

Cross-linguistic Russian-Norwegian families in Norway: Language choice, family contexts and bilingual development¹

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Abstract

In this study we investigated how the process of initial language choice and minority language transmission to the child was carried out within Russian mother/Norwegian father families living in Norway. The study was based on grounded theory, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. 15 mothers were interviewed about their initial choices concerning language transmission, their actual language use within the family and their child's language development. All the mothers except one were initially motivated to transmit Russian to their child, and the main reasons given for this choice are presented. The actual use of Russian within the families varied, however, depending in particular on the father's competence in Russian and the quality of the emotional relationship between the mother and the father. Furthermore, these variations seemed to have consequences for whether the child developed active or only passive bilingualism. The results are interpreted within the present socio-historical context of Norway where a high number of women are engaged in full-time work, fathers often participate actively in child care and even young children go to kindergartens.

Key words: bilingualism, cross-linguistic families, family context, language-choice, Russian-Norwegian families

Introduction

This study deals with the possibilities and challenges for bilingual development in the context of Russian-Norwegian families living in Norway. Over the last decades the number of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural marriages has been growing both globally and in Norway (Constable 2005, Daugstad 2008). When a couple has chosen to live in one of the partners' native country, a combination of majority and minority languages is involved in the linguistic repertoire of the family, with one of the partners' languages being the minority language as opposed to the language of the outside community. The offspring of cross-linguistic marriages have a unique opportunity to acquire both of the parental native languages and develop a simultaneous bilingual competence from the very start. However, this potential is actualized to various degrees. According to De Houwer (2007) and Pearson (2007) about one-quarter of the children does not develop such a competence. Whether the children become bilingual or not, depends on several factors. In the present study, we will explore the initial choices taken by the parents for or against bilingual childrearing as well as the families' attempts to establish language interactions and environments stimulating the development of more than one language. Our data come from qualitative interviews with 15 mothers. Before describing our study, relevant earlier research will be presented, however.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner 1977, Gardiner and Kosmitzki 2002) has inspired the present study. Bronfenbrenner understands development as the result of interactions between the developing individual and his/her environment. The environment includes the immediate settings containing the developing individual (microsystems) and the larger societal context in which the microsystems are embedded (the exo-, macro- and cronosystemsⁱⁱ). The exosystem refers to systems, for example the world of work and the distribution of goods and services, that not directly contains the developing person, but that nevertheless influences what is going on in the child's microsystems. The macrosystem are more "distant" from concrete interactions than the two former mentioned systems. It refers to the prototypes, ideologies and meanings in a specific society. The cronosystem refers to time and sociohistorical conditions as broadly discusses in the developmental work of Rogoff (2003). When relevant we will focus on one specific system within the broader societal context, often, however, focus on them all together as the 'socio-cultural' (or 'socio-historical') context.

The choice of bilingual childrearing

If a child is going to develop a specific language, a minimal requirement is that the child is integrated into communication using that language, implying, in the words of Bronfenbrenner, that the child must be part of a microsystem (or more microsystems) using that language. Furthermore, if such microsystems are to be created, those competent in the actual language must decide to create such microsystems by their conscious – or less conscious – choice of language of communication with the child. Studies by Okita (2002) and Varro (1988), among others, have shown that many minority parents are strongly motivated to transmit their native language to the child and thus make such choices. The reasons given for them vary. By studying the language use in Japanese mother/British father families living in the UK Okita (2002) found that the need to communicate with the extended family, the desire to feel satisfied in communication with the child, observation of other families raising their children bilingually, and fear of becoming isolated in the husband's country were strong motivating factors in the mothers' decisions to use their native language with the child. Varro (1988), studying French-American marriages in France, argue that minority-language mothers in a foreign country may be strongly motivated to transmit their native language to the child as they are trying to achieve their personal fulfillment through their children's bilingualism/ biculturalism. Varro points out that the minority-language wives are often unable to utilize the credentials from their native country. Many mothers have to accept less challenging jobs or become housewives, a life situation that may strengthen their investment in the children's bilingual/bicultural development. Pavlenko (2004), furthermore, discussing the role of emotion-related factors for local and more overall language choices in bilingual families, points out that the perceived emotionality of the first language may affect the choice of which language to use as main language in parent-child communication. The choice of mother tongue use and the reasons given for it may be conceived of as individual family affairs. Pavlenko argues, however, that they also may be influenced by romantic societal discourses and ideologies about first language primacy.

But every family does not go for bilingual child rearing. Some families may have objectives which conflict with that of raising children bilingually. Okita (2002) found that aspirations such as to orientate towards local social networks, the lack of motivation to engage in work related to language transmission and the intension to avoid unpleasant relationships with family

in the country of origin determined the mothers' decisions to use their second language with the child. Yamamoto (2002) identified another important factor influencing the initial language choice within parent-child units in his study exploring language use in Japanese-English families living in Japan, namely the concern about a possible delay in the development of the majority language of the society. In this study, the parents in two families chose to speak the majority language (Japanese) together and to the children because they believed that a child should establish a base in one language first, and then learn the second language (English).

Language interaction in the family and bilingual development

But even if the minority-language parents have decided to transmit their native language to their offspring, the establishment of productive bilingualism in the home may constitute a difficult task for parents living in a community which speaks a language other than their own and who in addition may be the main or the only providers of linguistic input in the minority language (Arnberg 1981, 1987, Billings 1990, Porsché 1983, Søndergaard 1981). Parents can be unprepared for the difficulties of bilingual childrearing, and when the expected results are not achieved, they may altogether give up their attempts to raise their children bilingually (Okita, 2002). Studies by Döpke (1992), Kasuya (1998) and Takeuchi (2006) have shown that the quality of linguistic interactions – that is the quality of the microsystem – between the minority-language parent and the child is crucial for whether the child will actively use the minority language or not. Consistency of use of the minority language in communication with the child and explicit discourse strategies by which the minority – language parents pretend not to comprehend when their children address them in the majority language, seem to be the most common characteristics promoting productive bilingualism (Kasuya 1998, Lanza 1997, 2001, Mishina 1999, Takeuchi 2006). Many parents fail to establish such an interactional style, however, and consequently their children may not even begin to develop an active command of the minority language. Nonetheless they seem to acquire a good understanding of the minority language (Döpke 1992) and thus to develop a passive form of bilingualism.

A strong desire to communicate with the child irrespective of the language used can make it difficult for minority-language parents to firmly insist on the use of their native language. For instance, in Yamamoto's (2002)

study, all interviewed parents reported that they did not want to force their children to speak a particular language. The parents felt that it was more important for the children to feel comfortable and to communicate with them intimately in whatever language they preferred. Furthermore, as Goodz's (1989, 1994) and Kasuya's (1998) research shows, the most frequent strategy applied by the parents in response to the child's utterances in their nonnative language is not an explicit strategy where they pretend not to understand the utterance, but rather an implicit strategy, where the parents repeat the child's utterances in the nonnative language, and then expand it in their own language. As Goodz (1994: 42) states: "the motivation here seems to be to encourage language behavior regardless of its form".

Bronfenbrenner (1977) argues that the interactions within the mother-child dyades in the family microsystem are influenced by the father, and so is the case when it comes to the frequency and possibilities of interactions in the minority language. Mother's linguistic input in communication with the child is shown to be strongly influenced by the majority-language father's linguistic practices. For instance, in Lanza's (2001) study, investigating the interactions between parents and their child, Siri, within a bilingual Norwegian father-American mother family in Norway, shows that the mother's linguistic interaction with the child can be affected by the presence of the father. The parents in this study claimed to speak the minority language to each other. The analysis of triadic interactions, however, revealed that despite this claim, the father often spoke Norwegian to his wife in the presence of the child. When the father addressed the mother in Norwegian, she often responded without negotiation. "Hence the mother's monolingual identity established with Siri in dyadic interactions is confronted with a bilingual identity in triadic interactions" (p. 294). Furthermore, Siri's mother who generally did not accept Siri's use of Norwegian in their dyadic interactions, accepted it more in triadic interactions, or even used Norwegian words herself to help Siri tell her father about the day's activities.

Varro (1988) argues that the level of bilingualism attained by a child is mostly related to the fact that the mother regularly or almost exclusively uses her native language. She emphasizes, however, that the mother's language choices in turn depends on which language her husband speaks with her. If the father exclusively uses his language, the mother has very limited chances to maintain her own. On the other hand, if the father uses the mother's native language in conversation with her, it makes it easier for the mother to adhere to her native language in communication with the child

and to insist on the child's use of this language. Varro notes that the father's use of the minority language with the mother has a strong psychological impact on the child. The child then perceives that the father, who Varro claims is having the dominant moral authority in the mixed family, endorses the mother's foreign tongue. It is worth noting, however, that according to Varro's study it was not necessary for the fathers to use the minority language exclusively. Even when they combined it with their own language, but persisted in doing so through the different periods of the children's language development, the mothers still managed to maintain English use almost exclusively, and the children in most of these families attained active bilingualism.

The majority-language parents' support for bilingual childrearing can also be expressed through their use of the minority language directly with the child. As the study by Yamamoto (2001) shows, the more both parents in cross-linguistic families use the minority language and the less the minority language parent uses the majority language in communication with the child, the greater is the chance that the child would use the minority language in interaction with the minority-language parent. Yamamoto points out that if the linguistic environment of the child is characterized by the principle of 'maximal engagement with the minority language' (p.128) the child receives not only more input in the minority language, but also an implicit message from the parents that the minority language is supposed to be the means of communication in the family. It could be noted that this conclusion is at variance with the advice of a "one parent, one language, strategy" which parents often encounter, following the advice of Ronjat (1913).

However, in family contexts where the majority language parents do not have the competence in the minority language, such support for the minority language use is not available. Furthermore, such lack of competence may be associated with additional difficulties. Okita (2002) describes one case from her research in which the father, having very limited knowledge in the minority language, became distant from the mother-child unit. On the other hand, in their study addressing the issues of how social and psychological factors influenced the language choices made by bilingual Welsh-English mothers while raising their children in Wales, Harrison and Piette (1980) showed that the father's language ability was not decisive, but rather his attitude towards the minority language which influenced his acceptance of minority language use in the mother-child unit. Thus the studies

by Harrison and Piette (1980) and Okita (2002) point to the important issue of how the minority language use in communication between the mother and the child might be influenced by the father's competence in the minority language and his attitudes towards this language. Neither of the studies, however, discusses how the mothers deal with the problem of their monolingual husbands having negative attitudes towards the minority language or becoming distant from the mother-child units because of minority language use. In the present study, investigating language use in cross-linguistic Russian-Norwegian families, in which many of the fathers do not have competence in the minority language (Russian), further explorations of these issues will be possible.

Significant others outside the nuclear family, either in settings where the child directly participate or in the wider social environment, can also have an important impact on the mother's language use in communication with her child. For instance, in the study by Okita (2002) some mothers found it difficult to speak their native language to their children in front of monolingual speakers, especially if those people were vital sources of support in the foreign country. Furthermore, Okita found that the availability of a social environment supporting use of the minority language was a crucial condition for establishing minority language use in mother-child communication. On the other hand, if mothers were more oriented towards local majority-language social networks and did not create a social network to support Japanese, it was difficult to maintain the active use of the minority language in communication with the child.

The language learning child may be involved in other microsystems characterized by direct interactions by use of the minority language in addition to the nuclear family. Attendance in minority language kindergartens and schools has been found to be important factors for promoting children's minority language development (Varro 1988, Yamamoto 2001). Different factors from the exo- and macro-systems, as the availability of relevant educational contexts and the societal value attached to the specific language, are, however, related to the chances of a child for such stimulation. In both Varro's (1988) and Yamamoto's (2001) studies the minority language is English, a widespread language enjoying high international prestige. Consequently, for the minority-language parents in these studies it might have been relatively easy to find schools and kindergartens with English as the language of instruction. The situation is different for the minority-language parents whose native language is Japanese as, for instance, in Okita's (2002)

study, or Russian as in the present study. For these mothers, at best, support for the minority language use is limited to weekend private schools.

Many children in the process of learning a minority language experience important changes in their environment, including changes at the micro-, exo- and macrolevel, for example visits to the minority parents (most often the mother's) home country. Spending the vacations in the mother's home country has been found to be an important promoting factor for the child's active use of the minority language (Caldas 2006, Takeuchi 2006, Varro 1988). In Okita's (2002) research as well, trips to the mother's home country supported the minority language use within mother-child units. To travel to the minority parent's home country requires active decisions by the parents, however, and Varro stresses the importance of the father's support in terms of his acceptance of such significant family experiences as for example regular trips to the mother's native country.

Thus additional factors such as extra linguistic input from other sources than the parents and the frequency of trips to the minority-language parent home country are important for children's minority language development. According to Takeuchi (2006), however, such factors can neither substitute high quality linguistic interaction within parent-child unit, nor predict the level of success in the child's minority language development. But these factors seem to help to promote a continuous development in the minority language over time.

Prior research has demonstrated the importance of language strategies within the family microsystem for minority language development, but it has also pointed to the influence of the wider societal context, the exo-, macro- and cronosystems, and increased our awareness of the context of research. A majority of the studies earlier referred to include English as the minority or majority language. To the knowledge of the present authors no prior study of bilingual language development within cross-linguistic Russian-Norwegian families living in Norway can be found. Many studies focusing on Russian development and maintenance by Russian immigrants in other countries, particularly in Israel, have been performed (among others, Epstein and Kheimets 2000, Kopeliovich 2009, Tannenbaum and Berkovich 2005). These studies, however, deal with language development within families where both parents are Russian and thus differ in important aspect from the present study where focus is on cross-linguistic families. Thus we will ask: Under which circumstances do some cross-linguistic families choose to use both parents' native languages in communication with

the child, and under which circumstances do they choose to use only one? And why is it that some parents initially intending to rear the child with two languages, fail to establish an interactional style to facilitate minority language acquisition? What other strategies do parents use in their attempts to motivate the child's active use of the minority language? The objective of the present article is to increase our understanding of these issues by looking at how the processes of initial language choice and the minority language transmission to the child are carried out within Russian mother/Norwegian father families living in Norway. As the mothers are primarily responsible for providing the child with opportunities to be exposed to the minority language within the family, this article focuses on their initial decisions concerning their child's bilingualism and their experiences of bilingual childrearing.

The context of the study

In general, immigration for family reasons is important in the Norwegian immigration landscape, and in the period 1991 – 2004 about 20 % of all immigrants coming from not-Nordic countries, came as spouses, the number increasing over the period. Some of the anchoring persons in Norway had immigration backgrounds, but most of them (57 %) actually had an ethnic Norwegian one. More men than women marry transnationally, and the partners of men and women come from different countries. Ethnic Norwegian men marry women from many different countries, but most frequently from Thailand, Russia and the Philippines (Daugstad 2008). Henriksen (2007) presents detailed information about 18 different immigration groups with not- Western descent in Norway and among them the Russian group. In 2006 there were about 10 000 Russian people in Norway (Henriksen 2007), the number increasing to about 16 000 in 2010 (Henriksen, Østby and Ellingsen 2010). The Russian group includes more women than men, and many of them marry/have married ethnic Norwegian men. In more recent years, however, immigration from Russia has also included more refugee men coming from Chechnya. 1500 children with one Russian and one Norwegian parent live in Norway, three times as many as the number of children with two Russian immigrant parents. When comparing immigrant people from the different countries, people from Russia are exceptionally well educated. In Norway three out of ten men and four out of ten women have

higher education. The same is true for five out of ten of both Russian women and men coming to Norway, making this group the most highly educated of all the groups compared. The employment rate is high, and in contrast to other immigration groups, higher for women than men. The highest number of Russian live in the Oslo area, while the highest proportion of Russian live in the northern county of Finnmark, bordering Russia (Henriksen 2007).

The characteristics of the Russian population in Norway may be considered as aspects of the exosystem influencing a child's microsystem for Russian language development. Attitudes toward bilingualism and the Russian language and supporting language learning systems as school classes most probably also influence a child's possibilities for development of Russian. Policy documents in Norway express positive attitudes toward bi- or multilingual language knowledge by individuals (NOU 2010: 7). But the society does not in general offer minority language support during the pre-school and primary school years for bilingual children competent in the majority language (Section 2–8, Education Act 1998) – which most of the children in cross-linguistic families are.

From a world perspective Russian is an important language and may be considered its fifth most widespread language, and it is one of the six official languages of the United Nations (Grønn 2007). Direct studies of the attitude toward the Russian language by Norwegian people are not known to the authors. Within the Norwegian school system there are, however, some traditions for offering Russian as a foreign language, particularly in secondary school, and particularly within the northern part of the country. Three foreign languages – in addition to English – have a special position in the Norwegian educational system judged by the number of students learning the language and formulations in the Provisions to the Educational Act – German, French and Spanish. But it could be argued that Russian has a position next to these languages. Thus in the Provisions (§ 1-8, Provisions to the Educational Act) it is stated that the school owner has to offer teaching in at least one of the following four languages, German, French, Spanish or Russian, giving Russian in this context formally a position equal to the other three languages. In addition, the Norwegian Defence has been offering courses in Russian since 1954 (Grønn, 2007).

Thus the Russian women marrying Norwegian men come from a big country with a language of world importance to a small country with about five million inhabitants and about an equally number of persons with competence in the Norwegian language. Even so, the Norwegian language

would in their daily life function as the majority language. The Russian women also come to a country with a political ideology of sex equality and high participation in work for both women and men, even for those being parents of rather young children. Adjustment of working conditions, rather generous arrangements, from an international perspective, for maternal (and paternal) leaves and development of a sufficient number of kindergartens of good quality to a reasonable price have been among the political means used to approach the sex equality goal. An important aspect of sex equality policies since the 1980's, has been attempts to increase fathers' participation in family life (Vollset 2011). In 1993 Norway introduced, as the first country in the world, a specific paternal leave in connection with the birth of a child exclusively for fathers (Brandth og Kvande 2003). It started out as four weeks and has increased gradually over the years to 12 weeks in 2011 (Wikipedia). Ideology and practice may differ, however, and studies of division of work within the family show that the mothers still use much more time on household tasks and childrearing than fathers. However, the time fathers use for childcare has clearly been increasing since 1971 (Pettersen 2004), and to take care of children is compatible with male identity (Brandth and Kvande 2003). Studies of Russian wife/Norwegian husband families in the northern part of Norway also tell the story of Russian women been impressed by Norwegian men and their involvement in childcare and more generally also about more sex equality in Norway than they had experienced in Russia (Lotherington 2008, Flemmen 2004). Women growing up in Russia, or the former Soviet Union, are used to family practices where the mothers have the main responsibility for child rearing, and where a special emphasis is given to early education of the child.

Research Methods

Grounded theory

The qualitative method of grounded theory was chosen as the research tool (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978, Strauss 1987, Strauss & Corbin 1990, Corbin & Strauss 1990, Willig 2008), for our study, with in-depth semi-structured interviews with 15 mothers being the source of the data. Grounded theory aims at developing a theory based on, and thus "grounded" in, the data at hand. It aims at a contextualized theory giving in the words of Willig (2008:35) "an explanatory framework with which to understand

the phenomenon under investigation”. Central to the research process of grounded theory, as used in this study, was the specific coding strategies used to analyse the data and the theoretical sampling involved in selecting some of the informants (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Following grounded theory, the research processes of data collection and analysis were partly merged in the present case. The analysis included open, axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin 1990) and started rather early in the research process. The different coding procedures will be explained in the section on “The process of analysis”. But to understand the process of theoretical sampling it must already be noted that together these different coding strategies suggest categories and their relations which seem to be of specific importance for understanding the data. The aim of theoretical sampling is to select further informants in a strategic way to allow for testing of preliminary results or insights based on the initial coding of the data.

Participants

15 Russian mothers, residing permanently in Norway and having a child with a Norwegian partner participated in the interviews. In addition two mothers took part in preliminary interviews to check the interview guide, but these interviews were not included into the analysis. The selection criterion for mothers was the age of her first child, which should be at least three years old. Since one of the objectives of the present study was to explore the process of transmitting the minority language to the child, it was necessary to ensure that the child already had reached some competence in the language(s), and the mothers had sufficient experience with this process to make some reflection upon it. Further decisions concerning the selection of participants were made in the process of initial analysis and interpretation of the data, following the principles of theoretical sampling.

The contact with the first participants was established with the help of a Russian student who had been studying interpretation (Russian – Norwegian) at the University of Oslo, and who had among her fellow students two Russian women who had a child with a Norwegian partner. These two mothers were told about our project and were willing to contribute to the study. From this point, the recruitment of the participants took shape of a ‘snowball’ sampling from one case to the next. The mothers who had already taken part in the study, contacted their friends, who had the same family pattern, and they in turn contacted the first author who conducted the interviews.

The educational background of this group of women was rather high. 14 out of 15 women had education at the university level. Their age varied from 25 to 40 years.

Interviewing

One or two semi-structured interviews of two hours were conducted with each mother. The interviews were carried out in Russian by the first author whose mother tongue is also Russian. In this way we were able to create a secure and well functioning communication. The interviews began with questions about the life history of the mother and continued with questions about her identity, language strategies in the family and the child's bilingual development, attitudes toward bilingualism and the Russian language, and family relationships (For interview guide, see Appendix). Several of the communicative strategies suggested by Kvale (1996: 133–135) were applied during this stage of the interview session. 'Probing Questions' were used for deeper inquiries of the interviewee's answers and 'Interpretative Questions' were used to clarify the meaning of the mothers' answers. Kvale (1996: 132) notes that such meaning clarification during the interview session provides "a more trustworthy point of departure for the later analysis". The interviewer took special care to clarify any ambiguous statements and to verify the interpretation of the participants' answers during the interview session. As the interview session proceeded, most of the interviewees introduced many new topics which they wanted to reflect upon. Therefore it was sometimes a real challenge to stay on track during the interviewing process and decide what was relevant and what was not in relation to our research questions. The interview guide, comprising the major research topics, helped a lot in this respect. Despite the interviewer's efforts to be as flexible as possible in letting the mothers say what they wanted to say, it was sometimes necessary to give the interview a new turn by asking 'Structuring Questions' when the conversation seemed to go very far from the focus of the study.

At the end of the interview session the mothers were asked what they thought about the study, and how they felt during the interview session. This final stage of the interview process is very important because the researcher should be aware of how the subjects experienced the interview situation, and what they gained through their participation in the investigation (Blumer 1969, Voysey 1975, LaRossa & LaRossa 1981, Kvale 1996). Most

of the mothers gave positive feedback and suggested that we could contact them again if their further participation in the study would be necessary.

The process of analysis

After each interview session, the full-length interview was transcribed and translated to English. The process of analysis started with ‘open coding’ (Strauss & Corbin 1990). In the open coding, the interview was coded paragraph by paragraph and conceptual labels were given to each discrete incident. Then these concepts were compared one against another, and those that seemed to pertain to similar phenomenon were grouped together to form a category. This stage of analysis helped us to identify the major areas of inquiry on which to focus in conducting the subsequent interviews.

After the first five interviews were subjected to open coding, many different categories emerged. Among these we chose nine categories which were of particular relevance for our research questions. These categories were: 1) *the initial choice regarding the transmission of Russian to the child*, 2) *the mothers’ personal motives leading to these choices*, 3) *the situational and socio-historical context influencing the mothers’ motives*, 4) *the mothers’ language use in communication with the child*, 5) *the mothers’ beliefs about early bilingual development*, 6) *the family context influences on the mothers’ language use*, 7) *the childrearing arrangements influencing the language use within the mother-child units*, 8) *the mothers’ strategies providing the children with additional input in Russian* and 9) *the children’s bilingual development*.

As the interviewing proceeded, we began to connect some of the categories which were identified through open coding, a process called ‘axial coding’. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990: 97) axial coding aims at “the development of what will eventually become one of several main categories”. In order to develop a category (phenomenon) at this higher-order level the authors suggest the use of a ‘coding paradigm’. It presents a number of predefined relations between categories to be searched for in the data. Examples of such relations are causal conditions that lead to the occurrence of the phenomenon, the context in which the phenomenon is embedded, the action/interaction strategies by which it is carried out, and the consequences of these strategies. At this stage of analysis we partially applied this coding paradigm for developing the category – *initial choices regarding the transmission of Russian to the child* in terms of its causal conditions (mother’s

personal motives) and the various contexts which in turn influenced the mothers' motives.

It was also used to further develop the category *the mothers language use in communication with the child*. The conceptual relations between this category and several other major categories emerged relatively early in the process of analysis. After axial coding of seven interviewees, it became clear that *the mothers' language use in communication with the child* was strongly influenced by two specific characteristics of their family contexts – their husband's competence in Russian (which varied from excellent to very limited) and by the emotional relationship between the parents (which ranged from distant to close). Furthermore, it seemed that *the mothers' language use* in turn to a large degree determined their *children's Russian language development*. From then on the research process was focused on verifying the relations between these categories and on relating them to the other categories by the means of the coding paradigm. Thus our coding became more selective. According to the principles of theoretical sampling, furthermore, selection of new mothers to be interviewed depended on their expected level of insight for validating the suggested relations between these categories. We interviewed eight more mothers, six raising their child in a family context where the father had a poor competence in Russian and two where the father had sufficient competence in this language. Some of these mothers described their relationship with the husband as close and some as distant. The new data confirmed our hypothesis concerning the conceptual relations between the categories – *the mothers' language use in communication with the child* and *the family context influences on the mothers' language use*, and between the former category and *the children's bilingual development*.

As part of grounded theory's aim of developing a contextual theory of the data from the study a core or key category around which other categories can be organized, should be identified. A possible core category in the present study is *Establishing Russian language use within mother-child units in the context of cross-linguistic Norwegian-Russian families*. By labelling the core category in this way the authors intend to emphasize that the mothers were *taking actions* in order to establish Russian language use in communication with the child, actions which furthermore were influenced by the family context in which they were taken. The suggested core category could be related to all other central categories, and this structure of categories represents the grounded theory of how the mothers managed the

process of establishing the Russian language use in the context of their families.

Results

In this section, we will first present the mothers' initial choices regarding the transmission of Russian to the child and the reasons given for them and show how these choices were influenced by intrapersonal, family and situational factors. Then we will describe how and to what degree, the mothers were able to establish Russian language use in communication with their children in three different family contexts identified throughout the research process. Our major objective in this part is to portray various dilemmas which the minority language mothers were facing during the early period of childrearing, while trying to stimulate the development of an active command of Russian in the children. We will also provide a brief description of the children's Russian language development based on the mothers' accounts.

Initial choices regarding transmission of Russian to the child

An important finding in this study was that all of the mothers interviewed except one initially intended to raise their children bilingually. In what follows, the reasons given by the mothers for this choice are presented. Then we look at the motives given by the only mother initially choosing Norwegian in communication with her child.

The desire to have a close emotional relationship with the child. The quality of emotional communication with the children was particularly important for most of the mothers, but high quality communication could not be fully obtained if they were to speak in Norwegian, their second language. The mothers said that Russian was the only language through which they could fully express their emotions and in some cases, even their personalities. Actually, all mothers but one were concerned that the emotional connection between them and their children would be affected if they did not speak Russian to them.

I can only express myself emotionally in Russian and as a Russian. This

language is the only tool I can use to let my children know my personality, to show how much I love them. I am Russian, I am not Norwegian! I want my children to know and love me as I am. It would be very artificial to speak Norwegian with them; we would not have a close relationship then.

Interestingly, this concern was not simply determined by the mother's competence in Norwegian. It was emphasized by the mothers who had their first child soon after arrival to Norway, and who were still in the process of learning Norwegian, but the mothers who already had good competence in Norwegian, also expressed a strong need to speak Russian with the child in order to not disturb the emotional contact between them.

I spoke Norwegian fluently when Herman was born, but I could not speak Norwegian with him when we were alone. I felt it was so artificial, like somebody else was speaking. I did not want to have this tension between us; it could have consequences for us in the future.

The desire to be respected by the child. In some cases mothers' decisions to introduce Russian to their child, reflected not only the wish to feel satisfied in their verbal communication, but also the desire to be respected by the child. The concern about respect in the mother-child relationship was related to such intrapersonal psychological context, as perceived ability to speak Norwegian without accent. The mothers, who mentioned this reason, felt that they would never obtain the pronunciation of a native speaker of Norwegian. Consequently, they feared that their children would not respect them fully because of their accent. Speaking Russian could prevent this problem.

Even though we speak good Norwegian, we still have an accent when speaking this language. It is important to speak Russian. The child would not feel then that her mother is inferior to other people. She should know that her mother can speak some language excellent. Then she will respect me.

The desire to have a close person in the foreign country. Some mothers wanted their children to speak Russian, because then they would have a close person in Norway, one who would understand their personality better

than their Norwegian partner. The frequency of mentioning this reason was related to *the family context* in which the mother had her child. It emerged as especially important for the mothers who had a distant relationship with their husbands.

My husband works a lot. We don't have a bad relationship, but we don't spend much time together. If my son would not speak Russian, I would feel so lonely here. I need to convey him my native language. Then he will understand me better. After all I am Russian.

The desire to maintain close ties to the Russian family. Some mothers wanted to keep close ties to the Russian family, and this was an important reason for the native language transmission. This was also the case mostly for the mothers whose relationship with the father lacked a close emotional link. It seemed like the mothers who were not satisfied with their family life in Norway wanted to keep close ties to their Russian families to compensate for emotional distance resulting from imperfect relationships with their partners in Norway.

I am very attached to my family in Russia; I want my son to be able to speak with them. It is very important for me. The only time I am really happy is when we are visiting my family in Russia, or when they visit us here... I don't want this time to be destroyed because my son speaks bad Russian.

The desire to equip the child with the knowledge of an extra language. All the mothers clearly expressed that they wanted their children to speak Russian, because the knowledge of an extra language could be beneficial for them in their future life. Such reasoning was partly connected to their own experience of growing up in a country emphasizing early education, partly by the encounter of positive attitudes toward bilingual childrearing by people around them.

When I was a child, I went to music school and to art school. I believe that early education is very important for children. You should make as much efforts as possible for the development of your child. Knowledge of languages is an important part of the education, as it will give him so many possibilities in his future life.

The motives of the mother who chose Norwegian from the beginning.

Out of 15 interviewed mothers, only one said that she had deliberately chosen to speak Norwegian to her child almost from the beginning. In order to understand the mother's initial language choice, we have to consider the contexts of decision making. The mother had her child soon after arrival to Norway. She was still in the process of learning the language and establishing herself occupationally and socially in the new country. The situational context was the same for several other mothers as well. However, these mothers had Norwegian partners who to some extent could assist in the process of adaptation in Norway. Elena, on the other hand, did not get even the most basic emotional or practical support from her husband and moved away from him when her daughter was around four months old. In this situation it was her responsibility to establish herself and the child in the Norwegian society. Elena reflected that during this period she thought that Russian was not important for her:

Maybe because I had the child here, and I did not have anybody to rely on, I had to adjust very quickly. It was very important for me that my child would not feel that she is an outcast or very different from all others. I tried to learn as much Norwegian as possible within a really short time. Maria started to attend the kindergarten before she turned one, by this time I decided to use only Norwegian with her.

However, when the family and situational contexts changed in favorable ways for Elena – she met a supportive partner and got a secure job – she also, as all the other mothers in this study, recognized the need to develop Russian in her child. Elena emphasized that one reason in particular had made her change language strategy with her child – *the desire to have emotional communication with her child*. This she could not obtain fully through Norwegian.

Establishing Russian language use within the mother-child units

All the mothers but one were thus initially very determined to stimulate the development of Russian in their child. In order to succeed, the mothers had to establish a language use pattern in communication with the child which would be favorable for the acquisition of the minority language. Most of the mothers appeared to believe that in order to stimulate their children's

Russian language development, they should speak this language consistently with them. Information about bilingual childrearing was obtained from books offering practical advice to parents wishing to raise children bilingually and the advices of other families, bringing children up with two languages. Despite of this awareness, not all the mothers were able to establish such a language use pattern. Some mothers reported that they used almost exclusively Russian with the child, while the others said that they spoke both Norwegian and Russian. How, then, could these differences in the mothers' language use be explained?

Thorough the research process we have identified a close connection between the paternal competence in Russian, the quality of the emotional relationship between the parents and the mothers' language use patterns in communication with the child. Three types of family contexts which seem to be important for understanding the variations in the mothers' language use can be identified: 1) *the father has limited competence in Russian and the parents have a close emotional relation*), 2) *the father has sufficient competence in Russian and the parents have a close emotional relation*, 3) *the father has limited competence in Russian and the parents have a distant relationship*. The fourth possibility – parents with distant emotional relationship and fathers with good competence in Russian – were not encountered in this study.

According to Strauss and Corbin's (1990) coding paradigm, *the mothers' language use in communication with the child* could be conceived of as action/ interaction strategies and *the children's bilingual development* as an outcome or consequence of the language strategy used (see The process of analysis). The children's bilingual development was evaluated on the basis of the mothers' accounts as either active or passive early bilingualism (De Houwer 1999). An active bilingual child responds and initiates dialogues in either of the two languages, while a passive bilingual child appears to understand both languages, but actively uses only one.

The core phenomenon – *establishing Russian language use within the mother child unit* – was not only influenced by the two family contextual factors mentioned so far, however. In addition, specific ways of dealing with *childrearing arrangements in the families* – how the mothers were involved in paid employment and how the majority-language speaking fathers were participating in early child-care – were of importance. Important also was *the mothers' strategies for providing the children with additional input in Russian*. These two factors were conceived of as conditions inter-

vening between *the mothers' language use and the children's bilingual development*.

With this conceptual framework in mind let us now look at how the mothers were trying to establish minority language use in communication with their children in the three different family contexts, and what consequences it had for their children's Russian language development in the first years of life.

Family context 1: The father has limited competence in Russian and the parents have a close emotional relation. Nine of the mothers in the present study were trying to establish minority language use in communication with their children in a *family context* where the fathers' understanding of Russian was very limited and the parents were very emotionally attached to each other. For these mothers the initial attempts to establish a consistent language use pattern in the family resulted in a period of simultaneous accommodation of diametrically opposed goals; the goal to speak consistently in Russian to the child and the goal to include the father fully into their communication. When we started this study, we were not aware that the responsibility for including the father into the communication with the child would appear to be so influential for the mother's language use. In the present family context, however, this concern was expressed strongly in all the interviews. The mothers said that balancing both of these needs was very emotionally demanding. They felt that close emotional communication within the family could not be sustained if they only spoke to the child in Russian. Eventually all the mothers prioritized such a communication. They used both languages (Russian and Norwegian) when addressing the child in the presence of the father, and tried to speak only Russian when they were alone with him/her. The following example is illustrative:

In the beginning I tried to only speak Russian to Erik, because I was told that if you want your child to learn Russian, you should not speak Norwegian to him. It was difficult when my husband was with us. He does not understand much Russian, so when I spoke in Russian to Erik he became silent ...I don't know how it should be possible to speak all the time in Russian when your husband doesn't understand what you are saying. I knew that it was not right that I started speaking Norwegian to Eric, but Russian is not more important than the family. When we were alone, I spoke only Russian with him.

The childrearing arrangements in the families affected the minority language use in mother-child communication even further. All the mothers in this group were working women who went back to full time work before their children turned two. The mothers' involvement into paid employment resulted in their children's early exposure to Norwegian through day care and limited the Russian language input to evening hours and weekends. Furthermore, the mothers told us that their partners expressed a strong desire to participate equally in early child-care, and the mothers themselves encouraged the fathers' involvement. In this family context, the high involvement of the fathers in early child-care provided the children with additional input in Norwegian at the expense of Russian. The interplay of these conditions led to a situation where the mothers felt that their children were receiving very limited input in the Russian language:

I felt that I didn't speak enough Russian with her. During the day she was in kindergarten and in the evening when the whole family was together our main language was Norwegian. I spoke in Russian when I addressed her, but when I discussed something with my husband, we spoke Norwegian. If I needed to say something to her, I also said that in Norwegian, so the father would understand what I was speaking about. Then I repeated in Russian what I just had said in Norwegian. Sometimes I became so exhausted that I forgot to repeat my sentence in Russian.

The mothers who were not able to provide their children with sufficient input in Russian, found it very difficult to insist on minority language use. According to the mothers, their children's first verbal expressions were in Norwegian, and the mothers tended to accept their children speaking in Norwegian to them, translated their Norwegian to Russian, and then continued the conversation.

He started to speak in Norwegian, and I did not try to push him to speak Russian. I did not feel that it would be right, because it was my fault that mixed Norwegian and Russian when I spoke to him, so I just repeated in Russian what he said in Norwegian.

On the other hand, if the mothers made an attempt to insist on their native language use, they had to 'compete' with their husbands for the atten-

tion of the children. According to the mothers, their husbands were very engaged in playful activities with the children. Furthermore, the children themselves in some cases had a more enjoyable verbal interaction with the fathers, because the game was carried out in Norwegian, their dominant language. Under these circumstances the mothers felt that insisting on minority language use could distance them from the child:

I tried a few times to ask him to say it in Russian; he tried and did not succeed. Then he just went to his father and asked him in Norwegian to play. I would not do this anymore, our relationship is more important.

My daughter loves me, but she is closer to her father, he is everything for her. I know that this is partially because of the language. My husband did not need to push her, while I tried to insist. I very seldom insist on any language use now, I want to be closer to her.

In addition some mothers had worries about a delay in both languages, for which they also felt responsible because they attributed it to their mixed language use strategy in communication with the child. Following the advice of a health specialist, one mother who was especially concerned about her daughter's delayed language development completely switched to Norwegian. The child quickly caught up in Norwegian, but lost even a passive understanding of Russian:

She was so confused about all these languages that she did not speak until she was almost four years old. I worried so much, because my child did not speak any language. I asked for advice at the health station, and they told me that we had to choose one language as home language, and preferably it would be Norwegian. It was difficult to use Norwegian when I was alone with Tine, so at first I used both languages, but gradually I switched completely to Norwegian. By the age of five she caught up in Norwegian, but lost even a passive understanding of Russian.

The other mothers, however, did not give up the hope of developing an active command of their native language in their children. In order to promote their children's Russian language development, they used such strategies as reading Russian books, singing Russian songs for the child and watching Russian cartoons and films together with the child. Some mothers

also enrolled their children into Russian weekend school when they were around three years old. The mothers said that all these efforts did not motivate the children to use Russian actively, but considerably enriched their passive vocabulary. According to the mothers, their children, aged from 3 to 6 at the time of the interview, had reached the level of passive bilingualism and appeared to understand Russian concerning daily issues. Furthermore, most of the mothers said that during long vacations in Russia their children often began to use Russian language actively to communicate with their grandparents. For some mothers, however, extended trips to Russia with the child were a problematical issue. When speaking about the reasons preventing them from long trips to the home country, these mothers mostly referred to the attitudes of their husbands. According to the mothers, the fathers, who were very engaged in childrearing, found it very difficult to be away from the child. Again, the mothers tended to prioritize the family needs instead of the language project requirements as with language use in the family,

Family context 2: The father has sufficient competence in Russian and the parents have a close emotional relationship.

Three of the mothers were establishing Russian language use in a family context where the father had good or moderate competence in Russian and the parents had a very close relationship. This family context was more favourable for maintaining a balance between the language project requirements and the family needs. The mothers could speak Russian with the child without any risk of excluding the father from their communication. These mothers said that they used the Russian language consistently when addressing the child, regardless of the presence of the father. When talking about their language use, these mothers especially emphasized that the father's good competence in Russian was an important condition which made it possible for them to only use this language when communicating with the child:

It was not difficult for me to only speak in Russian, because my husband understood everything I was saying to her'

Furthermore, in two families where the parents have chosen to speak Russian to each other, the mothers got additional support in the process of establishing minority language use with the child.

He tried to only speak Russian with me, my family and friends. I felt a lot of emotional support from him in relation to the Russian language; we did not have any conflicts about language use. He knew that it was important for me that Natalie would speak Russian, and he did his best to help me to feel comfortable to speak my language. With Marine, he spoke mostly Norwegian.

The childrearing arrangements in these families were similar to those described above, with both parents working outside home and equally participating in early child-care. The children in these families were also exposed very early to Norwegian through kindergartens as their mothers returned to paid employment before they reached the age of two. In this kind of family context the fathers' high participation in the child care became a factor promoting the establishment of minority language use in the mother-child units, though only in the families, where the parents used the minority language in communication between each other. The mothers, whose families adopted this pattern of language use, said that although they needed to insist on Russian language use, their children recognized relatively early that Russian was supposed to be the means of communication with the mother.

She answered me in Russian all the time, but sometimes she could ask me something in Norwegian. Then I pretended that I did not understand her. After some time she recognized that she should speak with mummy in Russian and with daddy or the neighbors in Norwegian.

In one family, the parents chose to speak Norwegian to each other. For this mother the process of establishing the Russian language use became very emotionally demanding. However, the strict adherence to the Russian language in communication with her child, combined with the extra strategies used to promote the child's minority language development, eventually succeeded.

Sometimes when we came home from the kindergarten, she was very silent. She was not able to tell me in Russian what had happened with her during the day. She knew that I would not speak with her in Norwegian, so she waited for her father to tell him about her day. It was a period of jealousy and despair for me. I felt that I was losing the emotional

contact with her. It was so painful that I had to go to a psychologist. But I tried to relax and continue to speak Russian with her as much as I could. I also read a lot for her; even she tried to object because it was boring for her. Sometimes I almost had to make a theatre to capture her attention. I also bought a lot of Russian films and cartoons. The most important thing is to don't give up. I did not show her my frustration, I just continued to work with her Russian, and I have never answered her in Norwegian. After a while, she attained a sufficient vocabulary in Russian to be able to tell me what happened during her day. Our emotional contact was restored.

According to the mothers, their children who were aged around 5 at the time of interview, actively used Russian when addressing their mothers, and had a sufficient Russian vocabulary. The mothers, however, said that in order to retain this competence they had to constantly spend a lot of time reading Russian books to the child, watching Russian cartoons and playing with the child. Children in two of the families living in Oslo, the capital of Norway, also attended a Russian weekend school. Furthermore, the mothers said that traveling to Russia with the child was a very important factor promoting Russian language development. In these cases the fathers' opinions also became an important factor. Two of the mothers said that their partners recognized the importance of these trips, while one mother said that the attitude of the father prevented her from traveling back home.

Family context 3: The father has limited competence in Russian and parents have a distant relationship

Two mothers were establishing Russian language use in communication with the child in the *family context* where the fathers' understanding of Russian was very limited and the parents had a distant emotional relationship. These mothers decided from the beginning that the establishment of a language use pattern promoting the acquisition of an active command of Russian had a higher priority than other family requirements, for instance, the father's need to participate equally in early communication with the child. The mothers said that they used Russian language consistently when addressing their child, regardless of the fathers' presence. They felt that the exclusive use of Russian raised tensions in the relationships with their husbands. However, these mothers did not want to compromise their Russian language use in order to include the fathers into communication with the children.

I only spoke in Russian with him. My mother stayed a lot with us, so it was not difficult to speak Russian at home. His father spoke in Norwegian with him, but he did not stay much home anyway. Sometimes I thought that he probably was not fully involved because he did not understand what we spoke about, but I did not want to speak Norwegian to my son.

My son is all that I have in Norway! It is very important for me that he will speak Russian. I have read that if you want your child to speak your language, you should only speak this language to him. I felt that when my husband was with us, he wished to participate more in our communication, but I could not allow myself to speak in Norwegian to my boy.

Childrearing arrangements in these families differed considerably from those in the other families in the study in relation to the fathers' participation in early child care. According to the mothers, their partners spent considerable time at work while child-care was considered to be their responsibility.

'My husband does not participate much. He was mostly out at work, or some other places. A maximum contribution by him could be to read a Norwegian book for our son for a few minutes.

Most of the time we are alone. My husband works a lot, so often when he comes back home, Nicolay is asleep. In the weekends his father needs to relax, so it is mostly newspaper or TV. I feel that our child is my responsibility.

The limited extent of participation by the fathers in the childrearing became an important intervening condition promoting the minority language use in mother-child communication. The mothers in this group said that they did not need to insist on Russian language use – their children started to speak Russian naturally. These mothers returned to work soon after their children turned two. When the children began to attend kindergartens, Russian was their main language. Furthermore, the mothers said that attending the kindergarten did not change the established language use pattern between them and the children:

When my boy went to kindergarten he barely spoke any Norwegian,

though I think he understood a lot. I worried a little bit. How he would manage to communicate in his kindergarten? But he is managing. He learns fast. He has never tried to speak Norwegian to me as I use only Russian with him, and he is with me most of the time.

We speak only Russian together. I have never insisted on the Russian language use. I spoke Russian and he answered in Russian. With his father he spoke Norwegian, but his Russian is much stronger than Norwegian, so he mostly addresses me for his needs. I think it was not easy for him to begin in kindergarten, as his Norwegian was not good enough.

According to the mothers, their children aged 4 and 5 at the time of the interview, speak very good Russian. The mothers in turn use much effort to promote their children's language development. They created a Russian language environment outside the home, enrolled their children in a Russian weekend school and spent considerable time reading Russian books and watching Russian TV with the children. Furthermore, the childrearing arrangements in their families, with the mother having the central responsibility for the child, give these mothers the opportunity to travel with the child to Russia quite often. The mothers, however, worry about the delay in Norwegian language development. They say that attending Norwegian kindergartens help children to gradually catch up in Norwegian, but they are still behind the age norms in this language.

Discussion

The choice of bilingual childrearing

All the mothers in the present study, with one exception, were initially very motivated to raise their children bilingually. Different reasons were given for this choice and among those the following: the importance of using their native language for developing a close emotional relationship with the child, to be respected by the child, to have a close person in the foreign country and to have close ties to the Russian family. These reasons seem to focus on the importance of transmitting their first language for the quality of their interpersonal relations. Rather similar reasons were also given by the mothers in Okita's (2002) study, but they did not mention the reason of respect.

The attention toward respect by the Russian mothers may possibly be interpreted as part of a more general value of respect between parents and children in the former Soviet Union (Bronfenbrenner 1970). The specific reasons given by the different mothers varied and seemed to be influenced by such factors as the mothers' competence in Norwegian at the time of the child's birth and the quality of the parents' relationship.

In addition to the more interpersonal reasons the mothers also wished to transmit Russian to their children in order to convey knowledge of an extra language. Such more intellectual reasons for bilingualism have also been documented in other studies (Pavlenko 2004). In the present case it should be interpreted within the socio-historical context of this study. All the mothers participating grew up in the former Soviet Union, where emphasis was given to children's early education, and they felt very committed to provide their children with as much knowledge as possible.

One of the reasons given by the mothers deserves further discussion. The mothers wished to use Russian in communication with the child in order to have a close emotional relationship with him or her. They felt that it was difficult to express their love by using Norwegian, their second language. It is important to stress that the relation between using the first language and the possibility to develop a close emotional relationship with the child, is not a causal one and cannot be conceived of as generally true. What we have presented is just the experience of a small group of women at a specific time in their lives. The ways mothers talked about using their first language and expressing close emotional relationship in our study are rather similar to examples given by Pavlenko (2004) from a study focusing on the role of emotion-related factors in language choice in multilingual families. But she also presents examples of mothers using, and being satisfied by using, other languages than their first in close and emotional communication with their children. She points to the possibility that ideological factors are at work in Western discussions of bilingual development, presenting the first language as a language with a specific emotional force. Books for bilingual parents, for example, often suggest the use of the first language to secure the development of a well functioning relationship with the child (Baker, 2000, Harding and Riley, 1986). People coming from other parts of the world may not agree that specifically strong feelings are connected to the first language, however. The second author of this article has some relevant personal experience from teaching university courses on language minority children in Norwegian schools and the importance of using their mother tongue for ed-

educational success. Some students attending this course have come from India and different African countries, and they seem to react differently than the rest of the students, approaching questions of language choice in a more instrumental and less emotional way. The challenge for those giving advices connected to bilingual childrearing is thus to accept the strong emotional value of the first language for some parents, without presenting such a view on language as universal and basic for advices to all.

Establishing Russian language use within the mother-child unit

The results of the present study show associations between the language use in the mother-child unit and the child's bilingual development consistent with earlier studies. If the mother is able to speak Russian consistently with the child, the chances of the child using this language in communication with her are considerably improved. All the mothers whose children actively used Russian claimed that they adhered strictly to their native language in communication with their children. But when the input in Russian is restricted to only the mother, and she in turn is very inconsistent in her language use, it is unlikely that the child will use this language actively when addressing her. This finding is similar to results from previous research (Döpke 1992, Lanza 1997, Kasuya 1998). Additional strategies such as attending a weekend school, reading and singing for the child, providing him or her with Russian cartoons and films, enrich the children's passive vocabulary, but do not seem to result in active use of the minority language. Nevertheless, even in this kind of situation, the children often develop a good passive understanding of this language. The mothers who employed such a language use pattern reported that their children appeared to understand Russian, and during extended trips to Russia they often began to use the Russian language actively.

The minority language mothers generally found it difficult to put pressure on their children to speak their native language in accordance with the results of Goodz's (1989, 1994), Kasuya's (1998) and Yamamoto's (2001) research. For many mothers insistence on Russian language use was especially emotionally demanding because of a concern about the child's delayed language development for which they felt responsible, attributing it to their mixed language use. In addition, some mothers were afraid of disrupting the relationship with the child, which they believed was already better between the father and the child.

The results connecting language use in the mother-child unit and the child's bilingual development are all based on what the mothers told us. Reported language use does not always reflect actual language use, however. For instance, the studies by Goodz (1994), Kasuya (1998) and Lanza (1997), analyzing parent-child conversational interactions, clearly showed that despite strong avowals to the contrary, no parents were able to maintain a strict separation of languages in interaction with their child. On the background of these studies, it might be expected that the mothers who claimed to be consistent in their language choice in our study could still use Norwegian on some occasions. In order to conclude on the relationship between the degree of consistency in the mothers' language use and the development of bilingualism in their children, micro-analysis of parent-child conversations would be necessary. Such analysis, however, was beyond the present investigation which mainly aimed to understand the mothers' personal experiences of such processes as initial language choice in communication with the child and the transmission of their native language to the child.

The mothers seemed to believe that the one parent – one language strategy would work best when raising bilingual children. Even so, to establish consistent language use pattern in communication with the child, turned out to be rather difficult for many mothers because of unforeseen challenges. Our results show that family context factors as the fathers' competence in Russian and the quality of the relationship between the mother and the father heavily influenced the chances of establishing consistent use of Russian within the mother-child unit. Most of the mothers were raising their children in families with fathers who had a poor competence in Russian. These mothers experienced that talking Russian with the father present excluded him from the communication and made the family situation uneasy. In cases where the relationship between the mother and the father was close, they solved the conflict between stimulating Russian development and taking care of family relationships by prioritizing the latter and decided to talk Norwegian even with the child when the father was present – *Russian is not more important than the family*” as one of the mothers said. However, when the family relationships were more distant, the decision to speak Russian was maintained.

The general importance of father's attitudes and ways of reacting for the interactions between mothers and children has been pointed out by Bronfenbrenner (1977), and we have also referred to some studies of bilingual childrearing discussing the importance of characteristics of fathers'

and their reactions in the introduction (Okita 2002, Harrison and Piette 1980, Varro 1988). For instance, Okita pointed out that mothers may face difficulties if their monolingual partners are feeling isolated by the minority language use in the mother-child interactions. In her study, however, this factor was not found to be among the most influential for mothers' choice of language, while in the present study it appeared to be of a crucial importance. This difference could be related to the differences between the socio-cultural contexts of the two studies, a point to which we will return.

The importance of the fathers' lack of competence in the minority language becomes highlighted when compared to the mothers' experiences when they do comprehend. It is then much easier to use the minority language with the child. If the fathers in addition communicate with the mother in the minority language, it has a strong psychological impact on the child and motivates him/her to answer the mother in her native language. These results are similar to those of Varro (1988) studying French-American marriages in France.

In the family bilingual literature reviewed here, it is only the study by Okita (2002) which points to the possibly negative consequences for family relationships when a mother is using a language with the child not comprehensible to the father. Furthermore, in Okita's study the importance of the father's competence in the minority language is only given minor attention. The importance of mother's choice of language of communication with the child for family relationships is, however, also illustrated by Pease-Alvarez (2003) in a study of language maintenance and shift (Spanish- English) in a group of immigrant parents and their youngsters with Mexican descent living in California. One bilingual Spanish/English mother with a monolingual Spanish father started to talk English to their children, a daughter and a younger son. She experiences, however, negative consequences of her tendency to use English. In her opinion it contributed to (ibid.: 18) "their loss of Spanish and a rift in their relationship with the father". It is worth noting that in this case it is not only the relationship with the father that is impeded, but also the development of his language. In contrast to the present study, however, the father's language was the minority language and not the prestigious language of the society, and the mothers had the main responsibility for childrearing, probably giving more distant positions for fathers from the very beginning. When recognizing the effects of her use of English, the mother switched to Spanish, advised her daughter to take Spanish lessons, and saw an improvement in the relationship between father and daughter.

In conclusion then, the importance of the fathers' competence in the minority language for the use of this language in the mother-child unit has received little attention in earlier studies. The results of the present study seem to imply that this factor may be of crucial importance for the child's bilingual development and should be explored further in new studies. As part of globalization and increased contact between persons from all over the world, families with a great variety of language compositions will be usual. In cross-linguistic families, questions of language choice will always be implied, and knowledge of which factors to consider in the choice process is important. The sparse attention given to the fathers' linguistic resources so far may possibly be interpreted within the context of little attention generally given to fathers in family studies of bilingual development (Jackson 2006). Actually the present study is an example of this trend of focusing the studies on mothers. It should have been very interesting to know how the fathers would talk about their experiences in the different families depending on their Russian competence and relationship to the mothers.

Furthermore, the present study suggests that the importance of the fathers' competence in the minority language is mediated by a set of factors both from the microsystem (the family) and from the broader socio-cultural context. Thus within the Norwegian context the importance is dependent on the closeness of the family ties. If mothers and fathers are closely related, the fathers' minority language competence may become decisive if mothers are consistently to follow up their initial choice of transmitting their language to the child. The function of language choice to include or exclude potential participants have been discussed within studies of bilingual children's linguistic practices (Jørgensen 1998). The present results show that such topics also may be relevant in studies of bilingual development within the family context. They should be followed up in further research attending to the dynamic and possibly circular relations between language competence, language use and social relations.

As noted, socio-cultural factors also mediate the importance of the fathers' competence. The importance seems to be stronger in our study than, for example, in the study by Okita (2002). This could be due to the fact that childrearing arrangements in the English-Japanese families differed considerably from those in the Russian-Norwegian families. Okita reported that many mothers were unable to find a job according to their qualifications and therefore concentrated on early childrearing, while the fathers spent considerable time at work. Thus the Japanese mothers spent much more

time alone with their children than the Russian mothers did, and it is possible that the pressures on the mothers to include their husbands into the family communication were not very strong. In the Norwegian-Russian families, on the other hand, the division of labor regarding childrearing seemed to be strongly influenced by the contemporary socio-cultural context of sex equality. In the present study both parents worked outside home, many fathers fully shared the childcare tasks and most children were taken care of in majority language kindergartens from an early age. Within such social-cultural contexts the importance of the fathers' competence in the minority language may become particularly strong.

Concluding remarks

The results of this study show that the mothers were strongly concerned about the transmission of their native language to the child. Some of the mothers, however, experienced that the establishment of a consistent use of Russian with the child was much more difficult than what they initially expected. In families where the fathers had limited competence in the minority language strict adherence to Russian might alienate the monolingual fathers from the mother-child unit. The complexity of bilingual childrearing in such contexts has not been fully acknowledged. Yet the recognition of this problem is of crucial importance, as it may encourage more effective sources of support. The fathers' awareness of this issue is essential, especially in the contemporary Norwegian context, where they are getting increasingly involved in childrearing. There seem to be two potential ways by which the fathers can contribute to the establishment of active use of Russian between the mothers and the children. The fathers may acquire at least some basic skill in the minority language so as to be able to follow the mother-child conversations. They should also to a greater extent acknowledge the importance of family trips to Russia, which significantly improves the active use of Russian by the children. In a less direct way, the need for recognition applies to society in general. It should meet the needs of such families by providing at least some degree of mother-tongue support. In our opinion, this may include improving bilingual family counselling at the health centres and employing minority language assistants at the daily care institutions.

To understand bilingual development in cross linguistic families it is necessary to take into account factors both at the family and societal level. The comparison of the findings in the present study with the findings by

Okita (2002) clearly demonstrates the importance of socio-historical influences on such individual family issues as childrearing arrangements which in turn have a considerable impact on the use of the minority language within the mother-child units.

Noter

1. This article is based on Ratikainen, J. (2006). *Language use and childrearing in cross-linguistic Norwegian-Russian families in Norway*. Oslo: University of Oslo. Masterthesis. Julia Ratikainen has recently changed her name to Julia Timofeeva.
2. Bronfenbrenner also conceptualize a fifth system, the mesosystem, but it is not relevant for the problems discussed in this article.

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Appendix

Appendix: Summary of interview guides

Life history

1. Could you please tell me briefly about your background?
2. Where were you born, lived?
3. Where did you meet your husband?
4. Can you please describe briefly family you grew up in?
5. What is your profession? What is your husband's profession?
6. For how long have you been living in Norway?
7. Are you planning to stay here?
8. How was it for you to learn the Norwegian language?

Mother's identity

9. To what extent do you think the cultures and ways of life and childrearing approaches are similar in Russia and Norway? Which way do you favor? Why?
10. How Russian/Norwegian would you say you are?
11. Do you want to keep your Russian identity while living in Norway?
12. Where do you feel yourself home?
13. Do you meet with other Russian mothers who are in similar situation?
14. Some Russian people think that it is important for our child to develop strong ties to Russian culture? What do you think?

Languages strategies in the family and the child' bilingualism

15. What language do you speak with your husband?
16. To what extent does the father understand / speak Russian?
17. Can you please tell how your family decided what language(s) you and your husband would speak to your child? Can you please tell the main reasons for your initial solution?
18. Can you please describe the initial language strategy in your family?
19. Did you have any sources of information about how to raise your child bilingually?
20. Some parents say that it is difficult to be all the time consistent in the language choice when addressing the child in different settings. Can you please tell about your experience?
21. Can you please describe me how did your child start to speak?
22. What was your strategy if your child mixed the languages or addressed you in Norwegian in his/her early stage of language development?
23. Can you please tell me whether or not language use in your home has changed as your child grew older, and how did it happen?
24. What do you think about your child's languages development? (Norwegian, Russian)
25. Some parents tell that it is difficult to insist on child's use of particular language. Can you please tell me about your experience?
26. Are you doing something to promote the development of Russian language?
27. Some people say that going back to Russia is helpful for language maintenance. What can you tell about your case?

Attitudes towards Russian language

28. Some people believe that maintenance of our language is important matter for our children? What do you think?
29. Is there any need to set up special classes in school for learning Russian in Norway? If so why?
30. Should Norwegian people be encouraged to learn Russian language? If so why?
31. What kind of attitude do you think your husband has towards Russian language?

Attitudes towards Bilingualism

32. Some people think that it is a good for children to be able to speak more

than one language? What do you think? Did you discuss it with your husband?

33. What kind of goals do you have with regard to your child's bilingualism?
34. Some people think that parents ultimately can influence children's linguistic development. What do you think?
35. In what way do you think bilingualism affect children (cognitive, intellectual, social development)? What do you think your husband believes? Do you talk about this?

Family relationships

36. How do you think your husband feels about the visits of Russian family and friends, your visits to Russia?
37. Do you feel comfortable to speak Russian with your child in the presence of you husband?
38. Do you feel emotional and practical support from your husband in relation to your child's Russian language development?
39. Have your ever had conflicts with your husband because of Russian language use?
40. Who is interacting more with the child in your family? (Spending more time on reading, playing, and speaking and answering child's questions?)

Environmental influences

41. What do you think about the status of Russian language within Norwegian community?
42. Can positive/ negative attitude of Norwegian community (represented by school or kindergarten) towards Russian language affect our children's language development?