Grammar – Inflection of Words" subtest, all participants obtained low scores, regardless of their language acquisition time. This may also indicate the significance of selecting grammatical topics carefully—those strongly influenced by negative transfer from Ukrainian/Russian and assessed in isolation (rather than in the context of comprehension or production) proved particularly challenging for the children. The conducted analysis of inflectional errors allowed for a more precise assessment of the extent to which children had mastered Polish inflection. The study showed that the highest number of errors concerned verbs. Among these errors, the most frequent were Ukrainian/Russian verb stems with Polish inflectional endings, incorrect present tense forms, and incorrect gender usage. Nouns ranked second in terms of error frequency. Regarding this part of speech, the most commonly observed errors included incorrect case selection, the use of inappropriate parallel inflectional endings, and erroneous stem alternations. The analysis indicated that verb errors were primarily related to the process of acquiring Polish inflectional forms and overall language learning (incomplete competence), whereas noun errors were of a transfer or interference nature. Numerous errors involving pronouns were also recorded, while numeral and adjective errors appeared sporadically (these parts of speech were the least frequent in children's utterances). The study illustrates the process of Polish language acquisition among children from Ukraine. When compared to research on errors made by adult Ukrainians, both similarities and differences between children and adults can be observed. The comprehension assessment in the study demonstrated that children managed fairly well with understanding in context. This subtest yielded the highest scores, although, as in the case of sentence comprehension, a threshold for achieving typical/high scores depending on the length of acquisition was also noticeable. Furthermore, the study revealed difficulties in text interpretation among children. The easiest questions for them were factual questions, which could be answered based on both the text and their general knowledge of the world.

Based on the detailed analysis of the results, areas for linguistic support corresponding to the research questions were identified: developing lexical competence, grammatical competence

(syntax and morphology), and discourse competence in listening comprehension. For each of these areas, specific exercises and activities tailored to the children's age were proposed, aimed at developing their language skills with a focus on the challenges and difficulties identified in Polish during the study.

This study complements existing analyses by focusing on the acquisition of Polish by children of Ukrainian origin. The findings can also be applied to students of Belarusian and Russian descent. Moreover, this research involves children, which is less common than studies involving adolescents or adults. Therefore, the conclusions may contribute to the advancement of the subject literature and enhance methodological approaches in teaching Polish as a second language to children.

