<u>Assignment: Interview with a multilingual speaker</u>

<u>Group members: Rafailia Poutachidou, Weronika Wylot and Mateusz Wawrowski</u>

1. **Multilingualism Types**

   a. Rafailia

With respect to the traditional model of thinking about bilingualism, Rafailia would not really consider herself as bilingual, but rather as a foreign language learner. According to the modern approach, however, she describes herself as a late bilingual because she started learning English when she was 8 years old. She has features of both the additive bilingual (that show mostly through her academic register) and the subtractive bilingual (as her profound knowledge of English imposes on her academic writing skill in Greek). Most importantly, Rafailia is a dominant bilingual, with her native language used in everyday situations and English used in more formal, academic contexts. She considers her competence (internalized language) to be better than her production (actual spoken/written utterances). Moreover, Rafailia is a foreign language learner with respect to French, and she was able to obtain quite a high proficiency level in this language (B2).

   b. Weronika

Weronika is a bilingual speaker of Polish (L1) and English (L2). She is dominant in Polish, since Polish is her mother tongue and she uses it in all contexts, but especially in informal ones. Due to her choice of academic field, her interests and the special kinds of literature she has been exposed to, she does not study in Polish as much as in English, nor does she use Polish in formal academic context (oral speech, written assignments). Weronika is more familiar with the English academic register. She started acquiring the English language at the age of 12 years, so she is a late, successive bilingual speaker. Since Weronika learned and studied English for so many years and -most importantly-in university, she is no less than proficient in her L2. During her academic studies she focused on and developed the variety of American English, or more accurately the American accent. Her bilingualism is additive: her competence in English did not cause any impoverishment to her Polish. What is more, Weronika is a foreign learner of the German language. She had been learning German from the age of 6 until the age of 22 years, though not intensively. She did not practice or use her German much and that is why she is not comfortable with identifying as trilingual. With respect to other linguistic experiences, she has tried to learn French and Japanese and she also attended2 courses of Latin during her academic studies.

   c. Mateusz

I consider myself successive bilingual, as I am able to speak fluently in Polish and I started learning English after I have partly acquired Polish. When it comes to my native language it is Polish and I have acquired it naturally from my parents and I also learned it at school, by for example cognitive strategies such as practicing and repeating with sounds and writing system. Moreover, there are 2 additional foreign languages that I am able to speak: English – fluently, and German less fluently, but I think I would be able to have a short conversation with a native German person. My goal is to reach native level of English one day, especially when it comes to pronunciation and fluency. I sometimes do code-switch when speaking to my friends or during academic lessons. In German, my skills basic, the vocabulary knowledge is rather poor in comparison to native German people. I have also studied Latin, however I do not use that language anymore and my knowledge is very poor, I think I would definitely not be able to have a conversation in that language.

2. Multilingual Learning Strategies

a. Rafailia

In her early years of learning English, Rafailia would use a lot of memory-connected learning strategies, such as repetition (writing relevant vocabulary repeatedly, pronouncing relevant words over and over again). She would also practice with English phonetical and writing systems (as English has different alphabet than Greek). When it comes to cognitive learning strategies, there was sadly not a lot of naturalistic practice (like speaking during classes or talking with native speakers of English) in her school. Yet, she did adapt English to Greek translations as her cognitive learning strategy. An important cognitive strategy for her was also note taking (from early years of learning English). As for Rafailia's compensation strategies, she often asks for help and uses synonyms when speaking. Her metacognitive strategies include linking similarities between English and Greek and setting up goals and deadlines (planning her work). As for social learning strategies, Rafailia mentioned working in groups. Of course, naturalistic acquisition process is really important for her so she practices English not only by watching TV-shows and videos made by native speakers but also by using English-speaking social media sites.

b. Weronika

Weronika has used and still uses a great variety of learning strategies for English, including cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, social and affective strategies.

During the early years of studying the English language, Weronika practiced by repeating words and phrases by memory and by reviewing how she used English. She

mostly focused on acquiring the grammar and the sound and writing system of English. Pronunciation was very important in her English classes. She studied, took notes, highlighted the important and challenging information and used post-it notes to boost her memory. Weronika also practiced (and continues to practice) English naturalistically, i.e., by communicating and chatting with native speakers.

As an adult Weronika reads many books and texts in English, mostly American classics and poetry. In addition, she enjoys listening to songs and musicals in English. Those interests of her in combination with the object of her academic study, have led her to develop a deep understanding of the American and British history and culture, which in general has proven to be very beneficiary when accompanying language learning. During her academic years, she wrote many assignments -by herself and cooperating in groups- and exams in English and as a result she developed proficient skills in sentence building and very good knowledge of vocabulary. Weronika constantly tries to overcome what she considers to be limitations in her written and spoken language and pronunciation, she practices finding synonyms in order to enhance her formal academic vocabulary and does not hesitate to get help from her teachers when she needs to by asking questions and asking for clarifications. When using English, Weronika switches to her mother tongue in some cases and in other cases she describes the words which she either does not know or misses momentarily. Weronika has also been doing some work translating texts from Polish to English during her internship.

Finally, some interesting strategies Weronika applies when communicating in English are trying to lower her anxiety, so as to be more relaxed when talking to native speakers and taking advantage of the communicative power of gesturing.

c. Mateusz

My multilingual learning strategies are mainly: studying grammar and vocabulary with regards to memory strategies, such as repetition. In addition, I'm talking with native speakers as much as possible, trying to learn from them a lot, especially when it comes to pronunciation and advanced vocabulary. Sometimes I do translation exercises, for example my friend wanted me to translate his blog from Polish to English and that also made me learn new vocabulary.

3. **Typical Features of Multilinguals/Polyglots**

Multilingual people usually exhibit, except for a natural inclination to languages and a special talent, very good memory and pronunciation skills. Research has also shown that they have very good inhibition, which is the cognitive capacity to block unnecessary stimuli and focus on the relevant stimuli people receive from their environment. Fascination, passion for language learning and interest in foreign cultures and histories are of course the basis of the strong motivation of these individuals.

As personalities, they tend to be out-going, creative, confident and sociable, because these qualities help them to socialize and communicate with many different people in order to practice. They usually are self-disciplined, because they study much and try to learn and apply learning strategies and acquire metalinguistic awareness. However, at the same time, they struggle not to be perfectionistic, because learning through trial & error and constructive criticism is key to their venture. Additionally, many multilinguals have good understanding of the contextual cues and circumstances of language use, which can help them a lot in acquiring vocabulary and pragmatic skills. Finally, they must have some analytical skills, given that many of them, when acquiring a new linguistic system, try to comprehend and organize the information in their mind by using their previous linguistic knowledge, i.e., focusing on similarities and differences with the other languages that they already know.

A comprehensive list of traits commonly observed in Multilinguals:

- Good memory
- Natural abilities / talent
- Creativity
- Self-discipline
- Motivation (fascination with culture...)
- Confidence, being out-going
- Having good learning strategies
- Metalinguistic awareness
- Not being afraid to make mistakes
- Being able to take criticism
- High analytical skills

Sources:

- prof. UAM dr hab. Magdalena Wrembel: *Types of multilingualism and multilinguals* presentation
- prof. UAM dr hab. Anna Ewert: *Introduction to learner strategies – definitions and taxonomies* lecture

Work process:

- A meeting on MS Teams
- Task I and II done by way of an interview (one person talks and the other is taking notes to later be edited and combined into coherent report paragraphs)
- Task III done by way of a brainstorming session