

# NONNATIVE EARLY BILINGUALISM IN BRAZILIAN FAMILIES: A CASE STUDY

## BILINGUISMO INFANTIL NÃO NATIVO EM FAMÍLIAS BRASILEIRAS: UM ESTUDO DE CASO

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**ABSTRACT:** This case study presents, assesses, and discusses the phenomenon of nonnative bilingualism in Brazil. Nonnative bilingualism consists of raising a child in a foreign language by parents who are not native speakers of that language, and live in an environment where the given language is not spoken, i.e. Brazilian parents living in Brazil raising their child/ren in English. Twenty-four families, who have adopted this practice, participated in this study by answering an online questionnaire. The results were analyzed against the background of bilingualism theories based on Pearson (2008), Grosjean (2010), Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams (2013), Baker (2014), Grosjean & Byers-Heinlein (2018), and Romanowski (2018). The discussion involves the parents' role in the child's language acquisition, the communicative strategies used by them, the problems found in the process, and recommendations for those willing to adopt the nonnative bilingualism.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Nonnative Bilingualism; Simultaneous Bilingualism; Bilingual Upbringing; Bilingual First Language Acquisition

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**RESUMO:** Este estudo de caso apresenta, avalia e discute o fenômeno do bilinguismo não nativo no Brasil. O bilinguismo não nativo consiste em criar uma criança em uma língua estrangeira por pais que não são falantes nativos dessa língua e vivem em um ambiente onde essa língua estrangeira não é falada, ou seja, pais brasileiros que vivem no Brasil criando seus filhos em inglês. Vinte e quatro famílias, que adotaram essa prática, participaram deste estudo, respondendo a um questionário escrito online. Os resultados são analisados no contexto das teorias do bilinguismo, baseadas em Pearson (2008), Grosjean (2010), Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams (2013), Baker (2014), Grosjean & Byers-Heinlein (2018), and Romanowski (2018), discutindo-se o papel dos pais na aquisição da língua estrangeira, as estratégias comunicativas utilizadas, os problemas encontrados nesse processo e recomendações para as famílias que desejam adotar o bilinguismo não nativo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Bilinguismo Não-Nativo; Bilinguismo Simultâneo; Criação Bilíngue; Aquisição Bilíngue da Primeira Língua.

## BILINGUALISM AND NONNATIVE BILINGUALISM

Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams (2013) separate bilinguals into two categories: those who learn two languages from birth, which are called simultaneous bilinguals, and those who learn a foreign language after they have acquired their mother tongue, which are called sequential bilinguals, regardless of whether they learned the second language in childhood, puberty or in adulthood.

Furthermore, child bilingualism is distinguished in two different learning contexts (DE HOUWER, 2009a): (i) Bilingual First Language Acquisition (BFLA): when the child is exposed to a language from birth to age 6 and up; and (ii) Early Second Language Acquisition (ESLA): when the child is exposed to a second language from roughly the age of one up to five. After this age, the author considers it to be a regular Second Language Acquisition (SLA) rather than ESLA.

Regarding the amount of language exposure, it is considered bilingual the child who is exposed to each language at least 10 to 25% of the time at least (BYERS-HEINLEIN & LEW-WILLIAMS, 2013), which, however, does not guarantee that the child will become bilingual (DE HOUWER, 2007). Differently, Grosjean and Byers-Heinlein (2018) point out that there are great variation among the several studies within the area regarding the minimum exposure for a child to be considered bilingual, although most indicate an exposure of at least 25 to 30% in each language; and as the child grows, language use and proficiency are factors that weigh more than

just exposure to it. Thus, for someone to be considered bilingual, both languages must be used constantly (GROSJEAN, 2010).

Nonnative bilingualism is a type of early simultaneous bilingualism that happens when a child is raised in a language that is not the parent's first language, nor the community where the family lives. It is a conscious decision of the parents to pass on to their child, from an early age, a foreign language – usually their second language – so that the infant, despite living in a monolingual environment, can acquire two languages or more. For example, a Brazilian parent raising a child in English while living in Brazil. This practice has become fashionable in monolingual countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as can be seen from researches by Romanowski, 2016; Szramek-Karcz, 2016; and Lozano-Martínez, 2019, and can also be increasingly noticed in Brazil in recent years. Unarguably, English has attained a privileged status and a worldwide prestige, then becoming a global language with nonnative speakers of the language outnumbering its native speakers. As Crystal stated “There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English” (2003, p. 189). He also wonders if in 500 years' time, everyone would automatically be introduced to English as soon as they were born or even conceived (2003).

According to Grosjean “there are probably more bilinguals on the earth today than monolinguals and that in this age of global communication and travel the number will surely increase” (2010, p. 243), and in Crystal's ideal world, everyone would be at least bilingual, as he further states, in the preface of the book aforementioned, his belief that a world language, in which everyone would be fluent, would be an amazing resource with unparalleled prospects for mutual understanding and opportunities for international cooperation.

Thus, under the siege that a global language creates, some families, in which one of the parents is usually fluent in a foreign language, have taken in their own hands the task of bringing bilingualism into their households. As ever more people have understood the importance of speaking a second language, and English has become a symbol of internationalization, economy, business, and academia. It is no wonder so many families are being drawn to this practice all over the world. In fact, back in 2008, Pearson, in her book *Raising a Bilingual Child* mentioned that the practice of nonnative bilingualism (also known as artificial or elective bilingualism)

despite being more unusual, has many examples that demonstrate that it can be done, with “no ill effects for the children” (2008, L3200).

In view of that, this case study will present, assess, and discuss the phenomenon of nonnative bilingualism in Brazil. The families invited to participate in this research were chosen in a bilingualism group in social media, and were invited to answer a written online questionnaire, which was adapted from Romanowski (2018). The present study aimed to understand issues such as the role of parents in raising bilingual children, the communication strategies adopted by the family, the reasons why parents chose to speak with their children in a foreign language, and how they face the difficulties inherent to the process. This paper is organized in five sections: this introduction, followed by the second part, where I present the most common used communicative strategies for bilingual families. Then in section 3, I describe the methods I used for this case-study and talk about the results obtained through the data collected; in section 4, I discuss the results relating them to the literature; and in the last section, I conclude with some recommendations, limitations of the study and possibilities for future research.

## COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES

There are many ways children can successfully be raised bilingually. As they are exceptionally adaptable language learners, it is not necessary to separate the languages they speak by person, place, or time (GROSJEAN & BYERS-HEINLEIN, 2018), however, there are some communicative strategies that are used to organize the family communication dynamics. According to Pearson (2008), there are four major strategies:

OPOL, which is the most known and probably most used strategy, and stands for One-Parent-One-Language. As the name implies, each parent will speak to the child in a different language. A benefit of using this strategy is that the infant can associate one language to each parent and so is better able to determine which language to use when addressing each one; and the parents will also know which language the child will be speaking to each of them, which improves comprehension of the infant’s first utterances (PEARSON, 2008). Also, by being consistent in the

use of each language, the parents will give the child the chance of creating a person-language bond. When using this strategy, parents must ensure that the child is being exposed to both languages equally, especially in the first months of language development, which will allow the child to start producing sounds, and syllables and words in both languages (GROSJEAN, 2010).

The second strategy is the Minority Language at Home (mL@H), in which case the minority language is obviously the foreign language. In this strategy both parents address their child in the foreign language at home, and when outside, speak their native language. While in the OPOL strategy the child associates a language to a person, in the mL@H, the child associates a place with a language, which is the trigger for the language switch. (GROSJEAN, 2010).

The third strategy, Time and Place (T&P), involves speaking the foreign language at specific times of the day or the week, imitating language immersion programs, for example. Grosjean (2010) also calls it the “language-time” strategy. It is used in immersion and dual language educational programs, and it is successful in that kind of setting, but not as so in the family environment (Grosjean 2010).

The fourth strategy is the Mixed Language Policy (MLP), also called “free-alternation” by Grosjean (2010): the parents’ native language and their second language are used randomly, according to the situation, i.e., the language will be chosen depending on the conversation topics, on the people involved in the social interchange, etc.

The fifth strategy is the one Grosjean (2010) calls One-Language-First (OLF), which is when parents speak only the foreign language to their child up until the age of 4 or 5 years old, and then, after considering it well established, they shift to their native language.

And the last one is a variation of the mL@H (ROMANOWSKI, 2018) and it is known as Minority Language Immersion (MLI), which consists of both parents always speaking the foreign language to the child, regardless of time or place.

## METHOD AND RESULTS

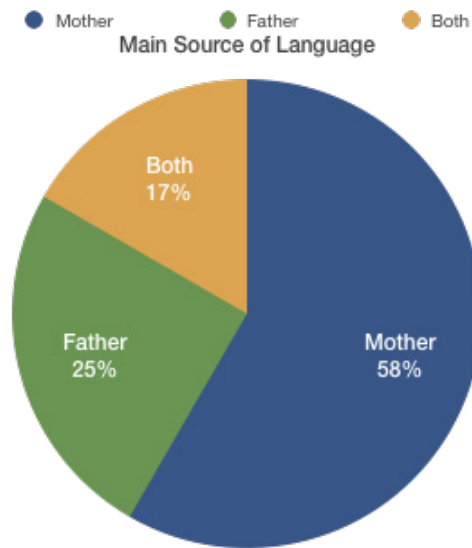
The data-gathering technique used for this study was an online written questionnaire on the Google™ platform adapted from Romanowski (2018). Both open-ended and close-ended questions aimed at outlining each family's linguistic profile (Appendix xx). The first step was to search, through social networks, families who live in Brazil and adopt the nonnative bilingualism. Then, They were invited to participate in the survey as volunteers. Once the invitation was accepted, the link to the online form was sent to each participant. Approximately fifty families that fitted the profile were found through a social network, however, only twenty-four families fully answered the questionnaire. The children's ages ranged from 0 to 10, and they live in São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Rio de Janeiro, Amazonas e Pernambuco. In the following section, a summary of the findings as well as some specific data are presented.

Although some participants reported adopting a third language, such as Italian, German or Spanish, English was the main foreign language used in all households. In fact, the relevance of the English language in today's world was often mentioned. Most parents in the study believe that being able to communicate fluently in English will give their child a head start in life, a better and broader education, better job opportunities in the future, and make traveling abroad easier.

A revealing information is that, in nineteen families (79%), at least one of the parents is involved in the Applied Linguistics field, either as a language teacher or a translator, or sometimes as both.

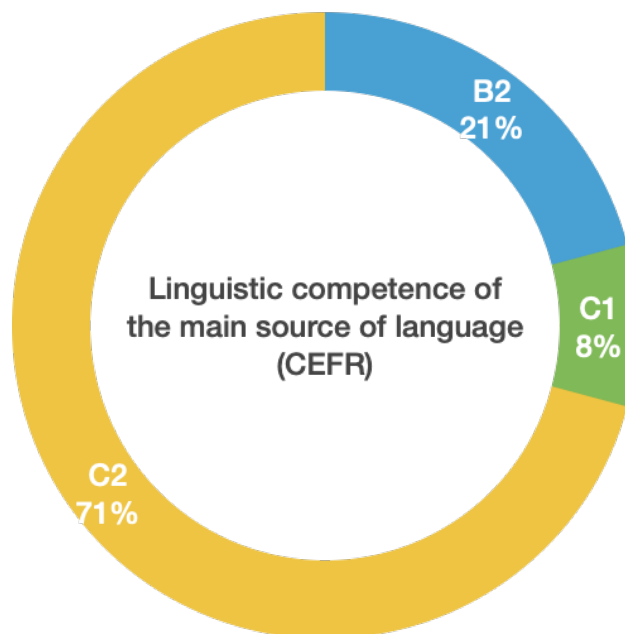
The main source of the foreign language in fourteen families was the mother; in six families, the father; and in four, both parents. In all of them, the mother was the primary caregiver, which is a relevant fact when considering time of exposure to the language.

Figure 1 - Main source of language



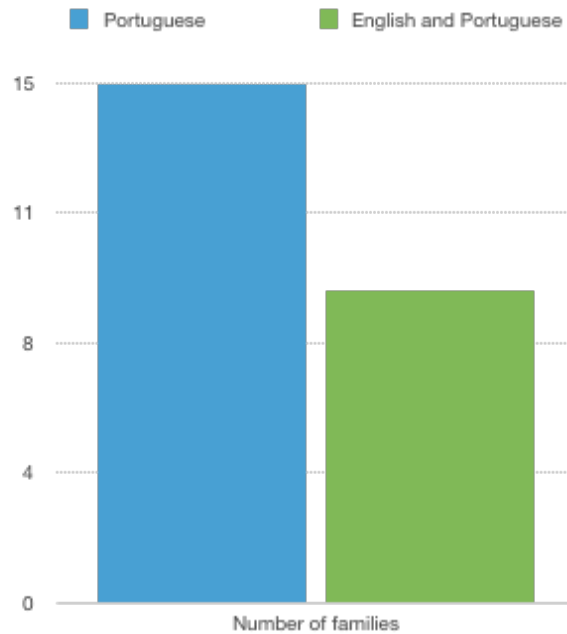
Regarding the linguistic competence of the main source of language, seventeen parents claimed to have a C2 level; two, a C1 level; and five, a B2 level, based on the global scale given by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Figure 2 - Linguistic competence of the main source of language



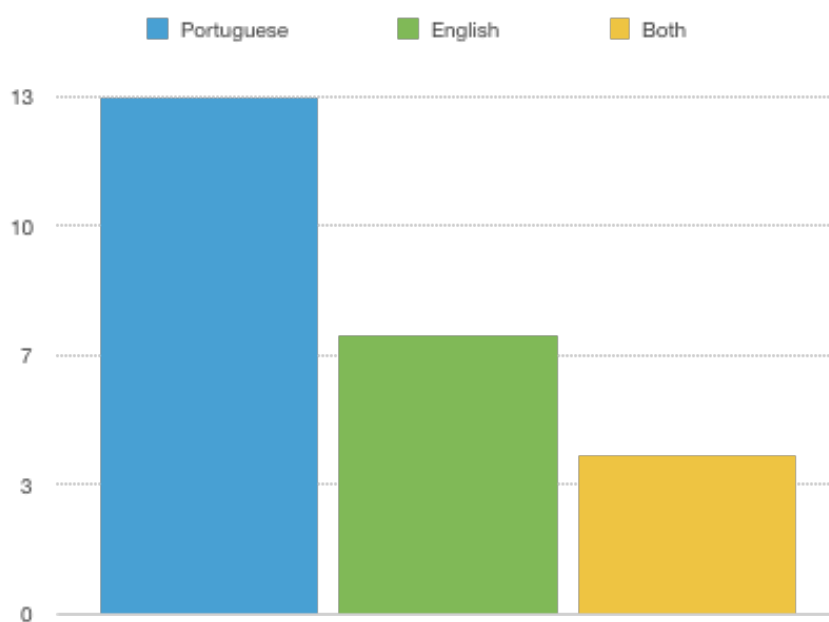
In nine families, the communication between the parents happened randomly, either in Portuguese or English, whereas in the others, parents talked to each other only in Portuguese.

Figure 3 - Language between caretakers



When around people who do not understand the foreign language, thirteen parents – those who are the main source of language – addressed their child(ren) in Portuguese; seven parents claimed to maintain consistency by only addressing their child(ren) in the foreign language at all times; and four parents said that they alternate between languages according to the situation.

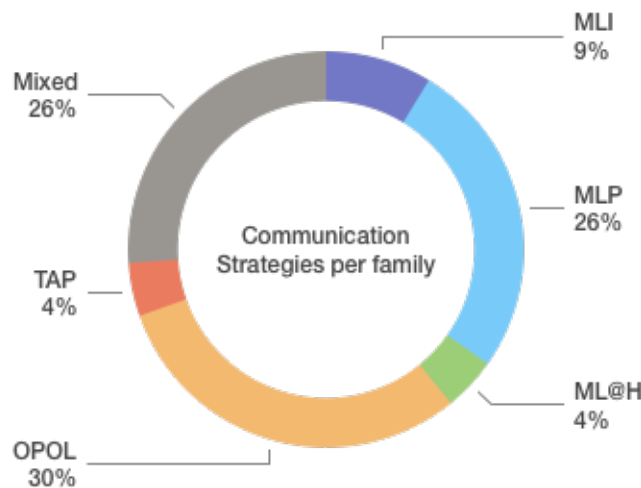
Figure 4 - Addressing the child before non-English speakers





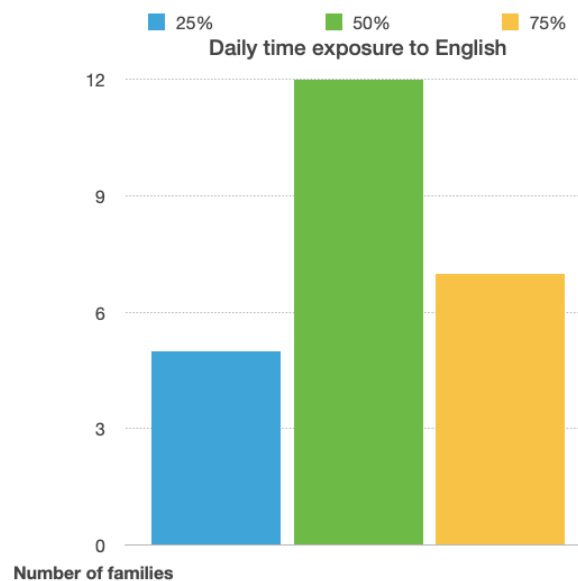
The communication strategies used by the families were varied: Seven families claimed to use OPOL; six families, MLP; two families, MLI; one family, ML@H; another family, TaP; and six families combine two or more strategies (one family combine OPOL and MLP; another combine TaP and MLP; another OPOL, TaP, and MLP; yet another ML@H, TaP, and MLP; and two families did not specify which strategies they use.

Figure 5 - Communication Strategies in the family



Most families started exposing the child to the foreign language before they were born or from birth on, or from the very first months of life. However, there is a great variation regarding the amount of time each child is exposed to the foreign language. Twelve parents claimed to expose their children to the foreign language 50% of the time; seven families, 75% of the time; and 5 families, only 25%, as shown in the chart below:

Figure 6 - Daily time exposure to English



Among the unpleasant reactions or negative opinions that the participants ever heard about bilingualism were the following: it would (i) cause a speech delay; (ii) overwhelm or confuse the child; (iii) hinder the native language acquisition process; and (iv) be a hurdle for literacy and even formal education. About nonnative bilingualism specifically, two participating mothers reported hearing that they would not be able to speak properly to the child and would not have enough vocabulary to discuss more specific matters, which would cause the child to learn the foreign language inadequately. Other participants reported hearing that they were discredited when other people thought they would not succeed in passing the language to their child. One of the fathers said that, at the beginning, he was criticized, but that it has changed over the three previous years due to what he believes to be a shift in mindset in Brazil, where people have started valuing bilingual education more. Some of the parents said that they were criticized by some relatives, friends, and even professionals who did not know about the benefits of bilingualism and thought impossible for a nonnative speaker to bring up a child in a foreign language in a monolingual country. Some mentioned being put off in public by other people's curiosity and the attention it sometimes attracted. Although most participants were criticized at the beginning of their bilingualism journey, most

claimed to be then admired and complimented when their child(ren) demonstrated fluency in both languages.

Three children from different families were reported to have a speech delay. However, it was not disclosed if a medical diagnosis was in fact received or how such delay was dealt with. But, overall, the study participants' attitude towards early bilingualism was highly positive. They all believe that it brings innumerable benefits to the child, such as communicative and cognitive advantages. It was also pointed out that the child can grow up more open-minded and have better chances in the future. They believe that bilingualism can improve interpersonal and professional relationships, phonetic awareness, foster a general understanding of ethnical diversity and cultural differences, which in turn can help Brazilian children value more their own background and culture.

Another reason given by the parents for exposing their child to a foreign language early on was that it makes the acquisition process natural, more successful, less laborious for the child and less expensive for the parents when compared to late second language learning. One of the parents mentioned the affection factor, oftentimes forgotten or considered irrelevant, which is the pleasure of talking to your own child in a language that you have always loved. It was also said that as knowledge and communication skills are ever so important, there is no reason why a child should be deprived of learning the foreign language the parent already speaks.

The participants were also inquired about suggestions for parents who want to raise their child bilingually. The first one of course is to expose the child to the foreign language as early as possible, especially by interacting with them, and so it is essential for the parent to be fluent in the foreign language and focus on the communication without making its acquisition a burden or an obligation to the child. In general, the advice given to other parents who would like to raise their children bilingually was very encouraging. Most participants agree that the results are rewarding, and that even though it might be hard work sometimes, the results do pay off. Finally, it was suggested that parents be determined and disciplined no matter the circumstances or criticisms that they may receive.

The resources and methods that were mentioned for helping with vocabulary acquisition, improving pronunciation, and internalizing grammar structures were

storytelling and reading, nursery rhymes, games, cartoons, etc. Online platforms such as YouTube and Netflix were often cited as an additional means for exposing the child to the foreign language.

Regarding how parents plan to keep fostering bilingualism in the future, some plan to continue interacting and homeschooling their children in the foreign language. Others plan to enroll them in bilingual or international schools where those are available. Many of these families plan to travel abroad and keep closer contact with the foreign language and culture, and some others even plan to move to a foreign country or send their children to study abroad in the future.

## DISCUSSION

For a variety of reasons, many parents are self-conscious about speaking a language that is not their native language, especially in a monolingual environment. Sometimes they do not want to draw attention to themselves, or they simply do not want to exclude people from the conversation, for the sake of politeness. Although parents should understandably have freedom to choose which language and when to use it with their child, the “person-language bond” that Grosjean (2010, p. 283) identified should not be overlooked. The author explains that infants distinguish between languages by taking into consideration many different factors, such as the context and structural aspects of a language, especially the person who speaks it, thus, for a young bilingual child, there is often a strong bond between a person and the language they speak, consequently, breaking it should be avoided:

In the eyes of the child, a person is associated with one particular language, and if that person addresses the child in the other language, the child may refuse to answer or may be distressed. Thus, it would seem that one strategy used by the bilingual child is to determine which language is spoken with whom, and to keep to that language. This makes the choice of words and of rules simpler and less effortful. When the person-language bond is broken, the young child is at a loss and may become upset. (GROSJEAN, 2010, p. 183)

Therefore, it would be desirable to maintain the foreign language with the child until they are old enough to understand, or perhaps try to clear the situation

with the adults involved. Moreover, a conversation involving both languages might be an interesting experience to the child since she/he will be able to switch from one language to another and will eventually get comfortable doing so. It might not be the case in other countries, but, in Brazil, foreign languages are usually met with good spirits, especially English, which, as mentioned before, is a language of prestige and power, and thus it is easily received and approved of, and – as some of the participants in the study put it, people would even appreciate or admire young children who are able to speak a foreign language.

Then, which communicative strategy is more suitable? Is there one that is more efficient than others? Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams (2013) advocate that any strategies can be used as long as it provides high-quality and high-quantity exposure to both languages. De Houwer (*apud* GROSJEAN, 2010, p. 173) remarks that children will learn a language as long as they have linguistic input not only in different contexts and situations but also from the people who are most important to them, such as family and close relatives and friends. Byers-Heinlein and Lew-Williams (2013) caution, though, based on several studies, that infants do not learn a new language from television and that watching low-quality television impacts negatively the vocabulary size in bilingual toddlers. And Grosjean (2010) stresses that exposure to the foreign language must be through interacting actively with people and not from passively watching TV for instance. Therefore, high-quality language exposure must come from social interaction.

Furthermore, Baker (2014) emphasizes that in families where one parent speaks one language and the other parent speaks another, both parents should give their child the chance to practice the languages in different contexts, thus offering them a broader linguistic experience. Hence, each parent has a significant role in their child's language development, which sometimes needs to be planned out properly, as the author puts it metaphorically: "Just as the dietary balance of meals is increasingly of interest and debate in families, so it is important that the diet of language in the home is also open to discussion. Both mothers and fathers are important chefs in the language kitchen" (BAKER, 2014, p. 11). And Grosjean (2010) points out that whatever strategy parents elect, the environment must always

be observed to guarantee that the child is being equally exposed to both languages and has a genuine need for using them.

However, nothing prevents a single mother or father to pass on their second language to their child. Suppose a mother talks to her child in English all the time, the child will still have many opportunities to speak Portuguese, be it with the extended family or in a daycare center or preschool. The balance might not be equal at first because the mother input will supposedly be greater, but then, as the child grows up and have more social activities, the community language will inevitably get stronger. So, if only one person is speaking the foreign language with the child, the amount of exposure to the foreign language should be increased.

As the child grows and spends more time outside the home, at school and with friends who do not speak the foreign language, the community language will become dominant, consequently, parents will have to make a bigger effort to balance the languages and ensure that the child and then the adolescent will always need it (Grosjean, 2010). Nevertheless, the language acquisition process should evidently be something natural and pleasant for both parent and child, as Grosjean adverts that imposing it can bring undesirable effects:

forcing a child to keep to just one language when his or her interlocutor knows both only leads to frustration in both sides. I have often said, with a smile, that bilingual parents are far from being the best friends of their children's weaker language and hence of their bilingualism. But they can make up for this by putting their children in natural situations where they have a real need for their weaker language. (GROSJEAN, 2010, p. 212).

As seen in the previous section, some of the participants in this study considered fundamental that the bilingual family be well informed about bilingualism and the communication strategies, which is corroborated by Grosjean who does not expect parents to be experts in the field, but stresses how important it is that they distinguish myths from facts about bilingualism:

It is crucial that parents, and all those who take care of bilingual children, be informed about [...] how children become bilingual and retain their bilingualism, what it means to be bilingual, the complementarity principle, language mode, code-switching and borrowing, the effects of bilingualism on children, and so on. This knowledge will help them comprehend the development of their bilingual children

and prepare them for the appearance of various bilingual phenomena. (GROSJEAN, 2010, p. 214)

Among the negative reactions the participants faced was the belief that their child would be confused and have a speech delay. However, that is not supported by science, as research shows that bilingual infants can easily recognize their two languages and do not show any signs of confusion. In fact, they may be even more responsive than monolinguals regarding information that sets their languages apart (BYERS-HEINLEIN & LEW-WILLIAMS, 2013). It is also important to mention that the proportion of bilinguals who have a language delay or impairment is the same as that of monolinguals (BYERS-HEINLEIN & LEW-WILLIAMS, 2013). In fact, bilinguals reach the main linguistic milestones at the same stages as monolinguals, considering the variability in the speed that language acquisition happens in both groups (GROSJEAN, 2010). And “even though bilinguals learn at the same rate as monolinguals, it is important to remember that children’s time and thus their language knowledge is divided between their languages” (GROSJEAN & BYERS-HEINLEIN, 2018, p. 16). Thus, when analyzing bilinguals’ abilities, the differences that exist between them and monolinguals should be considered: “[...] if you measure bilinguals using a monolingual measure, you are more likely to find false evidence of delay. Fortunately, researchers and clinicians are now developing bilingual-specific measures that paint a more accurate picture of bilinguals’ global language competence” (BYERS-HEINLEIN & LEW-WILLIAM, 2013, p. 10)

What about the many advantages that were mentioned by the parents in this study? What is really supported by science? Byers-Heinlein (2013), based on previous studies, summarizes the benefits: Young bilingual children: (i) have apparently better abilities at grasping other’s point of view, thoughts, desires, and intentions; (ii) have a superior understanding of some elements of communication, for example, tone of voice; and (iii) demonstrate cognitive advantages in some aspects of memory.

Research also demonstrates that simultaneous bilinguals have more advantages compared to sequential bilinguals, such as a clearer accent, a more varied vocabulary, higher grammatical competence, and better skills in processing



language instantaneously (GROSJEAN & BYERS-HEINLEIN, 2018). However, said benefits are not a suggestion that bilingualism is crucial for a child's successful development or even if they affect everyday life, as these cognitive advantages have only been verified through highly complex laboratory experiments (BYERS-HEINLEIN & LEW-WILLIAMS, 2013), and when differences between monolinguals and bilinguals are found, they are oftentimes subtle and related to a specific task (GROSJEAN, 2010).

A difficulty that may arise for families who adopt the nonnative bilingualism is enabling the child to experience the monolingual mode in each of their languages. When interacting with a bilingual parent, it is common for a child to receive input with code-switches and borrowings, but it is essential that the child “come into regular contact with monolingual speakers” so as to “receive input that does not contain code-switches and borrowings” and “learn how to navigate along the monolingual-bilingual language mode continuum and hence adapt their speech to the situation and interlocutor” (GROSJEAN, 2010, p. 211). It is also prudent not to overlook the results from a study by Place and Hoff (2010) that concludes that bilingual children demonstrate more linguistic competence when more of their input comes from native speakers, which means that that nonnative speech is “less supportive of language acquisition than native speech”, however, the authors acknowledge that the implication in this finding does not clarify the reasons for that, and “interpreting the effect of native input will require future work examining how the child-directed speech produced by native and nonnative speakers differ” (PLACE & HOFF, 2010, p. 14).

Nevertheless, I believe that the status of nonnative speakers should be approached more broadly and sensibly. To illustrate that, I will borrow some of the underlying problems of SLA [Second Language Acquisition], pointed out by Firth and Wagner and summarized by Schmitz (2012). The first is the use of the prefix *non* in nonnative, which denotes a lack of something; however, as a matter of fact, there are different levels of linguistic competence and there are nonnatives who reach native-like proficiency, thus not lacking anything. Another problem is the concept of the ‘omniscient’ native speaker, which I think must be dismantled, as should the third problem which is the prerogative that there only exists one identity underlying



both concepts of native and nonnative. Ultimately, there is a disregard of “the rich multilingual status on (the many) nonnatives in the world in comparison with monolingual native speakers with their limited linguistic awareness” (SCHMITZ, 2012, p. 271-272), which I believe, must be put to an end. Hopefully, that can be food-for-thought and may help dispel the controversies of nonnative speakers raising bilingual children.

As the study demonstrated, despite living in a monolingual country of huge proportions, the families surveyed, and the people around them are mostly receptive to foreign languages and believe that there are many benefits in being able to speak other languages, even though the idea of the omniscient native speaker lingers on. We must consider that “the sands have shifted for those supposedly nonnatives to consider English to be theirs, to be their own property and no longer the private terrain of native speakers in New York, London or Sydney” (SCHMITZ, 2012, p. 252). English is now so broadly accepted that it cannot be considered the property of any single country (CRYSTAL, 2003), which is clearly noticed in the phenomenon of nonnative bilingualism here in Brazil and worldwide, as ever more people understand that speaking another language, especially English, is not considered any longer a perk, it has become a necessity and a common global goal:

English is the medium of a great deal of the world’s knowledge, especially in such areas as science and technology. And access to knowledge is the business of education. When we investigate why so many nations have in recent years made English an official language or chosen it as their chief foreign language in schools, one of the most important reasons is always educational – in the broadest sense. (Crystal, 2003, p. 110)

Finally, it is worth mentioning that children are equipped for bilingualism since birth and that they acquire language naturally if they are consistently exposed to it (CRYSTAL, 2003). No wonder “two-thirds of the children on earth grow up in a bilingual environment and develop competence in it” (CRYSTAL, 2003, p. 16). So, if one is fluent in a foreign language and feels comfortable enough speaking it, why not raise a bilingual child in that language?

## CONCLUSION

Although this case study represents a small percentage of bilingual families in Brazil, considering all the variants discussed in the previous section, the results have been positive and demonstrate that, despite being somewhat controversial, nonnative bilingualism – just as regular bilingualism – may be a successful process.

In sum, the twenty-four families surveyed in this study, allowed for the construction of a positive linguistic profile. Although the communication strategies were wide-ranging, the participants were all unanimous on how knowledge about bilingualism and linguistic competence are key in this process, which is not free of bumps on the way. However, the most reported problems came down to negative opinions from people who are not well informed about bilingualism, which tended to disappear once the child demonstrated competence in both languages. And although three families reported some level of speech delay, research has shown that it happens at the same proportion to monolinguals as mentioned in the previous section.

This study is just the beginning of what is yet to come regarding early nonnative bilingualism in Brazil as its growing potential is visible everywhere we look. A limitation I encountered was having the questionnaire answered by the families as we know everybody leads a very busy life and it is difficult to spare time for such demands. By law, in Brazil, all research subjects must participate voluntarily, and incentive of any kind is prohibited. However, a longitudinal study that could accompany these children and assess their bilingual development over the years, their linguistic competence and potential influences in their language production would immensely contribute to the field. As Crystal (2003, p. 6) puts it, there are many cases around the world of children learning English as a mother tongue from a foreign source, and this “raises a question over the contribution that these babies will one day make to the language, once they grow up to be important people, for their intuitions about English will inevitably be different from those of traditional native speakers”. Will this nonnative bilingualism phenomenon forge a new English variety made in Brazil?

## Funding

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**APPENDIX – QUESTIONNAIRE: NON-NATIVE BILINGUALISM IN BRAZIL**

1. Where and when was your child born?
2. What languages is your child being exposed to?
3. Who is the main source of language for the child?
4. How long has your child been exposed to the foreign language?
5. What resources do you use?
6. What language do you speak with your partner?
7. What is your level of proficiency in the foreign language?
8. Why did you learn a second language and how do you maintain your level of proficiency?
9. Did you major in any course related to linguistics? If so, which one?
10. What is your partner's level of proficiency in the foreign language?
11. Are there any other family members that speak to the child in the foreign language?
12. In which language do you address your child in the presence of people who do not speak or understand the foreign language?
13. How much exposure does your child receive in each language on a daily basis?
14. Do you use any communicative strategies? If so, which one?
15. Are you consistent in speaking the foreign language to the child?
16. Is your child literate in the foreign language? If not, do you plan to teach your child to read and write in the target language? If yes, how was the process?
17. Did your child have any speech delay?
18. Does your child have a stronger language? Which one?
19. Are/Were there any difficulties in raising a bilingual child in a monolingual environment?
20. Does your child go to a bilingual or international school?
21. Does your child go to a language school?
22. Why did you choose to raise your child bilingually?
23. What is your attitude towards bilingual upbringing? What's the attitude of your family?
24. Have you ever heard any unfavourable comments regarding bilingualism?

25. Have you ever faced any unfavourable opinions as regards non-native bilingualism?
26. What advice would you give to those parents who are interested in introducing non-native bilingualism in their family?
27. How are you going to support your child's linguistic development in the future?